

ACLCL's annual 2015 National Convocation in Las Vegas

Tom Cutts
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The American Clergy Leadership Conference held its annual 2015 National Convocation in Las Vegas from November 9 to 12 under the theme “Blessed Marriage and True Families: God’s Gateway to Heaven.”

The content of the program and the family-like fellowship were extremely well received.



Rev. Franklin and Larissa Fountain

Dr. Alice Hattley from Los Angeles stated, “This was the greatest convocation I have ever attended.”

Rev. Hudson W. Smith of Las Vegas commented, “It was extremely valuable and informative and good fellowship.”



Rev. Alvin Jones of Las Vegas said, “It was awesome to see all of God’s children come together in unity of the same spirit, and sharing with one another.”

Rev. Grover Durham from Los Angeles commented, “Excellent planning was put into this convocation. The speakers were well prepared and presented information from their experience and their heart with such great passion.”



Rev. Grover Durham

The convocation’s objective was to prepare pastors to give the Marriage Blessing in their own congregations and help other pastors give the Marriage Blessing.

Nearly a dozen new pastors who previously had not heard the Divine Principle attended the convocation. Also present were pastors who had participated in the founding of ACLC in Korea in 2000, and others who had participated in the 172 Christian clergy meetings with True Father and True Mother in Korea. The content appealed to both those who were new to ACLC and those who had participated for many

years.



The venue this year was the International Peace Education Center. The ACLC was the first large group to hold meetings in the Peace Center and stay in the hotel-quality rooms. This venue was especially appreciated. One pastor who had been to Las Vegas before was determined to never come again, but when he heard that the convocation would be held at the International Peace Education Center, he changed his mind.

The program began on the evening of Monday, November 9, with an opening dinner for 120 people. There were welcoming remarks from Dr. Michael Jenkins, ACLC chair emeritus; Rev. G. Augustus Stallings, ACLC national co-chair; Rev. Sulanch Rose, ACLC co-president; and Pastor T.L. Barrett, chair of the ACLC Founding Committee. All the speakers referred to Rev. and Mrs. Moon as the “True Parents” and spoke of their personal experiences with True Parents.



Rev. Sulanch Rose

Dr. Ki Hoon Kim, the national co-chair of ACLC, was the keynote speaker at the opening dinner. He

recalled True Father's commitment to working with Christian pastors. "In the 40 years I worked with True Father I never saw him happier than when he was working with religious leaders. Pastors and religious leaders are chosen and prepared by God to help save this country and the world."



Dr. Ki Hoon Kim

Dr. Kim reminded the audience of many incidents in which True Father related directly with the Christian pastors. After the successful True Family Values Banquet in Chicago in 1996, True Father called for a 50-state speaking tour. In 2011, True Father called 172 Christian pastors to Korea for 21 days. During this visit True Father and the clergy met a number of times, including a six-hour morning service. Because True Father still had more to share, he asked twelve of the ministers to stay for seven more days.

True Father gave a serious, passionate and determined talk. He spoke about his 40 years in the United States, a country God prepared. Dr. Kim said, "I never saw Father more serious in his entire life. It reminded me of the Last Supper, when Jesus met with his 12 disciples." True Father told the twelve, "Now you must carry on my mission and save this nation—a nation that is broken and falling apart. Who will save it?"



The morning of Wednesday, November 11 began with reading the first part of True Father's sermon "The View of the Principle of the Providential History of Salvation." This message established the framework for studying the Divine Principle chapters on the Principle of Creation and the Human Fall.

The Wednesday morning sessions comprised three presentations and a roundtable discussion. Dr. Jenkins spoke on "God's Original Design for Marriage." Rev. Michael Sykes gave a presentation on "What Went Wrong." Minister Zena Sykes, representing the ACLC Women in Ministry, addressed the topic of "The Ideal of Marriage and Family." Rev. Sykes is the New Jersey co-chair of ACLC. He and his wife, Minister Zena Sykes, pastor the United Missionary Baptist Church of East Orange, New Jersey.



Rev. Michael and Zena Sykes



These presentations were followed by roundtable discussions and reports from selected tables. This was a new feature to the ACLC Convocation. Rev. Tanya Edwards remarked, "I enjoyed the roundtable discussions." Rev. Dr. Damon S. Roach of Indianapolis found the roundtable discussions especially meaningful. Throughout the convocation, participants returned to the same group. That way they really

got to know each other. The pastors learned more about each other, their ministries, their needs and aspirations. The fellowship became very productive. Many valuable suggestions were generated through men and women of faith coming together in that format.



