

FFWPU USA Couples Celebrating Their 40th Marriage Blessing Anniversary

Naokimi Ushiroda
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Unificationists across the country had much to celebrate over the holiday weekend. Each region honored the couples from their community celebrating their 40th Marriage Blessing anniversary on July 1, and on July 3 kicked off a new 40-day special devotion for a successful Seonghwa festival celebrating the 10th anniversary of True Father's holy ascension.



"We had a beautiful event at East Garden, where 102 participants [from the tri-state area] celebrated their 40th Blessing anniversary," said Rev. Miilhan Stephans, FFWPU USA vice president and pastor of the Manhattan Family Church. "It was a traditional celebration with an opening song and prayer, and offering flowers to True Parents, as well as a cake-cutting. We had a toast, a Blessing video, and during dinner we played a game with all of the couples."

It's been four decades since 2,075 couples participated in the Marriage Blessing ceremony officiated by True Parents at Madison Square Garden on July 1, 1982. The event is sometimes referred to as the 8,000 Couples Blessing, acknowledging another Blessing that year of 6,000 couples in Korea on October 14.

"What I loved about this [anniversary celebration] is that it reminded us that our Blessing is not just for us, but really a message for the world," said Rev. Miilhan. "Dr. Yong gave a very joyful message with a lot of laughter, and there was also beautiful heartfelt music. We heard a variety of testimonies that included things that [the couples] learned over time and how their relationship is continuing to blossom even today."

In Las Vegas, a Blessing anniversary celebration honored 19 couples at IPEC, while in Washington, DC, another 25 couples were honored at The Washington Times building. "We were very excited to be able to celebrate all of our couples," said Rev. Ernest Patton, FFWPU USA Southeast regional director. "We had a joint celebration with our evening Sunday service that was set up banquet style ... and we had just enough food for the 260 people who came. It was such a wonderful turnout and a great spirit while celebrating the beauty of the Blessing and the magnificence of discovering and creating true love guided by True Parents."

Most couples who receive the Marriage Blessing are from different backgrounds - a staple of the international cross-cultural ceremony uniting people beyond boundaries of race, religion, national and ideological views. Often faced with adversity, many couples, including those from the 1982 Blessing, sacrificed everything and overcame various hardships, including being disowned by their families, and, in some cases, kidnapped from the movement.



"We're grateful for this anniversary celebration," shared one couple from the DC community. "It was amazing because there were so many brothers and sisters that I haven't seen in ages." The couple noted the Blessing anniversary event could be "very effective in growing the [Unification] movement," as it is a testament of unwavering dedication and faith.



Rev. Patton said the Blessing is an inspiration and aspiration for others seeking a meaningful connection and lasting relationship. "Our guests, including one pastor from Baltimore, were just delighted by the faith and the history of the many people who were Blessed in 1982," he said. "The amazing brothers and sisters all across the world who committed to True Parents and creating true families is such a beautiful and noble goal. It's so important to honor the people who have made this kind of investment."

With Blessing anniversary celebrations held in communities nationwide, FFWPU leaders kicked off the global 40-day special devotion as well, which runs from July 3 to August 11. Leaders said the focus of this devotion is prayer for True Parents' health and well-being, the success of True Father's seonghwa anniversary event, and to reconnect with inactive community members.

"The Blessing is really the connecting point of all of our couples," said Rev. Kazuo Takami, FFWPU USA Midwest regional director. "It's a really amazing experience for us to share with even more people."

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

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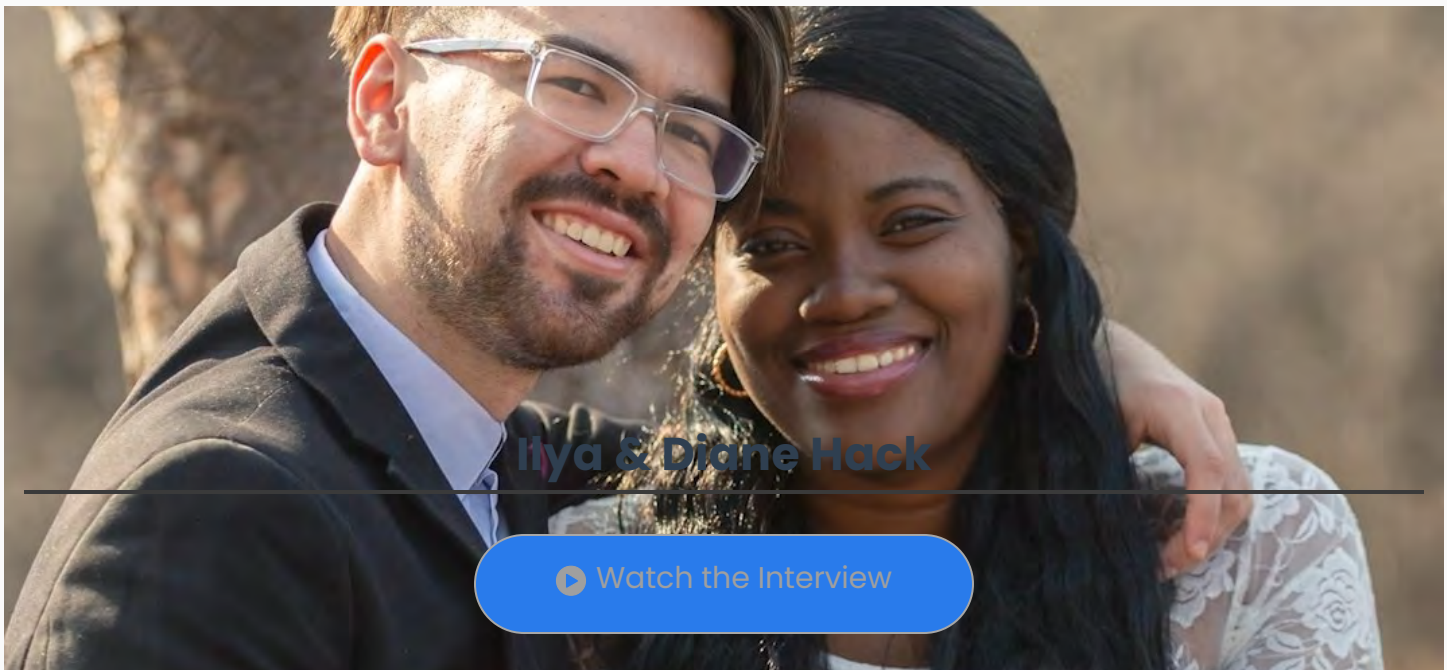
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