

Unification Church Founder Sun Myung Moon in Critical Condition

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South Korean evangelist Reverend Moon Sun-myung and his wife Han Hak-ja (R) bless newlyweds during a mass wedding ceremony at Sun Moon University in Asan, south of Seoul October 14, 2009.

The Rev. Sun Myung Moon of South Korea's Unification Church has been moved to a private hospital near his home after officials revealed his condition has grown worse.

Moon previously had been visiting a specialist in Japan to treat his pneumonia, but the 92-year-old multibillion-dollar media and self-professed messiah will need further care back in South Korea.

"Our prayers will hopefully work better in Gapyeong," commented church spokesman Ahn Ho-yeol as reported by The Associated Press. Ahn noted that Moon had developed further complications involving his kidney and liver.

"Seoul St. Mary's Hospital notified us that, as Rev. Moon's hospitalization period prolongs, complications arise and there is no way to improve his condition with modern medical technology," a statement from the church added.

The Washington Times, which Moon founded, notes that for a while, Moon's condition seemed to be improving, and it was only during the last few days that doctors said that the controversial church leader had entered "an irreversible stage of his condition."

Joon Ho Seuk, international vice president of the Unification Church wrote: "In reality, he is currently sustaining his life with the assistance of various machines" and "we have reached the point at which this stark reality cannot be reversed."

The Unification Church is considered controversial in mainstream Christian circles because Moon declares himself to be a messiah called by Jesus at the age of 15 to fulfill the Son of God's unfinished work on earth.

A Christian Post report on religious cults details the ways in which Moon's denomination differs from mainstream Christianity, such as his belief that people need to be married in order to enter heaven.

Moon's last public appearance in South Korea came in July, when he attended the opening and closing ceremonies of the Peace Cup soccer tournament, which was won by German club Hamburger SV and sponsored by the Unification Church.

The church was founded in 1954 by Moon, but has grown to attract between five to seven million members worldwide and has a presence in over 200 countries.