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Issues in the "Matching" of First Generation Unification Church Members in the Post Rev. Moon Era

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The International Blessing developed by the Unification Church is not a wedding which is limited only to Unification Church members. It is the official course that all people must pass through... because the human ancestors fell. If our first ancestors had not fallen, it would not be necessary for us to receive the Blessing. But we have to reverse the fallen process.

Why do we get married? Marriage allows us to go the Kingdom of Heaven... We have to get married in order to be qualified to go to the heavenly kingdom.

The value of the Blessing cannot be exchanged even for the world. The Blessing is one man and one woman, centering on God's will, becoming a true father and true mother, producing true love. (Rev. Sun Myung Moon)

The Blessing, marriage and family life is fundamental to the teachings of Rev. Sun Myung Moon and the lifestyle of the Unification Church. It is an undeniable part of being a Unification Church [UC] member. When one attends a Unification Church service or event, one sees and feels a strong sense of marriage and family culture. Members will often ask if you are "Blessed" if they do not know you personally. This has become a natural way of getting to know each other as a faith community. The Blessing, or being Blessed, is such an important part of what it means to be a UC member that it has become an expectation.

You are expected at some point in your spiritual journey to be Blessed and to start family life.

In breaking down the above words of Rev. Moon, there are three reasons why one needs the Blessing: First, to reverse the Human Fall; second, to create families centered on God; and third, to be qualified to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. These speak to the utmost importance Rev. Moon and the Unification Church places on the Blessing, marriage and family life. It is the building block or cornerstone of establishing the Kingdom of Heaven. It is not only the reversal of the Fall, but a recreation of oneself as men and women seeking true love through a new understanding of marriage and family life centered on God. Rev. Moon often said that we do not marry for the sake of ourselves, but for the sake of our spouse and to bring love and joy to God. This is truly revolutionary, especially in Western culture which is deeply rooted and saturated in the idea of love and marriage for the sake of oneself.

How does a Unification Church member pursue an ideal and eternal partner?^[1] In the past, Rev. Moon himself matched members. Qualified church members would gather together in a church hall or other location and Rev. Moon would match them in person. Members were asked if they were willing to marry a different race or marry internationally. But mostly, Rev. Moon would pick out and match couples by his keen spiritual sense. Once matched, the prospective couples would go off and decide whether or not to accept. If the couple accepted, they would return and bow showing their acceptance of the match and respect for Rev. Moon. Starting in 1992, Rev. Moon began to match members by photo. Photo matching became the major way of matching for the Blessing ceremonies of 1992 until 1999. After 1999, Rev. Moon stopped matching first generation—those who joined the church as opposed to being born into the church, and the

responsibility for matching them moved to the church leadership. This ultimately led to a lot of careless matchings and the breaking up of couples who were not educated about the meaning and value of the Blessing. In 2009, a new matching process was inaugurated.

This article takes an honest look at the current matching process for first generation in the Unification Church and the issues that we of that generation face trying to find our eternal partners for the Blessing and for marriage and family life. It may not cover all of the issues but focuses on some major points:

1. The new matching process and education about the meaning and value of the Blessing
2. The Online Matching System (OMS): how it works and whether it is effective
3. Matching Advisors: their role and whether they helping or hindering the process
4. Candidates: what does it mean to be a candidate and their feelings about the process

The New Matching Process and Education

We are pioneers of a new tradition of matching and Blessing, inherited from our True Parents beginning in 2009. It is essential that candidates and those supporting them understand the heart of this process.^[2]

In 2009 a new international matching and education system was established by the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification. The guidelines and policies of this new matching process are outlined in what is now a draft called *The Unificationist Matching Handbook*, which is currently being read by our legal department and is in its final editing stage according to Marjorie Buessing, Senior Matching Advisor and Chairwoman of the First Generation Matching Committee. *The Unificationist Matching Handbook* acts as a resource for adult Unifications wanting to enter the matching process.

