

## FFWPU USA: How is a Unificationist funeral different?

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If you have ever been to a funeral service, you would see the familiar scene of black suits, black dresses, black umbrellas, and sad faces. Being at a funeral is just - sadness. Maybe you haven't lost someone close, but you can imagine the feeling of not seeing a loved one anymore.

You don't think of seeing white dresses, smiling faces, laughter, and tears of gratitude. Only lamenting their disappearance. However, in the Unificationist tradition, there is the term Seong Hwa (pronounced sohng-hwa), which means ascension into the spirit world. This new and profound teaching of Father and Mother Moon shows us that God as our eternal parent would like to live with us even after our physical lives on earth have ended. Therefore, the Seong Hwa ceremony performed by Unificationists is the honoring of the sacred transition of our spirit from our physical bodies into the eternal world of love - the spirit world. Father Moon described the Seong Hwa ceremony as such:

"The word 'death' is sacred. It is not a synonym for "sadness and suffering." [We] have created the term Seong Hwa (ascension) to explain the true significance of death. The moment we enter the spirit world should be a time that we enter a world of joy and victory with the fruits born of our lives on earth. It is a time for those of us remaining on earth to send off the departed with joy. It should be a time for great celebration. We should be shedding tears of joy instead of tears of sadness. That is the way of the sacred and noble Seong Hwa Ceremony, the first step the spirit of the departed takes toward enjoying eternal life in attendance of God, within His embrace. "

- Rev. Sun Myung Moon

Just as a fetus develops its heart, brain, fingers, and lungs to prepare for the world outside of the mother's womb, our physical life is preparation for the spirit world. That is what Father Moon means when we "celebrate the fruits born of our lives on earth." We must develop our lungs of love by growing our hearts.

I have been to a funeral service. In fact, I have been to several Seong Hwa ceremonies. Each one was a beautiful testament to that person's victories on earth. The last one I went to was my younger brother Akinobu's. Yes, there is sadness and grief. There was also the taste of regret for not spending enough time with him when he was alive. Despite all that, there was an immense celebration for the life my little brother led. A life battling anxiety yet conquering those fears. At his Seong Hwa ceremony, his family and friends defined him as a man bold enough to keep fighting for his dreams. We celebrated the fruits of his physical life on earth by listening to the countless testimonies of people touched by his courage.



My friends who were unfamiliar with a Seong Hwa ceremony told me how touched they were with the love in the room. It strengthened my views on Father and Mother Moon's teachings. It allowed me to understand that the question is not when we will die or how successful we were materially. The question we must ask ourselves every day is how we were able to grow our lungs of love. Because that is the only thing we may take with us into our next life. The pain we feel when we lose a loved one is a testament to the love we experienced with them. What kind of testimonies will the people around you give at your Seong Hwa ceremony?