

Highlights in the life of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon

Compiled by Cheryl Wetzstein
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1920

Jan. 6 — Born as Yong Myung, one of 13 children, to Kyung-yoo Moon and Kyung-gye Kim in Sangsa Ri village in Pyongan province, now part of North Korea. His family had been wealthy, educated farmers, but had fallen on hard times. Japan had annexed the country in 1910, and Moon elders participated in independence efforts.

1930

Joined the Presbyterian Church with his family and became increasingly devout. While mourning the death of two siblings, he perceived that God was “the grieving parent of a lost mankind.”

1935

April 17 — After praying near Mount Myodu, he said Jesus Christ appeared to him on Easter morning and asked him to “take on a special mission on Earth having to do with Heaven’s work.” Overwhelmed, the 15-year-old initially declined, but eventually pledged to do so at the cost of his life. For the next nine years, searched for answers through intense prayer, fasting and Bible studies.

1941

March — Traveled to Tokyo to attend a technical school at Waseda University. Became involved with Korean independence activities, even though this meant arrests and beatings by Japanese police.

1943

Sept. 30 — After graduation, booked passage to Korea on the Konron Maru ferry. However, felt strange leadiness in his feet and a strong premonition not to board the ferry, and went instead on a trip with friends. The Konron Maru was sunk by a U.S. submarine, with more than 500 people aboard.

1944

May 4 — Married Seon-Gil Choi, daughter of a prominent Christian family, in a match arranged with an aunt. Knowing his mission, he asked Miss Choi several times if she could bear a life with a man with a difficult mission, and she insisted she could.

October — Arrested by Japanese police, who demanded he reveal the names of his friends in Japan. When he refused, police officers tortured and beat him, even hanging him from the ceiling “like a slab of meat in a butcher shop.”

1945

Aug. 15 — Japan’s surrender frees Korea, but the country was divided at the 38th parallel, with North Korea led by atheistic communists.

1946

June 5 — Acting on what he called “God’s demand,” left behind his wife and son to “find the people of

God who are in the North.”

Aug. 11 — Arrested by North Korean police for spying for South Korea, was held and beaten for months.

Oct. 31 — After a severe beating, tossed out of the prison into the snow and left for dead. Nursed back to health by followers. Resumed preaching in North Korea, but was viewed as a heretic and threat to Christians, who themselves were suffering communist harassment.

1948

February — Arrested on complaints of “disruption of the social order” and sentenced to five years imprisonment.

May 20 — Entered Hungnam Special Labor camp, where teams of men had to fill 700 bags a day with ammonium sulfate or be punished. Food was so scarce prisoners would take rice out of the mouths of dead men.

1950

Oct. 14 — Released from Hungnam as guards fled advancing U.N. troops. Walked more than 100 miles to Pyongyang to find his followers.

Dec. 4 — As Chinese troops advanced to Pyongyang, began journey south with two followers, one of whom had a broken leg and had to be carried or pushed on a bike. Arrived in Busan refugee camp two months later.

1951

September — Built first Unification Church out of stones, wood and discarded U.S. military ration cartons. Began writing “Divine Principle” in this hut.

1952

November — Was reunited with wife, but she did not understand his long absence or his religious mission, and in 1958 she divorced him.

1953

March — Formally changed name from Yong-Myung (“dragon”) to Sun-Myung. Moon means “truth,” Sun means “to reveal itself clearly,” and Myung “combines characters for sun and moon,” he once explained.

1954

May 1 — Founded Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity.

1955

March — After months of denouncing Rev. Moon’s church, Christian-led Ehwa Women’s University fires or expels 19 faculty and students who refuse to leave the church. Other Christian-led universities urged President Syngman Rhee’s administration to disband the church.

July 4 — Arrested and held for avoiding military draft. Found “not guilty” 93 days later.

1960

April 11 — Held marriage blessing ceremony with 17-year-old Hak Ja Han as “True Father” and “True Mother.” Five days later, they blessed three more couples.

1961

May — Gave the marriage blessing to 33 couples. Over the next decades and up to March 2012, the Moons held dozens of mass weddings, many with tens of thousands of couples, and even hundreds of thousands who participated either at the main ceremony or via satellite in ceremonies around the world.

1965

Feb. 12 — Made first visit to United States and created 120 “holy grounds,” as part of first of many world tours.

1971

Dec. 18 — Arrived in United States and established World Mission Headquarters. Through the early 1970s, held many national speaking tours on “Christianity in Crisis” and “Day of Hope.”

1973

Nov. 30 — Placed ads in major newspapers urging Americans to fast, pray and “forgive, love, unite” regarding the Watergate scandal.

1974

Feb. 1 — Met President Richard M. Nixon.

Sept. 18 — Held rally at Madison Square Garden in Manhattan with 25,000 attending.

Purchased the Christian Brothers Seminary in Barrytown, N.Y., which became Unification Theological Seminary; in the next two years, purchased New Yorker Hotel; Manhattan Center and Hammerstein Ballroom; Tiffany Building and Columbia Club in New York, and the Belvedere Estate in Tarrytown, N.Y.