So what is the new matching process? According to the draft handbook, there are three core principles to this new process:

1. Church leaders and elders “do not automatically have the authority or capacity of True Parents”. Therefore, a new matching system is required, that maintains this God-centered tradition, but respects the candidates’ input and gives them time to build a relationship and take ownership of their final commitment.”^[3] In other words, church leaders and elders are not in the position of Rev. and Mrs. Moon and do not have spiritual authority or capacity to match members in the same way Rev. Moon has done in the past. They must follow the new matching process.
2. Matching Advisors “should be trained and certified by each nation’s HQ, and should operate within the framework of the international guidelines. *Matching advisors do not make matches*. They work to educate, encourage, and get to know candidates, and network with other advisors to make suggestions.”^[4] Anyone wanting to help members or feel called to the task of finding and suggesting partners, must go through a training process to become certified Matching Advisors. This is also true for church leaders and elders.
3. “The matching process for First Generation Unificationists should have *clearly defined stages of qualification, recommendation, couple communication, and finally, commitment*. Education, guidance, and a clear vertical process that empowers candidates will result in healthier, everlasting Blessed families.”^[5]

And what are these clearly defined stages of qualification, recommendation, communication, and commitment? There are five prerequisites “to become a candidate and enter the matching process.” They are: (1) one year of membership, (2) minimum age of 20 years old, (3) education in the Divine Principle (the core teaching of the Unification Church) and affirmation of the Family Pledge,^[6] (4) Blessing Education, specifically Level 1 and 2 Blessing workshops which help prepare members to understand the spiritual meaning of the Blessing as well as the matching process, and finally (5) maintain sexual abstinence for at least one year.

Once a member has met these prerequisites, there are three important steps to becoming a fully qualified candidate. First, one must select a Matching Advisor (MA) trained and certified by the national Blessed Family Ministry (BFM);^[7] second, one must complete an online application, which includes letters of recommendation, health exams, and certificate of completing the Level

2 workshop; and third, one must complete a Purity Interview. A Purity Interview is basically a confession of sins so that one can make a new start before entering the matching process. It is confidential and must be done with a MA or church leader. Once one becomes a qualified candidate, with recommendations from local and district pastors, one is ready to work with a MA to find a potential match.

In finding a match, it is highly recommended to work with a Matching Advisor. The candidate, together with the Matching Advisor, searches for potential matches, predominantly on a church online matching system called OMS, which will be discussed later. When a potential match is found, it is submitted for review to the USA Matching Committee. Once the match suggestion is approved, the communication process can begin.

There is a 21-day Introduction Stage where the candidates “have 21 days to decide whether to begin to communicate with the matching in mind. If yes, they move to the Communication Stage; if no, they go back to the planning stage.”^[8] The Communication Stage is a 25-week or 7-month period of getting to know the potential match on a deeper level. The candidates are not dating but developing an “intentional friendship.” It is important to note that a candidate is free to say no at any point during this phase. But they instructed that if they say no during this phase, there must be a good reason.

When, after the 7 month to a year period is complete, the couple decides to take ownership of this match and wants to move forward to the Blessing, they enter the Commitment Stage and hold a commitment ceremony. It is at this time when they publicly announce themselves as a matched couple.

This new matching system, together with *The Unificationist Matching Handbook*, tries to maintain the vertical tradition of the matching while giving more authority and ownership to candidates and those seeking an eternal partner. It is designed to protect candidates from the misuse and mishandling of the matching process done previously by church leaders and elders. In many cases they had faulty understanding of the matching as to fulfill providential numbers, quotas that were given by Rev. Moon to church leaders in order to fulfill a certain number of candidates to attend the Blessing, and in striving to fulfill them they frequently made unwise matches. This led to many broken Blessings and broken hearts. With the focus now on clear stages of qualification, education, and empowering candidates to get to know potential partners and themselves deciding whom they want to be blessed to, there are less chances of feeling duped and pressured into marrying someone you feel is not right for you because a church leader or elder says so. The members are responsible and take ownership of their decision.

