

Alaskan Unificationists attend Northern Virginia - Maryland Winter Workshop

Jongsook Moon
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As a former Pastor for the Kodiak Family Church in Alaska, Jongsook Moon felt a calling to bring youth from Kodiak to America's East Coast. On December 22, 2015, eight young Unificationists from Alaska arrived for the annual Northern Virginia/Maryland Winter Workshop. The trip was a chance for the Kodiak youth to connect with other young people on the East Coast, and to be able to experience the many historically and spiritually significant places in the surrounding area including East Garden, Manhattan Center, Washington Monument, and Belvedere Training Center.

Amy Whitmore of Kodiak Alaska, who joined the trip through Generation Peace Academy (GPA), shared her experience of touring the New Yorker Hotel. She said, "What moved me the most was seeing True Father's vision and hopes, with this property. No matter how much persecution he went through, True Father had a vision for the New Yorker Hotel to play a bigger part in this movement and in this country later on."



Rev. Randy Francis, Rev. Ernest Patton (NOVA Pastor and FFWPU District 1 Leader), Rev. Young Chul Chang (KEA Pastor in Northern Virginia) Owin Pierson (NOVA youth pastor), and James Jenkins (youth leader and NOVA Church Council member) helped organize the New York portion of the trip, from Dec. 22-24. It was a wonderful chance for the students to walk in True Parents' footsteps. "As the former

pastor of Kodiak Family Church in Alaska, I realized that the majority of Kodiak youth were born and raised in Kodiak, Alaska, therefore lacking the experiences of the other communities in the country,” said Jongsook. “This trip is such an important method to integrate and educate young people about the bigger vision of True Parents.”



Putting the pilgrimage and workshop together was a victory in itself, as it took cooperation between the elders and youth of both communities. The students had to raise a combined sum of \$7,000 to make the trip, and began fundraising to make their goal. “There would be times where I would stay at the entrance of Safeway for two hours selling crafts and baked goods made by some of the youth and mothers. Fundraising has played a bigger part in this trip,” said Tamae Seto, a student from Kodiak who made the trip. In a wonderful turn of events, True Mother received a report of the fundraising efforts and matched the raised amount, supporting the youth with their transportation costs as well as the costs during the New York portion of the trip. True Mother’s love for the youth gave them a unique opportunity to connect to True Parents. “I now understand why True Mother wanted to support this trip,” said Amy. “It’s because she wants us second and third generation Unificationists to take the baton for God’s providence to move forward, and she wants us to do this by having a strong bond and connection with our older generation. When I heard True Mother was supporting this trip, I realized this was such a big and unique opportunity I can’t miss!”

It truly was a unique chance for these communities to interact, and to share the experience of a pilgrimage to places that many of the young people had never had an opportunity to experience. Tamae reflected, “Despite being a small community in Kodiak I found myself finding strength in the number of young Unificationists that are in Virginia. Knowing that there is a strong youth group here in Virginia has given me the strength to help my own youth group thrive. Also getting to visit East Garden, the Learning Center at 43 Street in Manhattan, the New Yorker Hotel, and Washington Times has left me proud to be a Unificationist. Knowing how vast our movement extends gives me pride and purpose to continue True Parents’ legacy.”

This was exactly what Jungsook had envisioned for the trip. She shared, “Through this trip the young people will be able to begin comprehending the depth of True Parents’ legacy, traditions, and their heart in their own unique perspective.” She hopes that this trip will be the beginning of more collaboration. She said, “My next goal is for Virginia and Maryland youth to go to Kodiak, Alaska and introduce National Ocean Challenge Program and True Parent’s Ocean Providence to them.” This exchange, she hopes, will be a bridge for the east and west coast youth, and a chance to see and explore all of the many ways True Parents have investing in this nation.