

Pastor Officiates Hometown Marriage Blessing Ceremonies

Norman Presley
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For 25 years, Norman Presley, a Unificationist from Kentucky, has been officiating Marriage Blessing Ceremonies of family members and friends in his Louisville hometown. It all started in 1991 when he moved back to his birthplace to reach out to people he knew during childhood. After introducing his own relatives to the Blessing in 1997, Norman met up with old friends and fellow musicians to share the ideals of the Unification movement. Over the years, Norman has reconnected with people at high school reunions, at band practice, and through word of mouth. When he had exhausted lists of people that he knew, he began to make new friends by going door-to-door.

Traditionally, the Marriage Blessing and Holy Wine Ceremonies are not legal weddings. People who receive the Holy Wine usually opt to have their own wedding at a later date. But Norman, who became a pastor of the Louisville Family Church in 2009, now has the ability to officiate legal marriages as well as Blessing ceremonies. Friends have asked Norman to officiate their own weddings and to include the Holy Wine Ceremony as part of the festivities. At a recent ceremony in which he married two couples, 35 guests joined in to receive the Holy Wine, which people drink to symbolically engraft themselves into God's lineage.

Norman believes that by reaching out to family and friends, anyone can become a spiritual leader. He hopes that by telling his story, he will inspire other Unificationists to share the beauty of the Blessing with their own communities. "Last week a fellow musician friend told me he would like to get married before the New Year and asked to do a ceremony right away," Norman said. At his friend's request, Norman met the couple in their living room to preside over their wedding. "We held the ceremony just before band practice," Norman shared.