

Michael and Zena Sykes take ACLC to the Leda Settlement in Paraguay

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Poets have reminded us that the best-laid plans of mice and men sometimes go astray, so it is wise to consider when faced with a roadblock that a “Greater Designer” may have something better in mind.

For months a small group of us were talking and making plans to host an eco-service tour involving a seniors (55+) group visiting the Leda Settlement in Paraguay, but several couples canceled. By late May it became evident that the original plan we had was not going to happen because of a lack of able-bodied participants. However, as is often the case, when one door closes, another is opened. An inspired Mrs. Toshiko Sato, in an effort to support the project, helped open a new door by inviting Revs. Michael and Zena Sykes to come to Paraguay.



The dynamic ministerial couple expressed great interest and with that interest came a new opportunity. What was initially meant to be an eco-service tour and learning experience in addition became the historic Inaugural Ceremony of the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC) in Paraguay and a study of True Father’s vision and expectation of seeing North and South America united, centered on the unification of Catholicism and Protestantism. The Revs. Kerry and Carol Pobanz were thus joined by Rev. Michael and Minister Zena Sykes, guided by Mr. Michihito Sano, an early missionary of the Unification Church on this 10-day whirlwind tour.

Rev. Moon said in 1995:

“When North America and South America become one, they will be like one country... If North America and South America can unite; it will not be difficult for all the nations of Europe to unite. After Europe becomes one, it will be possible for Judaism and Christianity as well as for Christianity and Islam to become one. Therefore, the key is how North America and South America will become one... If these two continents were to become one, they would form a great power base. If this were to happen, Europe, North America and South America, and then Asia would naturally join the Christian cultural realm. That is why I must unite the cultural realm of Christianity in North America and South America and then connect it to Asia. I need to unite Asia with North America and South America. Without doing this there is no future.” –Chambumo Gyeong, p. 1194



Highlights of this tour were:

- Michael Sykes’ keynote address to over 30 interreligious leaders including Catholics, Protestants and Buddhists at the Inaugural Ceremony of ACLC in Paraguay.
- Michael and Minister Zena Sykes inspiring and entertaining a packed FFWPU Sunday service with music and testimony about their experiences with Rev. and Mrs. Moon in becoming two of the ‘172 Ministers,’ becoming one of the representative 12 disciples, and eventually becoming blessed in marriage in 2012.
- An informative stop to the original Mennonite settlement in Loma Plata—a successful spiritual settlement and 80-year-old model of cooperative finance, government and social care.
- A visit to the town of Fuerto Olimpo, where Rev. Moon gave the initial direction to begin the Leda Settlement, and visits to two additional indigenous villages.
- Three days at Leda experiencing the pioneering life and catching Rev. Moon’s vision (this included fishing, cow milking, tree chopping, taro farming, tree planting, horseback riding, and learning about fish farming and sausage making).
- A visit to Jardim, Brazil to learn about the beginning of the South American Providence, and to take part in the opening ceremonies of Peace Road Jardim 2016, where the ministers met the Mayor of the town and Rev. Sykes addressed the group.
- An enjoyable visit to Brazil’s Bird Park, then across the street to Iguazu Falls (a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of the new Seven Wonders of the World) and a visit to a Paraguayan World Heritage site—the Jesuit Ruins in the town of Trinidad.



Upon the success of this first North-South America project, a second project will be organized next year for Christian and Unification ministers. There are many activities which were pioneered by Rev. and Mrs. Moon which yet need to be developed and moved forward. This is one such project needing the heart and investment of those who feel called.

For anyone interested, or who have questions or comments please contact John Gehring, the North American Representative, at our website.

