

40th Anniversary of the Washington Monument Rally at the Washington Times

Tom McDevitt
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Forty years ago, when True Father stood at the foot of the Washington Monument before three hundred thousand people, he declared a pivotal and urgent message for America: "The United States of America, transcending race and nationality, is already a model of the unified world. She must realize that the abundant blessings which God has been pouring upon this land are not just for America, but are for the children of God throughout the world." These visionary and enduring words have driven the work of numerous organizations, including the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) and its affiliates, to this day.

The first of the weekend's events to commemorate the forty-year anniversary of the groundbreaking 1976 Washington Monument rally was a commemorative banquet on the evening of Friday, September 16, at the Arbor Ballroom of the Washington Times building in Washington, D.C. True Father's speech, "America and God's Will," was the theme of the banquet and the common calling that brought together over two hundred and fifty guests and Unificationists to commemorate the speech and celebrate several outstanding individuals and non-profit organizations based in the Washington, D.C. area that have championed its message these past forty years.

Dr. Ki Hoon Kim, regional president of FFWPU North America, offered welcoming remarks both somber and hopeful in tone. Invoking the themes and concerns voiced by True Father at the monument forty years ago, Dr. Kim acknowledged the challenges our families and nation currently face, while also reaffirming that the only possible remedy to these challenges is the practice of forgiveness, love, and unity.

"Forty years ago, Rev. and Mrs. Moon felt a calling to bring this message, America and God's Will, to the great American people," said Dr. Kim. "His approach was not a simply patriotic message; he touched the very soul of the nation, highlighting the challenges to the family and nation, and proclaiming that if we unite, we can overcome communism. It was hard to believe then, but it was right on target. America can't fulfill her role today without principled leadership. God prepared great leaders like you to lead America to real peace. True Mother feels hope from you and feels that America is God's hope. If we unite, we will witness transformation just like in 1976."

Awarding public efforts

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Ambassadors for Peace Awards and the Three Blessings Service Awards, when individuals and organizations were recognized for their efforts to actualize True Parents' vision of peace in the world.

Rev. Karen Thibodeaux, founder of Lifeway Church of Dallas, and her husband Dr. Bishop David Thibodeaux were appointed ambassadors for the stellar work they have done as pastors to care for and uplift their neighbors and community in Dallas. Amir Adam Khan, a singer, actor, and model, was honored for his sincere efforts to advance the principles of peace in each of his professions. "I'd like to thank Father Moon for the choice he left us to move forward," said Bishop David Thibodeaux. "We are here today to take charge to move forward."

Vicki Tiahart, president of the Congressional Club for Spouses of Congress, chairwoman of the 91st First Lady Luncheon, and co-founder of American Prayer Initiative, was recognized for her efforts to honor faith and family values in Washington. "This is more than just a piece of paper to me," said Vicki Tiahart. "It's an incentive."

Unificationist Shinyoung Chang expressed how "looking back over the years that it has been active, it

amazes me the reach UPF can extend into the wider community through the Peace Ambassador program. It's refreshing to see so many faces and organizations established in the world being recognized tonight in light of True Parents' vision for world peace."



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Three blessings

Mr. Tom McDevitt, chairman of the Washington Times presented the Three Blessings Service Awards to four organizations.

The First Blessing award recipient was Seraphim Global. Cynthia Turner, the executive director; and members of the organization received the award and a \$1,000 donation toward their work to combat domestic violence and human trafficking both in America and abroad.

Kazi Mannan, owner of Mayur Kabob House restaurant, which provides free meals for the homeless to "heal their suffering with true love" and Douglas Leadership Institute, and education and public policy organization founded by Rev. Dean Nelson were awarded the Second Blessing Award. The award given to the Douglas Leadership Institute was accepted by Rev. Kerrick McKain, who said on behalf of the organization that they are "excited about what God is doing through the local church, the body of Christ and the greatest instrument of God."



The Institute for Faith, Work and Economics, which makes efforts to enhance the workplace by applying biblical principles, revolutionizing the way people view work, was awarded the Third Blessing Award. Rev. Art Lindsley, vice-president of Theology Initiatives, accepted it.

Also recognized were the veterans of the 1976 Washington Monument rally, who stood up. Miihan Stephens, vice-president of FFWPU USA, read four excerpts from the speech, "America and God's Will," followed by stories of impact that delved deeper into each of these four themes:

overcoming atheistic materialism, strengthening marriage and family, uniting faiths and creating a global community of leaders for peace. Brief and poignant presentations were then given by four Unificationists on each of these themes.

Call to action

Mrs. Angelika Selle, president of WFWP USA, closed the evening with a call to join in the activities on Saturday. "Are you feeling stirred up? Let's keep the fire burning, tell the story to someone new, and find new and creative ways to make True Father's message our own -- to adapt it and make a difference."



Larry Moffitt



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