

## Days of Blessing in the United States

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*The Blessing ceremony at the International Peace Education center in Las Vegas*

On Saturday, October 3, America celebrated the marriage blessing in churches and congregations all around the country as 123 couples rededicated their marriages before God and True Parents and began their journey in marriage as blessed couples.

A major celebration took place at the International Peace Education Center in Las Vegas, Nevada. There, thirty-six couples, including three newlywed couples, participated in a marriage rededication Blessing Ceremony, in the presence of hundreds of their friends, relatives and fellow community members. Dr. and Mrs. Ki Hoon Kim officiated the program.

The involvement of both civic and religious leaders created an exciting dynamic during this universal ceremony for all faiths. All resonated with the theme of reclaiming marriage in God's image.

The Blessing was followed by a gala luncheon on the second floor of the IPEC. During the luncheon, all the civic leaders and many of the religious leaders were able to share their impressions of the program. Many were so inspired by the day that they held Blessing Ceremonies in their own churches.

### **Northern Virginia**

The Northern Virginia Family Church hosted over a hundred people, including twenty guests, for a Blessing Ceremony. A young Unificationist couple and another couple, pastors of the Bible Way Church in Fairfax, Virginia, received the blessing. Participants enjoyed a wonderful dinner, congratulatory remarks and a remarkable ballet performance by a young Unificationist from the Kirov Academy of Ballet. The entire day was a beautiful tribute to Heavenly Parent and True Parents.

### **Berkeley, California**

At a house used by True Parents, two couples received the Blessing on October 3. With a backdrop of the Golden Gate Bridge, surrounded by family and friends, Gabriel Pugnoli and Molly Adshead, and Hyojin Light and Kairene Posas, committed their lives to God and each other and to building true families in service to the world. "Thank you, True Parents, for making the Blessing a possibility for myself and Kairene," said Hyojin Light.

It was a lovely, simple ceremony, but with the same dignity as if True Parents were physically there. Forty guests welcomed and cheered on the couples. "I felt as if God smiled down in contentment," said Satomi Adshead, Molly's mother, "watching the lineage continue and feeling so much hope for the future."

### **Detroit, Michigan**

Two couples participated in the Holy Wine and Blessing Ceremonies in Detroit. The whole congregation enjoyed the day and had a wonderful experience. The next day, Rev. Willie Downer of Greater Love Missionary Baptist Church invited Detroit Unificationists to conduct the Blessing Ceremony as a part of his church service. After Rev. Downer's sermon on the coming kingdom of heaven, he turned the service over to Rev. David Kasbow, who opened with a reading of Gen. 1:28.

After explaining God's original desire to bless Adam and Eve, he spoke about the basics of the Fall and how Rev. and Mrs. Moon had initiated the Holy Wine Ceremony with Jesus' guidance to "reverse the curse." After he demonstrated how to take the communion of Holy Wine, all the married couples drank the Holy Wine. Following the Blessing Ceremony, a Unificationist choir sang "Song of the Banquet."

### **Seattle, Washington**

On a beautiful Sunday morning, October 4, Seattle Unificationists celebrated a marriage rededication ceremony at the Day Star Baptist Church in Renton, Washington. Rev. Donald Ward Sr. gave a wonderful Divine Principle-centered sermon on the family titled "The Enemy of the Families," in which he talked about five enemies of churches and families and encouraged all married couples to be transparent with their belief in their daily family life. A simple ceremony followed in which six couples rededicated their marriage.



*Couples in Los Angeles, California*

### **Clifton, New Jersey**

Two couples participated in a Blessing Ceremony at the Clifton Family Church in New Jersey. Dr. Michael Balcomb, President of FFWPU USA, and Mrs. Fumiko Balcomb, officiated the ceremony and gave a congratulatory message.

### **Baltimore, Maryland**

A Blessing Ceremony took place in Baltimore, Maryland, on October 4 at the Rehoboth Church of Christ Apostolic. Ten couples rededicated their marriages. The service was officiated by Rev. James and Matilda Steward, pastors of the Baltimore Family Church. FFWPU District 1 Pastor, Rev. Ernest Patton, was master of ceremonies. Rev. Keith G. Allen and Mrs. Paulette Allen had received the blessing in Las Vegas the day before and returned to lead their congregation through the Blessing Ceremony there.

