

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Trump Adviser Paula White Praises Mother Han

Knut Holdhus  
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Reverend Paula White, senior advisor to the White House Faith Office, delivering a video message 31st August 31, 2025



Remarks on detained and persecuted Mother Han by televangelist Paula White, adviser to President Donald Trump, draw attention in South Korean religious media

An [article](#) by reporter Shin Bi-rom (신비롬) in the South Korean religious news outlet Peace Tree (평화나무) 16th March has drawn attention to remarks made by American televangelist Paula White, a prominent evangelical leader who currently heads the

White House Faith Office. According to the [report](#), White publicly praised [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자) - also called [Mother Han](#) - the leader of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#), during a video address sent to a major [religious conference](#) organized by the [movement](#) in 2025.

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[Hak Ja Han](#), aka [Mother Han](#)

The remarks have attracted attention in South Korea because [Unificationism](#) (통일교) - often called the "[Moon](#) movement" after its [founder](#) - has long been regarded by many Korean Protestant churches as a controversial new religious movement. Statements of support for its leadership from internationally known Christian figures can therefore provoke debate within Korea's highly active Christian media environment.

According to the [Peace Tree report](#), White recorded a congratulatory message in August 2025 for the "[2025 World Religious Leaders Conference](#)", an event hosted by [Unificationism](#) that brings together religious leaders from different countries and traditions. In the message, White expressed appreciation for the leadership of [Hak Ja Han](#) and referred to her with the phrase "Holy Mother Han", a title used by followers of the [movement](#). White thanked her for demonstrating courage and strong faith and said she believed [Mother Han](#)'s prayers would play a role in the future peaceful unification of the Korean Peninsula.

In the same message, White also praised [Mother Han](#) for convening religious leaders in Korea and encouraging them to worship [God](#) together, affirm religious freedom, and cooperate in the pursuit of peace. The comments, which circulated through [conference media coverage](#), were later highlighted by Peace Tree as part of its reporting on connections between political figures and controversial religious groups.

White is one of the most visible evangelical pastors in American politics. She served as a religious adviser during the first administration of Donald Trump and later became head of the White House Faith Office after Trump returned to power. Known for preaching prosperity theology - a strand of evangelical teaching that links faith with material blessing - White has been a prominent figure in American religious broadcasting and conservative Christian political networks for decades.



*Kim Min-seok, Prime Minister of South Korea since July 4, 2025*

The South Korean [report](#) also connects White's earlier remarks to a more recent political development. She has reportedly played a role in facilitating a meeting between Kim Min-seok (김민석), the Prime Minister of South Korea, and President Trump. According to Kim's explanation, the meeting was not originally scheduled but occurred after he first met with White in her capacity as head of the White House Faith Office.

Kim stated that during his conversation with White, questions arose concerning several Korean religious figures, including Son Hyun-bo (손현보), a megachurch pastor from Busan, and [Hak Ja Han](#). Prime Minister Kim emphasized that any legal issues being discussed were not related to religious beliefs or activities themselves. Instead, he said, the matters involved alleged violations of election law, political financing rules, or bribery statutes - issues that would apply equally to anyone, regardless of whether they were religious leaders.

The [article published by Peace Tree](#) reflects a broader pattern within South Korea's religious media landscape, where journalists closely track interactions between political leaders and religious organizations. Because Christianity - particularly Protestant Christianity - plays a significant social and political role in South Korea, statements by influential international Christian leaders can quickly become part of domestic debates about religious authority, political influence, and the legitimacy of new religious movements.

White's comments about [Mother Han](#) therefore attracted attention not only because of the praise itself but also because of the wider historical tensions between mainstream Korean Protestant churches and [Unificationism](#). By highlighting the remarks, the [Peace Tree report](#) situates them within ongoing discussions in South Korea about the relationship between religion, politics, and international evangelical networks.

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published on 13<sup>th</sup> march a [report](#) on the hearing the same day in *Seoul Central District Court* in a court case that has drawn considerable attention because it touches on the intersection of religion, politics, and allegations of financial influence.

