

GPA's Columbus Experience

Roland Platt
May 11, 2014



Generation Peace Academy had our Hot Topic debate on Wednesday as usual, this time on abortion for vs against and marriage inside vs outside the church.

The latter topic was interesting because it brought up so many relevant topics for us young unificationists, our immediate friends and family members. It also tied right in to what we had the next day: the Matching and Blessing workshop. For the workshop, Uncle Bob Becker showed us blessing/matching lecture videos by Rev. Phillip Shanker. Many questions that were thrown out in the debates were brought up, such as “why marry in the church when there’s better people and families outside the church” were answered: logically, scientifically, and anthropologically.

We also received a guidance, aka a “How to” session by Noah on “staying connected” to God, our families, and our ministries. He described his effort in staying connected to his family and stressed how these connections would have the most impact in our lives at home. Afterwards, Hitomi Suzuki came up to introduce our next activity; calling out pastors at our respective churches to see if could help out, or simply just stay connected once we arrive home.

Ministry-wise, we are currently planning two big events in tandem. BC Bash and Junction happen to be on the same day, and there would be many people at the church compared to usual. The young adult ministry was frantically figuring out lighting and seating for junction. The youth ministry was divided into three committees, logistics, activities, and communications. “We made a video and contacted all the states in the districts,” replied Trinton (2nd year) when asked what they were doing. “There’s three committees: logistics, activities, and communications.” The day was busy, and we’re excited to see how everything will play out.



From Light Boxes, Christmas Lights, to couches.

Columbus: Food is Love
May 7, 2014

The highlight of Generation Peace Academy the past few days was definitely on May 6; we went to eat at Akai Hana, a church owned Japanese restaurant. It was a very generous gift from Mr. Takenaka, who owns the nearby Japanese market and bakery. The sushi, udon, dinner sets, and whatever else we ordered were just... amazing. We say this a lot in this community, "Food is Love," and we've been getting tons of it.

Yeah, that's a lot of love.

In terms of guidances, GPA had been focusing on communication the last few days. On Monday, David Young gave a "How to" talk on listening. In all honesty, the participants of the talk probably did just as much talking as David himself. The whole thing was a step by step progress from staring at each other (Being present with each other) to asking each other questions and repeating the answers. Near the end, we were working on pinpointing the other persons' feelings and the commitment behind it, whether it be honesty, complacency, etc. It was mind-blowing, and helped us to make listening a very active process.

Tuesday morning, Seigan Kubota and Mary Anne Savage went up to give a talk on Public Speaking. The simple exercise was just simply talking about various topics and random words for a set time, avoiding "um"s, "uhs", and "likes", any filler words that didn't need to be there. It was quite difficult.



Taka vs the "Um" police; exercise to not say filler words.

Later that afternoon, GPA separated into each of the respective ministries to plan out the community's events. In two weeks, there's going to be a gathering of young unificationists, aka BC Bash, where a large numbers of high-school kids come to the community to hang out. The planning for this was the youth ministry's responsibility, but the timeframe also coincided with the young adult ministry's event, Junction. There was an overload of organizing going on with both ends, securing facilities and activities as well as the set-up to accommodate large numbers of people.



The Young Adult Ministry experimenting with lighting

It's going to be busy, but GPA was pretty determined to leave an impact on the community.

**Columbus: One More Step
May 3, 2014**

“Let us pray,” said Seigan before our Hot Topic debate on “does God exist?” It started off hysterically and ended heated and interesting. This time around for the Hot Topic debates, we split the group into four, and we had two teams who sat as an audience to critique the debate. We also did a debate on “alcohol and drugs”, which got pretty heated as well.

There was one major event that happened this week; Mrs. Louise Honey, aka Mama Honey, came to visit the Ohio community! She's one of the core staff on Generation Peace Academy, and helped to plan out the rest of the outreach experience with the second and third years...



Well, more like she wanted us first years to own our experience. GPA gathered at a park with her, and pretty much voted on what worked and how we could change the experience for the better. For one, we replaced Big Faith Friday (exploring other religions) with time to work on our respective ministries, and also made time to prepare a “give back” gift/act of kindness for the community itself. For example, this morning, the brothers helped move out the Schlichting family from one end of the apartment to the other. The job got done in about three hours. A bit changed from the schedule before, and overall, we all agree on it, and want to take initiative to make this the best experience.