### **Sioux Falls, South Dakota**

One couple in Sioux Falls, South Dakota received the Holy Marriage Blessing. Rev. Dennis and Mayuri Hoffman officiated the ceremony.

### **Chicago, Illinois**

On Sunday, October 4 at the Christian Unity Pentecostal Church, Pastor Maxine Williams hosted an event at which thirty-four people, one-third of whom were married, received the Holy Wine. Rev. Ken and Kazumi Murray officiated the ceremony, and all couples enthusiastically affirmed "yes" to the four vows and affirmations of purity and true love. Everyone exuded happiness, high spirits and gratitude toward True Parents. Pastor Williams closed the event with a prayer.

### **Gladstone, Missouri**

Kingdom of Faith and Restoration Church in Gladstone, Missouri hosted a Blessing Ceremony. Juan and Lay Choo Acosta officiated and Bill Dellinger coordinated the event. Pastor Dean P. Scott gave a powerful sermon about family. "Everyone's faces were shining after his sermon," said Rev. Acosta. And Rev. and Mrs. Acosta blessed the pastor and his wife first, then offered them flowers and asked them to

bless the congregation. The spirit was bright and prayerful.

### **Louisville, Kentucky**

On Sunday, October 4, the New Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky held a Blessing Ceremony at their Sunday worship service. Pastor James Elliott opened with a talk about the many experiences he has had with the American Clergy Leadership Conference and True Father.

At the close of Sunday Service, fifteen couples and thirty-six single people attended the ceremony. Rev. Elliott called the married couples, single people, widows and divorced members of the congregation. Rev. Elliott and his wife, representing True Parents, administered the Holy Wine, recited the vows for married couples and for single people and gave the blessing prayer.

### **Lakeland, Florida**

On October 3, thirteen couples, members of the clergy, went through the Blessing Ceremony in Lakeland, Florida at the First Baptist Institutional Church, answering the call for a national, interfaith revival of the institution of marriage and families centered on God. Rev. Isabelle Davati officiated the ceremony, asking couples to take a public stand for God-centered married couples and individuals.

### **Winter Haven, Florida**

One of the pastors attending the Lakeland Blessing Ceremony, Rev. George Bing, liked it so much that he invited Rev. Davati to come to his church the next day and perform a Blessing Ceremony for his members. She Blessed eight couples at the Abundant Life Ministries International in Winter Haven, Florida.

### **Los Angeles, California**

The Holy Spirit showed up in an incredible way at the Blessing of Marriage and Family on October 3 in South Central Los Angeles. Four couples and several single people preparing for a blessed marriage, met under a large tent in the parking lot of Mt. Pleasant Hill MBC for a Gospel Peace Festival and Blessing Ceremony. "I felt such a sense of reconciliation, closeness and family between all who attended," said Unificationist Carol Tahkar. "We are building a strong foundation for peace and love."

### **Yonkers, New York**

On October 4, 2015, 35 people in the Yonkers First Arabic Baptist Church held a Blessing Ceremony. Mrs. Julia Okamoto welcomed everyone warmly and introduced the co-pastor, Rev. Emma Loftin-Woods, who greeted everyone and thanked everyone for joining this service.

Rabbi Sarah Hadassah, Founder of Lion of Judah Hebrew Saphardic Union, rendered a prayer, bestowing grace and blessings to everyone in attendance. Kyoko Tachinaka of the West Rock Family Church sang beautifully, the historic and meaningful "Song of the Banquet". Through words, prayers and song, the atmosphere lifted to receive the message given by Rev. Jesse Edwards, ACLC National Evangelist, fresh from Las Vegas where another Marriage Blessing Ceremony had just taken place.

Rev. Jesse Edwards encouraged everyone to think beyond the conventional understanding of the life and death of Jesus. His sermon was a collection of questions that very few of the faithful ever really considered. "What if Jesus didn't die? What if he had married?" "What if they had a child-would that child be sinless?" These were some of the challenging questions posed to the congregation. Rev. Bruce and Debby Grodner then officiated the Blessing Ceremony.