

FFWPU USA: Restored Pride - The Washington, DC Family Church

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Washington DC Family Church

On December 4, 1977, twelve years after True Father first came to America, the Washington DC Family Church was founded in the nation's capital - a major achievement for the Unification movement.

Years earlier, momentum was already growing in the world's most powerful country. True Father had planted two holy grounds in DC and all 50 states; a national headquarters office was set up at Dupont Circle; freedom and anti-communism rallies were gaining widespread attention and support; and, in 1974, True Father met with then-President Richard Nixon in the White House.

But establishing the DC church was something else - it represented restored pride.

"I can see how hard the Washington members have worked to make this day possible and I'm sure they have learned a great lesson about how hard restoration work can be," said True Father during his

dedication speech for the new church, titled "Restored Pride."

"It is common sense that it is not easy to restore something to a state better than it was originally," he said. "The Unification movement, however, has a new tradition of acquiring something old and restoring it to a state better than its original condition. That is our faith and dedication."

The new church, he said, was "very symbolic" because Unificationists were restoring a former Mormon Church into a "heavenly temple." And it went beyond that.

"We are not just talking about one church," said True Father. "We are going to follow this pattern to restore the nation, the world and cosmos... With our energy and our effort, we want to restore the pride of God and restore the pride of the entire Christian community."

A storied history, the land at 16th Street and Columbia Road was purchased by the Mormon Church in 1924, with a chapel built and dedicated in 1933. The Mormons held their final service there in 1975. The cathedral stood vacant for two years before it was sold to Columbia Road Recording Studios, Inc., and then the Unification movement.

Acquiring the chapel made local headlines, as 16th Street was dubbed Washington's "Religion Row" because it had more churches than any other street in the city. Neighbors included a Masonic Temple, Baptist Church, and a Unitarian Church, among other places of worship.

"Washington is the nation's capital and what we are doing here is a first," said True Father. "This is the first Christian church we have occupied. It's the first time we have put our symbol on a spire high in the sky... We are not just competing with our contemporaries; we are competing with history. We want to set a new record in history. We shall surpass all Christians, being in the forefront of the sacrificial love of God."

As elements of the Mormon Church were removed, restoration and construction brought new life to the chapel. Placement of the Unification symbol in front of the tower completed the process. A stained glass mosaic over the cathedral's main entrance still remains, depicting Jesus on the Mount of Olives. And the steel frame structure, sheathed in birds-eye marble from Utah, also houses an expansive sanctuary and auditorium which can seat hundreds of people.

Now celebrating 44 years of countless services and events at the chapel, we've seen faith leaders of all religions as well as former presidents, vice presidents, and members of Congress support national and global initiatives with True Parents at the helm. True Father's vision and words from long ago continue to materialize in untold ways.

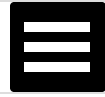
"We have a purpose and a providence to be here," he said. "We restored this temple not for our own glory, but for the celebration of this city, the nation's capital. If we give all of our energy unselfishly for the sake of God in heaven then we are superior to any church on earth. In that respect, this temple could be greater than any temple on earth."

You can learn more about the rich history of the Washington DC Family Church cathedral [here](#).



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A Brief History of the Washington Family Church National Cathedral Building at 1610 Columbia Rd NW Washington, DC

"I encourage you to have new pride and new confidence. This building has finally met its master, finally met the people who truly love it. This edifice will feel excitement because for the first time it will truly serve the purpose of God."

True Father, December 4, 1977

The history of the Family Federation for World Peace National Cathedral Family Church began on April 9, 1924 when Mrs. John B. Henderson sold a vacant lot at 16th St. and Columbia Road NW to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, also known as the Mormons, for \$54,000. This acquisition was the birth of the to-be-constructed Mormon temple in the District of Columbia, something that had been planned by the followers of the late Joseph Smith.

The deed was dated April 9, 1924, transferring the property from Mrs. Henderson to Heber Grant as trustee for the Church. Seven years later, on June 1, 1931, the building permit was issued to the Mormons and construction began. The church was constructed by a local builder, William P. Lipscomb Company at an estimated cost of \$275,000.00.