There are clear advantages to this new matching process and its potential to create healthy Blessing and marriage partners. But I also see some disadvantages. In the past, when UC members were matched directly by Rev. Moon, members were prepared to accept anyone, beyond race, nationality, cultural background. They were prepared to go beyond their concepts of beauty and/or their fallen concepts of what is an attractive spouse. It was a great honor to be matched and blessed by Rev. Moon, and they believed the person who was chosen was God’s choice for them. Members had absolute faith in the Blessing for creating ideal families, and it was faith and respect for the value of the Blessing that kept couples together. Members believed that challenges and tough times in these marriages had to do with restoration, of not only the first fall of Adam and Eve, but their ancestral sin and personal baggage. Sometimes members from enemy nations were matched together to restore historical resentment. The meaning and value of the Blessing was much bigger than UC members could imagine, and they were willing to take that on in the name of bringing joy to God and world peace.

Now that UC members are no longer required to accept absolute matches, they have a chance to be more selective in their choice of a spouse and take ownership of their Blessing, a freedom and responsibility they did not have before. This is a major cultural shift in the way to look at the matching process, but it can also present some issues. With more freedom to select their own spouses, candidates can also limit themselves. When what a candidate is looking for becomes more specific, this can limit their options in an already limited pool of available potential candidates. One of the reasons for this is the sobering reality that the church has not grown with new membership in the past 20 years, especially in the United States. Thus, candidates should

still have a spirit of openness. If candidates are not open to other races, international matches, etc., they can be waiting for a long time to find what they are looking for.

There are also issues that may come up if a candidate decides to find a potential partner outside of the UC. There are many reasons for this, as we will see later, such as age (40 yrs. and over) and not enough available candidates on the Online Matching System (OMS). According to Christian Nseka, Head Matching Advisor in the local NY area, if a candidate finds or witnesses to someone outside the UC, that person would still need to become a member for a year and meet the qualifications of education and purity before they can be a candidate. Essentially, you are not “dating” this person but witnessing to this person as a spiritual child. I believe from a Unificationist viewpoint, this would be the best way of finding a match on the outside. But I also see the challenge of realistically finding someone who can agree with our high standards. It would truly take a special and prepared person who is ready to make such a commitment. It’s a challenge, but it is not impossible.

For those looking for partners within the UC, the Online Matching System (OMS) is rapidly becoming a useful tool for finding candidates of the UC faith. This leads to the issue of how it works and whether it is effective in making successful matching partners.

The Online Matching System (OMS)

The Online Matching System (OMS) is a service provided to the Blessed Family Department of the FFWP-USA. OMS works in conjunction with the USA BFD, and cooperates with all international Blessed Family Departments. It does not override the authority of the BFDs, but is simply a tool to facilitate the matching and Blessing of First Generation Unificationists according to their faith.^[9]

The Online Matching System (OMS), a new part of the matching process, is a secure website that was created and designed by Anne-Marie Mylar in September 2009 and went live October 1, 2010. In 2011, Anne-Marie went to Europe “to present OMS to the BFDs representatives at their yearly meeting. She is currently the sole administrator of OMS.”^[10]

Essentially, the OMS is a website where an applicant or candidate can upload their application and create a profile that can be used by Matching Advisors in finding potential partners. An applicant or candidate, in creating their profile, uploads photos and answers several questions designed to express their character, life of faith, and goals for marriage and family life. After you complete your OMS profile, only qualified candidates—not applicants—have access to your profile information. But this does not include your photo, name or contact information, for security reasons and to keep a vertical process. They do get access to very basic information and the answers to the questions on your profile. If you are interested in a particular candidate, your matching advisor will contact the matching advisor of that person to find out more information.

Is the OMS effective in finding potential, eternal partners? Yes, I think it can be effective. But I also believe there is also room for improvement. The OMS is only as good as the number of available candidates that have actually created a profile and are registered on the website. Simply put, the more candidates on OMS, the better chances you have in finding a match. But let’s look at some statistics. According to the Online Matching System Newsletter from August 2013,^[11] there were 195 people in the OMS website. The stats show the number of candidates (86) and applicants (91), the number of males vs. females, and the numbers categorized by age. To clarify, an applicant is someone who has not completed the qualifications to be a candidate (online application, purity interview, selecting a matching advisor) but they can still register on OMS. Also, as mentioned earlier, an applicant will not be shown potential partners in OMS until they become a candidate. In both categories of applicants and candidates, females outnumber males (among candidates, 54 to 32). And there are more people that are applicants than candidates. And if the rule is that applicants cannot be suggested a partner until they are a candidate, looks like these applicants need a bit more encouragement to complete their information.