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The [newspaper writes](#) that at the center of the case are figures connected to [Unificationism](#) ([통일교](#)), a religious movement founded in Korea that has long been influential both domestically and internationally. Prosecutors are examining whether individuals linked to the [movement](#) attempted to build relationships with politicians through gifts or money, potentially violating South Korea's strict political funding laws.



**Yoon Yeong-ho**, 6th Dec. 2020. Screenshot from *Peacelink TV*

One of the people involved in the case is [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) ([윤영호](#)), a former senior official within [Unificationism](#). Yoon previously served as head of the [religious organization's](#) world headquarters and has been questioned in court about his contacts with politicians. During recent testimony, he described an incident in late 2021 involving a meeting with Kim Sung-tae ([김성태](#)), a former lawmaker from South Korea's conservative *People Power Party*.

According to [Yoon's](#) testimony, he went to the meeting prepared with both a gift set and a large sum of cash – 20 million Korean won, equivalent to roughly fifteen thousand US dollars. However, [Yoon](#) told the court that the money and gifts were never actually given to the politician.

According to the [Chosun Ilbo](#), the testimony emerged during a hearing at the *Seoul Central District Court* as part of a broader trial concerning possible violations of the *Political Funds Act*. Several individuals connected to [Unificationism](#) are facing scrutiny in the proceedings, including the organization's leader [Hak Ja Han](#) ([한학자](#)) – also called [Mother Han](#) – and Jeong Won-ju ([정원주](#)), who previously worked as the head of [Mother Han's](#) secretariat. Prosecutors are examining whether money or valuables were used to cultivate political connections or influence public officials. The defense, meanwhile, has been questioning witnesses in an effort to clarify what actually happened and whether any illegal transfers of money took place.

During questioning by attorneys representing [Hak Ja Han](#) (83), [Yoon](#) was asked about a meeting he had with former lawmaker Kim Sung-tae ([김성태](#)) on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021. The meeting took place at a restaurant in Yeouido, a district of Seoul that houses South Korea's National Assembly and many political offices. [Yoon](#) explained that he did not personally arrange the meeting. Instead, he said it had been set up through an introduction from Yoon Jung-ro ([윤정로](#)), who previously served as vice chairman of the newspaper [Segye Ilbo](#), a publication historically associated with [Unificationism](#).



**Kim Sung-tae** ([김성태](#)), former chairman of the *People Power Party Central Committee*. Photo: [이데일리TV](#) / *Wikimedia Commons*. License: [CC Attr 3.0 Unp](#). Cropped

When asked whether he had informed [Mother Han](#) about the meeting beforehand, [Yoon Yeong-ho](#) ([윤영호](#)) responded that he might have mentioned it but could not say with certainty. He added that he generally spoke casually with the [religious leader](#) about the people he met during his activities, implying that such meetings were not necessarily treated as formal reports or official matters.

The [Chosun Ilbo report](#) mentions that a key point of the court's questioning concerned what [Yoon](#) brought with him to the meeting. Lawyers asked whether he had prepared a gift set and 20

First Name \*

Last Name

Email \*

Your Message \*



meeting. Lawyers asked whether he had prepared a gift set and 20 million won in cash when he went to see Kim Sung-tae. Yoon acknowledged that he believed this was the case. However, he suggested that the items may not have been intended specifically for Kim himself. According to Yoon, the idea to prepare the money and gifts may have come from Yoon Jung-ro (윤정로), who reportedly said such items might be necessary. Yoon Yeong-ho described the money as something connected to broader activities rather than a clearly designated payment for any particular individual.

The defense then pressed further, asking whether the cash and gifts were meant to be handed over to Kim or other political figures. Yoon said he did not know for certain. He told the court that the items remained in the trunk of his car and were never taken out during the meeting. In other words, although he had brought them with him, he said that they were never delivered to the former lawmaker.

