

Over 50 attend ACLC True Family Values Seminar at Imani Temple in Maryland

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Over 50 teachers, preachers, pastors, and community leaders came together to focus on strengthening families through the Marriage Blessing at the Imani Temple in Maryland on February 27, 2016. Imani Temple is the mother church of the African-American Catholic Congregation (AACC) founded by Rev. George Augustus Stallings, Jr., the National Co-Chairman of the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC).

The program included two inspiring presentations in the morning with question and answer sessions, followed by a video report on the 20th Anniversary of the True Family Ministry.



Rev. Stallings, host pastor and patriarch of AACC, led us in the first session, entitled “Ideal Marriage and Family,” focusing on the Three Great Blessings which God, our Heavenly Parent, gave to Adam and Eve

in the first chapters of Genesis.

After the presentation we took some time to discuss how this content might be applied in or relevant to our own lives. How are our families the cornerstone of God's Kingdom? How do we practice altruism? How do we manifest art or creation in our families?

In response to this last question, we heard some very intriguing and beautiful answers, including how we as individuals can help God perfect the fullness of the creation through striving to perfect ourselves and building loving family relationships. One attendee, Rev. Joseph Taylor of the New Hope Family Church, commented, "As Dr. Jenkins said during the program, political leaders cannot save America; only religious leaders can begin to heal this nation. God will work through families centered on God, so the core of everything is true values embodied in the family. This program made it all so clear."

The second session was facilitated by Dr. Michael Jenkins, Chief Financial Officer for Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) USA, who discussed the value and process of the "Blessing of Marriage." Dr. Jenkins stressed that we must know how to prepare for marriage: namely that we must first learn to live for the sake of others and remain abstinent before marriage, so that when we do marry we may be totally committed and responsible for our marriages. Conveying the heart of both Jesus and True Father, Dr. Jenkins concluded by saying, "It is a lifelong commitment, and not only that. We can no longer think of it as "til death do us part." Marriage is an eternal commitment!"

After a delicious lunch prepared by the Imani hospitality team, Rev. Stallings and Dr. Jenkins explained the process of Holy Marriage Blessing Ceremony, with the goal of equipping clergy to conduct the ceremony in their own churches. Their discussion focused on outlining and explaining the several component steps involved in the Marriage Blessing Ceremony, from the Holy Wine Ceremony to a formal, concluding offering of thanksgiving in prayer.

The seminar closed with a video presentation honoring the 20th Anniversary of True Family Values Banquets held annually in Chicago, IL, but before we departed, we heard testimonies from a few of the attendees who had traveled from near and far to attend.



"Rev. Stallings hosted a wonderful ACLC program that gave spiritual and practical insight into how the Blessing can be shared with other congregations. This is inspiring for many of us, as we see that the Blessing movement is growing thanks to the foundations of True Parents." — Mrs. Brenda Miller, Women's Federation for World Peace, Maryland

"The program and discussion was highly informative and educational. I resonated with one guest who said, "Wow, the spirit here just keeps on getting higher and higher." This was great food for the heart and the intellect." — Mrs. Beverly Berndt, teacher at New Hope Academy

Before offering the concluding prayer, Bishop Vandy Kennedy, local ACLC co-chairman and pastor and founder of Walker Mill Baptist Church, invited all of us to join his upcoming "40 Days and 40 Nights of Prayer and Fasting," to be held from

April 1 through May 10 at the Franklin Square Park in Northwest, Washington, D.C. He implored all present to make time in their busy schedules to honor God and serve people during this upcoming 40-day period of renewal.

Seven participants ventured to the event from as far away as New York. These included the ACLC National Co-President Rev. Sulanch Lewis-Rose and two members from her congregation; the ACLC National Executive Director, Rev. Tom Cutts; the ACLC National Outreach Director, Rev. Bruce Grodner; the National Vice President of the Women's Federation for World Peace, Rev. Juanita Pierre-Louis; and the Youth Minister of the Harlem Family Church, Minister Nandi Bengu.