

## The UK was left out Nations for 2020, but there is hope for future selection

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*Myself with European Regional Director Mr. Jack Corley and Albanian National Director Mr. Gani Rroshi*

The UK did not get selected. Of the 21 nations that had delivered their strategic proposals to True Mother and a group of judges, 13 were selected, the names of which are at the end of this post. The countries that made the shortlist were announced during a luncheon with True Mother in a magnificent Cheon Jeong Gung dining room. I had allowed myself to be convinced that the UK had nailed its name onto the list, and waited eagerly to be hear confirmation of this through the simultaneous interpretation buzzing in my earphones.

As the name of the 13th country was announced – “Dominican Republic” – I immediately felt winded by the disappointment.

Gani Rroshi, the national leader of Albania, was sitting next to me. Swallowing my sadness, I turned to him to congratulate Albania on being selected, and expressed thanks that at least one European country made the cut. If I’m honest, at the start of my week-long trip to Korea I didn’t believe that the UK would be selected, but as the days went by and I had the opportunity to hear the presentations from the other 20 countries, I felt a growing excitement at the possibility that the UK would be considered as one of the 7 strategic nations True Mother wanted to especially invest in towards national restoration by 2020. It’s not that I felt the UK was better than the other countries, it’s just that I felt we offered something quite unique.

I did indeed learn a lot from listening to the reports of proposals from the other national leaders and representatives. Praying at the bon hyang won (True Father’s burial ground) at the start of the programme, I felt very emotional and was asking God, “Why me? Why am I here? Of course I’m here to share the UK proposal, but what else do you want me to do?” The answer I received clearly was “Listen and learn.” So I dedicated my attention during the 3 days of back-to-back presentations examining and reflecting on the unique contexts of the different countries and their existing tactics and proposed plans. Writing many notes, I paid particular notice to the questions asked by the quizzing judges and attempted to deduce what each judge perceived to be important.

This programme was an incredible opportunity to network with the other national leaders. Our group was relatively small, with about fifty individuals present, so it felt quite intimate in comparison to the other meetings in Korea during which there may be hundreds of participants. I was able to create deep bonds of heart with many of the participants. We could even begin making plans for future collaboration and mutual visits for fact-finding research and missionary support.

Let me take you back to the luncheon with True Mother. Just as dessert was being distributed – a rather tasty cheesecake, I think it was – True Mother addressed the dining assembly. She spoke for about 20 minutes, and in the middle of her address she surprised me by beginning to talk about yeong guk – the UK.



*A cheeky selfie outside the palace*

Why speak about the UK, considering that we weren't even on the shortlist for being selected as a strategic nation? Why not speak about one of the other countries? In fact, she mentioned no other country during her entire message, except Germany, although this was in the context of the UK and Europe. I was frantically scribbling notes on my notepad, attempting to truthfully minute every word she spoke. I was so busy that I barely noticed when she directly asked me if I understood what she was explaining. Eventually I began nodding my head in firm agreement, until

a Korean gentleman besides me elbowed me in the ribs to infer that I should vocalise an affirmation.

To be truthful, in sharp contrast to the sadness I felt in the UK not being selected, I felt an incredible comfort and encouragement from True Mother concerning her heart towards the FFWPU community in the UK and indeed all the citizens of our country. Upon reflection, I felt that True Mother wanted the UK to up its game in three distinct areas:

1. Sharing the faith, particularly through witnessing, but also through the 2nd generation members inheriting the foundation laid by the 1st generation pioneers
2. Helping Christianity fulfil its primary mission, which is to attend the marriage supper of the lamb and recognise True Parents as the returning Lord
3. Work with academics and professors to publish articles and create policies that will further the establishment of Cheon Il Guk, God's nation of peace and unity, on the earth.

With this in mind, I returned to the UK full of optimism. Even though we didn't make the cut this year, the UK could force itself into consideration for strategic nation designation next year, if we demonstrate a heart of filial devotion to God and True Parents. I felt from True Mother a yearning to see the UK realise its potential and make an offering befitting of our existing foundation. I believe that if we work together to make an offering acceptable to True Mother, not only will the heart of God and True Parents be comforted and uplifted, but we will position ourselves to be able to serve the worldwide providence more powerfully.

And that indeed would be of strategic importance.

*[The 13 nations shortlisted are: Nepal, Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia, Taiwan, Zambia, Kenya, DR Congo, Ivory Coast, Brazil, Paraguay, Dominican Republic and Albania.]*

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