According to Christian Nseka, there are not enough people on OMS, and that makes finding partners a challenge. But, he says, this was not the case a couple of years ago. In 2011 there were many successful suggested matches that ended up going to the Blessing. Now, the pool of available candidates is very limited and many of the candidates on OMS have been there for a while.

Also, if you look at the stats of candidates broken down by country, although the US has the most candidates, many of those who request to be on the OMS are from other countries. This means that either there are not many candidates outside the US or, possibly, national BFMs in other countries have created their own websites. According to Marjorie Beussing, some countries like Germany and England have created smaller websites for their candidates. It is when the candidate from outside the U.S. is looking for an international matching that they create a profile on OMS. But not all national BFMs have websites, and not all are on board with the new matching process.

I think that as we are an international community, there is great need to improve our communication. For example, I know there is a European website, but it was very difficult for my MA to connect with the candidates listed there. This is surprising! I think it would benefit the candidates if there were better ways of communicating with the national BFMs in other nations. And not only better communication, there needs to be more participation. There seems to be many disconnected BFMs and differences in standards between them, and this can hinder the matching process. There needs to be an internal shift to become more open and connected as a worldwide movement. I believe Matching Advisors can play a very important role in making that connection, which leads to the next issue of the role of Matching Advisors in the matching process.

The Role of the Matching Advisor

Candidates should be honest and open with their Matching Advisor about their background situation, plans, and preferences. This allows the MA to find the most qualified candidates to recommend. Full disclosure to a qualified advisor also ensures the vertical component that allows candidates to separate from self-centered motives, and creates the opportunity for God to guide their matching process.^[12]

In the new matching process, qualified candidates work together with qualified and trained Matching Advisors. Since the first generation were not born within the UC and do not have parents that can help in the matching process, they need a MA to act as a parent that can assist and suggest potential partners. Again, the MA ensures that “vertical component” and “creates the opportunity for God to guide their matching process.”

And what are the responsibilities of the MA? First, the MA needs to get to know the candidate, their background, their preferences, their deal breakers, etc. It is important that the MA is clear about who you are and what you are looking for and should insist that you, the candidate, be clear as well. They are also responsible for making sure you have completed your application and that you have created a profile on OMS. Second, the MA needs to assist the candidate in developing a personal matching plan. In the *Unificationist Matching Handbook*, there is a worksheet with questions designed to help create this matching plan and act as a “roadmap” for the matching process. Completing this worksheet together with the candidate helps to have a clear strategy as well as “help you understand them more deeply.”^[13] Also, in this matching plan, candidates are encouraged to have a matching “team.” This team can be a group of supportive individuals that encourage and help the candidate in the matching process. But the clear center point is the MA. Third, the MA should establish a communication plan and reporting system with their candidate. They should decide how often they will communicate and by what means, telephone, email, etc.

The MA has several sources when looking for potential partners for their candidates: Suggestions from the candidates matching team, the OMS, MA networking meetings (which

meet 4 times a year online through webinars), and introducing candidates to other MAs through Yammer, a social networking site primarily used for “private communication with organizations.” The candidate him or herself may also suggest a potential partner or someone they are interested in. But it is highly recommended that this suggestion be discussed with the MA to maintain the vertical process.

Yet, with all these sources for finding potential partners for their candidates, MAs still run into problems. Again, one of the major issues MAs have at this time is the lack of candidates on the OMS. Not enough candidates are registered, and those still in applicant status are at varying levels of completing their qualifications to be a candidate. There are more female candidates than male candidates and in certain age categories the female/male ratios are drastic (especially in the 40-50 age group).

I think it would also be interesting if there was a category in the stats for racial background. I would be curious to find what racial groups are represented on the OMS and, if possible, their racial preferences. Do racial preferences play an important role in the matching process? Are there certain racial groups that are more preferred than others? How would a MA deal with this issue, or better yet, the national BFM? Recent studies show that race does matter on popular dating sites like OKCupid and Facebook apps like Are You Interested, where certain racial groups were preferred more than others. I think we would discover similar findings in our matching system.

