

Report on National Council's Semiannual Meeting

Michael Balcomb
October 17 - 19, 2014



Delegates representing Unificationist communities across the United States met in Washington, D.C., from October 17 to 19, 2014, for the National Council's semiannual meeting.

The National Council meets every six months, choosing as the location a site that has significance to True Parents; for example, the two previous meetings were held in East Garden and Las Vegas. This latest meeting took place in the historic Upshur House in Washington, where True Parents lived during early visits to the United States. Upshur House has been the site of many providentially important events, including the Holy Marriage Blessing of 43 couples in 1969, which was the first Blessing ceremony that True Parents officiated in America.

This meeting was the culmination of the National Council's efforts begun at the April organizing meeting. Council committees have been working throughout the year and brought various proposals and plans to review and evaluate as a whole.

FFWPU Continental Director Dr. Ki Hoon Kim and President Dr. Michael Balcomb visited Washington to speak to the delegates. In his talk Dr. Kim said that a fundamental point of Divine Principle is the unity of Cain and Abel, but also appreciating things Abel's way, the way of True Mother. American Unificationists should unite with True Mother's efforts to build the International Peace Education Center in Las Vegas, Dr. Kim said, and each family should fulfill its tribal messiah responsibility.

Soon True Mother will honor several U.S. couples for having fulfilled the goal of bringing 430 couples to the Holy Marriage Blessing, and others for having given out 430 copies of True Father's autobiography, Dr. Kim said. Because of several Unificationists' achievement of bringing 430 couples to the Blessing, he explained, God will be able to help all Unificationists fulfill their responsibilities. He also said that from now on Las Vegas will be True Mother's residence in America.

Dr. Michael Balcomb told the delegates that True Mother is promoting young adults as future leaders of the church and related organizations. He said he is now interviewing young adult candidates to become an FFWPU vice president. An important qualification is the ability to speak Korean. There are a number of qualified candidates, he said.

The convener for the meeting was FFWPU Vice President and National Council President Alexa Ward. Noah Ross served as council chair, Dr. David Burgess as vice council chair, and Libby Henkin as secretary.

In addition, the National Council was pleased to welcome Michael Lograsso as the new delegate from District 12.

Over the three days of the meeting each of the National Council committees gave a report on its activities. The first was the Church Growth Committee, consisting of Bryan Lancaster, Kevin Thompson, Tyler Hendricks and Rick Schnorr, who gave the report in the form of a PowerPoint presentation. Based on input from the field, the committee made recommendations in the areas of witnessing, education (including the Unification Theological Seminary), and pastoral support. The National Council recommended getting more input from young adult Unificationists for the final report.

Dr. David Burgess reported for the Personal Growth Committee, whose other members are Poppy Richie and RoseAnn Kennett. The report spoke of the need to facilitate Unificationists' personal growth and happiness. Individuals in the process of seeking personal growth often lack support. However, personal growth corresponds to church growth, as growing people have good personal testimonies to share with others. The committee noted that an important part of spiritual growth is mentoring and that mentoring mechanisms are needed on the local level. Pastoral support is needed to facilitate development in this area. The National Council pointed out that one area of support is small group activity focused on books about personal growth.

Christine Hempowicz, who is a professional grant writer, gave the report for the Grants Committee. This committee, which also includes Luke Abrahams, Cindy Pfeiffer and Rick Schnorr, was responsible for setting up the process of awarding grants that will help fulfill the 20/20 Vision. The committee received 64 applications to receive a portion of \$200,000 in grant money that is being made available by National Headquarters.

In deciding the awardees, the committee looked for programs that showed promise of improving witnessing results. The top applications requested money either to hire young pastors and ministry leaders or to improve facilities that would lead to more tithing and witnessing. The National Council has made the final recommendations to the FFWPU Board of Directors, who will finalize the awards.

The grant-awarding process will continue in the following years. The opinion was expressed that even though some of the submitted applications were very professional, many Unificationists would benefit from webinars on how to write grant applications.

The Finance Committee's report was given by Steven Jares. The committee, whose other members are Luke Abrahams, Cindy Pfeiffer and Christine Hempowicz, commended Dr. Michael Balcomb for his efforts in publishing his FFWPU President's Report for 2013. The committee acknowledged the complexity of making that report, but felt that more information was needed to get a clear picture of the church's actual financial standing. Dr. Balcomb received the report and enlisted the committee's support in developing his report.

The Judicial Committee consists of Bryan Lancaster, Richard Sapp and Alain Tamelissio, who presented the report. The committee said that it is very important for all local churches to know about FFWPU's Whistle-blower Policy and that the Judicial Committee is the place to address issues such as financial, sexual or substance abuse, etc., by those who hold positions in the church. The Whistle-blower Policy was created to protect the rights of members of Unificationist communities and to uphold transparency rules. District representatives are the first point of contact for complaints.

The Charter Committee report was given by Richard Sapp. He said that no amendments to the National Charter had been submitted. The National Charter was posted on the Family Federation website to allow access. Feedback from the field indicates that the adoption of charters by local councils has opened the way for greater community participation and good governance, which will lay the foundation for church growth.

The National Council meeting ended with a great feeling of accomplishment for its first year. We are confident this will provide a great future for the American church.