

## 21 Gather at the Clifton Family Church, NJ for the Aloha Winter Workshop 2016

Nina Urbonya  
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Twenty-one high-school students gathered at the Clifton Family Church of New Jersey from December 2 to 4, to participate in the Aloha Winter Workshop 2016. The goal of the workshop was to connect with True Mother and each other, learn what True Mother seeks from us as second-generation Unificationists, and then go back to our communities to share her love with them. The workshop was directed by Nina Urbonya and Yasutaka Ozawa with the support of four wonderful staff members.

The high school students arrived full of excitement; some had never met True Mother before, some had seen her when they were very young, and some had seen her at recent youth events. Either way, everyone couldn't wait to meet True Mother.



On the first day, we all set intentions for the workshop. Most intentions were geared toward becoming better leaders and creating a connection with True Mother. One participant shared, "I want to be open and invest fully when listening to True Mother," while another shared, "My goal is to improve my leadership skills, and that means I need to understand True Parents very well, so I hope to understand True Mother better through this workshop."

The following day we listened to a special lecture by Crescentia DeGoede, the director of the Blessing and Family Ministry, to learn more about True Mother's vision for young people. Crescentia explained with much passion that True Mother wants us to be "pure like water," develop a deep relationship with God, grow up into beautiful sons and daughters and share that love with everyone around. After that, participants had a chance to do a prayer walk and to create an "elevator speech."

The goal of the elevator speech exercise was to get participants to think about how they would tell a friend about our movement and True Parents. Nina facilitated the session by asking the participants: “Imagine you’re at home, and there is a photo of True Parents in the living room. You invite a friend over, and they ask you about the Asian-looking people in the photo. What do you say to them?” Some of the participants quickly shouted out, “They’re my grandparents.” Others preferred to be honest, explaining, “They’re the founders of my church,” but many were hesitant or unsure of what to say. All of the Aloha participants were then given some time to prepare and practice with one another about what they would say to someone unfamiliar with True Parents.



On Saturday, December 3, we waited in the long lines outside the Manhattan Center together with everyone who had come out to see True Mother. After we had prepared our hearts with singing, True Mother came up on the stage, greeted by a loud round of applause. She looked beautiful in red, and she was beaming. “I am happy to see you too,” she said. She encouraged us to be proud and tell the whole world that True Parents are now on the earth. Her last words will remain with us for a long time: “I can count on you, right? I love you.”

Fully energized by True Mother’s words, we enjoyed the Little Angels’ performance and cheered them on loudly. In the end, they got “encored” twice before finally leaving the stage.



On Sunday, December 4, there was a Youth Gathering with True Mother at East Garden, and luckily the Aloha participants were given front-row seats. True Mother was eager to talk to us. She seemed comfortable and the atmosphere was very relaxed. She poured out her heart, and we were able to feel her deep love and hope for us. She told us, "You are still young, so you have a lot of potential!" and she encouraged us to become the best in our respective fields and never forget that our value comes from True Parents.

At the end, we stood up to offer one last bow to our True Mother. True Mother was standing so close. Then suddenly she reached out and touched one of our participants, Noriaki To, on the cheek. He was ecstatic, and all the other Aloha participants cheered and laughed. What an unforgettable moment! True Mother's touch of love was surely felt by all the participants present.



We ended the workshop with testimonies, prayer and songs around the Holy Rock at Belvedere.

We will cherish the memories we made with True Mother and be sure to share them with others back home!

### **Participant Reflections**

*"I have been inspired and energized, so I want to share this blessing with my family by telling them about my experiences and loving them and living more for their sake and not only for myself. Also in school I want to share the love by caring more for them and listening to them with an open ear and heart. Now I see that I have potential and that True Mother believes in me. I need to find what I can do that will help the providence and bring happiness to both me and God. In the workshop I have gotten to know each person, and I feel that we have become brothers and sisters." -- S. Lewis, New Jersey*

*"Up till that point, I thought of True Parents as people who are all about creating heaven on earth, and I felt that they are different from me, but at East Garden I saw the humane characteristics of True Mother and realized that she is actually a mother. She sees every individual child of God as her own, and she cares about each and every one of us. Another goal of mine is to learn Korean, preferably by attending the Sun Moon University, so that I can read and hear the original words of True Parents and not through the translations. By understanding the original words, I want to learn more about the True Parents and be close to them." -- S. Imamura, New Jersey*

*"I felt her presence, energy, and love, which nearly drove me to tears. I felt as if I was not doing enough to offer up to the providence. Even though I have gone through suffering, that was nothing compared to True Mother's. I need to work harder. I also know that I shouldn't keep the Unification movement to myself, but share it with everyone I see, because it is truly a great movement which everyone deserves to experience. In addition, I was right beside True Mother for pictures. At my age, even though I cannot truly understand the significance of this moment, I am truly grateful that I have had such a blessing. Thank you, True Parents!" -- E. Ntamack, New York*

*"I myself feel far clearer about how I want to live my life as a second-generation Unificationist for the purpose of the Kingdom of Heaven. I'm excited for the Blessing, and I'm excited to pursue my passions. It feels like there's almost nothing to worry about with God's and True Parents' support. I came to the workshop to give love, but I ended up receiving immense love from True Mother that I am eager to share*

*with the rest of my community.” -- D. Drost, Maryland (staff)*

*“I feel like my goal as a missionary for God is now solidified. I feel that I am completely invincible. I am unstoppable, just as True Mother is, just as True Father is, and just as our church is now. This workshop has empowered me to do good, and it has helped me realize and experience what a true leader is. I believe that a true leader is a leader who serves the most. It is the person who initiates and gives the most love. I can see it in True Mother, how she served all of humanity.” -- Y. Ang, New Jersey*

*“One special moment that happened after True Mother finished her speech and we bowed to her: True Mother came up to me, gave me a touch on the cheek, and said something. Unfortunately, the room was too loud for me to hear what True Mother said, and even now I am very curious as to what she said. I really hope I can find out one day.*

*“Thanks to the workshop, I can now take what I learned to my track team, and lead them better as the captain. Whether it was the amazing performance by the Little Angels, the New Jersey youth choir, the lectures, the new friends I made, or meeting True Mother again, the Aloha workshop was worth it. All the experiences I had throughout this workshop are something I will never forget. Coming to this workshop was worth missing the two Ultimate Frisbee games, and I don't have any regrets. If anyone is debating or has the chance to go to the next Aloha workshop, I would strongly encourage them. It was truly an amazing experience.” -- N. To, New Jersey*