

Rev. Nagi Yousef and Rev. Emma Loftin-Woods organize Yonkers Prayer Breakfast

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Religious leaders gathered with local Unificationists in the city of Yonkers, just north of New York City, for a prayer breakfast on Saturday, February 21, 2015. Rev. Nagi Yousef of the 1st Arabic Baptist Church and Rev. Emma Loftin-Woods organized the event, held at the Castle Royale banquet hall. Both Rev. Yousef and Rev. Woods were among the 172 ministers who in 2011 made a special pilgrimage to Korea to study the Original Substance of the Divine Principle. They were eager to have an American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC) program in Yonkers.

Over 130 people attended, including a number of notable community leaders, such as Dr. Suzan Johnson Cook, the former ambassador-at-large for International Religious Freedom; Yonkers Mayor Mike Spano; Yonkers Police Commissioner Charles Gardner; New York State Assembly member Shelley Mayer; Yonkers City Councilman Michael Sabatino; Police Captain John Mueller of the Yonkers 4th Precinct; and Police Captain Peter Butler of the Yonkers 3rd Precinct.



Mayor Spano, whose mother and father are former "Parents of the Year," welcomed the participants to Yonkers and introduced the keynote speaker, Rev. Dr. Johnny Ray Youngblood, executive pastor at Mount Pisgah Baptist Church in Brooklyn, New York. Dr. Youngblood has a creative approach to ministry. Under his leadership, St. Paul Community Baptist Church in Brooklyn grew from 18 members to 5,000. He is a thought-provoking theologian who has embraced True Father's teachings. His visionary work, The Nehemiah Housing Project, provides affordable housing for thousands of families.

Dr. Youngblood spoke on the topic "Redeeming Communities" and used as his text Mark 5:10-20.

The story tells of a man who was delivered from unclean spirits by Jesus. When the man asked to go with Jesus, he was told to go home and let people see how much Jesus had changed him. With this story, Dr. Youngblood challenged all the participants to not stereotype others, and to realize that people do change.



A highlight of the program was entertainment by the Lincoln High School Honors Choir. For students to participate in the choir, they must maintain an "honor roll" grade point average. They sang three songs during the program, including "Let Your Glory Fill This Place," "My Soul Been Anchored in the Lord," and a Yoruba song from Nigeria, "Dide Ta Deo." It was a beautiful and moving performance that added to the whole spirit of the day.

The group was pleased to welcome several ministers from the Tri-State Area, including Bridgeport, Connecticut. Local pastors and city officials were impressed with the event and said they look forward to similar gatherings in the future.