

Family Federation Is Not a Church

Eugene Harnett
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Four years ago, in October 2013, then-President Dr. Michael Balcomb circulated a "National Charter" for the Family Federation for World Peace USA, which was adopted. It set forth the structure for Local Family churches as well as purposes and policies for Districts and the National Council of FFWPU.

The Family Federation's National Charter in America currently is written using sectarian language. It refers to local bodies as "churches" and local leaders as "pastors." Thus, it gives definition to our national movement, leaders and members, and provides direction for who we are and how we operate. Without saying so outright, by default it affirms the Family Federation is a church.

Our organization's mission is broad. The language it uses to define its functions and bind its members must also be broad and inclusive to reach out to the family of humankind in a welcoming manner. However, we use language that shapes us as a church in the pattern of Christianity, putting us in a sectarian box and making it difficult to act and grow beyond our sectarian nature.

Being defined as a church is a hindrance to the development of our family movement in America. It was appropriate for a time in history when we had to restore Christianity's failure. That time has passed. In our founder, Rev. Sun Myung Moon's words, "The reason I brought an end to our 'church' and established the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification is because the time had come to focus on the family." (*Pyeong Hwa Gyeong*, p. 1103)



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Further, he stated, "The time for me to lead the Unification Church has passed. Now is the time for horizontal expansion." (*Cheon Seong Gyeong*, 9.1.3.22) We may understand this to mean that the vertical responsibility of faith has been secured by the Unification Church and the Family Federation has a different mission to express the love of God in the world.

In 1993, Father Moon officially changed the name of the Unification Church to the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification. But the church nomenclature persisted. Thus, Mother Moon before Foundation Day reemphasized this prior change: "I am changing the name of the Unification Church to the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification." (*Cheon*

Seong Gyeong, 12.4.3.38)

It is time to amend our National Charter to be in alignment with True Parent's vision for the Unification movement, not to form a church but to establish one Family under God.

This proposed amendment to our National Charter removes the sectarian language of "church" and rewrites it in non-sectarian terms. First of all, it does not mean we become less spiritual or religious, nor that we stop teaching Divine Principle. It does not mean all Sunday services have to go. We are not talking about changing who we are but, instead, *how* we refer to ourselves.

We identify with being a church; that is acknowledged. This amendment runs against that grain. Father Moon said, "It is difficult to break a habit." (*Cheon Seong Gyeong*, 7.3.2.31) We habitually, even colloquially, call ourselves a church. It then becomes important to take a critical look at that habit. Even after True Father established us as the Family Federation in 1993, he continued to call us "church" himself.

But did he literally refer to us as a church? Or did he mean *kyo-hoi* in its original meaning as he stated in his autobiography:

"I do not like using the word *kyo-hoi* in its common usage to mean church. But I like its meaning from the original Chinese characters. *Kyo* means "to teach," and *hoi* means "gathering." The Korean word means, literally, "gathering for teaching." ... When the word church means a

gathering where spiritual fundamentals are taught, it has a good meaning. But the meaning of the word *kyo-hoi* does not provide any reason for people to share with each other. People in general do not use the word *kyo-hoi* with that meaning. I did not want to place ourselves in this separatist type of category. My hope was for the rise of a church without a denomination." (*As a Peace-Loving Global Citizen*, pp. 120-21)

Though we do not call ourselves the "Unification Church" any longer, we still refer to ourselves as a church. Sometimes we say we are the "Family Church," for example. Local Family Federation chapters may have adopted other names for themselves, yet our National Charter still refers to these local organizations as "churches."

When non-members, new members, and old members are asked their religious affiliation, it has become "Unificationism." Thus, we subtly have adopted a Christian denominational marker or the nomenclature of a denomination. It's natural for people to want to know what to call us. And we ourselves habitually and now comfortably refer to ourselves as a church.

If that is the direction our Family Federation leadership wants to take, then it needs to be clearly thought out. As we grow, we may have to shake the term at a later time; or let others continue to define us, as they did originally, calling us the Unification Church. Remember though, that was not the name Father Moon wanted us to be known as.

"The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity means an association, not a church. You must understand this clearly." (*God's Will and the World*, p. 563)

"The world has come to call us the Unification Church in place of our full name." (*Pyeong Hwa Gyeong*, pp. 266-67)

"My goal was never to build a church." (*Pyeong Hwa Gyeong*, p. 1064)

The world will define us as a church or a denomination, and may even point to our National Charter to affirm it. If it is not True Parent's intention to be known as founders of a church, then we need to start looking at how we may be inadvertently attaching that sectarian view to ourselves and True Parents.

The purpose of this charter amendment is not to just start the conversation on this topic but to invigorate our members to think bigger. Many early members joined when we were not called a church in America. They joined what was then called the "Unified Family." They called themselves "Family members." This term is immediately welcoming to all people, whether they belong to another church or not.

The Family Federation has a larger purpose than creating a church. True Parents have constantly urged us out of the church box to influence the entire society. It is more becoming of the Family Federation to be a broad organization, one that welcomes, supports and advocates for families in the world. Of course, we can continue to teach the principles of family life and the original design by which God created us. We can still teach about the Fall, Restoration, Christology, about all of Divine Principle, and the Blessing. We do not have to stop or change this aspect of education if we remove the vestige of the church nomenclature.

The idea that the Family Federation can be a hub of training and social involvement is central to who we are. This is our strong point. As a family-centric, social activist organization, our acceptance in the world will be more thorough than any church can ever be, even the Mormon Church or Catholic Church. They still retain their religious litmus test to be members. We should not have a religious litmus test for membership.