Another problem that MAs run into is a lack of participation from other countries. According to Drissa Kone, a MA and Resident Chaplain of Barrytown College, there are two major issues with the online process that present a problem for MAs. First, it is difficult for members from other countries (Europe, Japan, Africa) to be on the OMS. He says that some countries are following the old picture matching method, which is done by continental directors. The second issue he says has to do with leadership. Some leaders refuse to allow members to enroll on the website because they do not understand the complicated process of the OMS and the new matching system. It is, after all, an American matching system, and some in the international community are not familiar with the process. Kone believes that the OMS is a great tool, but it needs support from the international community to see good results.

Marjorie Beussing views the participation in the new matching system as not yet ideal but getting better. Every country’s BFM has the authority and responsibility to follow the international matching guidelines. America and Canada are one when it comes to the matching system, with Brazil following close behind having MA training seminars every month. America also takes care of the Caribbean countries, which follow our matching system and application forms. Recently, the South-East Asian countries of Thailand and Vietnam began to get on board. But other countries are still doing absolute matching,^[14] even though it is no longer recommended by the international guidelines. The publication of the Unificationist Matching Handbook will be a step for change.

Even though the international community is slowly moving to the new matching process, they are not all on the same page. Unfortunately, in some countries the leader still has too much power and would rather control the matching process themselves. This is problematic for MAs and for candidates who might seek a match from those countries.

Finally, some MAs have a difficult time communicating with other MAs in other countries. This means anywhere from email responses to requesting more information on a candidate. Sometimes there has been no response. This also creates problems and hinders the matching process. According to Christian Nseka, there are 150 MAs internationally, yet during the last webinar of Matching Advisors there was very little international participation. It is clear that there needs to be a bigger push for international participation and communication between MAs.

Knowing this, can candidates feel confident and hope in the matching process? As was mentioned above, the OMS is a great tool but needs support from the international community to see good results. This leads to the final issue of looking at candidates and their feelings about the new matching process.

The Candidate

The quality of your Blessed marriage relationship and the health of your future family life will depend greatly upon the strength of each partner's faith, the quality of your character, and your understanding of and commitment to the ideals of the Blessing. It is important to prepare your heart and establish a strong personal foundation for the Blessing. [\[15\]](#)

In the new matching process, it is the candidate who brings his or her strength of faith, character, and understanding of the meaning and value of the Blessing to the forefront. He or she will not only get to know a potential eternal partner, but will get to know him or herself. This new matching process asks the candidate to "prepare your heart," to deepen his or her relationship with God, and to be very clear and thorough in communication with his or her MA. It is the candidate who is ultimately taking responsibility and ownership in this brave new world of the matching process.

So how do candidates feel about the matching process? I thought it would be helpful to hear feedback from actual candidates. The candidates vary in age, ethnic background, and Blessing background (broken Blessing, etc). Most are working with MAs and have not yet been suggested a partner with whom they are communicating, one is in communicating with a potential match, and one had been matching candidate and is now blessed.

Candidate 1: Hispanic female, 41 years old. She was blessed in 1995 and has two teenage daughters from that Blessing. She has been legally divorced from her husband for a number of years and now feels ready to find a new partner. She said she recently had to change MAs because she felt the communication was not there. She now has a new MA and a "team" of supportive friends/members that encourage and empower her in this new process of finding her ideal partner. She connects with them via email, giving updates about how she is feeling and asking for prayer. She says she feels good about the matching system because she is taking ownership of it. She feels confident that with the right MA and supportive team, she will find her ideal partner. When asked about finding someone on the outside, she felt confident that with connecting him to the new matching system, education of the meaning of the Blessing, and a supportive team, it would be a real possibility.

Candidate 2: African male, 32 years of age. Never been blessed. He said the OMS is too complicated for users. The difficulty begins with registering one's data. He thinks that what he calls a "Facebook format" should have been adopted, where you can register by username and email and then be expected to complete the profile bit by bit. He also said that the OMS website is uninviting and looks unappealing. "It ought to be brightened up and made more lively and optimistic. Candidates should not get a dark feeling but be hopeful of meeting with a special someone." "There should be more use of color!" "The site should be made a desirable destination by both candidates and non-candidates. It should be an interesting site that people long to visit and connect with others." He also suggests that more eligible candidates be encouraged to enter their data to increase the pool of people on the site.