During the Wednesday afternoon sessions Christian pastors testified how the Marriage Blessing had transformed their own marriage and re-invigorated other couples of their congregations. Pastor T.L. Barrett, Rev. Jesse Edwards and Rev. Tanya Edwards, and Rev. and Mrs. Damon Roach of Indianapolis were the speakers.



Rev. Jesse Edwards and Pastor T.L. Barrett



Eric Garcia

The final presentation on Wednesday was given by Mr. Eric Garcia. He and his wife, Jennifer, are the co-founders of the Association of Marriage and Family Ministries. He emphasized the importance of marriage, affirming that “Healthy marriages produce strong families, since the family is anchored in marriage.” If we want to change the culture and strengthen families, he said, marriages have to be strengthened.

Mr. Garcia travels across America throughout the year speaking to hundreds of churches and pastors. He said he is usually the lone speaker on marriage, and was delighted and encouraged by the ACLC Convocation, because every session of the convocation dealt with the importance of marriage as designed by God.



On the morning of Thursday, November 12, the convocation completed the reading of “The View of the Principle of the Providential History of Salvation.” This portion of True Father’s speech discusses the providential victories of the women in Jesus’ lineage.

The morning sessions consisted of three presentations and roundtable discussions. Rev. Stallings presented “Christ: The Anointed One.” Dr. Jenkins spoke on “The Parallels of History.” Rev. Andrew Compton, the director of education at the International Peace Education Center, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the meaning and significance of the Marriage Blessing.



Rev. George Augustus Stallings



Dr. Michael Jenkins

After lunch, Rev. Stallings directed a demonstration of the Marriage Blessing. Two dozen couples received the Holy Wine and learned how to conduct the Marriage Blessing in their church.



The afternoon sessions concluded with presentations from Pastor Alan Plummer from Bethel Gospel Tabernacle in Jamaica, New York. He and his wife founded the Family Life Ministry 35 years ago. He gave an entertaining and instructive presentation about making marriage work.

Dr. Michael Ross, a medical doctor from Detroit and the director of Defending Our Father's House, gave a presentation entitled "A Tale of Two Cities." Detroit and El Paso, Texas, had similar demographics of poverty, violent crime and children born out of wedlock. Pastors in El Paso came together in prayer and established programs to encourage and strengthen marriages. This turned El Paso around to become one of the safest cities in the United States. Dr. Ross challenged ACLC to be the leading organization in America to bring marriage back to the nation.



Craig Williams and Dr. Ross

On Thursday morning the convocation watched the video “Stand for Family and Save the Nation.” This short film explained how the Lord has anointed pastors to give the Marriage Blessing to their congregations. Rev. Tom Cutts, the ACLC national executive director, gave a presentation explaining how 15 Christian churches held Marriage Blessings on October 3 and 4. Pastor T.L. Barrett explained how he had prepared his congregation to welcome the Marriage Blessing by establishing the “Millennials Marriage.” Adding together all the years of marriage in his congregation, they totaled around 450, so the congregation invited many other couples from the Chicago area to make up the 1,000 years of marriage.





Pastor T.L. Barrett and Rev. Tom Cutts

Before lunch, the participants related their experiences during the convocation and their determination to expand the Blessing in their city. Rev. Craig Williams of Las Vegas said that each year the convocation gets better and better, and “more effective in moving the hearts and minds of the religious leaders.”

Apostle Glenda Phillips-Lee of Bridgeport, Connecticut, commented, “Always amazing,” and her mother, Pastor Mary Williams Greene of Brooklyn, said, “It was remarkable.”

Rev. William Duke Allen of Memphis, Tennessee, appreciated the “inclusion and encouragement and accepting differences of those seeking wisdom and peace.”

Rev. Derry Kingsbury of Puerto Rico said, “There was a spirit of unity and harmony in all aspects of the convocation.”



When asked how she would improve the program, Rev. Betty Tatalajski of Tucson, Arizona, stated emphatically, “I wouldn’t dare to try to add to the experiences. It was truly priceless.”

Rev. Dr. Damon S. Roach of Indianapolis was grateful for the experience: “I thank God for our coming together.”

Pastor Gale Oliver of Santa Ana, California, felt the convocation “was awesome and it was truly a blessing to be a part of it.”

Rev. Dr. Willie Weston from Chicago commented, “This was the best. Very spiritually uplifting, and truly edifying.”

