



Unification Church of America
District 3: Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania
District Council Town Hall Meeting Notes

DATE: Wednesday, February 27, 2013, 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM EST

LOCATION: Clifton Church

PRESENT: Mr. John Hessell (Chair) Mr. Robert Beebe
Mr. Atsushi Takino Mr. Hiroshi Inose
Mrs. Carol Pobanz Mr. Hero Hernández (Secretary & National Rep)
Mr. Takashi Yashiro

ABSENT: Dr. Ann I., Mr. Pablo I.

STAFF: Pastor Manoj Jacob, Mrs. Eriko Endo, Mr. Hitoshi Onishi, Mrs. Niina Jewell, Mr. Joe Leonard

GUESTS: Mr. Raymond Burns, Mr. Kuninobu Miyazawa, Mr. Washington Pesantez, Mr. Steve Edwards, Mr. Frank Bell, Mrs. Noriko Sprague, Mr. Stephen Sprague, Mrs. Hiromi Kato, Ms. Hana Mansur, Mrs. Akemi Hirose, Mr. Bruce Burns, Mrs. Yoko Burns, Mr. Yukihiko Miyazawa, Mrs. Luella Santelli, Mrs. Etsuko Kaneko, Mr. Masa Nishimura, Mr. Sumio Kono, Mrs. Masayo Bien, Mrs. Yuka Kato, Mr. Kuni Nishimura

I. CALL TO ORDER & CONFIRMATION OF QUORUM

Mr. Hessell called the meeting to order at 7:06 PM and confirmed a quorum of the Council was present.

II. OPENING PRAYER

Mr. Hessell offered the opening prayer.

III. COUNCIL BUSINESS

A. Town Hall Meeting on Sunday Service

Mr. Hessell – I'd like to open with a story. When I was in Chicago, Mrs. Sheri Reuter was pastor and what I remember most about her was that she was able to give a Sunday sermon that moved both members and non-members to tears.

Pastor Manoj – I think it's really relevant that we are coming together to improve our service. I've shared with you a document that describes the components of each of the Sunday services at 9:00 AM and 11:00 AM. Previously, we even had a 2:00 PM service, which has been discontinued. At the earlier service, we are trying to keep to a traditional experience. The 11:00 AM service is geared more towards families with children and thus has a different liturgy. We are still not able to make a fully pleasing atmosphere because of the small building situation and other issues. Still, we are improving week after week. Even the volunteer rotations for Sunday service preparations have improved and become more consistent between five communities. However, since it's only five communities, there is some strain with the required frequency of a community's volunteerism. For the sermon, I have a list of twenty-five people that are able to give sermons on a rotational basis. Each person is notified three weeks prior to their sermon date. However, sometimes there is a challenge when a presenter cancels last minute. In terms of the emcee, I seek a person who really has a heart for it or someone who has the potential to be a great speaker one day. There is a purpose to every part of the service.



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Mr. Beebe – Mr. David Eaton could not attend tonight, but asked that I share something in place of him. His main comment was that we do not have a guest friendly Sunday service. We only sing holy songs, our messages are too narrow, and the community isn't welcoming to new faces. Personally, when we think about the church, our first contact with the church, we can reflect on what drew us here. I remember the term "love bomb." I joined in Boston. Boston is a really "cold" town, but entering the center was such a warm experience. I had expectations prior to entering the church. I knew I would be witnessed to and hear a few things and then have a meal and go home full. The meal was actually the low point of the evening; it was watery soup and toast. But my experience was completely the opposite. There was a lot of interaction, a lot of love, you felt spiritually pulled in. Today, we've somehow lost that experience. If we want to grow as a movement, our Sunday services should seek to recreate that atmosphere. I recently volunteered to greet any new guests. I hope that we can think together how to create an attractive Sunday service that we want to invite people to. To sum up Mr. Eaton's comments, he currently does not want to invite anyone to our Sunday service.