Yoon also addressed the origin of the 20 million won. He testified that the money had been provided by Mother Han as what he described as “special activity funds”. He emphasized that the money did not belong to him personally, implying that it was intended for use in the course of his organizational duties rather than for private purposes.



**Kweon Seong-dong (권성동)**, here portrait January 2025. Photo: 국민의힘TV / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 3.0 Unp. Cropped

Another figure mentioned during the hearing was Yoon Jung-ro (윤정로), the former newspaper executive who had introduced Yoon Yeong-ho to various politicians. According to information discussed in court, Yoon Jung-ro played a role in arranging contacts between Yoon Yeong-ho and several members of the People Power Party. One of these was Kweon Seong-dong (권성동), a sitting lawmaker from the party. Reports indicate that on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021, Yoon Jung-ro sent messages to Yoon Yeong-ho saying he had already met with both Kweon and Kim. The following day, he reportedly sent another message indicating that he would arrange a meeting between Yoon and Kweon as

well.

The testimony about the meeting with Kim Sung-tae (김성태) is only one element of the wider investigation surrounding the alleged political ties of the religious movement that Mother Han now leads. The case has attracted significant attention in South Korea partly because it directly or indirectly affects millions of believers. It appears to be part of a wider crackdown by the current left-leaning Lee Jae-myung (이재명) administration on large churches and religious movements perceived as aligned with conservative politics.

The Yeouido Full Gospel Church, known as the world’s largest church, has been targeted. It has historically been associated with anti-communist activism and conservative social causes. So has the Sarang Jeil Church in Seoul. Its head pastor Jeon Kwang-hoon (전광훈), former president of the Christian Council of Korea, has organized several mass rallies in support of the former South Korean president Yoon Suk-yeol (윤석열), a conservative.

Another Christian leader investigated and sentenced recently for mixing politics into his message from the pulpit is Protestant pastor Kim Jin-hong (김진홍) of the “Dure Monastery Community” (두레수도원) which is part of a broader network of institutions he created, including churches, schools, and intentional communities.



**Reverend Jeon Kwang-hoon (전광훈)** from Sarang Jeil Church. Photo (March 2024): MBC PD수첩 / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 3.0 Unp



Pastor Son Hyun-bo (손현보) of the large Segyero Church in Busan was similarly sentenced for “unlawful electioneering” because of –





**Pastor Son Hyun-bo,**  
here August 2025. Photo:  
[Bitter Winter](#)

electronic meeting because of  
according to himself – urging  
congregants to support candidates  
sympathetic to traditional Christian  
values.

Among the most prominent targets  
of recent raids and investigations are  
two large new religious movements –  
the *Shincheonji Church of Jesus* [[See  
editor's note below](#)] and the *Family  
Federation for World Peace and  
Unification*, co-founded and currently

led by [Mother Han](#) (83).

Investigations into their finances or political activities is interpreted  
by supporters as ideological targeting. Critics of the government  
argue that prosecutors are selectively focusing on conservative  
religious networks rather than all political-religious connections.

According to the [Chosun Ilbo article](#), for now, the court  
proceedings are focused on establishing the facts – specifically  
whether money or gifts were actually transferred to politicians and  
whether such actions violated political funding laws. [Yoon Yeong-  
ho's](#) testimony suggests that although money and gifts may have  
been prepared for the meeting in question, he insists they were  
never handed over. Determining whether that account is accurate  
will likely be a central issue as the trial continues.

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**Text:** Knut Holdhus, editor

**Featured image** above: South Korean trial about religion, politics,  
and money. Illustration: Chat GPT 16th March 2026

**[Editor's note: Shincheonji**, officially known as *Shincheonji Church  
of Jesus, the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony*, is a new  
religious movement founded in South Korea in 1984 by Lee Man-  
hee, who claims to be the promised pastor mentioned in the  
Bible's Book of Revelation. Shincheonji teaches that the Book of  
Revelation is being fulfilled through its church and that Lee Man-  
hee has received divine revelation to interpret it.]

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