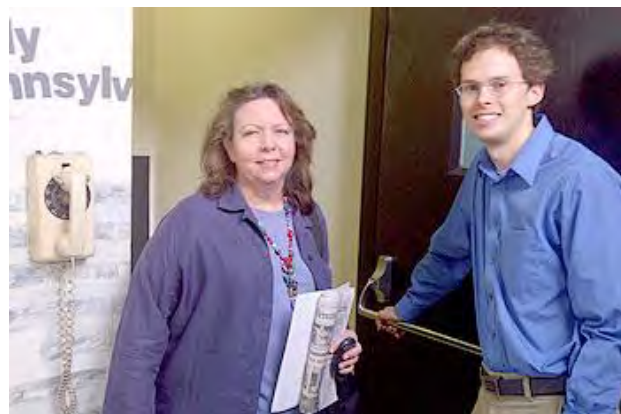


Lovin' Life Pastors to Meet with Editors of the Daily Pennsylvanian

Douglas Burton
May 2, 2012



Marion Miller, Penn alumna and mother of two Penn students, and Lovin' Life Pastor Leighton DeGoede visited the office of the DP on Tuesday.

A letter of protest to the editors of the *Daily Pennsylvanian* (DP) from Rev. Joshua Cotter, vice president of the Unification Church USA and personal visits of church leaders on Tuesday appear to have registered some notice, according to Pastor Leighton DeGoede, co-pastor of Lovin' Life in Philadelphia.

On April 5, 2012, the DP had published a feature story under the headline "Some Religious Organizations near Campus Show 'Darker Side,'" and with the subheading "Called high-pressure groups, these organizations can have negative consequences for followers."

The report implied that the Unification Church, the Good News Mission, and Ananda Marga were the high-pressure groups near the campus of the University of Pennsylvania, yet gave no documentation that any of these groups used such tactics.

"The executive editor of the DP told me by phone that she has ordered former deprogrammer Rick Ross to remove the DP article from his website, and he has said he will comply in a couple of days," Pastor DeGoede tells the *UC Newsletter*. The Good News Mission has refused to answer calls from the DP, whereas Ananda Marga no longer has a center there, according to their national office.

"Editor Dana Tom has promised us space for rebuttal in a 750-word opinion piece to run in the final issue of the paper on May 11, 2012, and she agrees to a meeting with me and other Unification Church leaders on Friday afternoon, May 4, 2012. That certainly is progress, even though it isn't all that we asked for," he added. In emails and telephone calls to the editor, DeGoede and his wife, Crescentia, co-pastors of the local church, had urged that the article be taken down entirely since it misquoted a professor of religious studies and had no evidence from local students of any high-pressure tactics.

A revised version of the story, without mention of the pejorative "Moonie," was posted last week under the new headline, "Scholars, religious leaders sound off on high-pressure tactics" and the subhead "Groups have stirred controversy for these tactics and creating tension among families."

In a development that may be related to the hate language of the original article, Leighton DeGoede received more than a dozen harassment calls and text messages, including taunts of "wacko Moonie" in the early morning hours of April 27, 2012. He filed a police report.



Doug Burton, public affairs director for the Unification Church, also visited the DP office.

"Though the DP reframed their article to show a slightly more balanced view, without the M word or reference to deprogramming, it still brings up old news that does more harm than good," Pastor Leighton DeGoede says. He adds that the posting of rebuttals by his wife and Penn Alumnus Gelo Fleischer

attracted several anonymous comments full of hatred. "We flagged the comments and demanded that the editors take them down, but they refused," says Pastor Leighton DeGoede.

Pastor DeGoede, Marion Miller, a Penn alumna, and Doug Burton, Unification Church public affairs director, visited the offices of the DP on Tuesday but were told that the editors were unavailable.

On April 13, 2012 Dr. Stephen Dunning visited the Lovin' Life Center to assure the pastor and church members that he had been misrepresented by the article [see his comments in Rev. Cotter's letter below]. As Crescentia DeGoede tells the UC Newsletter, "when the Penn students and I shared our horror at the article and how it distorted our experience with the church and gave him a vivid picture of what the Unification Church is really like today, Dr. Dunning seemed blown away and fascinated." She says Dr. Dunning told them that our movement is very different from what he knew it to be during the time he was teaching a class on cult controversy. They discussed his critical letter to the DP which has remained unpublished today. Another piece of news for them was that Dr. Dunning had enjoyed cordial relations with several local Unificationists and had invited two local members to give talks to his classes.

Megan Dickson, a Penn student, and Pastor Crescentia DeGoede met with Dana Tom, executive editor of the DP, Glenn Shrum, the reporter, and Julie Xie, Shrum's editor on April 18, 2012 at a coffee shop to register their complaints. Pastor DeGoede reports that the editors explained that they did not publish Dr. Dunning's letter because it was directed at the reporter but not to the *Daily Pennsylvanian* as a whole. They also promised to publish a follow-up story about Lovin' Life Ministry that gave a fair and balanced picture of the church, according to Pastor Crescentia DeGoede. The last daily paper was published on April 25, but the final graduation issue will appear on May 11, 2012.

