

Lovin' Life Ministries of Metro D.C. Reaches out with Summer Fest

Douglas Burton
August 22, 2012



From left: Rev. Randall Francis, Amy Ozaki, Doug Burton Councilman Walter Fickel, David Moffitt, and unidentified youth stood after floral presentation to the Councilman.

Sunday, August 19, 2012 at the Lovin' Life Ministries (LLM) worship for the Maryland, Virginia and District of Columbia area was a sobering worship service, and many in the congregation were on the last leg of a three-day fast, but heeding Mrs. Sun Myung Moon's words, "We will never stop," the show went on for the scheduled International Summer Fest at Bladensburg High School in Bladensburg, Maryland.

The two-hour event was an open house for the local community, a talent show and a luncheon for approximately 200 members of the congregation. Randall Francis, district pastor of the LLM Mid-Atlantic area, opened the event with an invocation of prayer that included a plea for the quick recovery of Rev. Sun Myung Moon, known the world over as "True Father," who remains in intensive care at a hospital in Seoul, South Korea.



Erica Selle and Karl Selle gave a marriage testimony.

Under the rubric of "World Peace through Marriage, Music, Food, and Fun," the event rolled out singers from Austria, Columbia, Japan, Korea and several countries of Africa. In addition, participants heard testimonies to the peace-building power of marriage across racial lines.

Walter Ficklin, a Bladensburg City Councilman, was an honored guest who also gave welcoming remarks to the LLM Congregation, which recently began renting the city's new high school for its services.



Mrs. Wanji Rowe, and 11 members of the African dance team lead the congregation in lighthearted folk songs.

Mrs. Rhonda Williams of Sterling, Virginia told about how she got inspired to join the Unification Church and about her marriage to the late Bruce Williams, which resulted in four high-achieving adult children. As she explained, their family walked a steep path of financial challenges, but they never swerved from serving the public purpose. Mrs. Williams' son, Joseph Williams, is a scholar-athlete at the University of Virginia and was featured in the July 9th issue of *Sports Illustrated*.

Michael and Bianca Roschuni gave a testimony to the pleasures and challenges of international marriage in the second generation of Unificationist culture. Karl and Erica Selle also gave their account following in their parents' path to a Unificationist marriage. Mr. Selle observed that all crimes, conflicts, and even wars, can be traced to conflicts that originated in human families, which is why he deliberately chose to invest himself in making his family a model for the future.



The Arigato singers from Laurel, Maryland were a hit.

"I enjoyed it," Councilman Ficklin said, adding, "You emphasized marriage. We need more of that. We need more young people marrying at an early age. It was phenomenal the way you emphasized marriage and how your church represented a community, actually a nation. I shared with another minister about what I had experienced."

The performances included Otmar Weinmann from Austria, who played the role of music director as well as performer, as he has done for dozens of district events. Weinmann sang three songs, including one of his own compositions, as the congregation entered the school cafeteria where the food and entertainment was staged. Dr. Antonio Betancourt, originally of Colombia, performed "Me diste la Vida," known to Americans as John Denver's "You Fill Up My Senses," which showed up his nightclub-singing skills.



The African drummers and dancers hail from Kenya, Togo, the Congo and other countries.

The already-popular Arigato girls' choir from Laurel, Maryland was on hand at Summer Fest as they were at the Japan-Aid event in 2011. Mrs. Miwako Lindsey led the eight girls who come from the Ozaki, Lindsey and Egoshi families in Maryland.

Mrs. Wanji Rowe (of Kenya), Gary Rowe, Alphonse Mayele, Dr. Achille Acolatae, and eight young African Unificationists brought such a show of African dance and song that the talent judges picked them as the grand prize winner.

Mrs. Manuela Rodrigues brought two great new performers, teenager Christopher Henry, who covered Lionel Richie with "Say You, Say Me," and Daniel Rodrigues, who told a weather report joke. Those boys were thrilled to be on stage.

Mrs. Sunny Reddin played Korean strings, and 11-year-old Celeste Ramirez sang a beautiful Korean song. Several of the congregation tried their hand at karaoke with the help of Yoshimi Ozaki, karaoke-jay.

The recently-formed Maryland chapter of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) under the leadership of

Jim Boothby made itself known for the first time at Summer Fest. Jim Parrish and Pier Angelo Beltrami created an impressive UPF tabletop display that could become an informative prop at exhibitions. The façade of the tabletop can be exchanged for a new one on anything that the pastoral team seeks to promote. Alex Apostolides built a handsome portable stage to support the performers.



Mrs. Rhonda Williams told of her journey toward the ideal marriage with her husband, Bruce Williams.

“Today was a beautiful celebration of marriage and family by our diverse community. I really appreciate the participation of all the volunteers – both young and old – and how our affiliated organizations came and supported the event. The participants I spoke with were unanimously overjoyed with the Summer Festival, including those from the town of Bladensburg and surrounding communities,” observed Rev. Francis.

International Summer Fest was conceived of and planned several months ago by Mrs. Keiko Burton, who is charged with directing LLM Maryland’s international culture ministry.

“Our community needs to learn about and recognize the roots of the different cultures that have been joined by our True Parents. This is a way to introduce our international marriages and our family values. And we need to interact after the sermon. We thought a party would be good for morale and a way to introduce ourselves to the residents of Bladensburg at the same time. We hope that through such events many new members of Lovin’ Life Ministries will come,” she said.