Candidate 3: European female, 30 years of age. She has never been blessed but had a matching that did not work out. She said that in the beginning it was not easy to change her "absolute-matching" way of thinking. She thought that the new process was similar to secular dating, and she really did not want to deal with that. She just wanted a MA to find her someone, and she would accept that person no matter what. After a year of waiting, she understood that if she did not "get a grip" on this new matching process, nothing would start moving. She changed her mentality from "waiting" to "what is my responsibility?" The new process made her pray more because there was no one to match her like Father did in the past. "The new process made me think what I really value in a person, what my values are, what my limitations are, etc. Overall, the new process ignited me to seek for more self-awareness. Now I am getting to understand that freedom to make your own choice based on the right motivation is a gift from God."

She does have a matching team of "aunties and uncles" who "know more people and are generally more experienced and wise... my team basically saved me a couple of times from undesirable matching processes." And she does feel hope in this new process. She believes it is

the future for marriages because it “combines the elements of healthy choice, your own responsibility, and purity of intentions and actions.” When asked about improvements, she said that she would like to see more Matching Advisors and more training for them. “The scope of a Matching Advisor’s responsibility needs to be developed more.” She would also like to see a healthy system of getting enough information about a prospective match before the communication stage. “A system where letters of recommendations, some secure background checks, and spiritual situations of candidates and external aspects should be really strict.”

Confidentiality for MA and anyone involved in the matching process is very important. Finally, she is grateful to Anne-Marie Mylar for creating the OMS. She said that the look of the website can be improved but understands it is a work in progress.

Candidate 4: African female, 38 years of age. She thinks that the matching process offers many people a trusted way of finding a suitable partner. She appreciates that all the Matching Advisors have to go through a rigorous process of training, and that many of them are married so that they can share their personal experiences with the potential matching candidates. She chose to go through the matching process because she felt that the potential matches would also have to have gone through rigorous screening and also belong to the Unification Church or movement.

For her, the biggest challenge in the matching process is that there are not enough candidates in her age range to choose profiles from. Recently a Matching Advisor contacted her Matching Advisor about one of his applicants. After she finished sending in all her documents and information, she was given the contact name of that applicant. She said that she would have opted for one of the candidates from another country, but dealing with immigration process and the time and cost of contacting her match over the phone or visiting deterred her. She is open to possibility of being blessed with this candidate, because “I know the person I was matched with, and although we have been in communication for just one month, at my age we have to keep our options open so that we will not end up back where we started.”

Candidate 5: Canadian male, 32 years of age. Went through the new matching process and was blessed in March 2012. “We (he and his new wife) were the guinea pigs of the new matching system.” His MA had known his wife-to-be and thought they would be a good match. This being a new way of finding matches, there were a lot of challenges in his journey, specifically between BFM and MAs encouraging this new process and a church leadership that was not quite confident in it. Now, in looking back on his experience, he truly believes that God was guiding the process even with the bumps and pit stops along the way.

One recommendation he mentioned when getting to know your match during the Communication Phase is to ask each other questions from the “Suggested Questions for Learning about a Matching Candidate” section from the *Unification Matching Handbook*.^[16] This section gives a list of over 40 questions designed to help you get to know your match, asking anything from simple questions like interests and aspirations to more serious question regarding each other’s past. He believes this really helped prepare them for the Blessing and become closer as a couple.

Comfort Blessings

There is another segment of the Unification faith that is increasingly raising its voice with regard to matching and Blessing, and that is our widowed brothers and sisters. If we are blessed as eternal partners, what happens when a spouse passes away? Is the remaining spouse left to live alone, without their beloved spouse, waiting to rejoin them in the spiritual realm? This has been the expectation.

Rev. Moon did perform what is known in the Unification faith as Comfort Blessings. A Comfort Blessing is when a widow is allowed to live a married life with another widow, with the understanding that when they eventually go to the spiritual realm they will both rejoin their original spouses. Comfort Blessings are, in a sense, not true Blessings, just a temporary solution for comfort. Rev. Moon stopped performing Comfort Blessings before he passed away, directing that there would be no more of these arrangements. But there is a growing reality of widows and

widowers that want a Comfort Blessing and want to resume married life for the love and companionship it provides. And there is a real problem of loneliness and emptiness that was not being addressed.