Mr. Kuni Miyazawa – How was it when 1st generation joined? Was there a Sunday service specifically that you attended?

Mrs. Pobanz – There wasn't specifically a Sunday service, but no matter when you entered the church center, you were approached by a member who was sincerely interested in you and asked you a litany of questions. Another key thing that I remember was the international atmosphere of the church center. It's a matter of how warmth of a greeting is created.

Mr. Steve Edwards – My mother came to visit us in 1992. At that time, we were having service at the 43rd Street center. My mother was very hostile toward the church, but was respectful enough to attend Sunday service. At that time, Dr. Pak gave a very generic service on a famous priest from Montreal (my mother's home). The message moved her heart, it was a simple story of how ordinary people could do extraordinary things. It changed her perspective on the church and she never stopped talking about that service. I joined in Oakland and I was as non-religious as you could get. They didn't even mention religion for the first two weeks. I visited a camp retreat and felt lots of love, members were praying for guests at all hours of the night. I wonder if the consciousness of praying for new members is something that we are missing.

Mr. Frank Bell – I checked out the Hillsong Church online and listened to some of their songs. I listened to their pastor's sermon; it was surprisingly very simple and short. It strikes me that being flexible like that would be helpful. It gets to another aspect that we are moving from a top-down church structure to a new style of a non-central figure centered approach. Why not have some joint Sunday services with Washington DC or Chicago? Why not utilize technology to allow other locations to tap into our Sundays services?

Pastor Manoj – Perhaps one focal point to the discussion can be how to make Sunday service more guest friendly?

Mr. Hitoshi Onishi – I personally feel a lot of love from this church and the Sunday service. When members talk about how "cold" and unwelcoming our church is, perhaps the boiler (heater) wasn't working that day. What is the definition of "warm?" Each person has a different definition of a warm Sunday service and different experiences and situations that affect their perspective. I think that there is something wrong with brothers and sisters that say the church is cold. We have the best teaching to give to the world. In order to really grow our church, we need to not just focus on Sunday service but also Sunday school and even personal prayer habits to prepare our hearts for service.

Mr. Stephen Sprague – I do think we need to elevate the spirit of the Sunday service. I've been to lots of black churches that have a very high spirit. They start singing a song, perhaps only three lines, and it's repeated over and over again. I remember an experience when I was younger; we were at a rally waiting for True Father to arrive. He was unusually late so we kept singing the Holy Songs over and



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over again. It was an incredibly high spirit. We have such beautiful Holy Songs with incomparable depth. Today, though we have different concerns, more stress, more things to worry about, we can still have a high-spirited Sunday service. I remember how whenever True Father spoke, we felt God's presence there. When I give service, I think about how the members can feel God. I have to talk about God so that the audience can remember how elevated they felt. In the least, we can elevate the spirit. Church is about God, not education. When you come to church, you're going to hear about God and experience a living God of true love. The way we talk about God is off the charts. We have an incomprehensible understanding of God.

Mrs. Noriko Sprague – I think an important aspect of church is the music. When we transitioned away from Lovin' Life Ministries, we weren't prepared to have a strong music presence in the service. In the beginning, I felt sorry for Pastor Manoj because he wasn't very acquainted with the community. I have been trying to choose Holy Songs for the beginning of service while closing with worship songs at the end. I see that the young people seem to enjoy the worship songs, as in Hillsong Church's style. Sometimes I'm confused what is the best way, either Holy Songs or more contemporary worship songs? I don't know if it's worth introducing newer worship songs that we aren't used to. Currently, we only have two or three people leading songs during the 9:00 AM service, but perhaps we need more song leaders. I would love to see 2nd generation leading the songs too. Even though we want to inspire our own members, we have to consider new members. In that sense, I want to introduce new songs. I want to continue helping with the music, but I need support. If you have any suggestions, please let me know.

