

Americans National Memorial Service for Sun Myung Moon

Michael Balcomb
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“True Father never doubted that no matter how big the task he could get it done,” former FFWPU president, now University of Bridgeport president, Dr. Neil Salonen recalled as he took the stage at the National Memorial Service in New York City this weekend. “True Mother is continuing, and the mantle is slipping to our shoulders.” He continued, echoing the sentiment of the evening, that America, and each one of us as individuals of this nation, needs to play a significant role in bringing about True Parents’ mission of peace.

America has been long awaiting her chance to celebrate True Father at the second anniversary of his ascension. Though Korea held a universal memorial service in August, the date of True Father’s Seonghwa according to the lunar calendar, American Unificationists felt strongly that they should hold a National Memorial Service as an offering to True Father for all of his love and investment, especially here in the United States. Local pastors, representatives of Women’s Federation for World Peace (WFWP), the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP), the American Clergy Leadership Conference, (ACLC), Universal Peace Federation (UPF) USA, and Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) National Headquarters came together over the summer to plan the event they hoped would honor True Parents through uplifting celebration.

The day finally arrived, when over 3,000 people gathered from around the country to pay their respects and honor the life and legacy of True Father. At the Hammerstein Ballroom in New York City, the mood was one of celebration as much as reverence. Yeon Ah (Choi) Moon, President of Women’s Federation for World Peace, True Parent’s daughter in law, and the Keynote Speaker for the event, offered words on behalf of True Parent’s family.

She said pointedly, “I vividly remember True Father speaking in this room, pouring out his love and passion for God to all of us.” Jeong Jin Moon, True Parents’ youngest daughter, also attended the service. Their presence offered a special and humbling connection to True Father that we were honored and grateful for.

Riveting musical and dance numbers, including a beautiful performance by Mathew Hill and Kiah Victoria, punctuated the many moving words from religious, political, and community leaders. Steve Honey, Patsy Casino and Raoul Joseph, the original performers at 1976 Yankee Stadium Gods Hope for America tour and speech, joined the choir of young people sporting “God’s Hope for America” t-shirts, in a memorable rendition of “Battle Hymn of the Republic” towards the end of the program.

The National Memorial Service comes on the heels of the God’s Hope for America Holy Ground Pilgrimage across the continental United States that spanned six weeks over the summer. The Memorial Service has become a culmination to a summer of revitalization. Among the attendants were a group of Korean Unification Church District Pastors who undertook a 10 day USA pilgrimage beginning in Las Vegas, and ending at the National Memorial Service in New York. Though the memorial service focused on all of True Father’s work around the world, it paid close attention to the many historical events that

took place in America. True Father's own words recited by Rev. Miilhan Stevens of Maryland Family Church reminded the audience that "America needs a spiritual revolution!"



Considering True Father's work of religious unity and reconciliation, he would be proud to see the many members of different faith backgrounds who gathered and participated in a symbolic water ceremony. The interfaith ceremony had each faith representative say a few words or give a short prayer, and then poured a vase of water into a larger vase, symbolizing "the spirit of each religion, poured into one vessel."

Bishop Cecil G. Riley introduced the ceremony with an interfaith prayer saying, "There is oneness at the heart of True Father. Without this oneness there will be no peace." He then invited the other representatives: Women in ministry, represented by Rev. Marilyn Kotulek; Unificationism, represented by Minister Nandi Bengu; Hinduism, represented by Guru Dileepji; Islam, represented by Imam Shamsi Ali; Judaism, represented by Chaya Eliya Kranz; and Christianity, represented by Rev. Dr. Robert Waterman.

True Father and True Mother would also be pleased to receive recognition for their life's work from America represented by Congressman Dan Burton who addressed the audience with words about religious freedom in America and throughout the world stating, "I know that the life of Reverend Moon was by no means an easy one. He encountered opposition and persecution throughout his life... Sadly, this also included him being imprisoned here in the United States... in the words of Orrin Hatch, 'I believe that injustice was done and that the treatment of Reverend Moon was because of his strong righteous stance against communism and immorality.'" Many, including Congressman Burton, agreed that "America must not fail today" in her calling to do better in her contribution to "moral leadership lifting up the God affirming principles that allow respect for men and women of every race, creed and culture."

Dr. Ki Hoon Kim, Continental Chairman of FFWPU North America, introduced the inspirational video "Rev. Moon, A Peace Loving Global Citizen", and spoke of True Father's over 50 years of investment in America, beginning in 1965 when he first came to the country. "True Father promoted God's way of life in his mission as a doctor, to heal this world, and a firefighter, to extinguish immorality." He said, "With True Mother leading the way, we commit to the clear goal of 2020."

