

## Mykhailo Ilin, the president of the Unification Church of Ukraine, visited the Maryland Unification Church

Douglas Burton  
November 7, 2014



Rev. Mykhailo Ilin, the president of the Unification Church of Ukraine, visited Maryland Unificationists for 10 days beginning November 1, 2014. Rev. Ilin was invited to visit New Hope Family Church by the local Unification Church council as a way to further the “20/20” mutual city-to-nation partnership between the Maryland Unification community and the Unification Church in Ukraine.

The term 20/20 project refers to partnerships between 20 communities in the United States and 20 Unificationist communities in other countries. Dr. Michael Balcomb, President of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) USA, explained in 2013 that he “hopes for these partnerships to flourish and foster mutual cooperation and support.” He added, “There are many possible projects: for example, in some cases it might be appropriate for missionaries from the U.S. city to travel to one or both of the other two countries; but in the alternative, leaders from other nations might be invited to the U.S. for training, education, evangelism and more. Other areas of cooperation could include service projects, exchange of educational materials, financial support and more.”



According to Rev. Ilin, Ukraine has active church centers in seven cities, with more than 300 adult Unificationists. There are about 100 Unificationist-born children, nearly all of whom are under 12 years old. Missionaries from the United States, including six from Maryland, helped staff Divine Principle workshops in Ukraine in the early 1990s. Rev. Ilin, 41, became a Unificationist in 2000. The church there recently inaugurated a beautiful new three-story church center. The Ukrainian Women’s Federation for World Peace (WFWP) and the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) also are very active.

Rev. Ilin was introduced to the congregation of New Hope Family Church in Maryland at the November 2 Sunday service, after which there was a get-acquainted session in the Founders' Room. It is expected that he will give the sermon at New Hope on November 9 and will be a featured presenter at a Ukraine briefing at the Melford Center in Maryland at 7 p.m. on Sunday, which also marks the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The briefing, and Q&A, will include the Berlin Wall and recent developments in Ukraine's struggle to retain its territory from separatists.

The purpose of Rev. Ilin's visit is to gather facts about the culture and governance style of the American church community and to hold talks with numerous Unificationist families to learn from their experiences in building community, raising children and reaching out to the larger society. Both communities hope that the visit will result in reciprocal visits of Marylanders to Ukraine and long-distance friendships by Internet and telephone. Doug Burton and Jim Boothby of the Maryland community assisted in arranging dinners on each evening with various local Unificationist families.

During his visit Rev. Ilin stopped at the Washington monuments and museums in the company of former Unification Church pastor Matthew Goldberg, and observed a polling station on Election Day, took a tour of *The Washington Times* building and sat in on a meeting of the Maryland Church Council.

He received a briefing on how New Hope Academy was founded and preserved as a successful private school and observed a Boy Scout meeting and the charter discussion group at the Melford Learning Center. He toured buildings sacred to the Washington Family Church, including Upshur House and the Columbia Road Cathedral. He also observed the Youth Ministry's activity at the Melford Center, checked on Rev. Gregg Jones' community garden in Baltimore and met Unificationists in the Annapolis area.

What can we learn from the brothers and sisters of faith in Ukraine? We can learn how to witness effectively and help new Unificationists deepen their faith. The Ukrainian church has a very organized and passionate program of outreach. Rev. Ilin has expressed that he is eager to learn about how witnessing is done in Maryland and what they have learned in the area of publishing and public relations.