

GPA's First Overseas Missionary Program

Roland Platt
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Participants of the Generation Peace Academy (GPA) just returned home safely after three weeks abroad. Each year GPA embarks on overseas service trips, during which participants are divided among three or four destination countries where they initiate or continue GPA-sponsored projects such as beautifying schools and parks, teaching character education, and building a relationship with the local community.

This year, GPA introduced the new Cheon Il Guk missionary program, in which a team of participants organize events specifically designed to teach True Parents' message, support Tribal Messiahship, and share the Marriage Blessing with people in their mission country. Cheon Il Guk missionaries have a unique schedule during their time on GPA. Before their trip to the Philippines, they received leadership training at the Global Top Gun workshop in Korea.

The following blog entries were written by GPA participants and describe their overseas experience.

Cheon Il Guk Missionaries in the Philippines



In the last couple weeks we:

- Mobilized and supported with two Interfaith Marriage Blessing Ceremonies with 45 new Blessed couples,
- Organized a Peace Loving Global Citizen Forum for the incoming and outgoing Bohol Island State University (BISU) student governors, who represent the top of their classes and universities (we used this event as a means to network and establish relationships with the top young leaders of Bohol and spread True Parents' message.)
- Mobilized and organized a Pure Love Rally at the BISU main campus. 300 students participated, and we spread a culture of abstinence before marriage and taught about the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse.
- Met with local government officials and a vice mayor, gathering support and connections to spread Tribal Messiahship endeavors

Our goal by the end of the 40 days here in Bohol was to mobilize and raise 40 righteous young leaders to attend a seven-day Divine Principle and Leadership Training Workshop on April 3 – 10 with W-CARP Philippines.

The venue will be held at a beach hotel and resort and we are currently starting an online fundraiser to support the CARP Philippines community for expenses. We need \$10,000 to meet our goal.



Amy's Testimony:

These past weeks were definitely full of new experiences. But the greatest thing I experienced was God's heart of longing and joy through the Interfaith Wedding Blessings we supported.

This was during the second Blessing that we helped prepare in the Province of Maribojoc. Before the event I honestly felt empty. Looking back I realized that I was over complicating my relationship with God and True Parents and thought that it was something I should keep for myself.

My heart completely switched once we started thinking of the couples, how we wanted them to feel and what we wanted them to experience. Even though we barely knew these couples, I felt so excited and happy for this holy day. Then I realized, what I was feeling was not just me but what God and True Parents were feeling. God must be incredibly happy to finally embrace His children and dwell in their families.

The moment I was able to genuinely care for others was the moment I connected to God and also True Parents' heart of joy. This experience not only helped me understand my purpose as a missionary but also what I have to hold on to as a missionary, which is the importance of continuously growing my relationships centered on God and True Parents.

Sunkook's Testimony:

On March 2nd, we had a Youth Leadership Peace Forum with the newly elected Student Government of the Bohol Island State University campuses and the outgoing governors.

It was an all-day initiative where our goal and theme was "Multiplying Righteous Young Leaders for a Sustainable World of Peace." Approximately 50 student governors attended. Also, the University President Dr. Elpedio Magante, the Dean Dr. Arceli Hernando, and the President of the WFWP Mrs. Marely Barlaan, allotted time from their busy schedules to attend the Forum. Even a senator running for re-election came for a surprise visit which showed me how important these young students are, even on a national political field.

For me, it was an amazing experience and it opened the door to future opportunities because as the CIG Missionaries we organized almost everything! Although we were supported by the school, we organized the schedule, activities and took ownership over the responsibilities.

My highlight was the opportunity to lecture on UPF's Five Principles of Peace. I originally had 30 minutes to speak but after the first minute of introduction, I was engulfed with fiery spirit and sincerity, and spoke for 50 minutes instead! Rather than nervously hovering over my notes, I stared passionately

into the eyes of the future leaders. I wanted to convey to them the importance of uniting with Heavenly Parent's desires since leaders are only leaders when they have a direction to lead others toward; and that vision should be God's vision.

I had such a deep desire to give more because I was learning about what I truly believed in and the foundations that I was raised on. Looking back, I'm grateful because God gave me this passion to speak in front of others freely, knowing that He can speak through me what needs to be conveyed.

Junta's Testimony:

"True love waits." "Be sure, be pure." "I'm proud to be a virgin." These were just a few of the messages that were conveyed by students during the Pure Love Rally held on March 3, 2016 at the Bohol Island State University (BISU).

Over 300 students gathered around the main Activity Center. Many of us were nervous as to how the event would turn out, and if the students will be impacted from what we have to offer. Especially in today's society, speaking up for purity is almost unheard of, and in fact, sometimes taboo. And that is exactly why I felt we needed to proclaim this message. I had confidence that this education can save many lives.

