

ACLC celebrated the 62 Marriage Blessing Ceremonies across the United States

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A Valentine's Day Marriage Blessing in Brooklyn

The American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC) celebrated the week of bouquets and sweetheart candies with a total of 62 Marriage Blessing Ceremonies across the United States. Hundreds of couples joined in the special Valentine's Day Blessings to receive True Parents' Holy Wine and dedicate their marriage to God's ideal. Some of the couples were just starting out, and others were renewing their vows before their Heavenly Parent and the community. Altogether, there were ceremonies in eleven states and the District of Columbia. Here are a few stories of the love that blossomed this week.

Chicago, IL South Side Love At Life Center Church of God in Christ



It was a beautiful morning as Chicago's Life Center Church of God celebrated its annual Divine Dating Sunday. An exciting feature added this year was the Holy Blessing ceremony for all 25 of Life Center's married couples attending the service. Before the ceremony, the couples joined the choir and gave heartfelt testimonies about their years of marriage. Pastor and Mrs. T. L. Barrett were honored as hero and shero for their leadership at Life Center for nearly fifty years. Pastor Barrett gave a profound message about the significance of marriage and the family in God's creation. "The family," he exclaimed, "is God's first love idea!" Then the couples joined Pastor and Mrs. Barrett in a resounding proclamation of their vows to God and each other. The ceremony ended with a robust cheer of praise and a warm embrace with spouses and other participants. It truly was a family celebration and everyone felt a taste of the love and joy that the Blessing brings.

300 People Gather at the Connect Point Christian Center in Snellville, Georgia receive the Blessing



On Sunday afternoon, 300 people gathered at the Connect Point Christian Center in Snellville, Georgia to celebrate God's love and receive the Blessing. Attendees included members from five congregations and four states. Pastor Mark Abernathy and Minister Edna Abernathy, who were also celebrating their fortieth wedding anniversary, officiated the event. Together, they Blessed 45 couples, seven single people, and 19 young adults. During the ceremony, the Abernathys shared candidly about the joys and challenges of being married for 40 years. The couple's self-disclosure was authentic and heartfelt. "I felt chills of excitement and joy throughout the whole service," commented Jayne Kerr from South Carolina. Pastor Abernathy, who has blessed over 570 couples in the past few years, ended the service by pledging to support and counsel everyone, married or not, who received the Holy Wine that day.

New Greater St. John Missionary Baptist Church, Chicago, IL receives True Parents' Blessing



On Sunday, February 11, over 20 couples gathered in the pews at the New Greater St. John Missionary Baptist Church to receive True Parents' Blessing. Reverend LeRoy Elliott and his wife officiated the ceremony, which followed a Sunday Service by the youth and young adult ministry.

Mr. and Mrs. Elliott have been married for forty-two years and have three children and seven grandchildren. It was an inspiration to see them as they led each couple through the Blessing vows, finishing with a beautiful heartfelt prayer. To add to the celebration, Mr. Christopher Kennedy, Jr., grandson of Senator Robert F. Kennedy, joined the service. Mr. Kennedy was accompanied by ACLC Pastor Reverend T.C. Raven of the Inspired Body of Christ Church.

Greater Chicago's Hispanic Community for Peace Welcomes a New Couple



On Saturday, February 10, 42 people joined Jose and Aida Gonzalez at their home in Northlake, Illinois to witness their Blessing and celebrate the marriage. In total, ten other couples received the Holy Wine along with the Gonzalez family. Together, the group ate a delicious potluck dinner and ended with festive Karaoke singing and dancing. The Hispanic and Latino Unification Community has led several such events in the past. "This is how we are educating our spiritual children to care for their tribes," says Marina Acevedo, co-director of the Chicago Hispanic Community for Peace. She plans to continue building God's family by hosting events in the homes of families interested in Divine Principle education and fellowship.