The letter from Rev. Cotter emailed to editor Sarah Gadsden, and with copies to editor Julie Xie and to reporter Glenn Shrum as well as to the University's Vice President for Communications Stephen MacCarthy, follows.

Re: "Moonie"
Date: April 30, 2012
To: Ms. Sarah Gadsden
Managing Editor
The *Daily Pennsylvanian*

Dear Ms. Gadsden:

I am writing to register my outrage and indignation regarding an article in the *Daily Pennsylvanian* of April 5, 2012. An article titled "Some Religious Organizations near Campus Show Darker Side," which apparently misquoted Prof. Stephen Dunning, emeritus chair of Department of Religious Studies and used two local, seemingly "approved" campus ministers to establish by inference that the Unification Church is a cult, a high-pressure group and not a part of the Penn community.

Dr. Dunning emailed a letter to you which to date you have declined to publish. That letter is as follows:

"I am sorry to see my views so poorly represented in the DP. Glenn Shrum [the reporter] did not admit to me that he was hoping to expose the Unification Church in a manner reminiscent of the anti-cult polemics of the eighties and nineties. He distorted many of my statements -- mostly by lifting phrases out of context -- to make them sound anti-cult, whereas I tried, with him as I did teaching on the subject for 20 years in the College, to make balanced statements that would point toward positive as well as questionable characteristics of so-called "cults." I emphasized to him that I have been out to touch with those groups -- and the Unification Church in particular -- for over 10 years, and that therefore he should not take what I recalled from the 1990's as accurate for the present situation.

It is tempting to excuse Shrum's poor reporting as due to his youth and inexperience, but I taught so many undergraduates in that course that I know very well how capable they are of doing a more sophisticated -- not to say honest -- job."

It is my understanding that at a follow-up meeting between the pastor of the local church, a Penn student and Glen Shrum along with Julie Xie, his editor, on April 17th, the pastor asked the newspaper to take down the article which used the insulting label of "Moonie," a pejorative avoided virtually by all mainstream U.S. media. The editors refused to do this, did not apologize nor did they acknowledge any wrong doing, according to the Unification Church members at the meeting. Since then, you have published letters of protest from the pastor and one student, but you have failed to take responsibility for publishing an article that insulted a great many Penn alumni and current students, and an article which was mean-spirited, undocumented and false. In fact, the revised article you posted remains undocumented and mean-spirited: there is no evidence that the three groups targeted, Ananda Marga, Good News

Mission, or the Unification Church EVER used high pressure tactics in Philadelphia. (By the way, Ananda Marga doesn't have a center in Philadelphia, which the reporter could have discovered by making a call to their national office, as I just did.) The fact is, there is no significant information in your article, no insight, and no news. The casual reader would conclude that you have an axe to grind against new religious movements, and you make no apologies.

Soon after your article was published it was posted on the website of a notorious hater and ex-criminal name Rick Ross, where it may remain for decades. Commenters on your article include "Mr. M." who insults the Penn Unificationists with the "Moonie" word and gives fulsome hateful text, which you have refused to strike, although requested to do so.

From Friday, April 27, 2012 the co-pastor of the Lovin' Life Ministry, received dozens of phone texts and telephone calls that were intended to intimidate him and his wife, including slurs of "wacko Moonie." A police report has been filed. Whether or not the man who made these calls had read your story, there is no doubt that the DP has contributed to a climate of hatred in Philadelphia.

Ms. Gadsden is it the DP's strategy to cover up the fact that you have harmed fellow students and the reputation of a great university? Time is running out for you to set the record straight, apologize to fellow students and set a policy of avoiding hate language at their paper. That is what elite newspapers in the United States have done for more than decades. What is your policy on hate language?

Ms. Gadsden, I trust that you are aware that the term "Moonie" is a derogatory, demeaning term. I believe that you, the Managing Editor, do not regularly demean minorities. I do not believe that you publicly refer to African-Americans using the "n-word", or to gays as "f-----s". Do you really think it is acceptable for the campus newspaper of the University of Pennsylvania to use derogatory language when referring to members of a particular church? Is it really OK by you that the Daily Pennsylvanian reporters can report unfair, unsubstantiated, inept claims against a new religious movement and then hide from it?

As the Vice President of the Unification Church USA, on behalf of all Unificationists in Pennsylvania, I demand that you contact Rick Ross and order him to remove the Glen Shrum article, which he posted without your permission. I demand that you take Glenn Shrum's article down. At the very least, you should allow the pastor to the local church to present the real news about Lovin' Life ministry which you seem incapable of discovering. You owe it to your readers and the University itself to uphold a publishing record that is worthy of the Ivy League, and yes, before the last paper this semester is published.

Sincerely,

Joshua Cotter
Vice President
Unification Church in the USA

Cc. Stephen MacCarthy, Vice President for Communications
Glenn Shrum, reporter
Julie Xie, student editor