

Generation Peace Academy at Ocean Church' Peace King Fishing Tournament

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Our Ocean Church team had been talking with the staff of Generation Peace Academy (GPA) about the possibility of their young participants doing some fishing with us. It was still a surprise when Mr. Kensaku Takahashi, the Ocean Church director, was told that a group of 20 GPA participants would be participating in the 2017 Peace King Fishing Tournament, which would take place from May 6 to 12 in the Hudson River between New York and New Jersey. Furthermore, the GPA participants wanted to get three days of training before the tournament started.

Modeled on the National Ocean Challenge Program (NOCP), a three-day training program was designed for the GPA youth to get a taste of the Ocean Providence and NOCP. Every morning there was a short Hoon Dok Hwe reading from God's Will and the Ocean, followed by a discussion of the reading.

On the first day the GPA group learned a little history about Ocean Challenge from Mr. Takahashi and were shown which fish species can be found in the New York/New Jersey area. Captain Steve Kearney recalled his experience of fishing with True Father at the Unification Theological Seminary. Then Branch and Naria Gaarder, a Second Generation couple working with Ocean Church, went over basic CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation), and explained various knots and boating terminology.

Afterward everyone piled into the two Good Go boats docked by the Ocean Church Center in Little Ferry, New Jersey, and the captains had each person try steering the boat down the Hackensack River. The young people learned that driving a boat isn't quite like driving a car. They also practiced the man-overboard procedure using lifebuoys. They concluded with a good cleaning of the boats and prayer.

For Day Two, because the target fish for the tournament was striped bass, all the GPA youth learned how to prepare and make their own striped bass rigs (hook and line setup). Then they mastered the skill of casting the line in the yard, some casting so high or so far that trees and telephone lines were caught.

Back in the lecture room, Mr. Takahashi gave his testimony about his experience fishing with True Father and True Mother at Lake Mead near Las Vegas, Nevada. Branch Gaarder talked about the importance of the tides and currents and how to relate fishing to Tribal Messiahship.

We were back on the boats in the afternoon, and this time groups of three were assigned to take turns anchoring and un-anchoring the boat. This takes teamwork, attentiveness and good communication, or else you risk getting your anchor line stuck in the boat propeller.

On Day Three, the final training day, we had a guest speaker, Dr. Keisuke Noda, who arrived with his wife. Dr. Noda is a professor at UTS and teaches philosophy and Ocean Providence history. While the GPA participants were listening to his lecture, Captain Steve, Branch Gaarder and Megumi Watanabe

took the two boats down to Bayonne, New Jersey, where afterward everyone would meet them to do some fishing.



Some very heavy rain was expected, and we thought about canceling, but after all the inspiring words from Mr. Takahashi about the “Oceangoing Spirit” and “Alaskan Spirit” that True Father talked about—meaning that if God calls you, you go out, no matter the circumstances—the young people were determined to still go fishing in the torrential rains.

It was definitely a soggy experience, but luckily rain gear helps in the long run. Three boats were taken out to New York Harbor, and not long after anchoring, one boat hooked a 29-inch striped bass. It being the first fish caught on the boat, it was “offered” to God and put back in the ocean, as is True Parents’ tradition. The other boats caught two smaller striped bass and one more that was 28 inches.

The GPA group might have come back soaked, with only one fish to show for their efforts, but their spirit to take on this challenge and the condition they made would truly make our True Parents proud!

