

Holy Marriage Blessing on the second anniversary of Foundation Day celebrated in the USA

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Thousands of couples in Korea and over 20,000 couples from 194 countries around the world participated in the Holy Marriage Blessing on the second anniversary of Foundation Day. In America, local celebrations were an occasion to decorate local churches or event halls, gather friends and family and celebrate the couples beginning their journeys in marriage. Enjoy the unique and beautiful Marriage Blessing stories from around the nation!

Clifton, New Jersey



A cold, snowy evening framed the warm gathering of over 350 attendees at the second anniversary of Foundation Day and the 2015 Holy Marriage Blessing in Clifton, New Jersey. Guests began arriving at 3:30PM, filling the seats in the fellowship hall for the wedding banquet. The couples, their families and guests were treated to a Korean/Western-blend meal prepared and served by the families of the New Jersey Family Church community. Strolling minstrels played guitar and violin at each couple's table, while servers cared for the guests' dinner needs. Revs. Michael and Zena Sykes, who themselves were Blessed in marriage just last year in the same location at a similar ceremony, gave their congratulatory remarks, commenting on how they remembered their own Marriage Blessing.

"I am so happy for the parents, who are here to see their children for this special day," said Zena.

Local young Unificationists were completely engaged in creating the beauty and excitement of this evening. Some worked in designing, catering and serving in order to make the evening great. Eighth grader Hosanna Nitro said that even though decorating the church took a lot longer than she expected, she enjoyed being part of the decorating team. "It makes me want to get Blessed here too!"

Nine couples attended the ceremony. An elegant and almost ethereal spirit prevailed as each beautiful couple walked down the aisle to "Song of the Banquet." Masaaki Saito and Karen Nishinaga graced the couples and guests with a beautiful musical performance.

Jeff Topkin and Soon Mansur, who took part in this year's Marriage Blessing, said they loved that their whole family was there. "It was a wonderful event," said Soon with a big smile on her face. "I felt like a princess!"

Officiating couple, Michael and Christl Brunkhorst carried out the ceremony with utmost sincerity, in accordance with True Parents' satellite broadcast, lovingly reaching out to each of the young couples as they affirmed their eternal vow to each other. As the ceremony concluded, confetti rained down on the couples. Flowers were offered to True Parents and a celebratory cake was cut.

Following the ceremony, couples gathered in the fellowship hall to share cake and have their “first dance.” Best wishes were offered to all the couples as they begin their walk together in true love.

Maryland



There were tears, cheers and toasts aplenty at La Fontaine Bleue Wedding Center on Monday night as three couples celebrated their cross-continental nuptials in a crowd of 130 well-wishers.

Peter Hanna married Nari Stephens of Columbia, Maryland. Daniele Guiducci of Italy married Angelina Beltrami of Charlestown, West Virginia, and her brother, David Beltrami exchanged vows with Emiko Kitano of Japan. Five other members of the New Hope Family Church, including Stephanie Eby, Joshua Hunter, Ryusung Weinman, Terese Ferrete, and Mateo Eisenbart joined the main Holy Marriage Blessing ceremony with True Mother in Cheong Pyeong, Korea.

Assistant Pastor James Boothby began the event with a passionate invocation. Dr. Reverend Vandy Kennedy, pastor of the Walker Mill Baptist Church in Capitol Heights, gave the couples pastoral guidance for their new journey. Dr. Kennedy co-founded the Interfaith Marriage Coalition in January to promote the marriage blessing and distributed thousands of flyers advertising the Marriage Blessing on March 2nd. Mayor Lee Walker, longtime mayor of Landover Hills, Maryland gave a greeting to the celebrants and wished them well.

The three hour celebration was guided by three masters of ceremonies: Douglas Burton was the first, and he gave welcoming remarks; Henri Schaufler served as emcee during the formal blessing ceremony which took place during the live transmission from Korea, and Se-Gil and Julie Feldsott served as emcees during the entertainment portion. The celebrants dined on Chicken Marsala and beef brisket before the dancing began. The father-daughter dance brought many tears as the band played “Dream a little dream of me.”

Pierangelo Beltrami, father of Angelina and David said in his toast, “All I can feel is God’s grace. It is extraordinary what True Father has done by creating a family that has linked all families here.”

New Hampshire

The New Hampshire Family Church had a wonderful Foundation Day and Marriage Blessing Ceremony. The small church of a little over 30 people, including five guests, embraced the local bride and groom who attended the local ceremony.

The groom’s father gave a wonderful explanation of the centrality of the concept of inheriting God’s love, life and lineage before the ceremony. Both the bride and groom’s parents were able to contribute and be a part of the ceremony.

The ceremony became more than just a wedding for the couple, but a way to reach out to the broader community. The bride invited her landlady, who had the University of Bridgeport in the late seventies and had been warned about the “Moonies.” She said that she had seen so many missionaries on campus and avoided them. Nevertheless, she was blown away by the ceremony and meaning behind it and realized that all these years she hadn’t known who Unificationists really were. It was a transformative experience for her.

The photographer, too, was a strong Christian, and didn’t know at first whether he would take the job, but he agreed to come and loved the ceremony. He said he has been to countless weddings but this was the most beautiful one he had ever been to.

All of the guests were enraptured by the beauty and sincerity of the couples, and amazed to see all of the participants gathered in Korea.

