

***Betsy O'Neill Jones,  
Washington, D.C., 1967***



I came from an Irish-Catholic family from a small town outside of Boston. My older sister became a nun, and I seriously thought about becoming a nun as well. I studied nursing at Boston College and resolved not to be a nun but a missionary after I graduated. I completed one year of volunteer nursing in the West Indies. I thought it would satisfy the deep desire I had to “do something for God.”

After returning from the West Indies I planned to go to New York City to attend a Master’s program in nursing, even though I still had this persistent spiritual question. Before I left, I remember shaking my mother in the kitchen holding on to her arms saying “What am I supposed to do for God?” She patted my arm and said, “Just go to school, and it will get clearer.” Soon after I arrived, I went to the school counselor at Teachers College, Columbia University, telling him also I had a strong sense that I needed to “do something for God!” He took avid notes for 15 minutes then referred me to someone else.

In the fall of 1967, I received a call telling me there was a letter from Farley Jones at the Center for me. The letter encouraged me to hear the teachings and not to judge the people. I came to the church center on several evenings to listen and to discuss the ideas of the Divine Principle. Most of it I could support, but of course, the conclusion caused conflict. What if it were true? How could I know?

I did not want to lose the close relationship I had with Jesus, yet at the same time I wanted to know if God was leading me to something new through these unique and humble circumstances? The center at that time was a small apartment near Times Square in Manhattan.

After studying in New York, I went to Washington, D.C., to meet

more members at the Upshur Street residence. I met Nora Martin Spurgin, Farley Jones, Phillip Burley and many others. As I made my way out of Upshur House, I tried to appear only mildly interested in what I had heard when saying goodbye, yet all of a sudden a torrent of tears came, and I cried like never before. I felt like I finally had found my spiritual home.

I met True Parents one-and-one-half years after I joined. They came to the United States in 1969 for 40 days. I remember the wonderful feeling I had when I first met them. They were so bright and spiritually beautiful. When I first met True Father, his first words were "What is your ancestry?" I was moved by his question, and I felt happy to say "Ireland." He responded by repeating "Irishee" with a big smile and twinkle in his eye. I felt that my ancestors were very happy. His second question to all of us was, "How many spiritual children do you have?" From this question I could feel his seriousness of purpose. I was happy I had already had some witnessing experiences in New York City and Berkeley, California and had come to know something of the heart of a spiritual parent.

I was present in Washington, D.C., when Father matched the first 13 American couples. From a list I helped prepare, Father sensitively and lovingly interviewed the candidates and the 13 couples, some newly-matched and some previously married, emerged. At one point I met Father in the hall, and he said "your time is next time." I felt more than relieved, since I had only been in the Church for one-and-a-half years.

When True Parents completed their work in Washington, D.C., they spent a few days in New York City, taking their meals in our small center on a bridge table. At one point they took the New York members, including Diane, Helen, Wesley, myself and a few others to the top of the Empire State Building. There, looking to the future, Father shared with us his vision of rallies in Yankee Stadium, Washington D.C., and Moscow. On their departure to leave, Mother handed

me a scarf and said “Work hard!” Then, while seated in their car, Father took Mother’s hand and held it up, so we could see their united hands, signaling victory, visible through the back window of their car. I had a profound sense that mankind indeed had True Parents.

After being a center director in New York for more than a year, we heard from Miss Young Oon Kim that Farley and I, Rebecca and Neil Salonen, and other couples should go to Korea in the fall of 1970 for the Blessing of 777 Couples. In October 1970, we travelled to Japan and Korea. Father spoke to us each day while we were in Korea. He listened to each of our confessions individually with the help of Mrs. Won Pok Choi, who translated. I can still remember the peaceful, supportive feeling that emanated from him.

He called us in the middle of the night to attend a ceremony to receive the Holy Wine. The wine passed from Father to the wife and then to the husband. I felt how important it was for me to feel this spiritual connection to Father and that somehow that would empower me to fulfill my role as a true wife.

Father’s central teaching to us in Korea was to “develop a vertical relationship with God” and to “love your enemy.” He further explained that “your enemy would be your mate.” As soon as we returned to America, the reality of these words set in. We experienced tremendous pressure on our couple, simultaneously called on to develop the national movement, support the 40 members living with us at the Upshur house, and try to build harmony in our relationship. We had very little skill and a lot of differences in our approach to things.

When Father returned to the United States in December 1971, he began to choose and educate State Leaders, One-World-Crusade teams and an itinerant-worker system. He selected five women to be Itinerant Workers (IW’s), and they chose their regions by lottery. I drew 13 states, including all of New England. When I asked Father what our job description was, he simply said “to help the State Leaders.” I remember travelling every three days by Greyhound bus,

making curtains, cooking, sleeping in small spaces, practice teaching, meeting guests, and counseling very young State Leaders. The mission was challenging, but we were renewed by seeing Father once a month at the Belvedere training center (in Tarrytown, New York). He would listen to reports, give deep internal guidance, and uplift us all. He always gave us the strength to keep going. These meetings offered us solid land on a stormy sea.



Betsy Jones (far left) assigned as an Itinerant Worker at Belvedere, 1977.  
Others from left: Darlene Pepper, Alice Boutte, Genie Kagawa, Diane Fernsler,  
Lynda MacKenzie, Nora Spurgin, and Susan Hughes Oliver.

On this 40th year of our Blessing we honor our precious True Parents for being our inspiration and guides on this path of true love. Our hearts are full of memories of the many moments we could be in their presence. We witnessed the tears they shed for God and mankind and the painful separations from their children. True Parents and True Children have borne an unimaginable level of heartache with such dignity, love, and courage. Thank you for the times I/we could be at your side in our various missions!

We are grateful for each of our five children – Matthew, Cara, Harvet, Bow and Farley – who pioneered the way with us. You gave us a taste of hardship and suffering, so we could understand God’s heart and your own suffering life course. This bond united us and gave us the strength to join you in this course, for which we are eternally grateful. I thought I had something to do for God, but all the while God was doing something for me. He was leading me to you, True Parents, and blessing my life more than I could have ever imagined.