

FFWPU USA National Education Ministry's first-ever Unification Thought Week

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The National Education Ministry held its first-ever Unification Thought Week from July 22 to 28, in collaboration with the Research Institute for the Integration of World Thought (RIIWT). The program consisted of two parts: a Unification Thought Inheritance workshop taught by Professor Gerry Servito of the Education Ministry during the week, and the annual RIIWT conference on the weekend. The week-long program represented a new chapter for the study and the teaching of Unification Thought in the United States.



Inheriting Unification Thought

Unification Thought is a systematic philosophical presentation of the worldview of True Parents, first published as a text by Dr. Sang Hun Lee in 1973. Dr. Lee derived Unification Thought from the Exposition of the Divine Principle and True Parents' extended teachings, which he categorized according to the major fields of philosophical inquiry, in order to support the reach and the application of their thought. The purpose of the inheritance workshop was to give a basic introduction to Unification Thought that could help participants later teach its contents with confidence and competence.

Over the course of the workshop, Professor Servito covered topics featured in the most recent publication of Unification Thought, "The New Essentials of Unification Thought," revealing the breadth, depth, and novelty of True Parents' teachings. Mari Curry, Director of Education for the Family Federation for a Heavenly USA, and director of the inheritance workshop, limited the number of participants to create an intimate and familial atmosphere.

Throughout the week, participants experienced the incredible love of the East Garden staff and tapped into the heart and spirit of True Parents, preserved in the memories of the staff, the property, and in the Hyojeong East Garden Museum. Many felt the tour of the museum was a highlight of the week.

Several members of the RIIWT board taught at the workshop, including Dr. Thomas Ward, President of RIIWT, and Dr. Claude Perrottet, Secretary General of RIIWT. In his presentation, Dr. Ward discussed the Unification Thought foundations of the CAUSA project, a major educational initiative launched by True Parents to counter the global influence and spread of communism in the 1980s. Dr. Perrottet then explained the place, significance, and contributions of Unification Thought within the wider history of philosophy.

Adelina Lazar, a coordinator for the American Cheon Il Guk Missionaries team, commented on the experience,

For me, it was my first time visiting East Garden and Belvedere. My heart was filled with immense gratitude as we visited the East Garden Museum and had the chance to pray in such a sanctified place." She continued, "Study has always been one of my passions. So having the time to focus on studying True Parents' teachings from people who have dedicated their lives in the academic field was, without any doubt, one of the best experiences I've had here in America. I felt both my mind and my heart stretching and expanding during this week.

Similarly, Jennifer Pierce, Communications Coordinator for the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP) USA, expressed,

My takeaway was that what I'm doing and how I live contributes to True Parents' work. I think hearing about the ideal can sometimes cause dissonance if you compare to the current situation of the world, but I felt comforted by it. Even though there are a lot of changes that need to be made, being able to embody the ideal and put it into practice brings Heavenly Parents and True Parents work and dream a little bit closer. It also gave me more confidence about the direction we're heading as a movement and explained to me a lot of True Mother's work.



Good, Evil, and the Revival of the Christian World: RIIWT Conference

The 2019 RIIWT conference convened on Saturday, July 27, under the theme, "Good, Evil, and the Role of the Research Institute in the Revival of the Christian World." Presentations covered topics ranging from the existence of God and the origins of evil to the contemporary confusion of the western value system and how to explain the Marriage Blessing Ceremony. Vice President of Family Federation International, Dr. Ki Hoon Kim, and Family Federation for a Heavenly USA presidential couple, Rev. Demian and Yumiko Dunkley, participated in the first day of the conference.

In keeping with the themes of the inheritance workshop, Dr. Jung Chang Choi, founding Chairman and

President of RIIWT, highlighted the depth of Unification Thought as True Parents' thought and ultimately God's thought in his keynote presentation. Dr. Choi also offered a moving testimony about the role Unification Thought has played as a guiding force in his life.

Joshua Holmes of CARP Los Angeles reflected on his experience of meeting Dr. Choi,

We had the blessing of being attended and loved by Dr. Choi and the rest of the RIIWT Board. [During] the final talk that Dr. Choi gave, I remember distinctly feeling a hint of the absolute love and 'mind-blowing' truth that I'm sure the early members felt when they were in such an intimate setting with Father and Mother... Afterward, I could barely speak, it was like my entire heart and mind had been shifted 180 degrees.



Gratitude and Next Steps

It was a powerful, uplifting, and humbling week. In a reflection written for True Mother, Nina Jesper, one of the workshop participants, summed up the experience and the heart of all who attended:

Unification Thought is very relatable and connected well to the youth of today. I'm moved by how beautiful God's heart is in His design and effort in creating every part of this world. I want to live the ideal that Unification Thought spells out. I'm excited to learn how to teach it so I can share it with my friends. Thank you for the opportunity to learn this and also for letting us into your home. To receive God's word where so much investment is given is such a major blessing. Truly, thank you.

Unification Thought Week 2019 will be followed by a 16-week distance study course, to further train participants as future teachers of Unification Thought. The Education Ministry looks forward to hosting its next in-depth training at East Garden in 2020.

