

Another Way Forward: Our Next Steps to Take in Transforming American Culture

Jack LaValley
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Mother Moon (Mrs. Hak Ja Han Moon) wants tribal messiah work in America to give millions of people access to God's love through the Holy Blessing so they can practice "living for the sake of others" and usher in a new era of peace and security for all citizens. It's a beautiful aspiration filled with expectant hopes and dreams.

The challenge to this ambition is few people know anything about us, and we are a group with limited financial resources. Our relatively small American movement has few resources to effectively tackle a multitude of serious social ills.



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In this article, I explore how -- after 40 plus years of unrelenting, sacrificial work by thousands of members and billions of dollars invested to "bring America back to God" -- our movement has yet to emerge as a leader in transforming American culture.

I then look at how we might alter this situation and more effectively integrate Unification ideals into the fabric of American society.

I do not criticize any individual, institution or leadership, but prescribe next steps so we make good on our promise to transform American culture through Unification ideals.

Since the passing in 2012 of our founder, Rev. Sun Myung Moon (Father Moon), our movement is in a period of reevaluation and self-correction. From our IPEC 7-day National Divine Principle Revival Workshops, to the "God's Hope for America: Remembered, Revived, Reimagined" bus tours, to the "miracle of the Madison Square Garden event" and our recently renewed "Blessing Movement" and tribal messiahship initiatives, we earnestly try to "get our message out," hoping to influence people's minds and hearts to embrace our worldview and religious teachings. Our ongoing efforts to impact American culture come on the heels of some unthinkable internal setbacks.

Hundreds of our young adults experienced great shock and disappointed in 2012 when In-jin Moon, then president of our American movement and Lovin' Life Ministries, abruptly resigned from her positions when it became known she had carried on an extramarital affair and secretly bore a child.

In 2015, we learned that Hyung-jin Moon, leader of our movement in the last third of 2012, broke all ties with the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU). He preaches FFWPU members must come under his authority because only he among his entire family has the moral standing to lead our movement.

In 2016, Hyun-jin Moon -- former leader of numerous FFWPU organizations in America -- inaugurated the Family Peace Association. After mainly focusing on his Global Peace Festivals since 2009, he actively tries to recruit FFWPU members to join his group, claiming he alone has exclusive moral authority to lead our movement forward.

Naturally, many FFWPU members are deeply concerned about these developments. Local faith communities have suffered some "defections" of Blessed Central Families to one or both of these "breakaway" ministries, and in some cases, second generation children have separated from their parents or parents from their children to be part of these ministries, causing great strain and tension in the family. In addition, hundreds of young adults who worked with In-jin's Lovin' Life Ministries cut all ties with FFWPU after the betrayal of public trust they experienced with the collapse of that ministry.

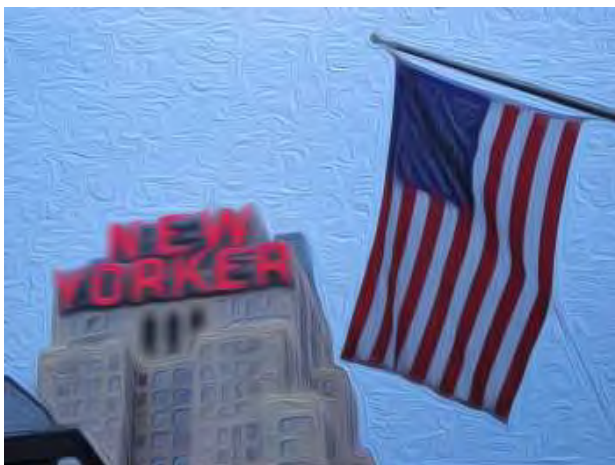
The American membership is trying hard to make sense of these unsettling circumstances, desperately trying to understand how a religious organization dedicated to high ideals like "uniting all religions through the new truth of Divine Principle" and "establishing God-centered families centered on the ideal of True Parents" can itself be divided. Yet, it is difficult to discuss these issues in our local faith communities for two main reasons.

First, there is a tendency in our communities to not engage in public discussion about matters that reflect poorly on the organization, especially where matters of the True Family are concerned. Secondly, there is an assumed cultural norm that it is always in bad taste -- or more likely bad faith -- to voice critical assessments or evaluations of FFWPU organizational leadership and its programs.

Some claim now is not the time to discuss troubling issues, and it is not our place to address current organizational challenges. They declare our only concern is to faithfully work towards fulfilling Vision 2020 goals. But asking FFWPU members -- many still reeling from the very difficult internal challenges experienced these past five years -- to work at full capacity and achieve larger-than-life goals is like asking a high-level competitive runner with a broken leg to "get out on the track" and run a four-minute mile. First, the broken leg needs to be put into a cast and allowed to heal so the runner can begin the process of rebuilding strength to again run at top speed.

