

Columbus, Indianapolis, and Chicago hold an Intentional Program on Parenting

Gerry Servito and Benjy Uyama
June 26, 2016



On June 25 and 26, Columbus, Indianapolis, and Chicago held an intentional program and discussion on parenting. Two members of the National FFWPU Team visited these communities to hold the programs: Gerry Servito from the Evangelism Department and Benjy Uyama from the Blessing & Family Ministry. After meeting with the parents, Gerry and Benjy traveled to Camp Kohoe from June 26 to 30 to present on the topic of parent-child relationship.

The Vision

Gerry and Benjy, a passionate, cross-generational team, were invited to presentations at the youth summer workshop, Camp Kohoe, in Michigan from June 26 to 30. They requested to extend their stay in the Midwest in order to meet with the parents of the camp participants beforehand. Since the theme of Camp Kohoe was “Parent-Child Relationship,” the three communities held discussions on the topic of parenting and reflected on how we can create a culture of healthy relationships with our children. Gerry and Benjy had planned to describe True Parents’ teachings about true family life and love, after which they encouraged the camp participants to step out of their comfort zones and try to reach a newer, truer level of relationship with their parents through writing letters to their parents. Especially as outlined in the three Holy Books, family relationships will move into being more like they were originally intended. Therefore, Gerry and Benjy wanted to give the parents a heads up to receive any efforts the children might make to improve their relationship with their parents.

Content

In each of the three communities, the first session was a presentation titled “Parent-Child Relationship in the Age of Settlement” given by Gerry Servito. It was a condensed summary of some ideals about family relationships that the campers would be hearing. It was meant to clarify some key ideas about the Unification ideals of family relationship and how we need to slowly but surely transition out of the Age of Wilderness mindset and focus on creating healthy and loving families for the succeeding generations. The second session was Benjy Uyama speaking about the topic of parent-child relationship from his perspective and experience as a young parent and Unificationist, but also drawing on his thoughts as a father and his experience and observations as an educator/advisor in the Blessing & Family Ministry. He advised the parents that he would be giving the campers daily “action steps” to communicate more genuinely with their parents. He directed group discussions on the content they heard. The final session was an opportunity for questions and answers.

Columbus, Ohio

In Columbus, there was a sincere interest in the topic, especially since children and parents at this age are beginning to think more about the matching process and the Marriage Blessing, which hinges on a functional, workable relationship between the child and their parents. Healthy couples and families are also an important basis for sharing our faith with others. A hope was expressed by the group that more such education could be provided for the community. Rev. Frank Sanchez, pastor of UC Columbus, wrote, “We were really happy to have Gerry and Benjy both in Columbus. We pray this will be just the first of many of these type of educational opportunities. Greatly appreciated.” He also commented that it

would be nice to have one or two similar workshops per year for just pastors, so that they could also be refreshed and enabled to take better care of the families in their congregations. Pastors who attended appreciated the perspective of Cheon Il Guk parenting.



Indianapolis, Indiana

Similar to the meeting in Columbus, there was a sincere interest in the topic for the same reasons: children and parents are thinking about the matching process and the Marriage Blessing. The community expressed gratitude to the National Ministry Team for visiting their community in Indianapolis. Because the visit felt rather short, the community wished for more time together. The Indianapolis community was particularly appreciative of Benjy Uyama because of his personal connection to this city and even to the church building itself. It was where he lived and studied when he was young and where he made important breakthroughs in his life of faith. There were two experienced educators in the Indianapolis community who attended with their spouses: Dr. David Carlson, and Mr. Michael Callahan. Both expressed their appreciation for the meeting.



Chicago, Illinois

The Chicago session was longer than the preceding two in Columbus and Indianapolis. There were many interactive group discussions and sharing as the group of both parents and children discussed and reflected on their relationship with their parents or children. One couple commented that they will relate to their children differently based on the understanding they gained during the program. After the program there were more requests from participants for individual conversations with the presenters, but time was limited as they prepared to head over to Camp Kohoe that night.



