

## Members Experiment with Part-time Pastors in Maryland and Ohio

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*Miilhan and Sayaka Stephens*



*Gregg and Kyoho Jones*



*Jim Boothby*

Two Unification churches in Maryland and Columbus, Ohio have begun an experiment with a new pastor model. In District 1, Maryland adopted a part-time pastor model and in District 6, Unification Church Columbus in Columbus, Ohio launched a pastor team.

The Maryland Family Church has experimented with a part time pastor team since January 2013. Head pastor Miilhan Stephens, 25, was nominated by the elected Maryland church council and approved by the district pastors in March 2013. Pastor Stephens works full-time for a federal agency 40-hours a week and runs the pastoral team as a side job. He is supported by assistant pastors Gregg and Kyoho Jones, outreach pastor, Jim Boothby, youth minister Kaeleigh Moffitt and young adult minister Cynthia Jones.



*Kaeleigh Moffitt*



*Cynthia Jones*



*Josef Schrattecker and his wife*

“Over the past 4 months I’ve learned that God is alive more than ever when we work in numbers and this pastor model exemplifies that,” wrote Pastor Stephens in an e-mail to Unification News. “It does present challenges because we run into several differing opinions within the core team, but the amazing creativity from input completely outweighs that problem.”

The Maryland church council had concluded already in 2011 that a congregation of 1,000 members spread out over a wide geographical area was too much of a burden for one full time pastor. “Why expect just one guy to take care of 1,200 people?” formal council chairman Boothby had asked. “It is far better to have a team of part time pastors who can specialize in well-defined areas, including outreach,” he told his colleagues. The pastoral team members meet with Pastor Stephens every Wednesday evening to plan Sunday services and outreach events. Maryland church’s upcoming event is an open house and pancake brunch planned for May 12th, Mother’s Day. Pastor Stephens and Pastor Boothby started going door-to-

door in the neighborhood around New Hope Academy on April 14, 2013. Their plan is to create several special events and celebrations that could become portals for new members.



*David Young*



*Yusun Abrahams*



*Rev. Michael Lamson and his wife*

As district pastor of District 6, Rev. Michael Lamson, learned that ministry is difficult. “There is a complex web of church and community constituents that constantly need attention,” he wrote. “There is a never ending string of needs. How easy it is for a pastor to be consumed in organizational maintenance and never get to the proactive things needed to move ahead.”

With this concern, he and the district council worked with each community to set up local councils and to elect pastors.

In Columbus, Ohio three members that wanted to be pastors, Josef Schrattenecker, an elder leader and former state leader of Ohio, David Young and Yusun Abrahams, both college-age second-generation Unificationists, came together and decided to enter the pastor election as a team. “Members at first had a little difficulty with the concept of a pastor team but most voted for the team and many commented on getting three pastors for the price of one,” wrote Rev. Lamson. “Now after a few months things are working amazingly well.”

“Here at Unification Church Columbus, having a Pastoral Team has allowed us to blossom in unique ways and also lighten the leadership load for any one person,” wrote Lamson. He continued: “A few of the benefits: it allows us to organize more efficiently. Having three different pastors allows us to work on different aspects of ministry with greater focus. We are able to work deeper because we are spreading one person too thin. It allows us to be in more than one place at the same time. This is extremely helpful for meetings, counseling and care. In addition, some people in the community feel more called to speak with one pastor than another, so you're able to reach more types of people because you have more than one type of pastor. It saves a lot of stress. The pastor position has one of the highest turn-over rates of all of occupations. Having a team or co-pastors allows the load to be lightened for one person. “

The goal for District 6 is to move all communities into a similar inter-generational pastoral team adopted by Unification Church Columbus, concluded Rev. Lamson.