As the service concluded, Dr. Chang Shik Yang, True Mother's Special Emissary to the Americas, reminded everyone of True Mother's sentiment that "There really are so many areas where all of us can make an investment of our time and talent. As True Mother says 'Pick one thing, and do it very well.'"

After the service had concluded, Dr. Michael Balcomb, President of FFWPU USA and emcee for the evening remarked, "We all felt closer together. Once again, we were reminded of Father Moon's greatest teaching and legacy: that in the end, we are One Family Under God."

The National Memorial Banquet

Filled with inspiration, leaders from around the world, and rising youth leaders, were invited to a special banquet following the National Memorial Service. The banquet was not simply a chance to honor distinguished guests, but it was the opportunity for these leaders to come together on the foundation of putting True Parents' vision into action. They were able to share their reflections, connect about their

projects and ministries, and hear some interfaith inspirational talks about committing to True Father's goal.



Mr. Leroy Baca, Sheriff of Los Angeles County from 1998 to 2014, asked the crowd to “reflect on not only why you’re here, but the challenges you’ve faced in your own life and that True Father faced as a young man all the way until the point of time until he passed.” He said, “To be a successful human being you need faith and, as you already have, the potential to do heroic deeds.” He encouraged the crowd to follow True Father's example, and to meet the challenges of our time, "You will all risk or lose something for the betterment of somebody else. That's what True Father was able to provide: his greatest skill was what all courageous individuals have: he knew how to suffer. Therein is the rising of the dawn where the sun emerges. Ironically, it's an amazing reality that we all can rise up and face the next day and do it with a great degree of certainty that we will overcome."

Hon. Sam Zakhem, the US Ambassador to Bahrain from 1986-89, was also moved by the event, and spoke on re-dedicating ourselves to True Parents' vision of peace in this particularly tumultuous time. “On Monday, the United Nations will begin its annual high level sessions here in New York with a lot to consider,” he noted. “Over the past couple of months, international tensions have increased with the atrocities of ISIS in Syria and Iraq, dark troubles in the Ukraine, the Ebola pandemic in West Africa, and so much more. It's been only a week since we solemnly remembered the thirteenth 9/11 anniversary. All of this is of course far different than the bold vision of peace that True Parents have been declaring around the world throughout their lives.” Hon. Zakhem went on to encourage that “the most powerful teaching of True Parents is that we must love our enemies and bring good fortune to them through dialogue and understanding. Though we are living in times of great crisis and tension, True Parents give real solutions and ways in which enemies can be reconciled.”

Indeed, many of the leaders spoke of exactly how True Parents' teachings created the blueprint for the work that they are doing. Dr. Thomas Walsh, president of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF International), spoke of ongoing projects that reflect and build upon True Father's legacy. “True Father has always advocated building a world of peace... We should never give up on that.” He continued, "These principles that True Father has always taught us and expounded and elaborated on are not just for our personal salvation, but really they are applications to all spheres and sectors and social institutions of everyday life: our families, our communities, society, nation and the world. So when we gather together in True Father's honor it has that hallmark.”

The spirit of urgency crossed generational boundaries, as Lena Yasutake, board member of the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP), spoke of the need for everyone to do their part in building a world of peace. “You don't have to be perfect or even the right person for the job,” she said, "but if you step up, and you stand with integrity and you show up consistently, you can make a difference no matter who you are. I encourage you to catch that fire, because if you invest you can make a profound difference in your own community and your own endeavors to build world peace.” Lena's speech exemplified the potential and passion of the next generation of leaders emerging to step up and carry on True Father's legacy.

Lena also introduced the Sunhak Peace Prize. Founded by True Mother, this award reflects her profound hope of the continuing legacy left by her husband who dedicated his entire life for world peace, prosperity and coexistence, that humankind can be one family under God. This peace prize will become a beacon of hope for champions of peace, in remembrance of True Father and his legacy, commitment and dedication. It will be awarded on July 17, 2015, the solar calendar anniversary of True Father's passing. Nominations are about to begin.



Young Unificationist Leaders Gathering

Those next generation leaders were able to have their own reflective experience thanks to the Young Unificationist Leaders Gathering (YULG) that followed the Banquet.