Because of how crucial it was to share the importance of true love, I felt that the entire rally was also a spiritual battle. Sharing this kind of message is not easy, but I believe we remained strong. At the same time, we received so much support, especially from Dr. Hernando, the Director of Student Affairs at BISU. She proudly stood up for purity and was the bridge for us and the students.

I felt so grateful to be able to pass down these values which we have gained from our True Parents.



Sachika's Testimony:

Being a part of GPA for two years, what I find the most difficult is becoming a channel for God and True Parents. It was always difficult for me to guide others to understand the importance of living a principled life, and to create a core relationship with God and True Parents. And because of that, witnessing has always been the most difficult course for me.

Before coming to Bohol, Philippines, I witnessed in both California and in Las Vegas. Both times, I had struggled to understand the importance of outreach, for every day it felt as if 10 days had gone by. And the reason to why it was so challenging was because I never had the right intention. I never really connected my witnessing experience back to understanding Heavenly Parents and True Parents. So it was very difficult to understand the importance of True Mother's Vision 2020.

Right after Las Vegas, CIG Missionaries went straight to the Global Top Gun Workshop. Overall the workshop helped me get a clear idea of what Vision 2020 looks like. Coming to Bohol, a lot of things

have happened. I have already experienced bringing in about 16 guests! This is actually huge for me, and honestly quite overwhelming. Although it is very stressful taking care of many guests, God has to take care of more.

In addition to these events, Cheon Il Guk missionaries also organized a one-day Divine Principle seminar at the local CARP center, and hosted a CARP family night, service day, and sports festival.

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Nepal



In Nepal, we:

- Split into teams to teach about abstinence and true love to eighth and ninth graders,
- Received a talk from Dr. Robert Kittel, a first generation Unificationist, about the vitality of sacrifice and public thinking to inspire us on what we can teach here,
- Visited the world's tallest statue of Lord Shiva, a Hindu God
- Met with Hon. Ek Nath Dhakhal, President of the Nepal Family Party



We had the opportunity to teach true love and abstinence to a class of ninth graders. We had a difficult time teaching subjects like family love and purity because many of the students looked already aware of these ideas. Grace asked the class, “Are your parents married?” The whole class giggled. It appeared to be a ridiculously obvious question; everyone in the class replied with “Yes” and “Of course.” This amazed us because it showed that Nepal has such a stable family structure; a lot of Americans would actually say “No” to the same question. It was challenging to add spiritual vitality to an already pure-hearted class. We shifted our focus more on why purity is important rather than just explaining what purity means. A lot of the students did not date, but they didn’t know why their parents don’t let them.



When we visited Lord Shiva’s statue, which stands 143 feet tall, we saw at the top was a lone Nepali man (who appeared to be a construction worker) touching up Lord Shiva’s face. The craziest thing was that the man did not have a safety harness; he was standing on a beam of bamboo that is over one hundred feet from the ground. This showed that this person is willing to put his life at risk to help with showing pride in the Hindu faith. He was willing to forget himself and his possible fears for the sake of the greater good. Essentially, he was willing to make a sacrifice. This inspired us because we want to be able to forget our private desires for the sake of a public purpose.

When we got back to the hotel, we had a Divine Principle lecture by Dr. Kittle, who helped us prepare to give our own lectures. He explained a lot about the principles of peace and how they must be universal. What really amazed us was that all these morals that we talk about are taught in all religions. After dinner, we had family night with a small competition between brothers and sisters. We played games like charades and Pictionary. It gave us a chance to really enjoy each other’s company and relax.



The next day, we stopped by a small temple in Kathmandu called Jaiya Bagishori. After we gave a small donation, each of us received *tikas* when we greeted the priest. We then walked to the holy ground our movement in Nepal established, which is very nearby. We took some time to pray, and then we went to the Hon. Ek Nath Dhakal's house. His wife prepared lunch for us. After eating, we had some time to share our experiences so far and hear testimonies.



After a long drive through traffic, we taught at another school, Janasewa Higher Secondary school. As we walked over, we saw the recent earthquake's destruction in the area, and learned that the government helps very little. This inspired us continue helping these people even after we go back home.



“Throughout the time we taught, I just felt so connected to the class, and I wanted so much to get our message across to them. I really felt that they were my younger sisters; I wanted to raise them up. I also felt that they received us so well. I really hope that they were able to recognize their importance and how they can grow through our class.”

-Yasunari, first year GPA participant

After our class, the principal talked to us and expressed her heart appreciation for our teaching.