The New Hampshire community is incredibly grateful to True Parents for liberating us all through the Blessing. They are also very grateful for True Mother’s leadership. Experiencing the Marriage Blessing reminded everyone of the incredible gift True Parents have given to humanity and how we need to share it with everyone.

Chicago, IL



Seven couples from the Hispanic community and young Unificationists from Thailand and Malaysia participated in the Blessing Celebration at Avalon Banquets in Elk Grove Village. Sister Claudette Muhammad of Nation of Islam and other American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC) pastors came to offer their support along with over 200 guests.

Denver, Colorado

Professional photographer, Tami Ichinoche, met couples for special photo sessions before the main event. Guests and community members all helped to prepare for the event. Rev. Ignace Wantete was honored with escorting the brides down the aisle.

Everyone enjoyed a wonderful reception in the fellowship hall that was beautifully decorated by the local community. Amazing floral arrangements were made and donated by Catherine Ichinoche. In the dining room, after everyone seated themselves, participants cut an extravagant wedding cake prepared by Marianne Rischl and her daughters.

Friends and family made toasts as everyone enjoyed a delicious meal, and Rev. Wantete shared about how he had met the couples when he first taught them about the Divine Principle and True Parents. Each participant also shared words with the group. Overall, they wanted to express their gratitude for all the people who helped them get to the Blessing and to be a part of this momentous day. They felt truly “Blessed”.

So many people worked together and invested so much into making this Blessing and Foundation Day

celebration happen, and it paid off in a beautiful event.

New York, NY



Twelve couples and over 100 guests, friends and family gathered at The Family Church of New York City for the local Marriage Blessing event. Rev. and Mrs. Compton officiated the ceremony at the 43rd street center. The couples enjoyed an evening of celebration and dancing, including father-daughter and mother-son dances, and the first dance as married couples. It was an uplifting evening for everyone present.

Tempe, AZ



Participants and friends gathered at the Peace Embassy in Tempe, AZ to celebrate the Holy Blessing Ceremony of two young Unificationist couples.

Over 40 celebrants were serenaded by Mark Hickler and Giselle Lee's instrumentals on violin, bass and guitar during the banquet. Many members of the local community helped and did a beautiful job. They felt that they were participating alongside True Mother and those attending in Korea.

After the beautiful video and exchange of the rings, the new brides and grooms were invited into a specially prepared room to cut their respective wedding cakes and take more photographs. The individualized cakes were lovingly crafted by Blandine Perry Taylor.

Worcester, MA



The Worcester community embraced and celebrated their new couple, Stephany Perry and Trevor Anderson. The couple was very happy that they were able to attend the Holy Marriage Blessing ceremony in their local community, because it meant that all their family and friends could join them in this joyful moment. Over 130 participants gathered for the celebration, including one young Unificationist couple. The Worcester Family Church band played festive music as the couples danced amidst great food and a light atmosphere.

Bridgeport, Connecticut



Six couples received the Marriage Blessing in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Rev. Chris and Dr. Christine Hempowicz served as officiators in a ceremony held at the prestigious Tower Room of the Bernhard

Center at the University of Bridgeport Campus, overlooking Long Island Sound. The evening began with photos and hors d'oeuvres in the University's Art Gallery, then moved upstairs for the live feed from Korea.

The program ended with some local talent led by Abe Deshotel who serenaded the new couples with love songs and other pop tunes. The room was filled with over 120 guests who attended the proceedings. The crowd was moved by True Mother's words that emphasized the serious as well as joyous time we live in.

Dr. Hempowicz, in her remarks, noted that this event was a new beginning for Bridgeport and they should endeavor to make these gatherings larger and larger, eventually having one in the nearby Arena.

Northern Virginia



The NOVA Family Church celebration had 90 people in attendance at their Holy Marriage Blessing Ceremony. Fifteen guests attended and were pleased to observe the traditions of the wedding ceremony.

Berkeley, California



Eight couples married at Shimjung Gardens in Berkeley, California in the presence of 100 family and friends. Officiated by Myrna Lapres, assistant pastor of the Bay Area Family Church, the couples began with the Holy Wine ceremony in the prayer room where True Parents stayed many times in the 70's & 80's. It was a beautiful setting overlooking the San Francisco bay for the couples to take their vows, exchange rings, and begin their married life together. There was a cake for each couple to cut and guests enjoyed wonderful food and fellowship.

Family Church of South Florida



Around 35 members gathered at the Hialeah Center to watch the Foundation Day Holy Marriage Blessing live broadcast. Two local families had children who were participating in Korea, so it was very exciting to experience it together with them. After singing songs and greeting True Parents, Rev. Wesley and Gladys Samuel, who recently celebrated their 46th year of marriage, led the congregation in a holy wine ceremony. It was a precious and memorable time, with laughter and the sharing of joy.

Columbus, Ohio



Three couples attended from Columbus, Ohio: Young Angelucci and Grace Lindstrom; Trimon Lamson and Felicia Bratti; and Seizan Lindstrom and Junna Kanazawa.

Detroit, Michigan



In Detroit, six couples received the Holy Marriage Blessing. Local Unificationists and five pastor couples celebrated alongside them. The Lindsay and Tanimoto families were happy to celebrate with the community, while their son, August Lindsay, and daughter, Chiyo Tanimoto, received the Marriage Blessing in Korea. August's uncle also participated with his wife in this year's Marriage Blessing. It was a wonderful family affair.