

Alumni Discuss Civic Engagement at Values Voter Summit

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The Family Research Council's 10th annual three day leadership conference billed as the "Values Voter Summit" (VVS) Sept. 25-27 at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C., drew UTS alumni determined to make a difference in restoring culture in America, relating principled values to culture.

UTS alumni have long been putting in volunteer hours in civic engagement. As far back as October 1980 Jonathan Wells, Dan Stringer, Pamela (Valente) Kuhlmann, and Lloyd Eby as well as dozens of others put in many days, on their own time, canvassing for the Reagan campaign in New York. Alumni who held leadership roles in the American Freedom Coalition (AFC) and CAUSA International (Confederation of the Associations for the Unification of the Societies of the Americas) during the mid and late 1980s to the 1990s put in many weeks educating the public on the important issues in society. In 1987, CAUSA President, Dr. Bo Hi Pak, anointed several of these

activists as "Top Guns", after the 1986 movie of the same name starring Tom Cruise.

In recent months, UTS alumni have been among those on a conference-call prayer line with New Hope Family Church Assistant Pastor, Jim Boothby, brainstorming ways to be more active in civic engagement during the run up to the 2016 Presidential elections.

Rev. Ernest Patton (UTS Trustee), Dr. Michael Jenkins, Doug Burton, John Kung and Dr. Donna Ferrantello attended the VVS to hear from GOP Presidential candidates and activists engaged in the battle for conservative ideas. During meal breaks the alumni held discussions on how to leverage their seminary education in the arena of civic engagement. Other attendees included Tom McDevitt, Chairman of the Washington Times, Olga Kenedy, Rev. Jim Boothby, and Teresa Ledesma.

"It's high time for Unificationists to join the fight for America's soul," said Rev. Boothby, a former activist for AFC. He explained: "Though American life seems tranquil, a major war of ideas is being waged. Every area of American life is a battlefield – public policy, culture, and media. Hostility to Judeo-Christian culture has never been stronger. In many respects our side is losing."

The consensus of those alumni who attended the VVS was that a citizen network could make use of some of the special editorial materials in the Washington Times as a basis for educating the public on the issues. The UTS alumni participants at VVS have agreed to form an ad hoc working group that will create a networking system of communication to inspire civic engagement and responsibility. This project will share information and promote dialogue on important issues that have an impact upon society and national leadership. As Dr. Ferrantello noted, "By providing understanding of the issues with special respect to values of faith, family and freedoms, people will be more empowered to restore culture through civic engagement."

The meal-break discussions confirmed that Unificationist ideals support and strengthen civic engagement in our community life. As Tom McDevitt commented, "The Unificationist family pledge has mention of becoming "patriots for the nation" and "living for the sake of others."

Doug Burton wrote the following umbrella statement as a proposal for discussion:



From left: UTS alumni, Douglas Burton, John Kung and Donna Ferrantello, with fellow summit participants at the Omni Shoreham Hotel on Sept. 25, 2015.

“Unificationist religious values derived from the theology of the three blessings (Gen. 1:27) may lead to prosperous engagement in the election process. Unificationists honor the ideal of filial piety, which implies honoring the values of the American founders. Unificationists value the ideal of perfection of individuality and the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness as a goal of human development. Republicans value freedom and see the free enterprise system as the modality for gaining personal freedom and economic independence. Democrats value a managed economy that nurtures individual development and protects the vulnerable. These values are defensible.”

Rev. Boothby says that the upcoming election is too important for concerned religious people to ignore. He sums up the urgency of the campaign season this way: “Our children’s and grandchildren’s fate hangs in the balance. We should realize that America’s providential success is by no mean secure. There are signs of very serious difficulties. Our pro-God, pro-marriage, pro-religious freedom, and pro-first principles “ship” has taken on serious water. We must win this war of ideas.”

Any persons interested to join this initial working group for transforming America’s culture can get more information by contacting Rev. Boothby or the UTS alumni mentioned in this article.