

Interfaith Marriage Blessing at Third Street Bethel AME Church, Richmond, VA

F. George & Chiyomi Russell
March 25, 2017



A joyful spirit greeted Richmond, Virginia as the sun broke through several days of cloudiness to welcome the Interfaith Marriage Blessing. In the outreach efforts to prepare for the program (the first in Richmond on a public level), many Christian leaders were told that 'after 2,000 years of focus on the individual level of salvation, God is now moving His Providence to the level of 'Couple and Family' in order to complete the salvation process for humankind. And, that now, with the increasing decadence and dismantling of marriage and family, is the opportune time for Christian leaders and those of other faiths to make a firm and resolute stance to help restore God's first institution.'



The event was held at the Third Street Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church on Saturday, March 25 with mainly leaders of various Christian Churches, and other faiths groups. Rev. Veronica Carter, Associate Pastor of the host Church, gave the Invocation and welcomed everyone. The Christian group included Baptists, African Methodist Episcopalians, a Mormon High Priest (an Ambassador for Peace -AFP), representatives of the Temple of Judah Ministries (Non-Denomination), and a Catholic.

In addition, there were members from the Buddhist, Sikh and Hindu Communities, and a couple – Independent New Agers. The Muslim representative who was unable to attend, submitted a statement on the Islamic position on “Peace and Marriage.” This was read by Mr. Rodney Vaughan, one of our AFPs from the 144,000 Couples Blessing.



Overall, about 40 participants were present. The majority were married couples. Total couples represented were 18. (six – both partners present). New couples blessed were ten. Others rededicated their marriage.



In their presentations on the general theme: “Peace, Unity and Strong Families,” the speakers from the various faiths: Mr. Sanjay Thirunagari (AFP), President, Hindu Center of Virginia; Venerable Cang Kim (AFP), Abbot, Cambodian Buddhist Monastery of Richmond; Mr. Harpal Malik, Interfaith Coordinator, Sikh Association of Central Virginia; and Rev. Telesea Boynes, Associate Pastor, Great Hope Baptist Church, spoke to the common ground of peace, love and unity shared by all the world’s religions. They enlightened everyone on the paramount significance of marriage that expresses not only the union of one man and one woman, but also is an enactment of a covenant with God and the joining of two lineages of families.

The Moderator, Rev. F. George Russell, Director of UPF-VA, at varying times, shared great insights and wisdom from Rev. Moon’s words on the theme. He drew attention to the fact that marriage was not about ‘one plus one being two’, but ‘half plus half being one;’ in that, marriage is to complete one’s individuality through one’s spouse so that human beings can stand as the perfection of the image of God.



The event was primarily the effort of the Russell Tribe, with son, Mr. William Russell making a special trip from Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. to contribute to True Mother’s call for a victorious three-year course of Tribal Messiahship in accomplishing Vision 2020.

Apart from our main sponsoring organizations: Universal Peace Federation (UPF) and Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), we had eight supporting organizations.

Our District Pastor, Rev. Ernest Patton and wife, Keiko Patton, made the trip from Northern VA to join us. He gave the ‘Opening Remarks’ and helped set the tone for subsequent addresses from each speaker. We were also delighted to have Pastor Werner Seubert of Northern Virginia Family Church and some members of our District 1 community in support.

Three Videos highlighting True Parents activities around the world, including the Marriage Blessing Movement were shown. The main points of the Blessing Ceremony were explained through a brief PowerPoint presentation and content regarding the value of the Blessing was given (excerpted from Cham Bumo Gyeong and Pyeong Hwa Gyeong).

Entertainment was provided by our beloved sisters: Mrs. Nanae Goto and Mrs. Miwako Lindsey from Washington D.C. Family Church, singing the heartfelt song: “One Family Under God.” Also, Mr. Christopher Oliver (organist from Great Hope Baptist Church) and Ms. Nicole Jackson, his fiance performed a wonderful rendition of the “Rainbow Song.”

The conclusion was particularly bright. Everyone poured their hearts out in three resounding shouts of “Ok Mansei!” – ‘eternal joy and blessings!’

The following are quotes (texts received); feedback from participants:

“It was great! ... people were happy we need to organize another one with three month’s preparation. I will give more time to assist you. (Mormon High Priest)

“Great event! ...the guest speakers were awesome! (Mr. Rodney Vaughan)

“We had an awesome time and enjoyed ourselves. Look forward to working with you more. (Mr. Christopher Oliver)

