

## The God's Hope for America Bus Tour Kicks off in the San Francisco

Kevin Thompson  
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Pastor of District 11



The God's Hope for America revival road trip was preceded on June 21 by a spirit-filled interfaith breakfast of the National Assembly, attracting clergy and Ambassadors for Peace from around the nation to the San Francisco Bay Area to offer rousing prayers and support for this epic journey. There Archbishop George Augustus Stallings strongly outlined True Father's calling to America and what it was he was trying to accomplish in 1965 when he first arrived in the United States to bring God's message of family and lineage.

Archbishop Stallings challenged the audience, stating: "It is incumbent on us to discover what is God's assignment, what is God's mission, what is our purpose for being here on the Earth ... and it is rooted in our identity. The reason we cannot fulfill our mission, the reason why God called True Parents, is because He had to have champions who would live only for God, who would not live for themselves, who would not be distracted, who would not be deterred, who would not be encumbered by the burdens of this world, so that they would truly lead America back to God." At the conclusion of the breakfast the clergy and National Assembly participants gathered to bless the bus in prayer.



"I can feel God begging me, in everything I do—whether it's some simple task at home, with the family, with the public—to be more present, and that will affect my impact on the world. I believe that for all of us," Betsy Jones, one of the earliest U.S. members, said in prayer, adding, "I always will remember the love True Parents had for God together, and the love they have for each other. It's incredible that no

matter how much crisis they went through, they never wavered; they never went against each other. This example is to be remembered, broadcast, and given to America and the world.”



With high spirits on Kickoff Day, June 22, the tour began in San Francisco at the Twin Peaks Holy Ground, the first of the 55 Holy Grounds in the United States consecrated by True Father in February and March 1965. On that initial occasion there were just a few people with True Father as he planted Korean soil in America, a symbol of uniting the best of the East and the West. Now, nearly 50 years later, more than 300 gathered here as Peter Hyoeul Kim, longtime special assistant to True Parents, gave an endearing message on the best teachings of the mothers of Japan, America and Korea to their children. In Japan, Rev. Kim said, mothers teach their children the phrases “arigato” (thank you) and “sumimasen” (I’m sorry); in America mothers teach gratitude expressed in service to others; and in Korea the “tiger mothers” teach their children to do and be their best. Rev. Kim said that if we could combine all three of these mothers’ teachings, we would have a perfect package.



Following this reflection, Dr. Michael Balcomb, president of FFWPU USA, invited Rev. Zagery Oliver to read the prayer that True Father gave at the Twin Peaks Holy Ground in 1993 at the end of his 12-city speaking tour, titled “True Parents and the Completed Testament Age.” True Father’s prayer included the words: “I cordially ask You, Father, to throw open the blessed door of heaven, along with the one hundred twenty Holy Grounds connected to this Holy Ground of Twin Peaks, so that the forty nations scattered over the world can be dedicated as unified, sacrificial nations.” (You can read the full prayer here. The service concluded with a prayer from Dr. Michael Jenkins, chief financial officer of FFWPU USA, and four cheers of “Eog Mansei” (victory) from FFWPU Continental Director Dr. Ki Hoon Kim, who concluded the Holy Ground event with these words: “America is God’s Hope as the center of the world, and True Father’s commitment in 1965 at 45 years old. Let us inherit this spirit. We will bring this country back to God.”





The day concluded festively at the Bay Area Family Church, where 500 people gathered for an outdoor church service—such events are planned for every community stop of the bus tour. A tent erected in the parking lot was the scene for a rocking church service featuring the "Father's House Band" who had everyone on their feet singing and clapping along. Dr. Balcomb read True Father's sermon "God's Hope for America," which is as relevant today as it was when it was given. Crescentia DeGoede, director of the Blessing and Family Ministry, was the emcee for the kickoff to the tour. She invited former FFWPU USA President Dr. Mose Durst to share his reflection on True Father. Dr. Durst gave a beautiful message of encouragement based on what he had learned from "the most important man in my life." He called for revival and healing among Unificationists so that we will accomplish our great potential, and suggested that we get past the past and stop rehashing the mistakes that have been made. Instead, Dr. Durst said, we should press the “delete” button on the negative things that may have happened and move forward with grace and conviction.

