

The Austrian Church Celebrates Forty-Nine Years

Peter Zöhrer
October 2014



Austrian members celebrates their forty-ninth anniversary

Every creation becomes the perfect embodiment of the number seven, which is the sum of the number of Heaven and the number of earth. This is the reason the Bible recounts the creation of heaven and earth as having taken seven days," So says, *Exposition of Divine Principle*. This deep desire to become the perfect embodiment and representative of heaven and earth may also explain why our members in Austria looked at the forty-ninth anniversary of the movement in their nation as 7×7 years for world peace.

Paul Werner, a thoroughly dedicated Christian that had met the church in the U.S. state of California, pioneered the Austrian church a year after he and his wife Christel returned to Europe. In fact, upon their return to Europe, one of the first things the Werners did was to travel to seven prominent European cities including Vienna in Austria to deposit a Divine Principle book in the main cathedral there. Like the seven trumpets, held by seven priests who marched around Jericho seven times, the Divine Principle was blaring out the good news about the second coming of the Lord.

Youth to the Forefront

The celebration of the anniversary and of the harvest that has occurred in the years since that lone pioneer placed himself in Heaven's hands took place over three days, August 29–31. Austrian members had recently expressed their strong desire to see one another, for the national flock to convene in one location. Their national board responded with anniversary festivities in Vienna that attracted three hundred members.

The young people ruled the first day. Though they displayed their prowess at competitive sports, their intention in coming together was not all fun and games. They also held a Youth Symposium on the Future of the Austrian Unification Movement.

The topic was of great enough importance to draw eighty young people. These young people want to take personal responsibility for the future of an organization they care about and that their parents' generation felt was essential to nation's spiritual wellbeing.

In fact, the church in Austria has not grown unimpeded since the early days. In 1974, the Austrian

government declared our Austrian church illegal. The members continued to witness on a personal basis, but the church operated under the stigma of not having government approval. Being a Unificationist in Austria requires the level of personal commitment that these young people displayed.

Toward a Greater Future

The main event took place in a trade union hall in Vienna and attracted three hundred people. Mr. Peter Zöhrer, national leader of the Austria movement spoke first. Mr. Zöhrer went through an experience with True Parents in 1995 that he is likely never to forget. As national leader of Hungary, he and his wife were among a small group of people that were with True Parents soon after they learned of the Schengen ban. This galvanized Mr. Zöhrer. He had had an interest in religious freedom before this incident but from then on his focus and determination drove him forward relentlessly until -- based on the conditions made by European members and members worldwide and on the foundation of True Parents' true innocence -- the ban was finally lifted.

On that day, speaking in the trade union hall in Vienna to an audience of Unificationists and compassionate guests, he told them that a few days earlier he had been able submit an application for the Austrian Unification Church to be officially recognized by the government as a "confessional community." If it does transpire that the status of a confessional community is accepted, it will definitely be a step forward. As their report submitted to ipeacstv explains, since the government dissolved HSAUWC in Austria in 1974, members of the movement "have had to operate 'underground.'" Rev. Young Shik An, Europe's regional president attended the anniversary at the invitation of the Austrian members. He spoke to Korea's longstanding wish for reunification. He emphasized that this desire for peace in Korea was not peace for the nation's sake alone but would lead to peace globally. Mr. Peter Haider, president of UPF-Austria, spoke about UPF's local efforts in recent years and several ambassadors for peace congratulated the Austrian movement on tenaciously moving forward toward its half-century mark and beyond.