We need to find ways to bring our religious path into oneness with the secular path. The terminology of church confines us. Our message is one of unity or unification. How can we do that with the nomenclature of "church" on the doorposts of our members? As Rev. Moon stated in his autobiography:

"As soon as a person hangs a sign that says "church," he is making a distinction between church and not church. Taking something that is one and dividing it into two is not right. This was not my dream. It is not the path I chose to travel. If I need to take down that sign to save the nation or the world, I am ready to do so at any time." (pp. 120-21)

This may be why a breakdown in our church movement is occurring. It is not about members refusing to be members of the Family, but that members don't sense the organization represents them anymore. Good members do not skip Sunday Services because they dislike us; they skip services because they didn't join a church to begin with.

The Home Church providence and Tribal Messiah providence is where members may feel more aligned. Each one has their area of expertise, their area of influence, where they feel most comfortable. Shall we

give them reasons to stay connected to the Family Federation because the Family Federation is truly beyond the church level, welcoming all people without imposing religious doctrines? Or shall we give them excuses to stay disassociated because we act like another denominational church?



The Inaugural World Convention of the Family Federation for World Peace (FFWP) held in Washington, DC July 30 – August 1, 1996.

It is an eventuality, then, that if our organization tries to be like a Christian type of church, it will fade away. It is not about disunity, failure to love True Parents or rebellion. It is the natural course of events, especially considering Father's many words on the topic. And it is a good thing. We who remain loyal to the Family Federation, even as it exists as a church body, must applaud the many brothers and sisters who have decided to distance themselves from this quasi-church of ours. We must also give them a reason to participate with us anew in a dynamic way.

The saying goes, "If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it probably is a duck." If we act like a church, talk in church language, and refer to ourselves as a church, then no matter how much we say we are trans-denominational and universal in our appeal, we will still be a church in the minds of many people. This is an old habit that will not fall away easily.

If this message strikes a chord within you, you already resonate with many members of the Family Federation who feel the same. No doubt the proposed amendment to modify the language of our National Charter will invoke a nod of agreement from many Family Members.

By removing the sectarian language in our national charter, we will more accurately define the role of Family Federation members and leaders – which is a broad role, not defined solely by sectarian purposes – to be aligned with the vision of building one huge family of humankind under God. We will be an organization that attracts people of all faiths, not just Christians. And we will be welcomed by all society as a beneficial, family-centric force, not just a religious sect.

Here are reasons to change the language of our National Charter:

1. **The term "church" has connotations.** It refers only to religious denominational groups. Though Father colloquially often referred to us as "church," his definition could more be in line with the original intent of the word *kyo-hoi*, which means a place of gathering and teaching.
2. **It makes us compete with other churches.** Members of other churches include the good people we want to recruit; however, they do not necessarily look to join another church. We cannot and should not be trying to get them to leave their church to join ours. Secondly, by holding meeting times on Sunday, it makes our work of gathering God's children into a competition with other churches.
3. **The term "church" divides.** In Father's autobiography, he explains that using the term "church" immediately divides people between church and non-church people.
4. **HSA-UWC is an association** for uniting Christianity, not another church denomination.
5. **Father ended the Unification Church in 1996.**

6. **Mother removed our Unification Church name in 2013.**
7. **Church requires religious adherence and worship.** Family is built upon love and attendance beyond any religious belief system. Unification Family members are religious in that we love God, love others and understand religious practice. It has special meaning to us, since we've practiced it so much in our movement until now. To say its time has gone is not simple.
8. **Church is about worship.** If you are a church in America, you are expected to lead worship services on Sunday. If we are a "church," then that's what's expected. Yet, Father didn't emphasize worship of God, but understanding the heart of God. That is so different. We relate better as Family members without focusing on worship of God.
9. **Church cannot unite Muslims, Buddhists, Baha'is.** In 30 years, studies predict the world Muslim population will exceed the Christian population. How well do Muslims welcome churches? If we are to influence the Islamic world, we will have a much better avenue through a family-centric than a church organization.
10. **Family is universal and accepting of all.** The divisions of the world do not exist in a family.
11. **Family members did not join a church when they originally joined.** We joined The Family.
12. **Family will broaden our community appeal.** The Family Federation by name has no opposition, no religious test, no political purpose, no divisive nature. In reality, it can be as welcomed and receptive in the community as any non-sectarian organization, like a Rotary Club or Lions Club.
13. **"Pastor" is a Christian term and has connotations.** Currently, a local leader is named specifically the "pastor." Pastor is restrictive in recruiting new leaders, who may have leadership qualities or drive but not necessarily see themselves as pastoring.
14. **Church-type activities and worship services can continue for those who want it.** Not everybody wants Sunday Service, but old customs exist and some people enjoy traditional services. Those things do not have to be discarded, yet they don't have to be the main meeting of the week.
15. **Family activities for learning and fellowship can be more diverse.** Father encouraged the formation of hobby and special interest groups, like the "Hiking Federation" or "Sport Fishing Association." These types of ministries (another term that carries church connotations) can include family-friendly, community gathering activities. Father encouraged reading even a short *Hoon Dok Hae* before those gatherings. They can be used to help teach Divine Principle as well.

Eugene Harnett currently serves on the FFWPU National Council representing the Northwest Region. He is a business owner in Alaska, father of five boys, and active in the local Family Federation in Anchorage.