Peru

Our time in Peru took us to Cuzco, Lima, Puno and more. In our last days in Peru, Rena Kanazawa gave the group a morning service on the significance of learning the Divine Principle. We then took turns sharing lectures with each other. Sarah Jackson expressed, "I felt excited to lecture and grateful for the opportunity to study with the intention of finding God's heart through the content." This lecturing time was a great beginning to our transition to ending our overseas trip and welcoming in preparation for the springtime lecture competition that has become a tradition of GPA.

After lunch, we went out for what we first thought was a casual walk around the city, but turned out to be a rigorous hike up a very steep mountain. We had a personal tour guide explaining the Incan history on the mountain. The one thing that was really exciting was seeing the Incan tombs. It was high on a mountain that took an hour to climb. Although it was a very tough hike, the view from the top was rewarding; everyone was glad they did it and felt accomplished in the end.

A feeling of nostalgia occurred when we were greeted by a Lima Unificationist, Wilfredo, upon our arrival at the bus station there. We hopped on the van toward the church, eager to greet our Lima community friends. When we arrived, the chapel was packed with people and local leader, Mrs. Jones, was finishing her sermon about unity. GPA was invited up and our commander, Francis, gave a thank you message to the community for our time here. We closed off with our offering song, "Hold my Hand" by Akon. At lunch, Mrs. Jones gave a small background about herself and how her husband and her came to this nation. She's been working with Peru since 1996—that's 20 years! She expressed, "True Father told us we need to love this nation more than we love our own land of England. He told us, 'Love the people of Peru, more than you love your own children.'" This was moving to us all because we saw the incredible amount of faith they had in coming to Peru.

After lunch we went to a park by the beach to play soccer with the community. Everyone from church came to either watch or play. The soccer game was United States VS. Peru. It was a very competitive and heated game and there were cheer teams for each side. In the end, Peru was the better team, taking the win at 7-3. At the end of the day we embraced and thanked each other for a great game.

Back at the church center, we were surprised with ice cream and cake, the community's way of wishing us a safe trip home. We closed the night with dancing to both American electric music and Peruvian salsa music. Francis expressed that art is one of the best ways to express God through oneself. We danced with one another until it was time for us to leave for the airport. Upon saying our goodbyes, many of the Peruvians were shedding tears. Some Peruvians even gave gifts to GPA members as a token to remember them by.

It's been an amazing experience here in Peru, especially with the church communities in Lima and Puno. It excites our hearts to know that there are others around the world who are also fighting for a life of faith. We sincerely thank God, True parents, and Peru, for this amazing experience.

Philippines

Our highlights in the Philippines have been:

- Creating a garden at Jandig Elementary School
- Bonding with the local children
- Supporting the Cheon Il Guk missionaries here with their outreach and other events

On Monday, February 29, we broke soil on our new service project at Jandig Elementary, our second home that we've had the privilege to stay at since the start of this overseas journey.

Ate Meryle and Kuya James have worked together with our coordinator, Kenzo, to create a beautiful idea of a garden and playground for the children of Jandig Elementary School. The garden was used for a Marriage Blessing Ceremony later that week as well as for a peaceful and cute reading area for the children.



In the middle left side of the elementary school, there was a hectic, messy looking pile of greenery and pieces of wood thrown about. In one days' worth of joint effort with the GPA team and 100 children from the elementary school taking a break from their education to support us, we were able to clear the entire mess and lay out markers. GPA split into four teams, each responsible for a different section of the garden to clear out in preparation for the greenery and the cement to lay down on the paths. Each team was also assigned one of the four teams of children who were eager to help us out. We were frantically pulling weeds out of the ground and throwing away colorful little junk food wrappers that were embedded into the soil after years and years of neglect.



This service project definitely had a different feel to it than the Interfaith Peace Garden we were working on previously, and the main reason was because of the vast amount of children who were adamant on helping us with whatever they could. They would run to collect rocks with us to mark the borders of the flower and vegetable gardens, and they would do so with a brightly lit smile. It's been only two days of working seven hours a day but the garden already looks unrecognizable compared to the ungodly mess it was before we revived it.



The second day, we were ready to paint the gazebo metal frame in the center of our garden, and plan out where to put which plants. Our gazebo painting team colored the metal frame carefully with a burnt red color which stood out beautifully from the rest of the garden. The soda bottle team colored 281 soda bottles into seven different colors. They had the idea to paint each child's name onto a bottle. Some children even wrote the names of GPA members that they love and several painted "thank you GPA" on their bottles. We cannot wait until they get strung together and will hang from tree to tree!



We also saw the Cheon Il Guk missionaries here on both days. They were brainstorming for a youth leaders forum that we would all host. We also helped them with the Blessing Ceremony, and the Pure Love Rally at the Bohol Island State University campus.



GPA's overseas program is self-funded by participants, who fund-raise diligently throughout their year on GPA. Support the expansion of GPA's overseas work by donating to the program. Every bit helps!