

Reflections on Lessons Learned and the Way Forward

Tyler Hendricks
December 27, 2013

The following reflection by Dr. Tyler Hendricks, outgoing developer of ministry and curriculum, is about his time working at HSA-UWC headquarters and his hopes for the future.



I thank the US HQ's communications staff for the opportunity to share a reflection about my time at HQ and what comes next. By way of background, I joined in the church down the street from where I grew up, which happened to be Oakland, California, in January of 1973. Three and a half years later I matriculated at UTS, and seven years after that earned a doctorate in the history of Christianity at Vanderbilt University. Soon thereafter True Parents appointed me National Director of Ocean Church, and I served as our church president from 1995-2000.

During the late 90s, I came to the conclusion that the Messiah True Parents will save the world through a global spiritual community—the church—centered on the Holy Marriage Blessing. Therefore, I concluded, our only priority is to expand the church and family federation. I combined Christian leaders' insights about expanding churches with my experiences at HQ 1989-2000, and came up with a book, *Family, Church, Community, Kingdom*.

True Parents moved me from HQ to UTS in 2000, and the story of my decade there was one of turning the seminary in the direction of professional ministry training. At the same time, True Parents' peace providence was in full swing and, mistakenly I believe, we failed to package that as faith, and instead called it interfaith.

I tried very hard to work with this, writing an article about it called "An Interfaith Movement and Its Seminary." (*Journal of Unification Studies*, Vol. VIII [2007], available at www.journals.uts.edu/volume-viii-2007.html) UTS's salad days of interfaith were not followed by a main course, just desserts and, at odds with the HQ leadership and the UTS Board as to how to proceed, I consented to resign from the presidency and spent a week in seclusion with the bugs, the squirrels, God, and the three Adams.

Whether it was God I heard from, or one of the Adams, or the bugs and squirrels, I emerged recommitted to the proposition that our True Parents, their teachings and their church, is the hope of the world. I continued the correspondence I had as UTS president with Rev. Heather Thalheimer, then head of education at church HQ. I spun a vision of our great pastors on the frontline growing healthy churches. My part would be to share resources from True Parents' teachings and the Christian world and build a network of practitioners. Heather's response was, "this is what HQ should be doing. Why don't you come to HQ to do this?" I accepted; this was August 2010 and it's how I ended up working at HQ again.

I want to give my utmost thanks to Heather [Thalheimer] and to the team she assembled, in particular co-creators Camia Gavin, Tami Gavin, Christine Froehlich and Maio Biaoocco. I also want to thank Pastor Andrew Love, Luna Gomez and the members of the 43rd Street Video Center that flowered at that time, house-mother Rev. Loretta Schaufler, who gave me a bunk-bed in a brothers dorm, the resilient HQ team, Rev. Rendel, Jaga, Koichi, Karlsun, Doug, Krista, Shinyoung, LeeHee and Lymhwa, the marvelous 30th floor team that only Special K and Eric could Holt together, the always-indispensible Jonathan Gullery, current ministry lords Demian, Crescentia, Naokimi and Dave and, through it all, Archbishop Ki Hoon Kim and Dr. Michael Balcomb, and their predecessors.

And what was the fruit of those three-years? Most essentially, I moved from ministry training to curriculum formation, based on a vision for an effective formula course. It is the vision of providing the world a path from where you are at to membership, ministry, marriage and multiplication in the body of True Parents.

I was blessed to help generate, with the team, this curricula—the Introduction to OSDP, Discovering the Divine Principle (mainly the work of Andrew Compton), the "Create a Life You Love" video, the Snapshot introduction to the church, the Membership Class, Starting Point (gateway to membership), w.i.r.e.d (gateway to ministry), 2 Become 1 (gateway to marriage), and Giving Life (gateway to multiplication and messiahship).

I tested Starting Point and w.i.r.e.d with small groups in my local church, with the witnessing team and their new members, and with the GPA.

2 Become 1 is a biblical supplement to the work of the Blessed Family Department—Debby, Ayako and Esther—through Rev. Schanker’s brilliant leadership. Yes, the Blessing—the whole nine yards—is a Bible-based sacrament. For those for whom this is important, I hope 2 Become 1 will be useful.

Giving Life is an exploratory exposition of blessed family life from planting a home church in your bedroom and neighborhood, to returning resurrection, based on True Parents’ Words, with some biblical texts intertwined. I hope to bring this curriculum in particular to the light of day in the future.

In the last year at HQ, I was blessed to participate in the discussion about the organization of the body that would house such things, through the NY District Council, the National Council, and my role as the church’s Ecclesiastical Endorser.

I also was able to run five-week long web-based ministry certificate classes co-sponsored by HQ and UTS. I was gratified that enrollment for one of those exceeded 30 pastors and lay leaders, including from Europe. I continue to believe that pastor education such as this is essential to the future, and look forward to its expansion.

I turn around and find myself 65 years old. My calling today is to a sub-mission I’ve had over the decades, editing the English translations of True Parents’ words, the new Cheon Seong Gyeong project, based in Korea. Let me tell you one thing I’ve learned from this and it begins with my father, Jack Dillard Hendricks.

My dad told me that he did not want to work for another man. With that philosophy, by the time he was 50, he started his own business (and worked twice as hard for himself and his family than he ever had for another man).

My path, as part of a collective with a strong ethic of obedience, seems quite different. But here’s what comes to me, as my full-time engagement with Father’s Words wends into my brain. I’m not working for another man (or woman); I’m working for God.

True Father always talked about systems but he never made one for which he didn’t set up a countervailing one. So we are evangelical and interfaith. We are conservative and liberal. We are Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim. We are capitalist and socialist. We are beyond race and so serious about race. These systems cancel each other out so that God alone can be in charge.

And God creates the only system True Parents never changed, and for which they never set up an alternative, is the three-generation, four heart-realm Blessed family. What God had in mind for Adam and Eve.

And so my core commitment is to the Blessed family and the expansion of the Holy Marriage Blessing that creates and brings life to the local spiritual community. I published my reflections about this in an article entitled, “Evangelical Mission, Congregational Polity.” (Journal of Unification Studies, vol. XIV, 2013, <http://www.journals.uts.edu/>)

The authentic expansion of the Holy Marriage Blessing is the standard by which I assess the design of any institution. By authentic expansion, I mean: does this institution help people prepare to receive the Blessing in Spirit and Truth? Does it nurture sincere participation in the ceremony, centered on the vows? Does it facilitate the eternal engagement with God and spouse to fulfill those vows (which is called Tribal Messiahship)?

True Parents made it clear that this is the only thing for which God considers us accountable. Sociology makes it clear that this is the only thing that will save the world. The peace message tours, which True Father did at the cost of his life, consisted of the three-generation True Family dispensing the Word and Holy Marriage Blessing to all nations, races and religions, and them receiving it. True Parents made the world and cosmos their church, their body. They completely fulfilled the Family Pledge.

From this perspective I assess our movement’s history, present activities and future. Most of all, I assess myself and my family, and my local church, and how much of this I’ve made real in my life.