

HARP summer camp "Family Reunion 2014"

Sipoo, Finland, 4. – 6. July 2014



HARP Finland organised a summer camp for all Harp-aged children (12–17rs) on the Granö island in Sipoo, not very far from Helsinki. The theme of the camp was "Family Reunion 2014" (Sukukokous 2014) and we wanted to take this time to gather as a family of brothers and sisters, without forgetting to include God and True Parents as well. Our goal was to create a genuine family atmosphere and especially strengthen the bonds between elder and younger Blessed children. We were happy to be as many as 27 people: 16 participants, 10 2nd Gen staff members and one 1st Gen parent, who greatly helped us with boat transportations, cooking and all other practical aspects of the camp.

Friday 4th July was arrival day and after everyone had reached the island safe and sound, the camp kicked off with a short orientation session. In addition to practical aspects and an introduction to the camp theme, orientation also included receiving a "secret friend", i.e. someone you should get to know better or make happy during the camp. Before going to bed, we still had a few fun games to get everyone acquainted and to relax the atmosphere. We also made free one table, where everyone could put a family photo album / family photos they had been asked to bring. This way they'd be available for everyone to look at and all families would be somehow present at the camp.

The program on Saturday started with Niina Mikkanen and Antto Hassinen giving short talks about the importance of family. Niina shared especially about how to get to know your parents and your family, while Antto talked about developing our relationship to God and how True Parents connect us as one family. These talks helped to bring out the internal side of the camp theme and many participants found them inspiring. The talks were

then followed by two different family-related activities. First, everyone was divided into families of four by lottery and they then had to build a "home" in the forest using whatever they could find in the nature (you really could've slept in some of them!). Next, everyone was divided into pairs and given the task to draw the other person's family. The goal was to then put together the pictures as a big family tree, with Heavenly Parents and True Parents at the top. We decided to continue this activity also the next day, since we didn't have enough time to finish it.

After lunch everyone was free to choose between three different pastimes: kayaking, fishing or making friendship bracelets. Later in the afternoon there was free time, people went to the sauna and for a swim, played volley ball or just hung out talking. The weather was great, so everyone could really enjoy all the different activities and the beautiful seaside ☺.

We ate dinner by the fire (sausages, vegetables, mushrooms, marshmallows...) and then continued there with a family evening. Instead of preparing activities beforehand, we divided everyone into pairs or small groups (one elder 2nd Gen and 1-2 Harpies) that then had to come up with one program for the evening. We ended up having many fun games and creative performances – it was such a wonderful evening, with a true family atmosphere.

We had planned to conclude Saturday night with a 12-minute prayer, but since we finished so late, we left it out and instead had the prayer on Sunday morning. Everyone could spread out to pray for their current family and the family they'll have in the future. This way we wanted to not just have a family atmosphere among ourselves, but also include God.

After breakfast we had a "speed talk" activity where everyone wrote down a topic of their choice (like "Cheongpyeong", "baking", "When do we come back

to this island?" etc). Then staff members and voluntary Harpies picked a topic from the hat and spoke about it for one minute. It was a fun little activity and it was especially nice to see so many Harpies taking the challenge and volunteering. We then continued putting together our family tree. Although at some point it wasn't so clear what should be done next and some pictures had been misplaced, the end result turned out very nice and unique.

Finally, it was time to write reflections and have an official closing of the camp. Instead of a traditional closing ceremony, we sat down in a circle and everyone could tell their own highlight of the camp. After everyone had shared, we didn't want to break the good atmosphere by just going to lunch and still ended up singing a few songs all together. It was good closing for a good weekend and after a few hours of packing, cleaning and playing volley ball, everyone was ready to head home in high spirits.

Based on the feedback we received, everyone enjoyed the camp a lot and really felt like a family. Although there were sometimes small practical issues and the conditions on the island weren't the most comfortable (the brothers had to sleep outside, no electricity or running water, outhouse, mosquitoes...), the atmosphere remained positive and people could gain many things from the program. No one was left out and people could bond naturally doing activities together. Even those who sometimes aren't so enthusiastic about Harp activities were enjoying themselves and learning new things, which was great. We hope that this summer camp can be a positive memory that can always remind the participants of the power of being one family under God and guide them on their path. It will surely provide us with a big motivation boost for the planning of next autumn's Harp activities and future workshops ☺. Thank you all!

Report by Veera Hynninen