

International Couples to be virtually blessed at 2021 Hyojeong Cosmic Blessing

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April 9, 2021



"My faith is my way of life, it's the way I want to live," says N. Yee, a young Unificationist in Illinois.

Raised in the suburbs of Chicago, Yee, now 30, is participating locally in the 2021 Hyojeong Cosmic Blessing Ceremony in just two weeks. It's a huge step for him and his partner, S. Kitaguchi, 29. On April 25, they will join millions of couples worldwide who have received the [Marriage Blessing](#) officiated by the late Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, co-founders of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU).

"I'm excited that we both understand the value of the Marriage Blessing and can share this experience together," says Yee.

Although Kitaguchi is more than 6,000 miles away, in Tokyo, the couple has triumphed over distance -- and the pandemic.

"We've been communicating for more than a year," says Yee. "We started talking in November 2019, so right before Covid started. We planned for S. to visit America early on but that couldn't happen."

After months of texting and video chatting, the couple, who connected online through the international Unificationist matching website MatchNet with the help of a matching advisor, finally met for two weeks before Christmas 2020. It was the first time Kitaguchi had been to the U.S.

"I felt nervous," says Kitaguchi, "but I felt very comfortable being with N. and talking with him. I was very excited to see him."

Despite challenges like time zones -- a 14-hour difference for the couple -- they made it work. Their blossoming love, rooted faith, maturity, and similar backgrounds propelled them forward.

"I've been to Japan several times in the past to see my grandparents and extended family," says Yee, whose mother is Japanese and father is American-Chinese. "S. visited during the pandemic which showed me she's very committed."

They both took a leap of faith by putting themselves out there on a matching website -- a growing trend among Unificationists.

Recent data shows that while Unificationists from around the world meet through a variety of ways, including traditional methods, 30 percent of couples now connect through national and international Unificationist matching websites, making finding true love 'just a click away.'

In a digital age, Kitaguchi will join Yee virtually for the Blessing ceremony in Chicago.



Another matched couple, K. Maeda of Illinois and L. Park of New Jersey, will also be there. Similarly, they connected online through the national matching website, Matchbook.

"It was the most accessible option for me since organic ways of meeting someone weren't a reality for me," says Park, 26, who initially felt unsure about the Marriage Blessing and focused on school. "I previously saw K.'s profile a couple of years earlier when I was helping my sister in her matching search," says Park. "I thought, 'Wow, this guy has amazing answers; I've never seen such great answers in a profile!'"

After attending an inspiring regional church summit in 2019, Park had a change of heart about the Marriage Blessing.

"I shot down all of my internal excuses," she says. "I came home and put a profile up, and in two months I heard from K.'s family. I viewed the effort he put into his profile as a condition of heart that I wanted to be able to receive and appreciate."

For Maeda, 25, the feeling was mutual.

"Reading through her profile, she seemed like someone who had a similar perspective on life," he says. "We talked for about three hours on the first call which showed us that we could communicate well."

Their families easily connected, too, as the pair met over Thanksgiving. A strong life of faith has been their priority, both serving as co-pastors of their respective youth communities as they develop their careers.

"It was important to us to have a commitment to our faith and God and connect our relationship to something bigger," says Maeda. "I want to align myself with the values of the Marriage Blessing; it's what I stand for and what I really admire in our Unification movement."

"This was a very spiritual process for me and I felt a lot of God's presence," says Park.



Likewise, M. Sonohara, from Tokyo, also felt guided in his search for a partner in 2019 when he created a profile online. In February 2020, he received the Marriage Blessing in Korea with M. Micherino, 26, of Brazil.

"I knew she was the one for me when I saw her profile on the international matching website," says M., 28, who connected with Micherino through a matching supporter and mutual friend. The happy couple, who spent countless hours talking on Skype, met for the first time at the Blessing -- the last live ceremony in South Korea before the pandemic.

"I believe that when you put yourself out there, God will work in your life," says Sonohara. "It was really our faith that brought us together and we're so grateful for that."

For more than five decades, the Marriage Blessing movement, based on true love and ideal families, has united numerous couples of all backgrounds from around the world centered on God.

You can learn more about the Marriage Blessing [here](#).