Mr. Raymond Burns – I don't know if this place is necessarily cold and I believe that truth is important. I don't usually attend service because I am in Sunday school. My honest perspective, though, when I attend is that we are like robots and zombies. When I scan the room, I see everyone with their heads down. After service, I see members come to the basement to mingle with their groups and then leave. I believe that people are not owning the service, are not contributing to the atmosphere of the church. We have to inspire members to feel that they are contributing to the church's atmosphere. We also need more interaction with members especially when we advertise events and opportunities. We need to personally call the members to elicit their support. The second point is 2nd generation attendance is an issue. When I attend service, I don't see my peers here. The leadership needs to personally reach out to the 2nd generation, especially when speaking at service. When this happens, other 2nd generation will want to support their peers. Hearing something from 2nd generation makes more of an impact than hearing it from their parents.

Pastor Manoj – I will be calling you next for Sunday service! I have been trying to contact 2nd generation to speak, yet it's been difficult to get volunteers. Also, we have a smaller Thursday evening service which would be great practice ground for 2nd generation to get used to lecturing.

Mr. Washington Pesantez – I do enjoy Sunday service and I especially was inspired by Mrs. Pobanz' sermon last week. I am trying to encourage my children to attend service as well to educate them on their identity and value. I joined in New York City near the Bryant Park public library. It was an awesome feeling to experience the culture of the church. One big factor was the presence of Spanish members that could reach out to me. I was inspired to learn English to better understand why True Father invested so much in America. This new generation seems uninterested in the incredible history of our country. I see my kids not being educated properly by the education system. They don't realize the great blessing to be born in this country. I think the American culture is awesome and the founding narrative is beautiful.

Mr. Yukihiro Miyazawa – My honest feeling is that I am obligated to come to Sunday service because I am a church member, it's not because I want to go. However, I want to want to go. Members are struggling with many different spiritual challenges that the pastor must be able to address. The Sunday



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service should not be a report or announcement but education on how to experience God. I believe that some volunteer roles are ok because they are simpler, but core roles, such as an emcee, shouldn't be arbitrarily chosen. Someone with such an integral role in the Sunday service should be better prepared and trained and specialize in that specific responsibility. Again, the sermon is about giving spiritual guidance of the standard of God's word. We don't have to hide things about our church, but we don't also need to talk about True Mother's or leaders' directions in service.

Mr. Bruce Burns – I used to teach Sunday school with Mrs. Porter, who was awesome. However, when a 2nd generation would support us and teach the class, I felt as if God was speaking. It was incredible how much the other 2nd generation would listen to their peer. How do we create programs that keep our kids here? We want to hold on to them, but how? On another point, when I joined, we didn't have service, but we had a living Divine Principle. I don't think people join through the Sunday service but through Divine Principle.

Mr. Hessell – I think Mr. Burns elaborated on your question, Mr. Kuni Miyazawa, about Sunday service.

Mr. Kuni Nishimura – When I come to Sunday service in New Jersey, it feels dead. I have been attending service in New York City, and that is always incredibly inspiring. For some reason, New Jersey's audience is much quieter and less spirited. I would love to see the speaker try to get more out of the crowd.

Mr. Hessell – Who has attended the New York City service? (Four or five people raise their hands).

Ms. Hana Manseur – I attended the NYC service once and it was incredible. However, I attend the New Jersey service because this is my community. I believe that I am inspired to attend partly because I am so involved this community.

Mrs. Pobanz – The question is how to draw the young people to New Jersey's service? I think that GPA is a big factor to attracting young people to New York City's service. Without GPA, would there still be a strong attendance by the 2nd generation? How will we substantially change our service that attracts youth? One that creates a warmer atmosphere for new guests? I do agree that our service can be cold, I've brought guests and no one even said hello to them. Another example, we had an Organ competition where 30 guests attended last weekend. However, even then, our own members only associated with themselves and did not interact with the guests.

