

DC area holds Chuseok Memorial Service at our Wonjeon at Ft. Lincoln Cemetery

Bill Selig
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On Sunday, September 11, Unificationists of District 1 held a Chuseok Memorial Service at our Wonjeon at Fort Lincoln Cemetery. About 40 Unificationists gathered for the event, which was hosted by Rev. Young Chil Jang and the local Korean Evangelical Association (KEA), and the District 1 Seonghwa (ascension) Committee.

Chuseok is a Korean festival that celebrates the harvest. In Korea this is a three-day holiday. Families travel from the big cities and visit their ancestral hometowns. Part of the celebration includes visiting the cemeteries of their ancestors – to trim the grass, offer favorite foods, and thank them for the good harvest and for watching over their loved ones the past year. Thanks to our True Parents, our movement has inherited this rich tradition of family and a heart of gratitude.



Rev. Young Chil Jang of the local KEA leads the memorial service.

We were blessed to have Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) USA President Michael Balcomb address our gathering. He warmly expressed his appreciation and love to all the families and to the members buried at the Wonjeon, and related some beautiful stories about True Parents. True Mother says, “I don’t how long I have before I join True Father, so I want to make every day precious.” Last month in Korea, Dr. Balcomb said the only ministry discussed at the International

Leaders' Conference was the Seonghwa ministry. It was reported that many Unificationists in Korea and Japan ascend to the spirit world without the benefit of the Seonghwa ceremony. "My goal," he said, "is that no member should be denied the Seonghwa ceremony with all the greatness that goes with it." He called on all those attending to be the core members who can encourage and promote this tradition in our movement.



Dr. Balcomb encourages all gathered to uphold and share the Seonghwa tradition.

The main address was given by Jim and Joanne Parrish, whose son Ryan ascended two years ago. Joanne said that she was deeply moved by how much the community came out and supported them. "It made me want to do more for my community," she said. Jim admitted that he had little experience with the Seonghwa before his own son died. "I had no idea the community would pour out their hearts the way they did. We were so amazed and touched by how the community came and helped us. It really opened my eyes to the value of our community," he said.



Jim and Joanne Parrish share about the life of their son Ryan and the role his ascension played in strengthening their relationships with the wider Unification community.

Other testimonies were given, including one by Greg Carter, who shared about his journey with the Marriage Blessing, from challenges to breakthroughs. Everything changed for him when one evening he felt God speaking to him. “How can I make world peace if you and your wife cannot come together peacefully?” God said, “Peace will come when you realize that your enemy loves something more than you.” Greg admitted he had no clue what that meant until he looked at his daughter. “Then I realized that my wife took care of my daughter more than me; then I understood how wonderful my wife is. We became closer. It made me a better man and made my Blessing better.”



Greg Carter reflects on God’s guidance and cultivation of love in his marriage and family.

Rhonda Williams shared about her experience with an interracial Blessing. Her husband, Bruce, ascended in 2010. She was joined by two of her children and daughter-in-law. She explained, “True Father spoke at the Washington Monument 40 years ago. He said we must go beyond race. The truth is my husband and I struggled, but when I look at my children I’m so grateful to True Parents. I want to make sure that brothers and sisters inherit the Seonghwa tradition as a way to always keep us connected to our loved ones. This is heaven’s tradition and we are very blessed to receive it,” she testified.



Rhonda Williams, with two of her children and her daughter-in-law, shares about her husband’s life and their marriage as an interracial couple.

Emcee Bill Selig noted that True Mother has been using the word Seonghwa more frequently, not just in reference to True Father's recent fourth ascension anniversary but regarding the Seonghwa culture. "The Seonghwa embraces not only the past or a culmination of a time to celebrate a loved one's life, but also the future, in other words, the Seonghwa culture represents a new beginning," he said.



Bill Selig reflects on the new beginning embodied in the Seonghwa ceremony.

After Rev. Jang led the group in the incense ceremony, we all gathered in a circle holding hands and Rev. Joe Taylor offered a benediction followed by three cheers of Eog Mansei (victory). Everyone stayed for fellowship and a delicious Korean lunch.



Rev. Joe Taylor offers the concluding benediction.