Festering wounds left unresolved become like dams blocking the natural flow of our healthy growth and development. Eventually, unhealed wounds will seep out from underneath the soiled bandages covering them, demanding to be properly taken care of and healed.

The series of near cataclysmic events experienced in the American movement since the passing of our Founder can be likened to a "universal brake" being applied to our forward momentum, granting us an opportunity to slow down, take stock of what is happening, and reconsider another way forward.



There are two steps our movement can take to successfully move forward as a leader in transforming American culture. The first involves fixing the dysfunctional aspects of our internal culture and governance that led to the near meltdown of our group in America. The primary symptom of this dysfunction is the practice of how individuals are put into key national leadership governance roles, or removed and replaced from such roles.

A case in point is the recent changes at our national headquarters. When I asked in my faith community if anyone knew the process of how the former national president was transferred from his position and how our newly-installed president was chosen, no one did. I also asked if anyone knew who had replaced another individual transferred from leading our national business development and management of our church assets; yet I could not find anyone who knew the answer. If our general membership doesn't understand how key national leadership governance positions are filled or how key leaders in these positions are removed and replaced, this ought to be cause for serious concern.

We have a National Council that meets at least on an annual basis. A report of their most recent meeting held in April this year is available on the Family Federation website. I'd like to see our National Council help clarify the process how our key national governance leadership roles are filled, and how individuals in those roles are selected, removed and replaced. These key roles need to be filled or replaced through authorization by elected representatives of the general membership. Perhaps this practice is a ways off, but it needs to be done if we want to organize ourselves better to be on the leading edge of cultural transformation. This democratic process will help reduce the risk of our leaders in these key positions

becoming isolated, disconnected, and aloof to the needs and concerns of the general membership.

The best case to be made for this approach is the reckoning we faced at the downfall of In-jin Moon's Lovin' Life Ministry. After she stepped down from her position, she posted a public statement admitting that when she became president of HSA-UWC in 2008, her marriage had already been compromised and her personal life was not in proper order. Yet, she had managed to gain control over much of the American movement for several years (see her statement [here](#)).

Another symptom of dysfunction is the practice of covering up and ignoring embarrassing internal problems. Through this practice, the general membership is kept in the dark about difficult events and activities impacting the movement from within, and members end up being shocked, surprised, and hurt when such news suddenly appears in front of them on non-FFWPU media platforms.

Our local communities need to gain the necessary skills and experience to talk openly about difficult and embarrassing things in productive and meaningful ways. This is the best way members can get closer to one another, learn lessons from mistakes made by others, and more effectively support one another. We have to change this aspect of our internal culture to be better prepared to embrace anyone who wants to intimately associate with us and be part of our faith community.

The second way forward is more challenging and less likely to take root in the short run. This approach requires jettisoning exclusionary aspects of our Unification worldview. Rather than insisting "God's work of salvation" ends with the new truth given to us in Divine Principle by True Parents, we acknowledge Divine Principle and the institutional works of FFWPU are part of God's continuing revelation to humanity, but not the final and complete expression of it.

This is in line with our Founder's mandate of the mid-1990s, when he proclaimed the salvation of humanity is no longer dependent on one religion exclusively. This is why True Parents established the Family Federation for World Peace in 1996. Taking this approach to the idea of "truth" will make our group in America accessible to a wider range of people and organizations dedicated to positive social transformation.

Holding democratic elections of key national leadership positions in the American movement allows for our elected leaders to "find their own leadership voice" and exercise their unique spiritual authority on behalf of our movement. This in turn will naturally help strategically align our available resources for more effective engagement with American society. Nurturing a culture of "admitting to and wanting to learn from our mistakes" will give us ample opportunity to quickly self-correct from our errors and cultivate more intimacy and compassion with ourselves and the larger society. Transcending the "we are the final truth" worldview creates needed space for others to get to know us more intimately, and this in turn results in a lot more people in America being impacted by our teachings and lifestyle -- the major goal of our tribal messiah work.

Taking these two steps is the key to our movement's prosperity and longevity in America. Mother Moon is desperately longing for God's love to penetrate the heart and soul of every American citizen. We all long for the same thing. The sacrifices made by True Parents and our members in America in the latter half of the 20th century and into the first decade of the 21st century shall not be in vain. Helping facilitate executing these next steps ought to be an exciting proposition, as it means we will be setting the stage for our movement to move up to the next level of maturation and effectiveness to see God more active in guiding and nurturing the American people.

Jack LaValley spent 20 years as part of a personal protection team for Rev. and Mrs. Moon and their family. He is the founder of true4ever, author of the book, Seven Secrets to Finding True Love, and founder of profoundmeditate.com. He received his M.S. Ed from the University of Bridgeport. Jack and his wife, Wha ja, are the proud parents of three grown children.

Top photo: *The "Peace Starts with Me" FFWPU event at Madison Square Garden on July 15, 2017.*