Mr. Beebe – One thing that InJin Nim did well was to make reaching out to 2nd generation her priority and ministry focus. The future is with the 2nd generation and their families. We should create opportunities for 2nd generation to be more connected. We should put them in the front and make them the leaders of the movement. On another note, to Mr. Washington Pesantez, I agree that our children are not getting the foundational history lessons that we learned when we were young. They are getting a very distorted view of what America is. Send your children to New Hope School to get a proper education!

Mr. Joe Leonard – I'm getting very fired up sitting here. This is a very valuable brain trust here. We have the Council and members of both generations. We have crucial life and death things in our nation and our movement. I think that the first issue is that we don't know the purpose of our movement right now. There is a lot of confusion. Sunday service is just a larger component of the larger issues. If we aren't clear about the movement, then how can we be clear about the service? If you ask ten different people about what our movement is, you will get ten different answers. Thus, I do have an issue with the many different sermon givers because each person interprets the current situation and the word of God in different ways, depending on their experiences. It feels very random. 2nd generation feel this confusion, this randomness. Most do not speak out, but instead quietly stop attending Sunday service. Even the ones that stuck it out through the difficult times are finding less and less reason to come to Sunday service. We have solutions, but we need to focus. There is power in this room. We are here



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because we care. We need to first clarify what we want to accomplish as a church. If that is clear, then Sunday service becomes a very powerful tool to support that very clear goal. We are starting Young Unificationist Ministry (YUM) to reach out to college BCs. However, I believe that there is still an urgent need in reaching out to the young families. They have a powerful energy that can be contagious. Mrs. Nina Jewell Takahashi – We keep talking about creating programs, yet we only have 40 people here, it doesn't give me much confidence. We are all trying our best. I doubt it is specifically the service; it's how we treat each other. I'm wondering what's deeper. We've tried creating new programs, but overtime, everyone always gets burnout. There is no consistency. There is an initial excitement and then it runs out.

Mr. Hessell – Has anyone read the book “The Tipping Point?” It talks about how people known as “connectors” are needed to get the ball moving. 2nd generation need those connectors that reach out to inspire others.

Mr. Joe Leonard – I think that's true, but we also have to ask ourselves how we as 1st generation are doing. 1st generation are able to stick it out and don't necessarily look for something new. 2nd generation will go seek something new to replace something that isn't working.

Pastor Manoj Jacob – To say that we don't have an identity isn't true. I think that we have to give ourselves credit for how much we have accomplished with such a short history. We are only into our 2nd and 3rd generation. The 1st generation all joined for different reasons. Also, our church has gone through many transitions. Historically, we have never been a Sunday service church. So I think there are lots of new circumstances and we need to have an open mind and heart.

Mr. Steve Edwards – I come from the business world and in that world, you don't have the time to figure things out. Business experience massive changes in a short time because they are faced with their own destruction. We don't have time to be patient. I don't want to wait five years to have experiments. I'd like to give an example: I am a huge Montreal hockey team fan. A year ago they placed 15th out of 16 teams. After that awful season, a new manager was hired and he made drastic changes in the preseason. He had a simple two word message to his team: “no excuses.” This year, they placed number one in the league. Our movement doesn't have that culture or any culture. When you don't have a culture, people wander around aimlessly not sure of what they are meant to be.

Mr. Raymond Burns – I feel that every time I am having a conversation with 2nd generation, the question is “what's the direction.” The general gist is that “I am going to just do my thing for the time being.” There is nothing that is sacred anymore. Things that used to have value, no longer have value. I'm skeptical about everything. I've been in this church for such a long time, but I have been in a midway position because I am not sure how to commit to this movement, especially with so much ambiguity. I can guarantee that I can be a connector and get eight 2nd generation to commit to speaking at Sunday service.

