

Canada Celebrates True Parents' Birthday

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True Parents' Birthday is on February 13, and Unificationists around the world have begun to celebrate! Here is the latest from True Parents' Birthday, Canada-style:

Vancouver

Unificationists in the western Canadian city of Vancouver held their third public commemoration of True Parents' Birthday on Saturday evening, February 6, 2016.

The event was organized jointly by Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) and its affiliated organizations Universal Peace Federation (UPF) and Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP). Vancouver Pastor Rev. Katsumi Kambashi and local Unificationists worked together to create an important and memorable event.



As in the past two years, the community used the occasion to reach out to other religious leaders and families, introducing them to the Unificationist community and the teachings of True Parents. Once again, many UPF Ambassadors for Peace and representatives of local religious groups joined the celebration, learning more about True Parents' lifetime work to build a world of peace.

The featured speaker, FFWPU North American Continental Director Dr. Ki Hoon Kim, related how happy Mother Moon was when she heard about the gathering. He told the congregation that she was enthusiastic, and encouraged all communities to do the same.

Welcoming remarks were given by a local rabbi. The rabbi, who is a friend of Alan and Michiko Wilding, UPF directors for Western Canada, explained how dramatically his perspective on the Unification Movement changed once he learned the worldview of True Parents. He was particularly moved by the role the Holy Marriage Blessing plays in realizing world peace.

It was fitting to see the Marriage Blessing featured prominently at the event because of the importance True Parents have placed on it. Mr. John Abelseth, the Blessing and Family Ministry leader for Canada, explained more in depth about the meaning and process of the Blessing and some of his own personal experiences. A very touching video presentation of the 2012 Blessing in Korea was shown. Several of the young couples attending and supporting the event had been participants in that Blessing.

The organizers hope that everyone in the room, regardless of their cultural or religious traditions, was touched in some way by the knowledge of how present God can be in their life. Once again, it was a wonderful celebration, honoring the legacy of True Parents.

Toronto



Unificationists in Toronto combined a celebration of True Parents' Birthday with a Holy Marriage Blessing Ceremony on Saturday, February 6, 2016. The event was organized jointly by the local chapters of FFWPU, UPF and WFWP.

By midafternoon, the beautiful King's Garden Banquet Hall was buzzing with happy couples who had come to receive the Marriage Blessing.

The occasion began with the Blessing Ceremony, which was officiated by Dr. and Mrs. Moonshik Kim, president of FFWPU Canada. Rev. Paul T. Musembwa and Unity Chang, serving as emcees, embraced the participants with excitement and joy. Rev. John Funelas, a chaplain, offered the invocation. After the Holy Wine and Holy Water ceremonies, Martin Gray played "Song of the Banquet" on his violin. Rev. Stoyan Tadin, the director of the Toronto branch of UPF, offered congratulatory remarks to the newly blessed couples.

The musical offering, Holy Wine, exchange of rings, and messages about the Blessing moved the participants and guests alike. The faces of the newly blessed couples were beaming with joy.

"All of us were filled with gratitude for being able to offer these precious blessed couples as future citizens of the world," said Lily Tadin, president of WFWP-Canada. The community had spent months planning, educating and guiding the couples, she said. "It was a real testimony of faith and commitment." Rev. Mitch Dixon, the co-chair of UPF for Central Canada, added, "We know that we took the first steps in blessing sons and daughters of God, and it gave us confidence and reassurance that indeed it can be done."

After the ceremony, photos were taken of the happy couples with their families and friends.

The second half of the program began after dinner, with the celebration of True Parents' Birthday. The invocation was given by Paul T. Musembwa. Dr. Ki Hoon Kim spoke about True Parents' lives, showing images and video on a screen. For some participants, it was their first time hearing about True Parents'

life of sacrifice and their unyielding commitment to God and humanity. Some were so moved by the message that during the musical performances they were reading True Father's autobiography, *As a Peace-Loving Global Citizen*.



Martin Gray gave a beautiful performance on the violin of Partita No. 3 by Johann Sebastian Bach. Dr. Hoossen Auckbaraullee, the chair of UPF for the Toronto area, who had heard True Father speak numerous times in person, then gave congratulatory remarks for True Parents' Birthday.

The main highlight was the keynote address by Archbishop George Augustus Stallings Jr., the national co-chair of the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC), who had traveled from the United States to join the event. His passionate talk moved the crowd. Archbishop Stallings used the term "birthday" to emphasize the need to know our purpose, the reason we are born. He said before we are physical we are spiritual, meaning that we should place emphasis on our spiritual lives. Afterward quite a number of people said they were spiritually revived through his talk.

After the uplifting and inspiring talk by Archbishop Stallings, young adults Joshua Paghubasan and Hannah Winters offered flowers to True Parents. A birthday cake was cut, followed by the taking of a group photo.

Lilac Cana, a very talented performer, sang three beautiful songs. Her soprano voice moved the audience to their feet. The Second Generation Dance Team wowed the crowd with a performance of two dances. The dances were led by the young and very skilled dancers Eri Young and Hitomi Dixon. It was good to see the enthusiastic audience clapping and moving their bodies along with the performers.

A Filipino disc jockey hosted a dance afterward which went on until about 11 p.m. Both young and old found themselves on the floor dancing and singing. It was a wonderful way to celebrate True Parents' Birthday together with the community.