Special Emissary to the USA Dr. Chang Shik Yang shared the purpose and direction of True Parents today. Exciting testimonies from participants of the bus tour were followed by rousing final songs, which led to spontaneous breakouts of dancing.



The service ended with a barbecue lunch and games for all, and finally a ribbon cutting and a red-carpet send-off as the tour participants boarded the bus. Among the traveling party is the 14th and current president of FFWPU USA, Dr. Michael Balcomb, who will be journaling his personal reflections and insights, as did those who accompanied True Father on his 1965 tour to establish the Holy Grounds. Below is one of the first entries on the God's Hope for America road trip.

### **On the Crowded Mountaintop**

Actually, to call San Francisco's Twin Peaks, which are just 925 feet high, a “mountaintop” is a bit of a stretch. The first Spanish explorers, perhaps too many months away from Madrid, called them “Los Pechos de la Chola,” or “Breasts of the Maiden.”

Rev. Sun Myung Moon, whose first footsteps in America I am retracing this summer on the God's Hope for America Holy Ground pilgrimage to 55 Holy Grounds in 48 states in just 46 days (#godshopeforamerica), was another who liked to draw fanciful comparisons between geography and physiology.



When he stood on top of Twin Peaks in 1965 to plant his first Holy Ground in the United States, he said that the entire San Francisco Bay, when seen from the air, resembled a woman's womb. Perhaps this was the esoteric reason why the seeds of so many teachings from the East were to flourish in Northern California in the 1960s and 1970s?

Throughout those decades Father Moon led one of the most prominent and notorious new religious movements in America. There were high points, such as filling Madison Square Garden, Yankee Stadium and the grounds surrounding the Washington Monument for major public sermons. There were low points too, including a 1980s trial and conviction on charges of tax evasion, and persistent and frequent attacks in the media.



Twenty-eight years later, in May 1993, Father Moon climbed up the Twin Peaks once again, this time with his wife, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon (Mother Moon), after speaking in the first 12 cities of a 33-city speaking tour in as many days. In a tearful prayer he bequeathed to Mother Moon his public speaking mission for the first time. The couple were to share their public ministry for another two decades, before Father Moon died in 2012 at the age of 92. Now Mother Moon leads the movement alone.

This morning I, with more than 300 Unificationists, climbed up Twin Peaks to pray at this, the first of the Holy Grounds on our six-week pilgrimage. Sixty of the climbers will be joining me on our tour bus this afternoon, but the others, coming from the local community, will be returning to work tomorrow morning.





Like French mystic and scientist Louis Pascal, I find myself most at peace out in nature. But when we started our service of songs and prayers, it was typically misty, cold and windy, hardly an auspicious start. Yet within a half-hour, the sun broke through and the wind died down. For me, who spends most of every day worrying about the problems and challenges of leading a movement that has yet to really settle down in America, it felt like a welcome respite and a moment of grace.

Tightly crammed together on the narrow peak, it's not easy to concentrate on prayer. I open my eyes, look around, and wonder if I can see a difference between the faces of those who will be on the pilgrimage and those who will just go back to work on Monday as usual.

I couldn't.



When I last lived here, in the mid-1990s, I was a Unificationist campus minister at several colleges in the area and had to cross the Bay several times a week. I used to pity the toll-booth collectors on the Bay Bridge. Day after day, hour after hour, they sat in their tiny booths, collecting cash and sometimes abuse from an unending stream of drivers, most of them stressed and all of them in a hurry.



Late one night, when the traffic had dwindled to a trickle, I asked one attendant how he could stand it. Didn't he feel constrained, captive; didn't he find it hard to breathe?

"Oh, no," he said. "It's the other way round. All day long I meditate and think about things I would like to let go of. Then I look for a driver to help carry that burden and mentally transfer it to them as they drive away."



That midnight encounter flashed through my mind once again as I drove back across the bridge after my visit to Twin Peaks this morning, down from the mountain and ready to hit the road. What invisible burden, I wondered, might that toll-booth attendant have given me to carry that day? Am I still carrying it? Will I be able to put it down before the end of this trip?