

Michael Balcomb addresses 45 graduate from Generation Peace Academy (GPA)

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On June 10, 45 young Unificationists graduated from Generation Peace Academy (GPA), a gap-year leadership and service program, in Barrytown, NY. Tasnah Moyer of National Youth Adult Ministry emceed the ceremony, while President of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) USA, Dr. Michael Balcomb, delivered a message to the GPA graduates as they prepare for the next stage of their lives.



The night before the official graduation, the GPA graduates held a commitment ceremony in which each graduate pledged to continue fighting for their faith to maintain their relationships with God and True Parents. Family and friends of the GPA graduates who had arrived early were in attendance to witness the passion of the graduates, as each graduate gave a full bow to God and True Parents, placed their left hand on the Divine Principle, rested their right hand on their heart, and delivered a personalized pledge to their Heavenly Parent. In their earnest desire to make most of the love God had given them throughout their

past year at GPA, several of the graduates could not hold back their heartfelt tears. This emotional ceremony set the stage for the official graduation.

The following day at the graduation ceremony, Tasnah, who had the opportunity to get closer to the GPA participants, opened with words reminding the young, graduating Unificationists how far they have come and their potential to accomplish great things after GPA. Rosia Schmidt delivered the opening prayer, with the GPA choir subsequently performing “The Climb” by Miley Cyrus.

The graduates then received a warm congratulations from Dr. Ki Hoon Kim, Continental Chairman of North America for FFWPU through video.

Dr. Balcomb then spoke about how God calls young people, referring to how the prophet Jeremiah received his calling from God in the Bible. Upon being called by God, Jeremiah believed he was too young. Yet God showed unwavering faith in Jeremiah, giving him His word that Jeremiah will be able to do anything God asks of him. Through this story, Dr. Balcomb reminded the graduates that God and True Parents need them. Even when they feel incapable, with God’s word, they are capable of any task God gives them.

Following Dr. Balcomb’s inspirational message, a special award was given to the Cheon Il Guk Missionaries, with each missionary receiving a certificate that honored their investment and dedication, in addition to a copy of the Cheon Sung Gyung . .



Four graduates with varying years of experience at GPA gave testimonies:

First Year: M. Taguchi talked about an experience in the woods that allowed her to understand God’s love for her.

Second Year: Y. Tateno explained how working on her relationship with her central figures helped her to work on understanding her parents. She saw the numerous ways in which God had guided her in that area this past year.

Third Year: H. Takahashi understood God’s love for the participants and himself by realizing how much everyone had grown this year and recognizing that he had actually succeeded in bringing God joy.

Cheon Il Guk Missionary: R. Cunningham (third year) gave a testimony on being so comforted by understanding that True Parents understood his heart. They have been through so much that they can completely understand his pain, joy, sadness -- everything in between -- that he may experience.

There were plenty of smiles and tears when all of the graduates received their certificates one by one, as they walked across the stage, shook Dr. Balcomb’s hand, and hugged the GPA staff for one last time. The ceremony closed with a performance of the song, “I’ll Never Leave You” by the GPA Choir, prayer, and three cheers of eog-mansei (billion years of victory).

When the ceremony ended, the graduates embraced as they shared their farewells and reflected on their experiences together.