According to the National BFM, Mrs. Moon was recently asked about allowing Comfort Blessing. The response was to allow Comfort Blessing but nothing was made official as of yet. The church is still waiting for clarification and clear instructions.

Personal Reflection

I wanted to take an honest look at the new matching system, because I too am a candidate participating, navigating my way to finding my ideal, eternal partner. And it has not been easy. I am a 41 year old woman who was blessed in 1995. Unfortunately, that Blessing ended less than a year later. I was blessed a second time, but did not have success then either. And I have no children. Needless to say, the Blessing has been a painful course of disappointment. I had to rebuild my trust in God, my faith community and ultimately myself. It took some time to heal, strengthen my faith, and prepare myself before deciding to become a candidate and enter this new matching system.

I have hope in this new matching process. I do believe, as was mentioned by one of the candidates, that the freedom to make your own choice based on the right motivation is a gift from God. But I also see that in many ways the process is being hindered. There needs to be better communication and participation among the international community. This will bring more candidates, matches, and overall confidence. Also, I believe the Matching Advisor plays a crucial role. Without an MA in the parental role, it will be difficult to keep a seamless vertical standard and for God to work in the process.

It seems like the American BFM is leading the way, but we need to make more effort to bring other countries on board with this new process. The fact that MAs from other countries (with the exception of Brazil, which is following the American matching process) do not participate in webinars to introduce candidates and give updates is evidence not only of disunity but also a lack of interest. Also, no one in my opinion should be doing absolute matching or picture matching. That was reserved for True Parents! I think that anyone wanting to suggest partners for candidates should be trained as a certified MA, no exceptions. Without an international communication and participation for the matching process, there can only be dysfunction and disappointment for many good brothers and sisters that truly want to find a God-centered companion.

The OMS is a great tool, but it needs to be improved aesthetically and made easier to use if we want candidates to participate. Other national BFMs can create their own websites, but I believe this should not create a barrier to making connections. And as a woman over 40, I feel I should be able to see photos and contact information of other candidates up front without having to wait a during a week-long process of back and forth between MAs. As long as there is communication between you and your MA about your interest and intentions, I don't see why people over 40 cannot access this information themselves.

I think we need to think bigger and more globally. Technology today can better serve us than hinder us. We need to tap into new ways of using technology, social networking, etc. to help us better fulfill our needs and goals. As long as the purpose and motivation is clear and God-centered, I see tremendous potential for growth. We also need to remember that this new matching process started in 2009, which is not that long ago. We have made some progress, but it is clear that we need to keep moving forward.

As for me, I will continue to ride the wave of this new matching system. I have a MA and am now building my team of supporters. I don't have a potential partner as of yet, but I am hopeful. For now, I am working on "becoming my best self" which to me means a better person, a better friend, an active part of my faith community, and sharing my faith with others. Hopefully that will soon include being a good wife and mother.

Notes

[1] It is a UC belief that Blessed marriages are eternal and couples continue Blessed life after death.

[2] *Unificationist Matching Handbook*, unofficial draft, 2013, p. 3.
<http://www.tparents.org/Library/Unification/Books/MatchingHbook-131023.pdf>

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 3

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 4

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 4. Emphasis in the original.

[6] The Family Pledge is a Unification Church ritual.

[7] The Blessed Family Ministry or BFM is the department within the Unification Church that deals with matching, Blessing, and family issues.

[8] *Unificationist Matching Handbook*, p. 7

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 26

[10] FFWPU Online Matching System website, Cheon Il Guk Incorporated. <http://www.cheon-il-guk.org>

[11] "Online Matching System Newsletter," Cheon Il Guk Incorporated, August 2013.
<http://www.tparents.org/Library/Unification/Talks1/Mylar/Mylar-130800.pdf>

[12] *Unificationist Matching Handbook*, p. 25

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 30

[14] Absolute Matching is a term used to describe how church leaders choose partners for UC members in a similar way to how Rev. Moon chose partners in the past. They are not in compliance with the new matching system.

[15] *Unificationist Matching Handbook*, p. 18

[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 80-82.