

70 Unificationists Gather for National Level 2 Blessing Workshop at UTS

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UTS Conference Center



“This workshop was really amazing and deeply affected me. I’m glad to have gained a deep understanding of the Matching and Blessing – I feel truly inspired and supported by God and the Blessing leadership. Honestly – thank you so, so much.” – Jenny

On October 3rd – 5th the National Blessing and Family Ministry (BFM) conducted a Level 2 Blessing Workshop in Barrytown, New York, at the picturesque and historical Unification Theological Seminary (UTS). Completion of Level 2 Blessing education is required in order to become a candidate for the matching and attend the Holy Marriage Blessing Ceremony. It is open to anyone preparing to begin the matching process, or interested in learning more about the matching process. Parents, matching advisors, and ministry leaders wanting to support matching candidates, or learn how to host a local Level 2 Blessing Workshop are also welcome.



The workshop was refreshingly diverse in its participants, with 46 young adults born into the Unification tradition, 11 new Unificationist members, and 8 parents of participants, matching advisors and ministry leaders, culminating to a total of 65 participants. While the majority of the participants traveled from the nearby North East states, participants also traveled from as far as the deep South, the Midwest, and Canada, totaling ten different states.



Staff members for the workshop included: Crescentia DeGoede *BFM Director*, Debby Gullery *BFM Consultant*, Benjy Uyama *BFM Project Coordinator*, Esther Flores *BFM Logistical Coordinator*, Jessica Sattinger *BFM Intern*, and Toshi Tagawa *HQ Media Support*.



Participants had the following to say about their overall experience at the workshop:

“Provides the space where you can really think about the matching and Blessing. There are loads of resources and people to talk to who can help you.” – Kent

“The information was useful and relatable. Helped me understand where I am in my life of faith and how I feel about the Blessing.” – David

“This was a very helpful workshop, and the positivity of the staff was very comforting. It gave me the feeling that someone is always willing to help.” – Naomi



The workshop began on Friday evening with a presentation from Debby Gullery on *What Do I Bring to the Table?* In the presentation Debby introduced and expanded on four areas in which a participant can reflect and work on to prepare internally for the matching process and marriage. The four main areas covered were faith, motivation, maturity and the capacity to love. Following the presentation, participants filled out a questionnaire about their vision, values, life purpose, lifestyle, relationships with others, and ability to communicate effectively. After completing the questionnaire, participants met together to discuss the content of the presentation and responses to their questionnaires. Based on their experience with this part of the workshop, participants shared that:



“I want to work on growing myself, finding my core values, beliefs and principles, and applying them to my life. Definitely knowing what they are will be helpful in growing as an individual.” – Jonathan

“I grasped the idea that you need to be very honest with yourself about what you want, what your values are, what your goals are; and that self-reflection is key in preparing for the matching.” - Hana

“I need to understand my value in order to truly love someone else” – Alex



Day 2 of the workshop began with a presentation from Crescentia DeGoede on *Matching Smarts*. During the presentation Crescentia encouraged participants to consider their own blocks and concepts that might interfere with or confuse the matching process for them. Several common challenging situations matching candidates face were presented, and participants had the opportunity to discuss each one, and suggest possible solutions throughout the presentation.



Immediately following the *Matching Smarts* presentation, participants met in groups with their gender and discussed some of the concerns they have about the matching process and challenges they face in feeling prepared for the matching and Blessing, as well as, shared ideas for how to address challenges. Participants appreciated the time to connect with their own gender and discuss some sensitive issues with one another.



After enjoying some recreation and relaxation in the early afternoon, participants listened to a presentation from Debby Gullery on *My Heritage, My Legacy*, which explored the meaning and the value of lineage and the Marriage Blessing, and encouraged participants to reflect on what kind of legacy they want to leave behind in their life. Some reflections on the presentation:

“Brought me back to my beliefs and why I chose this path, making things a lot more clear. The Blessing is not just to make ourselves and our parents happy but to make God happy and that the choices we make shape our legacy/lineage.” - Chiaki

“Helped change my perspective on what the Blessing is and what it signifies. Clarified steps towards the Blessing, my motivation for the Blessing, and the type of legacy I want to build.” – Kevin



Participants spent the evening listening to testimonies from Blessed young adults, Justin Okamoto, Honey Fong and Chigo Ahunanya, about their unique matching processes. Through their testimonies Justin, Honey and Chigo were able to impart the wisdom they have accumulated through their experiences with

the matching process and Blessing, as well as, dispel some of the fears participants had about their own future processes. These testimonies were a huge hit with the participants.

“The testimonies were the most meaningful because it gave us a real life example to help see how the matching process works and what worked for these couples and what didn’t work.” – Isaac

“I was able to get helpful tips on what I can work on myself. Seeing that they’re happy gives me a lot of hope and excitement for when it’s my turn.” - Yasu



Day 3 closed with a morning session on *Understanding the Matching Process*, which included a presentation, Q & A and discussion. For this session, participants attended either a presentation on the Family Matching Process given by Crescentia DeGoede or the Matching Process for First Generation Unificationists given by Debby Gullery. Both presentations outlined the stages and steps of the matching process, and offered ideas and suggestions for how candidates and their parents/matching advisors can develop a clear plan for approaching the matching process. Participants felt these presentations were:

“Very useful for getting the basis of what a matching and Blessing looks like and figuring out how to prepare.” – Aidan

“Extremely valuable to people, like me, who know little to nothing about the matching process.” - Juliana

The BFM staff is grateful to all those who participated in this workshop and contributed to its success, and look forward to continuing to serve the members of the Unification community. They wish the very best to each workshop participant on their journey towards the Blessing, and offer their continued support every step of the way.

Additional Resources Available

Level 2 Blessing Workshop Curriculum

All of the power point slides used to give the presentations for this workshop, presenter scripts for each presentation, and a workshop manual are included in the Level 2 Blessing Workshop Curriculum package for ministry leaders. With this curriculum, Level 2 Blessing workshops can be hosted on a local level, without the presence of the National BFM Team. The hope is to see many Level 2 Blessing Workshops happening locally throughout the nation. Ministry leaders who are interested in hosting a workshop are encouraged to take advantage of this curriculum, which will be available for purchase on hsabooks.com by Nov. 1st.



Matching Handbooks

During the workshop, participants were able to purchase the *Family Matching Handbook* in English or Japanese, as well as, *Finding the One: A Guide to Matching and Blessing in the Unification Tradition* (matching handbook for First Generation Unificationists). These handbooks provide clear, step-by-step guidance for navigating the matching process. The *Family Matching Handbook* in English and Japanese is currently available online at hsabooks.com. *Finding the One: A Guide to Matching and Blessing in the Unification Tradition* will be available on hsabooks.com by Nov. 1st.

Photos by Toshi Tagawa