“We had a great group that gathered,” said Naokimi Ushiroda, President of the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP) USA. “I counted 57. The breakout session was pretty evenly distributed among CARP, Blessing & Family Ministry (BFM) and DPLife. I thought it was a great beginning. It was really nice that both Dr. Balcomb and Dr. Kim stopped by.”

True Mother's focus has been, in great part, on raising the youth of the Unification Church into future leaders. This winter, she is asking us to focus more specifically on young professional Unificationists around America, and so this gathering was a natural extension of that vision within the framework of the day's inspirational activities.

One of the goals of this gathering was to receive input from young adult Unificationists about what their church could do for them, and what they could contribute back to their church. YULG was a great chance for many young professionals to network and share creative ideas. Teresa Ferrete, a CARP USA staff member said: “Many young people gathered to discuss, collaborate and share resources of how to take the legacy that was started by True Father and continue to make a universal impact.”

Benjy Uyama, BFM Project Coordinator, said: “YULG was a fantastic opportunity for the National Blessing & Family Ministry to meet with other young leaders from around the country who share a similar passion for family and marriage. The gathering allowed for curious people to come together to talk, listen, and share ideas to further our local ministries.”

The breakout session for DPLife garnered many fresh ideas on how to engage the public to learn Divine Principle, the core teachings of the Unification Church. For Demian Dunkley, Director of Evangelism at Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) USA National Headquarters and the creative mind behind Dplife.info said YULG was an “opportunity to gather with over 50 Young Unificationists to discuss areas of church ministry and plan ways of getting involved together. We hope to offer more opportunities for this type of networking soon.”

In December 2014, YULG will support a larger gathering of young professional Unificationists at a long weekend retreat in Las Vegas meant to nurture leadership growth and foster networking under the guidance of True Mother.



Today's Challenge

It was truly an inspiring day, filled with remembrance and reflection, but most importantly, with the hopeful and determined spirit of continuing to do the work that True Father lived and died for. As Dr. Salonen said during his address, “On this day as we look out, no matter what the challenge, our main responsibility is to be examples of True Father’s absolute faith until peace is established in the world from one end to the other.”

We thank everyone who came and participated in New York, and the many more that joined us via live broadcast. If you missed it, or want to share it with others, the full service is still available to view. If you were moved by the celebration, and you have not done so already, donations are still being accepted on behalf of the National Memorial Service, and we continue to welcome your reflections on the day.

Reflections

People from around the nation shared their reflections on the National Memorial Service for the second anniversary of True Father’s Seonghwa. Whether you were at the Manhattan Center or viewed the event live from your home, please send in your experience and what this service meant to you.

“I watched from my home. Thank you for the broadcast; it was very clear technically. "O Light of Grace" brought tears to my eyes as did the Water Ceremony with Rev. Riley. As I prayed, I saw the vessel filling up with light and bubbling over the top.” —Shirley Chimes, 67, Denver, Colorado.

“I was able to access the live broadcast on the internet. It was great, especially the speeches by Neil Salonen, Dan Burton, and of course, True Mother’s representative, Professor Yeon Ah Moon. Thank you.” —Edward Kaady, 65, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

“We watched from our house. The service was simple, elegant, uplifting and inspirational! Such a fusion of words, images, music, dance, past, present and future! A special shout out to everyone involved in the conception, planning, production and execution of this wonderful event! And a special shout out to Neil Salonen and his call to action!” —Joy Garratt, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

“It was great to be able to participate with my wife and meet many friends who gathered together on Saturday for the memorial celebration. The event moved us both. We felt the diversity of our community was well represented and we enjoyed the entertainment. We were moved to tears to hear True Father’s voice echoing through the ballroom.” —Demian Dunkley, Nutley, New Jersey.

“True Father's National Memorial Service was one of the best events I have ever attended. Great job to everyone who helped make it happen. The flow was smooth, it was interactive, meaningful and the entertainment was engaging for all audiences.” —Naokimi Ushiroda, Fort Lee, New Jersey.

“What a full day! I was quite impressed by the spirit, flow and support I felt through the memorial service. The program was beautiful, showed the direct fruits of True Father and how the legacy is continuing. It was deep, heart-felt, sincere and very professional in my opinion. It was a pleasure to support behind the scenes and I'm so glad America was able to pay honor and respects from the big Apple. Imagine if we could honor True Parents like this everyday, each day in a big way? For one reason or another, the people who packed the Hammerstein Ballroom have been touched by True Father and True Mother.”—Teresa Ferrete, College Park, Maryland.