Camp Kohoe

The focus of this year's summer camp at Camp Kohoe (or Kingdom of Heaven on Earth) was the parent-child relationship. More than 60 staff and campers, ranging in age from 13-20, came to Camp Kohoe this summer, which ran from June 26 to June 30 in Benton Harbor, Michigan. Youth Pastors Kensei Maeda, Kosuke Enami, and Junka Honda organized the camp activities and also invited Gerry Servito and Benjy Uyama of the National Ministry Team to give presentations the principles of the parent-child relationship and to apply those principles in their own relationships with their parents.

Gerry Servito reflected after the camp concluded, "Benjy and I left Wednesday evening—the final full day of the camp. Kensei wrote us on Friday: "Thank you guys for everything! Reading through the survey responses, the campers loved having you guys around a lot!" Benjy and I did feel that we were educating and refreshing the staff, as well as the young ones. But I think that because of the focus of the camp, another critical outcome is what will happen between the children and their parents *after* the camp is over and remains to be seen, particularly when the parents receive their child's letter in the mail, the one they wrote on the last night of camp."

Some feedback from the camp participants included:

"Benjy and Uncle Gerry were very easy to relate to and the message was simple, but at the same time had a lot of meaning to it and was really deep. So I loved them so much."

"The testimonies were the what I learned the most from because they were the most relatable and touching. Hearing real true stories about how my older siblings overcame their issues with their parents was inspiring."

"I connected to all of the lectures because they were all fun, understandable, and not boring."

Reflections by Benjy Uyama

"Overall, the experience of meeting with parents in three communities before beginning Camp Kohoe was impactful and insightful. Many of the parents we met shared that they felt the idea of meeting with the parents before the high school camp was quite revolutionary. The challenge of workshops is keeping the inspiration going afterward, but through meeting with the parents beforehand, we hoped to create a solid foundation and opportunity for the campers and their parents to bond on a new level through knowing how to genuinely share and listen to each other. My biggest takeaway and insight from meeting the parents and then meeting their children at camp is that the topic of marriage, matching, Blessing, and sex is one of the biggest things in the lives of most parents and children. Therefore, it deserves a lot of our attention and effort. Family is everything, and the parent-child relationship is definitely the core of it all."
– Benjy Uyama, Blessing & Family Ministry

Reflection by Gerry Servito

"One of the most critical realizations I've had in the last couple of decades is connected to the third pledge in the CIG Family Pledge. That realization was central to this entire trip. We speak the words

‘Attendance,’ ‘Three Great Kingships,’ ‘Realms of Heart’ often without understanding their fuller, original meanings and how important they are in the way we live our lives.

The ‘Realms of Heart’ idea has been expanded in the *Cheon Seong Gyeong*. The section is entitled ‘The Realms of True Love’ and, in addition to the four realms, there’s a new fifth one: *Grandparents’ Love*. That section makes it clear that Heavenly Parent’s greatest expression in a family’s life is supposed to be the grandfather and grandmother. That made me realize that the most important role in my life is approaching; and that many of my peers are already in that role: to represent the love of Heavenly Parent to their grandchildren.

So I’ve got to remain serious about my spiritual growth, and even about my physical health, so that God can have direct access to my children’s children. And that idea ties directly into the idea of “Kingships” because monarchs treat their offspring as future kings and queens. And so their sense of responsibility and of the potential of their children is what True Parents want us to consider when we relate to our own blessed children. Because the original role of parents, and especially of grandparents, is much greater and deeper than we’d been used to.

So it’s important in our transition from the Wilderness Age into the Age of Settlement — the post-Foundation Day Era of Cheon Il Guk — that we actively work on understanding and stepping up to more original ways of love in the parent-child relationship.”

A special “thank you” to all the pastors and organizers who made the trip productive and enjoyable: Rev. David and Mrs. Rendel, Rev. Frank Sanchez, Rev. Garrun and Yusun Abrahams, Marcus & Sayumi Vandermark Rev. Jack and Mrs. Harford, Rev. Jeff Schmidt, Toby Gullery, Hans Rinkema, Yoshitomo Naka, Kensei Maeda, Kosuke Enami, Dieter and Mrs. Jesper, the Kohoe kitchen staff, and of course to the team & activity leaders and all support staff of Camp Kohoe.