We also began our outreach this week, on Wednesday and Friday. GPA went in pairs, first to the mall, and then the Ohio State University (OSU). We prepared questions, bookmarks, and little hand-drawn cards for the people and invited them to the community for the small groups and Junction. So far, from the experience, we all agreed that it was a different and good experience. The people we met so far were very open and willing to listen and interact with us. We won’t know the result until this coming Junction, but as of now, we believe that there’s a good handful coming.



On our part, we’re actually pretty excited about the experience. Johanna mentioned (pretty much on everyone’s behalf), “Even if only one person comes to junction, I would be so happy.”

Merging with Columbus **April 25, 2014**



to right) David, Max, Noah

(From left

Today was the first day all of us were split into our respective groups, youth, young adult, and pastoral ministries. The youth ministry got to plan out an event for the youth of the church with Max Heuft, and the people who chose pastoral were given guidances from David Young about what happens as the church's pastor. The young adult ministry, led by Noah Trimble, worked on improving Junction, the weekly program for young college-age people. All in all, it was interesting and exciting to see how the simplest things are brainstormed and organized behind-the-scenes.

One of our GPA members, Brian Falconi, led a CARP talk on Tuesday. CARP, which stands for Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles, is a "network of students across America who study and apply life and leadership principles." A Carp Talk is something similar to TED talks, a short speech in front of people on leadership skills and our life. The key points he focused on were our spiritual lives and teamwork. We all took turns standing in front of our group and talking about our life of faith, and afterwards, a game of charades ensued as an intro to teamwork. It was fun, interactive, and as Brian put it, "spontaneous"; he brought it together with less than 24 hours notice.

Yugen Takii led a "Hot Topic Debate" the next day, where we discussed to have religion or no religion, local or national churches. The topics were chosen a few days beforehand by all of us, and the debates were done by taking turns on our standpoints. They lasted a bit past the set time limit and slightly into lunch; it definitely got heated at one point. According to Yugen, "I felt like everyone did pretty well in participating and to support their own side."



Seigan getting up to give a counter-argument.

Later that day, we did a scavenger hunt at the Ohio State University as the first step to start our outreach program in Ohio, just to get used to the campus and the people there. Because the Ohio community didn't have an outreach program, GPA will be building the program from the ground-up; all of us felt nervous and excited at the same time, knowing that we'll be the ones attempting/starting this.



O H I O! with the Young Life group on-campus in the "Oval"

Welcomed to Ohio!
April 22, 2014

Generation Peace Academy arrived in Ohio on the 17th.

The next three days, we did a lot. We went hiking on the state park, "Old Man's Cave", and went to watch "The Lone Survivor" at the local dollar theater.

On Saturday, we got the orientation for the Ohio Community Outreach. David Young, Max Heuft, and Noah, pastor, youth minister, and young adult minister respectively, presented us the schedule. From the lectures, activities, and time put into it, we could definitely feel the investment. They were prepared to teach the GPA members everything about starting and running a ministry.

Later that night, we got to learn about and attend Junction, a youth ministry led by Daniel and hosted by Noah. Before the whole thing started, Generation Peace Academy gathered up and were told how the whole thing was restarted, with a total expense of roughly \$5 by using local and church resources; the whole point was, it doesn't take much to give the church center a cafe-like, youth oriented vibe. And man, they did a great job at it, putting cafe tables out and putting up couches on the stage Dr. Phil style.

We had Sunday service the next day, and went to sports afterwards. The community welcomed GPA; we played ultimate Frisbee and got to connect with the youth and young adults there.

Today, Monday, we had our first Divine Principle (DP) study session, or more like our first Divine Principle sharing session, where we paired up and tried to apply the DP in casual conversation. Afterwards, we got an interactive leadership session with the pastor, David Young, in which we went up to share our own personal experiences and apply it to the DP in a way we never experienced before.

It's been less than a week, and we've already gone through so much. The Ohio community and its facilitators are intent on giving the best experience possible. There is a heavy focus on ministry and personal spiritual growth, and we're excited for the things coming up in the next month here.