Mr. Beebe – Let's think first about what is the most successful 2nd generation program? It's the GO program. It's something that has been ongoing and sustained for many years. I'm amazed at that so many staff members are committed to the program. This has to be developed for the other demographics of 2nd generation, especially the young families. We have to create a culture for the 2nd generation to feel that this is their church.

Mrs. Niina Jewell Takahashi – We've had successful programs for 2nd generation couples for the first two rounds, but on the third round, no one showed up. We've created many programs that start strong and then burn out.

Mr. Beebe – Was there a reason they stopped attending?

Mrs. Pobanz – Perhaps there needs to be a clear beginning and ending?



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Mrs. Hiromi Kato – Why is the GO program successful? It's because 1st and 2nd generation are working together. If there are 2nd generation programs that we as the parents can support, then I think it will be successful.

Mrs. Etsuko Kaneko – As a mother, I try to encourage my children to attend service, but I didn't ever elaborate the depth of the benefits of Sunday service, that we can meet God there. I didn't prepare my children's heart in that manner. Attending Sunday service is not a duty. If you don't want to go, you don't have to go. You should only go if you have the heart to be there. Also, we want to be a part of the GO program because we feel God there. Also, I feel that one aspect of the success of GO was that the team leaders would personally contact and build relationships with the younger 2nd generation. They were connectors.

Mr. George *Unknown* – Are we leader-centered or member-centered? If we are member-centered, then the leader should go to the members. If we want to multiply via tribal messiahship, we should give authority to the members. The leadership should go to the members and support them. We haven't grown because we have focused too much on centralization. In terms of Sunday service, members shouldn't have to come here every Sunday. Instead, members can go visit other churches. We can reunite perhaps half the time and outreach the other half. If we always attend our own Sunday service, then it becomes too centralized.

Mrs. Niina Jewell Takahashi – I think our church is attempting to become more decentralized by reaching out to, for example, the Elizabeth community and developing a local church.

Mr. Hessell – I think everyone's input has been valuable and the lesson is that we don't have to do what we've always done.

Mrs. Pobanz – One day we were having a team meeting and I had this thought of "I need to create a church." The next day, Dr. Ann told me "I think I should just go out and create my own church." I shared with her my ideas and she told me to go ahead and do that.

Mr. Masa Nishimura – I feel like I am literally outside of the box. I almost stopped coming to Sunday service recently. One way to improve Sunday service would be to ask the members who don't attend service "why they don't attend service?" I have been in the church since 1979, joining in London. When I returned to Japan, I was part of the IOWC. I was responsible for Sunday service and giving sermons for two years. It helped to see the different ways to reach out to brothers and sisters. The reason I stopped attending the church now, is not because I feel that I am leaving God or anything like that, but because Sunday service's message was not inspiring. My new source of inspiration is developing a habit of Hoon Dok Hae as well as my own missionary activities, for example, in Mozambique. I feel that the Sunday service message does not align with the higher purpose or direction from True Mother. I feel that the sermon does not connect to something greater. I also attend Mr. Takino and Mrs. Pobanz' respective small groups because I can feel connected to True Father's words and connected to other members there.

Mrs. Endo – Registered members last year was around 450 members. With the Foundation Day registration process, we now recognize around 600 families in District 3.

Mr. Sumio Kono – I think we should recognize all the hard work of the excellent Ministry Staff. Our church is always packed at both services, so let's not forget that we are doing some things well.

Pastor Manoj Jacob – We've heard lots of great feedback, but can there be a follow-up meeting to address these issues?

Mr. Beebe – We will consolidate the information and review it as a Council.

Mr. Hessell – The discussion isn't over and we will be in contact with you.

Mrs. Tallakson closed with prayer.



IV. SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS THAT REQUIRE FURTHER DISCUSSION

1. How will the Council use this information to make suggestions / improvements to Sunday service?
2. Will there be a follow-up meeting to this initial discussion?

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Hessell".

Mr. John Hessell
Chairperson

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hero Hernandez".

Mr. Hero Hernández
Secretary & National Representative