

Detroit Unification Church Honors Sun Myung Moon with Unity Walk and Tribute

David Kasbow
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Most of the participants of the Unity March for the city of Detroit and its suburbs attended the tribute service for Father Moon's memorial ceremony.

The following is a report from Pastor David Kasbow about his initial hesitation and following about-turn when he realized the media and guest-friendly nature of a march organized together on the day of Father Moon's first ascension anniversary with friends of the Unification movement. The aim of the march was to spread awareness for the unification of the city of Detroit and suburbs as a way of honoring the first anniversary of Sun Myung Moon's Seonghwa (Ascension), which it succeeded in doing with the broadcast of TV news reports aired on the evening news on August 22, 2013.

Father Lawrence Ventline, is a friend of our Unification movement and quite an activist in his own right. He is on the go constantly, creating interfaith and community activities, events and programs. We support him as much as we can, but we cannot keep up with everything he is doing. So, when he suggested a march for unity between the city [of Detroit] and suburbs, I kindly refused, for two reasons. First, we already had a prayer breakfast scheduled for the same week as his proposed date of Thursday, August 22, 2012. Second, I did not want to hurt his feelings but I had to explain to him that marches do not accomplish anything substantial. I reminded him of our view, at least my view, that restoring the community can only be achieved by restoring its families.



Pastor David Kasbow (far right) and marchers at the Unity parade on Memphis St. at Studebaker in Detroit on Aug. 22, 2013.

However, when he told me the march would take place on Van Dyke Avenue. I had to reconsider. Van Dyke Avenue is just blocks from our church, so I felt we should support his effort in some way. At our church-board meeting I explained the situation to our members. We concluded that since it is near our church, it would be good for us to at least support the march by hosting a meal for everyone after the event was finished. We also offered to shuttle the marchers to the march from our church parking lot. In Father Ventline's committee meetings they planned the program for noon, so we planned for a light lunch for everyone.

At Father Ventline's next committee meeting, however, some said it would be more convenient for everyone to hold the event after work so he, and they, decided to change the time to 6:00 p.m. When I heard this I asked him, "What date is that again?" Only when he reminded me that it would be on Thursday Aug. 22nd did it dawn on me what might be happening here. I had just seen the e-mail with the information about the live broadcast of Father's *Seonghwa* [Acension] Memorial Ceremony on the 22nd at 9:00 p.m. It suddenly became very clear. Their march would be taking place at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, Aug. 22nd the exact same evening as the live broadcast of Father's *Seonghwa*. I began to think that although I had opposed this march, God was doing something here. Maybe 40 or 50 people would be coming to our church just before the live program from Korea begins.

I began to take his committee meetings more seriously. I asked Father Ventline more specific question about what the plan for messages and music for the march. I assumed they would have speeches on the street at the conclusion of the march. He said, "No, we want to do this at your church." "Oh, OK," I said. So, the Sunday before the event he and I sketched out a program of interfaith prayers, messages and a call to action. With a program now scheduled at our church, I thought I had better explain to him the full scope of what would be happening that evening. I explained about Father Moon passing exactly one year earlier, about the 9:00 p.m. live broadcast and about a special video of Father Moon's life

that would be part of the program. He was open to all of it.



Marchers with casket carrying the message: "Bury Racism Uplift Love." At far left with megaphone, Rev. Sidney Griffin, Fr. Lawrence Ventline, behind the casket State Senator Steve Beida, at far right, Imam Arif Huskic.

So, we did it. We gathered on Van Dyke Ave, in Detroit on the south side of 8 Mile, the dividing line between Detroit and its suburbs. The march began with prayers for the city of Detroit and Warren, its neighbor. The group then began its march north across 8 Mile into Warren. Leading the March was Rev. Sidney Griffin, pastor, community leader and former marine. Joining the march was State Senator Steven Bieda, plus representatives from Protestant and Catholic denominations and from Jewish, Hindu, and Muslim faiths. They carried a casket with a sign on the side, "Bury Racism, Uplift Love." We chanted this and other slogans as we moved up the street. The TV cameras showed up at the agreed-upon conclusion of the walk a half mile north of 8 Mile. They interviewed some of the marchers.

From this destination point the plan was for us to shuttle the group back to our church in our van. However, everyone was so inspired they decided to walk the two long blocks through the neighborhood. Some neighbors followed along. So did the TV news crew. They followed us right into our church and interviewed several of the pastors.



Members and friends of the Unification movement in Detroit, young and old, join together to watch the live broadcast and tribute video from Korea celebrating the life and work of Father Moon.

We gathered in our church sanctuary for an interfaith service with readings, prayers and messages from the faiths that assembled. It was at this point I explained to the group the interesting coincidence of them coming to our church on the very evening when Rev. Moon would be honored on the one-year anniversary of his passing. I asked them if they would join with us in honoring Rev. Moon by watching a video of his life. They welcomed this and were quite moved by what they saw. I then invited them to stay after dinner to watch the live broadcast of the ceremonies in Korea. Seven of our key pastors stayed for the broadcast. We helped them with commentary on the events they were seeing on the screen. If they were moved by the video, they were even more moved when they saw 25,000 people honoring Father at the Cheongshim Peace World Center. Many questions followed, and we had some good give and take as the program unfolded. One pastor said there was more to Rev. Moon than he thought.

Our movement in Michigan took a major step forward that evening. With the TV coverage on the 11:00 p.m. news, the march and its conclusion at Father Moon's memorial ceremony became a city-wide event. I was so encouraged, because we could not have planned what happened even if we tried. I reported to our members that I opposed the march but it seems God was determined to have it take place.