

## A Dream Come True - True Mother speaks in Birmingham, England

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There are times in our life of faith when we can feel that there is something "in the air", but we don't know what it is, or what is about to happen. Perhaps you know the feeling.

On April 19, 2000, while driving a friend home after a wonderful interfaith evening in our home in Birmingham attended by about ten of our Muslim, Hindu, Christian and Buddhist friends, my car was hit from the side by a driver who went through a red traffic light. Three days later, again while driving a Muslim friend home late at night, this time in my father's car which I had had to borrow, I turned onto a freeway and found a car speeding straight at me, on the wrong side of the carriageway, at about 50 miles per hour! I swerved dramatically, and managed to avoid a head-on collision literally by a few inches.

A few days later, my wife Patricia and I received the incredible and totally unexpected news that our city of Birmingham had been chosen, together with London and Edinburgh, as one of three venues in Britain where True Mother would speak. It is very difficult at the moment for True Parents to enter Germany and France, so three locations were chosen in Britain for the initial phase of the European leg of True Mother's world speaking tour. As far as we knew, it would be the first time for either of our True Parents to visit Birmingham, often regarded as the home of the Industrial Revolution, and currently a uniquely cosmopolitan, multi-faith and multi-cultural city. We began to view my recent 'near-death' experiences in a new light.

We have been church leaders in the Midlands region of Britain since November 1996. Both in the five years preceding that appointment and in the three-and-a-half years since we have focused much of our energy on developing interfaith friendships and activities. My wife Patricia has been able to develop a women's 'Prayer for Peace' in our home, every 4-6 weeks for the last six years, and numbers of women participating this year have risen into the sixties and seventies each time. We have also carried out two RYS projects in Birmingham, and all of this has led to the building of an Interfaith Children's Home in Hyderabad, South India, for orphaned children of the Dalit.

True Mother's visit would provide an opportunity to try and bring all of our foundation as an offering to support her sacrificial efforts for peace, but we were extremely concerned about the fact that there would be no opportunity for the guests to join in the celebration this time, and connect to both True Mother and True Father - something that had been such a positive part of everyone's experience when True Mother came to London last year. This was particularly true for members of the Asian community who tend to be very "heartistic," and for whom music is an integral part of their life and worship. Also, we knew that the speech would be largely based on the providential Christian foundation this time, and we were concerned

that our Muslim, Hindu and Sikh friends would not be able to connect in heart with True Parents.

[Editor's note: Moreover, Father was in a part of South America where the usual video telephone hook-up would not have been possible.]



After speaking with our national leader and through prayer, the strong feeling came to try and call Rev. Peter Kim who was travelling with Mother in South America, and with whom we had a personal friendship from our time in America and in Jardim. We wanted to ask if it might be possible to combine True Mother's speech with the celebration for the benefit of all the guests who had promised to come.

At a planning meeting in our London headquarters, I tried for almost eight hours to contact True Mother's party as they travelled from Argentina to Campo Grande in Brazil. Finally, just before leaving London to travel back to Birmingham, I managed to get through to Rev. Kim and he agreed to ask True Mother about our request. Apparently, True Mother called True Father, who was fishing in South America and, after some deliberation, Father agreed and flew back to New York in order to be able to connect up by video computer-link with True Mother for the celebration following the speech. I'm sure there are much bigger reasons for this happening than one telephone call, but it was wonderful to feel True Parents' heart of embrace stretching across so many miles as they build the foundation for future peace.

True Mother duly arrived in Britain, having flown from Brazil, on May 20, and spoke at successful meetings in London (May 20) and Edinburgh (May 21). In Birmingham, we have a core group of nine blessed families who were faced with the challenge of filling a hall with three hundred people. Fortunately, we had the help and support of brothers and sisters from all over Britain, and it was the collective effort of our whole Family Federation here which made for success. Centering on our national leaders, Tim and Dolores Read, and our national messiah couples, brothers and sisters from all regions mobilized and made exceptional effort to support True Mother. The evening of the 22nd came, and people began to arrive and fill up the conference hall. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist, black, white brown, yellow - people of all faiths, races and colors. I heard that European church president Rev. Sa was so surprised as car after car arrived, full of people dressed in turbans and saris! By 7:00 pm, more than four hundred people had completely filled the venue. I felt very proud of my wife, who had managed to bring a hundred and thirty guests, most of them through her interfaith women's group.

True Mother presented her speech with such warmth and dignity, in spite of a very sore throat, and many people commented about the inner and outer beauty that radiated from her. Awards were presented to eight people representing the Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh faiths. And then came the entertainment, and the joy of having both Father and Mother there to exchange loving words, smiles, music and cake, giving the dimension of heart to enhance the truth that Mother had spoken just a short time earlier. When the event had officially finished, there was a lovely atmosphere to conclude True Mother's visit to Britain, and some people stayed on to chat with each other until almost 11.00 pm.



Finally, on a personal note, I shared with True Mother at Hoon Dok Hae the next morning how this was a dream come true for me. When I joined our movement in the late 1970s, there was tremendous difficulty, pain and tears for my parents who are very sincere Christians. God gave me a vivid dream to help me through that trauma, a dream in which I found myself back in my childhood home with my family, watching television. True Father appeared on the television, looking very young and handsome, with a flashing smile and white crown and singing a Christian hymn "We Plough the Fields and Scatter," a hymn from harvest time. My parents were distraught, crying so many tears and begging me to tell them who this person was. But I couldn't open my mouth - all I could do was to serve them tea and coffee, with my lips sealed. This time, in May 2000, I was able to bring my mother to sit in front of True Mother and hear her speak words of truth, and see True Parents together in such an intimate way - something I couldn't have imagined just a few years ago.

We know from Mother's words that she left Britain with hope, and our goal must be to work and pray for the day when True Parents can both visit these shores, to heal the wounds inflicted on them through the failure of Christianity, of which Britain was such an integral part.