1976

June 1 — Held rally in Yankee Stadium in New York

Sept. 18 — Held rally at Washington Monument with 300,000 in attendance.

Dec. 31 — Launched News World newspaper as a conservative voice in New York.

1978

Accused of being an agent of South Korean government in hearings held by Rep. Donald M. Fraser, Minnesota Democrat. Although Mr. Fraser lost his bid for U.S. Senate in September, his commission issued a report recommending full government investigation into the Unification Church.

1980

Was subject of a N.Y. grand jury investigation over tax issues.

Created “Ocean Church,” a ministry to build personal character and revive and strengthen boating and fishing industries. This led to maritime activities in Korea, South America, and U.S. locations such as Gloucester, Mass., Hawaii; Alaska; Norfolk, Va., and, in 2012, Lake Mead in Nevada.

Created CAUSA International, which conducted hundreds of “Victory Over Communism” conferences worldwide until 1991.

Nov. 4 — Predicted on News World’s front page that Ronald Reagan would win election in a “landslide”; Reagan was photographed with the paper at a victory party later that night.

1981

Oct. 15 — Notified while in South Korea that he and a church leader were indicted on 13 counts of tax fraud, including not paying \$7,300 taxes on \$160,000 of church funds kept in a bank account under his name. Returned to the U.S. on the next flight.

Oct. 22 — At a rally with clergy and members in New York’s Foley Square, said, “I am innocent. I have committed no crime I am here today only because my skin is yellow and my religion is Unification Church.

1982

April 1 — Went to court for tax trial.

May 17 — Launched The Washington Times in Washington, D.C.

May 18 — Found guilty of tax fraud by a jury. On July 16, Judge Gerard Goettel sentenced him to 18 months in prison and a fine of \$25,000.

1984

May 14 — Despite outcry from religious groups over the legal implications of the verdict, the Supreme Court declined to hear the appeal.

July 20 — Entered federal prison in Danbury, Conn., with Takeru Kamiyama, who was also convicted. Became famous as a model prisoner, good Ping-Pong player and praying nightly in the prison chapel from 3 to 5 a.m.

1985

Received honorary doctorate from Shaw University, which his wife accepted for him.

Aug. 20 — Freed from Danbury prison; attended a welcome-home banquet in Washington, D.C., with 1,700 clergy including the Rev. Joseph Lowery and the Rev. Jerry Falwell.

1990

April 10-11 — Spoke in Moscow at World Media Conference, and met with Soviet President Mikhail

Gorbachev.

1991

Nov. 30 — Dec. 1 — Traveled to North Korea and met with President Kim Il-Sung.

2000

Inaugurated the Ambassadors for Peace program.

Gave marriage blessing to Roman Catholic Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo and Maria Sung. The Catholic prelate was later excommunicated and started an advocacy group to promote marriage for Catholic priests and nuns.

2002

April 27 — Held Blessing ceremony for 144,000 clergy couples in Washington, D.C.

May 20 — Addressed 20th anniversary gala of The Washington Times.

June 12 — Hosted inauguration ceremony for the Sun Moon Peace Cup in Korea, with soccer star Pele.

Dec. 15 — Began the process of bequeathing his physical belongings to Unification Church members.

2003

Feb. 5 — Held dedication ceremony for Cheongshim Hospital at Chung Pyung in Korea. Also holds a ceremony to renew vows with Mrs. Moon.

May 12 — Held the first Middle East Peace Initiative, in which clergy of different faiths visit Rome and the Holy Land to discuss peace.

2004

March 23 — Held Crown of Peace ceremony at Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C.

2005

July 13 — Held rally for unity of North and South Korea with 6,000 Koreans.

September — Embarked on a four-month, 100-country speaking tour. A ban on his travel into several European countries is finally lifted, and he visits them as part of this tour.

Sept. 12 — Founded the Universal Peace Federation and spoke on “God’s Ideal Family, The Model for World Peace.”

2006

March-April — Attended nine rallies in Korea for the restoration of the homeland.

Aug. 31 — Began a 40-day world speaking tour with members of his family.

2008

April 18 — Appointed youngest son, Hyung Jin, as international president of the Unification Church.

June 19 — Survived a helicopter crash in Korea; he and 15 others, including his wife, grandchildren and others, all escaped with minor injuries before it ignited into flames.

July 29 — Appointed daughter In Jin as head of Unification Church in North America.

2009

March 9 — Published his autobiography in Korea and held yearlong celebration of 50th wedding anniversary with Mrs. Moon.

2011

April-June — Held speaking tour in Asia, Europe and Africa.

Unveiled personally designed “Won Mo” boat in Las Vegas.

2012

Sept. 2 — Died of complications of pneumonia at the church complex at Chung Pyung, South Korea.

Sources: Today's World magazine; "Sun Myung Moon, The Early Years: 1920-53," by Michael Breen; "As a Peace-Loving Global Citizen," the autobiography of Rev. Moon; "Messiah: My Testimony to Rev. Sun Myung Moon," Volumes I and II, by Bo Hi Pak; HSA-UWC.