

USA's Kodiak Alaska National Ocean Challenge Program

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"Building a culture of heart; developing character while learning maritime skills in the Alaskan wilderness" is the Kodiak National Ocean Challenge Program mission statement.

There was a consensus from participants and guests that the seventh annual National Ocean Challenge Program (NOCP) in Kodiak this July was a very special one-for many reasons.



Visits and inspirational messages from top leaders in our movement, including Michael Balcomb, president of FFWPU in the United States; Michael Jenkins, the financial director of FFWPU in the US; Michael Faris, president of Ocean Peace, Inc.; Joshua Yashiro, president of Ocean Providence LLC; and Kensaku Takahashi, president of Ocean Church U.S.A. embellished the experience of participants, who had come all over the world.

Bishop Ki Hoon Kim, regional president of North America, en route to Kodiak as well, but was waylaid at the airport by a request to meet with True Mother in Korea. Naokimi Ushiroda, president of CARP USA, spent five quality days speaking with the participant's key management and goal setting ideas.

Dr. Balcomb encouraged us to pursue an organic relationship with True Parents. "Father is with us today more than ever," he said.

Dr. Jenkins emphasized that with the successful advent of True Parents, God has a handle to elevate "the word" to a whole new level. His excitement was contagious.



Clint Woods, the director of NOCP, who has been working tirelessly to bring True Parent's Ocean Church vision to fruition, orchestrated the high profile assembly. Pursuant to this, Clint also created a nonprofit entity, Ocean Providence International Inc., to act as a clearinghouse to secure and facilitate our movement's ocean-related activities (see www.OPIINC.org).

This year's NOCP, filled to capacity, took on a particularly international flavor with participants from Korea, Japan, Canada, Austria, the US and Uruguay. In this unique oceanic "age of women," exemplified by True Mother's leadership, nearly 50 percent of those taking the "Ocean Challenge" were young women.

Many of those that became team leaders and CITS (Captains in Training) and did so with gusto and commitment were members of our second-generation. Overall, young second-generation members facilitated the program, with senior captains and staff members on hand to support when needed. A team of second-generation Unificationists, which Branch Gaarder led, prepared and maintained four twenty-eight-foot diesel boats, which True Father had designed. Minoru Kageyama, the longstanding NOCP senior commander, was on hand to monitor all tackle preparation, teach fishing and navigational techniques and oversee the fleet.



Core Ocean Church alumni from the original Gloucester, Massachusetts, Ocean Challenge project, which True Parents initiated in 1981, started the Kodiak program in 2009. It was their belief that the ocean-

especially the pristine Alaska environs-was an ideal setting for those in our second generation to find their identity and create the culture of heart True Parents had ushered in. The assets for the program-boats and the training center-were already in place as a consequence of directions from True Parents during numerous visits.

True Father, who visited Kodiak during the early editions of the program, did not interfere much except to say once that the program needed to have a strong foundation to succeed. We interpreted this to mean that this historical effort needed to connect to the strong root of indemnity True Parents and ancestors had laid surely this was not a normal project.

In an effort to realize that strong foundation, as well as to supply needed marine training, the twenty-one-day schedule includes daily study of True Father's teachings, Divine Principle education, education on the meaning of the ocean providence, and evening testimonies reflecting first and second-generation members' experiences with True Parents. Each participant receives top level Coast Guard training, Red Cross CPR certification, a salmon hatchery tour, river and ocean rod use training, as well as training in boat docking and handling, knot tying, fish filleting, and to top it off, ten days of the world's best ocean fishing.



Additionally, everyone is treated to a campout and river fishing excursion, unequaled hiking and beachcombing, the best food of any camp ever (unanimously agreed) thanks to Mrs. Oka and her assistant "chefs." The grand finale included an ocean fishing tournament with prizes, participation in the Peace Road Tour with Michal and Fumiko Balcomb, and a wonderful graduation ceremony replete with a near all night talent show the last evening that all could be together. Visitor Jennifer Yashiro, who attended with her husband said, "I would never have believed how wonderful this program was without actually being here; the youth are so alive with creativity and excitement."

After seven years, we are still going and have attracted attention and support from around the globe. Gradually, individual, family and company donors began to contribute. Soon thereafter, True Parent's Ocean Peace company stepped up to help start a scholarship program for young people due to the higher than average cost to travel to Kodiak. Thanks to all of our generous donors, participants graduate and leave Kodiak with real world connections and options for their future, unparalleled experiences with God in creation, and complimentary boxes of the finest king salmon, halibut, and other fish fillets to be found anywhere on the planet; a gift to share with family and friends back home. (Visit Donors Hall of Fame tab at www.oceanchallenge.org)

Since this is a youth project, centering on those in our second generation, that they take ownership is imperative. In a recent Kodiak gathering of second-generation members, program alumni-including Rebekah, David and John Reyes, Ethan Barker, Kahye and Myo Yeon Yu, Lukas Bercy and the program coordinator Naria McGee, we examined whether the program was hitting the mark.

Naria said that the overwhelming take-away mentioned in reflections by attendees was the joy of making new friends, building that "culture of heart." She said it was a "good feet-wetter program" for the maritime realm, but the real importance was the opportunity for second-generation members to be among each other in the last frontier. They all agreed. She added, "It's the perfect environment to feel God."