

## Restoring Marriage and Family in 2014 in Detroit MI

David Kasbow  
April 22, 2014



*Conference attendees participate in several Q&A sessions with different panels throughout the conference*

The importance of restoring marriage and the family brought together leaders of Detroit's Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities, as well as local political and business leaders, in a program which its organizers hope will be the first of many.

Approximately 120 people attended "Restoring Marriage and Family in 2014," which was held on April 7, 2014, in the Islamic House of Wisdom in Dearborn Heights, Michigan. The interfaith event was organized by Detroit Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) pastor Rev. David Kasbow together with Dr. Michael Ross, the president and co-founder of Defending Our Father's House.



*The panel for the Q&A from left to right: Ed Taub, Retired school teacher, St. Clair Shores MI; Rev. Sidney Griffin, Pilgrim Baptist Church, Detroit MI; Jim Thienel, Chair Oakland County Republican Party, Oakland County MI; Harry Veryser, Economist Walsh College and Univ. of Detroit Mercy, Detroit MI; Dr. Mark Latkovic, Professor Sacred Heart Major Seminary, Detroit MI; Bishop Roy Ferguson, World Deliverance Temple, Dearborn Heights MI; Rabbi Dorit Edhut, Detroit Interfaith Outreach Network, Detroit MI; Imam Abdullah Ali Elahi, House of Wisdom Mosque, Dearborn Heights MI; Rabbi Mordehi Waldman, retired, Oak Park MI; Betty Cook Scott, Association of Professional Women, Detroit MI; Rev. Dr. Nick Phillips, Northridge Church, Plymouth MI; and Rev. Galan D. Walther, Michigan District Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Lansing MI. "Restoring Marriage and Family Life in 2014: Metro Detroit Interfaith Conference for Clergy and Community Leaders", House of Wisdom Mosque, Dearborn Heights MI. Monday, April 7, 2014*

Dr. Ross was nominated for a True Family Values award at an ACLC Banquet in 2009, and connected to the vision of restoring the family and to Rev. Kasbow. It wasn't until 2013 however, that the two men reconnected. Dr. Ross had been in a life-threatening car accident which kept him out of contact at the time, but was thrilled to catch up, especially on all of the recent activities with ACLC. Their second meeting led to Rev. Kasbow teaching Dr. Ross the Divine Principle over a period of five months, and after attending a UPF conference together in Chicago, where Dr. Ross was honored as an Ambassador For Peace, they made plans to hold their own conference in Detroit.

Though the event turned out to be a success, even garnering some media attention, there was a point at which organizers feared it might not even happen, due to controversy over the chosen venue. When Imam Mohammad Ali Elahi, who has had friendly relations with the FFWPU interfaith activities for over 20 years, offered to hold the event at his mosque, there was an outcry from several local religious leaders. Rev. Kasbow said: "Even though we held the program on a Monday, so as not to interfere with any day of worship, we were told quite bluntly that the Jewish community would not attend. We were also told bluntly that many Christians would not attend. And we were told that the many imams would not attend if there were Christian speakers." One speaker even pulled out of the event altogether.



*Vic Faust, Co-anchor, Action News This Morning, Channel 7, WXYZ TV Detroit*

Despite the controversy, or perhaps because of it, the organizers realized that the mosque was the perfect place to hold such an event. After all, part of the purpose of the event was to challenge groups to set aside their differences in order to build a better society for everyone. They continued to meet with, call and invite people, and worked tirelessly to plan an exciting program that could unite people of different faiths under a common vision. Their hard work paid off when representatives from Christian, Jewish and Muslim faiths attended. Imam Elahi gave an opening prayer, and after greetings from the MC, Vic Faust, a local TV anchorman, the presentations began.



*Imam Mohammad Ali Elahi and Rev. Dr. Nick Phillips*

Rev. Kasbow began the conference with an overview of the Three Blessings that are explained in the Divine

Principle. Other speakers included Barney Field, a man credited with helping to lower the crime rate in El Paso, Texas, by working with local community and faith leaders, and Dr. Ross, who gave his personal testimony of growing up in a broken family and the foster care system, and the many suffering people he met in emergency rooms. He said he “could see early on that behind the gun shots, the stabbings, the burned bodies and drug overdoses was the breakdown of the family.”

Kathy LaLonde, a young Unificationist, gave the final presentation. She related her experience of participating in the “One Heart” (Il Shim) program at age 13, and in three later workshops that prepared her for the Holy Marriage Blessing. As she shared pictures of her new husband, the audience was inspired by her testimony as a model of hope for the future of marriage and the family.

In the end, the banner of “Marriage and Family Values” was indeed able to bring pastors, imams and rabbis together with community leaders and citizens to create an inspiring afternoon of discussion and fellowship. The next step will be for those participants to take the message into the streets of the community where it can make a difference. A program is planned for May 19, 2014, to put together an interfaith team of leaders within the Metro Detroit region who will focus on marriage and family restoration.