

Moving Pictures: Letting the Blessing Speak for Itself - How one brother's vision and desire to make a difference inspired a film

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From left to right: Chris, Une, Andrew Davies, and Dr. Chang-shik Yang with True Father.

So finally, the program is finished - and only twenty years in the making! That's roughly how long I have wanted to make a film like this and, perhaps not surprisingly, roughly how long I have been in the church. I have had many program ideas over the years. This one came whilst attending a workshop at Cheong Pyeong in January. I had flown in from England and was extremely fortunate to find most New York church members already there.

One evening, Dr. Yang, Rev. Mike Jenkins, and Archbishop George Stallings gave a presentation about the upcoming April 27 blessing event. Now, I don't know which planet I had been living on, but I had never heard of the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC). I was flabbergasted when they explained what was going on across America. This, I thought, would make one amazing documentary.

I knew the blessing ceremony would be recorded anyway, but I was interested in the story behind the event; what it would take to pull it all together; who the main characters behind it were, and so on. Certainly, if such a program were ever to reach a broadcast audience, that human story would be their point of interest. Also, I was still feeling pretty mad about a BBC program, part of a series called "Reputations" that had recently aired in Britain. This was another media hatchet job that bore no resemblance to the movement I knew. So here, I thought, was a story crying out to be told.

Despite having contracted pneumonia in Korea, I came back to England inspired. As soon as I was well enough, I put a program proposal together. Of course, I had no idea where it would lead, but I started to e-mail anyone I thought might be interested in it.

It had been ten years since I graduated from U.T.S. Over the ensuing years, I worked professionally in England as a video director and producer, which is good for gaining all sorts of production experience, but not good for being remembered by anyone in the American Church. I was lucky, however, in those six months earlier I had met up with sympathetic fellow Briton, U.T.S. graduate - now a World CARP vice president - Mike Balcomb, at a U.T.S. reunion. It is quite clear that without him as producer this program would have remained just another good idea.

Still, it took many more months to secure any funding for the project, and all the time we were getting nearer and nearer to the April event. My first choice for cameraman had always been a second-generation member called Une (pronounced You-nee) Herzer, whom I had worked with on numerous productions. At the time, I thought he was living in Australia, but, amazingly, at the end of March I received a call from him saying he had just moved back to the U.K. My ever-intuitive wife took this as a sign that the whole project was going to work out after all.

Only three days after the welcome go-ahead finally came, I found myself sitting on a plane bound for San Francisco with Une and my brother, Chris, who was a soundman as well as the main program editor. At the same time, Australian director Simon Kinney was taking another crew down to Miami. Up to that point, all my energy had been spent on trying to get the project off the ground, now I felt the weighty responsibility of delivering the goods.

We hit the ground running. After a quick equipment check in the airport parking lot, we were whisked off by one brother to our first location - a small but friendly church in Oakland. That first day lasted twenty-five hours for us, as England is eight hours behind California. Actually, the succeeding days only got slightly easier; it was adrenalin and, I am sure, a lot of help from the spirit world, that kept us going through the next two weeks.

The next morning we filmed Rev. Dr. Charles Kenyatta at a prayer breakfast in the Bay Area. He was once an aide to Malcolm X. More recently, he was chosen by Father to be one of the national evangelists for the blessing. I must confess that to begin with I still didn't know what he looked like, so Une and I anxiously scanned the tables trying to guess who to point the camera at! No one was quite sure who we were either; we received a fair amount of persecution from members who mistook us for the BBC. That same morning a couple of disapproving sisters shouted at us, "Make sure you tell the truth now!" Afterward, we flew with Rev. Kenyatta and his wife-to-be down to Las Vegas for an evening revival meeting.

In an extraordinary first week, we crisscrossed America - San Francisco, Las Vegas, San Jose, Sacramento, Oklahoma, Chicago, and New York. At the same time, Simon's crew followed Archbishop Stallings down to Miami, Atlanta, and Washington D.C. Each time we flew, which was every day, we had to check thirteen flight cases and luggage through security and, nowadays in America, that meant three times in every airport - right down to taking our shoes off.

Throughout all this, Mike Balcomb remained at his "mission control" in Ossining, NY, fixing up flights, accommodations, ground transportation, and appointments for both crews. Rapidly diminishing funds meant that in the second week, just our crew remained to cover New York and Washington D.C., including the main event itself.

On one occasion, we went to East Garden to film Archbishop Stallings and Dr. Kenyatta reporting to Father about successfully completing their speaking tours. At the end, U.S. continental director Dr. Yang Chang-shik introduced us to Father and explained about our film. Father said we should make sure it is a "number one" film and that it gets shown around the world.

We had so many adventures and met so many fascinating people during that time. At the end of it, we had amassed more than eighty hours of footage that had to be edited down into a film of less than an hour in length. How we did that was far less exciting, but even more challenging than the filming itself.

In order not to make the program sound propagandist, I decided not to use a narrator. Instead, the story is told through the authentic voices of the many pastors, rabbis and imams involved, as well as some of the key staff members - not least the amazing Japanese sisters who contributed so much to the April 27 event's success. The program tells the moving story of the struggles and sacrifices they have faced to come this far. There was opposition to the event, and I thought it made it more real to let the protesters have their say too.

The program had its world premiere at the recent minister's workshop in Ocean City, Maryland. The showing was slightly later than planned as we first went to Ocean City, New Jersey (two States north) in error! That day happened to be my birthday also, so to hear the ministers respond so well was a truly wonderful present.

I still find it hard to believe that the whole project actually came together. Above anything else, I feel extraordinarily privileged to have been able to experience and record this historic moment when Christianity finally, substantially began to receive Father.

I'm just very glad that my wife talked me into going to Cheong Pyeong.

[Andrew passed away from cancer in 2022](#). Republishing this story serves as a heartfelt memory of him. Andrew and his wife Ingrid were among the 1,275 couples blessed in 1989.