The architects were Mormon: Don Carlos Young, a grandson of Brigham Young, and Ramm Hansen, a Norwegian immigrant. They designed a steel structure covered in concrete and enveloped in "Birdseye marble" quarried in Utah from the summit of a mountain 9000 feet high, in what is now the Manti-La Sal National Forest in the mountains more than 60 miles south of Salt Lake City. The blocks of stone were hauled on mountain roads four miles to the base of a canyon 3000 feet below, this being done in the early 1930's utilizing the technology and transportation of that era, namely, 20 railcars cross country. The quarried stone produced 16,404 blocks for the exterior of the building.

The cornerstone for the chapel was laid in April, 1932 with Senator Reed Smoot, the first U.S. Senator from Utah of the Mormon faith, as one of the speakers. A year and a half later, on November 5, 1933, the chapel was dedicated following Mormon custom of completely paying for the building before it was dedicated.

An article in The Boston Evening Transcript about the church building described the chapel at the time of dedication, "The marble has a satin hone finish and at different times of the day reflects various hues. After a heavy rain the effect is that of highly polished marble which changes, as it dries, into hazy purple." Sadly, the stone no longer matches this description. From a distance, it remains a handsome tan/grey appearance. Up close, the surface is deeply lined and cracked with fissures. The wear and erosion have, however, highlighted the rounded shapes of millions of years old uncoils.

The severe surface wear has been attributed to acid rain and the persistent presence of automobile exhaust from the commuter artery of 16th St. Interestingly, the geologic tour of Salt Lake City posted on the website of the Utah Geological Survey describes two buildings as using "Birdseye marble" – both for interior walls.

There were unique characteristics designed into this building. Over the main entrance is a mosaic depicting Christ on the Mount of Olives. It was the work of Mahonri Young, another grandson of Brigham Young. The nine large round arched windows in the sanctuary contain stained glass of unusual design. At the top of each one is a circular panel of colored glass devoted to geographical and Mormon church history subjects. Below, the windows are divided into rectangular sections of clear stippled glass, interspersed with colored glass panels depicting state flowers.

The church building was in use for 42 years until August 31, 1975, when the last Mormon service was held in the Washington chapel. Changes in the neighborhood, the growing needs of the Mormon community, and the prospect of costly repairs to the walls, led to the end of services in 1975 and the sale of the chapel, which was purchased by the Unification Church in 1977. The Mormons constructed a new, larger chapel in suburban Bethesda – a structure that also provides a visible reference to the temple in Salt Lake City. The church building stood vacant for two years, and then sold to Columbia Road Recording Studios, Inc. on September 8, 1977, for \$300,000. The next day, on September 9, the building was sold to HSA-UWC for \$475,000. Before the building was turned over to its new owner, the statue of the angel Moroni was taken down and moved to the new

temple along the Beltway, and the contents of the cornerstone were removed.

Much restoration and construction was required to bring the church back to life and in conformity with the intended new use. Gallons of paint were applied to the interior, areas that were neglected from non-use had to be cleaned, carpet was laid in True Parents' apartment and stairway, floors repaired and waxed, moldings were installed, woodwork stripped and refinished, a \$30,000 kitchen installed, columns and railings were covered, a bronze sign for the outside was created, and the basketball court below the banquet hall/stage was eliminated through the installation of an intermediate concrete floor above the original wooden court, thus creating the dining area below the sanctuary.

Possibly the most dramatic event during the intense 3 month restoration project was the placement of the Unification symbol atop the tower where the statue of the angel Moroni once stood. Two brave members climbed the ladder secured into the stones leading to the apex of the tower, which stands 250 feet in the air, and installed the 250 pound symbol suspended from a crane onto a steel chassis secured into place by stainless steel bolts. The restoration was completed in time for the December 4, 1977 dedication by True Parents.

**We are raising funds to rebuild this temple and your contributions are welcome.
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