

1800 Couples' 40th Blessing Anniversary in Washington DC

Louise Strait
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On February 8, 1975, True Parents officiated over the historic 1800 Couples' Holy Marriage Blessing Ceremony in Seoul, South Korea. Participants of this Marriage Blessing had a special mission to serve the world, and approximately ninety American Unificationists served with distinction as missionaries to countries worldwide. This year couples around the world celebrated their 40th anniversary. Here is a beautiful account of the local celebration in Washington, D.C. as recounted by Louise Strait.



Thirteen couples in the Washington, DC, metro area welcomed the 40th anniversary of the 1800 Couple Holy Marriage Blessing with a buffet dinner and program at the Gah Rahm Korean Restaurant in Beltsville, Maryland, on February 8, 2015. Fortunately the weather cooperated, and almost all couples from the Maryland and Virginia suburbs were able to come, with the result that this was one of the most "populated" celebrations that we have experienced over the years.

The atmosphere in the restaurant's party room was enhanced by Otmar Weinmann on the piano and a banner and celebration cake carrying the design motif of Phoenix birds, echoing the background of our engagement and wedding photos from forty years ago. A video of our Marriage Blessing in Korea provided a visual backdrop as couples shared their memories with one another, having had many common challenges as international missionaries, parents, and, for the lucky ones, grandparents.

Susan and Dan Fefferman were outstanding as emcees for the evening. Throughout the evening, Dan provided background music on his guitar; he also gave all guests copies of the music CD Dan Fefferman: My Best so Far, with his original compositions. Susan made a special tribute to the members of our cohort in the United States who have ascended, and Margaret Herbers read from True Parents' comments about the meaning of the 1800 Couples Holy Marriage Blessing, including True Father's remark on our first anniversary, "February 8, 1975, was for me a most unforgettable day."

After the beautifully decorated cake was cut by Yuji and Michiko Yokoyama, we were blessed to hear Katherine Cromwell recite several original poems and Randy and Beverly Berndt sing a song that they had composed. We said a sad farewell to Michael and Kozue Leone, who offered a few words about their upcoming move to California. In looking toward the future, Louise and Glenn Strait reminded us that Mother has opened up so much for us, including a broader approach to God that comes from praying to Heavenly Parent, and encouraged us to give her our full support.



The program came to a strong conclusion with Dan and Susan singing the song "Trees of Life," written by Dan immediately after their blessing in 1975, followed by the whole group singing in spirited fashion Dan's "Generation of Righteousness." Judie Lejeune, retiring assistant pastor of the Northern Virginia Church, closed the formal part of the gathering in prayer.

No one left then, however, because Otmar was video-recording brief messages from each couple to be sent to True Mother, and we all wanted to listen in. Poor Otmar had to do several takes of many couples, as we in the audience would frequently interrupt to prompt the interviewees, "Don't forget to mention your children! How many grandchildren do you have?" We were all sent home with gifts from Bill and Misako Connery.

We are grateful to the New Hope Family Church (Maryland) and the Northern Virginia Family Church for their financial support of this special event. And, of course, we are grateful to our True Parents for that day 40 years ago that was our rebirth and to the other couples who have been our companions on this journey.