

## The 12th Annual Blessed Culture and Sports Festival - Days 1, 2 and 3

Michael Balcomb  
August 13, 2016



On August 10, 2016, the 12th Annual Blessed Culture and Sports Festival (BCSF XII) commenced at the Unification Theological Seminary (UTS) in Barrytown, NY. Unificationists from around the country and the world gathered together to celebrate our faith and community, as well as engage in spirited and respectful competition with one another all the way through Sunday, August 14.

BCSF kicked off on the first day with Junction and the Opening Ceremonies. After an excellent set of original music and covers performed by the Bridgeport-based, Unificationist band Prideswell, Tasnah Moyer, the STF/GPA (Special Task Force/Generation Peace Academy) Alumni Coordinator, gave the Junction message, speaking about the freedom that emerges when we can see even our most debilitating challenges as God-given opportunities to grow our capacity to love, forgive, and embrace. “We can look at the world and see everything that’s going wrong with it, but I can look at my own life and ask, ‘What small step can I take now, today? In my own family and in my own community, with the people around me, and slowly move this world forward?’”

The Opening Ceremonies followed, beginning with remarks by Continental Director of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) in North America Dr. Ki Hoon Kim. Sharing his enthusiasm and appreciation for BCSF, Dr. Kim commented,

“The way I see it, we are the miracle makers. For the last eight years, you have laid foundations for the younger generations; I even see many third-generation children and youth here, walking around, playing. These days, you, the American young people, are the great hope of True Mother. You are the great hope of the worldwide Unification movement.”

Dr. Kim was succeeded on stage by Oliver Knoll, Program Director for this year’s festival, who warmly welcomed all of the attendees to the festival and encouraged us to inherit and share in the spirit of BCSF. “BCSF is a place of wild abandon. It’s a place where you can put everything on the table. You don’t have to hold back. You don’t have to be reserved. You’re going to put it out there. You’re going to try your hardest. You’re going to go for it. That’s the kind of community we create: we create a community of sincerity. I want to see that this week. I want to see that in each and every person this week. I want to see everybody supporting each other.”

With that, representatives from each of the state, regional, and national teams in attendance had an opportunity to showcase their team shirts, colors, and spirit as the first of tomorrow’s sporting matchups were announced. The energy and excitement among the audience was so high that it seemed as if tomorrow couldn’t come soon enough.





## Day 2

BCSF shows clear signs of growth and evolution in its activities and community this year, as the BCSF Core Staff strive to provide more versatile opportunities for participants to connect with one another and develop their faith, and as new teams expand the BCSF community.

Karlsun Allen, General Affairs Coordinator for BCSF, explained some of the new developments: “This year we have a big focus on intramurals, so we have a lot more opportunities for people to just join up and play when they get to the event. We also have disc golf, and a board game station, where people can have fun while others are playing sports.

“We have a couple of new obstacles that we’ve built for a mud run and we’ve added a few new spiritual/religious activities in partnership with CARP, as well as a new Sunday service component.”

Another area in which BCSF has been evolving is technologically. Karlsun shared, “Our social media got a bit of an upgrade this year, too. We paid for geofilters for Snapchat so that people can market the event while they’re here. When they take a picture on Snapchat, they can select the BCSF geofilter, which is pretty cool. We’re also using a new mass-texting app so we can get the word out about events really quickly.”

This year is also the first year that Canadian Unificationists have been able to form their own team. Team Canada is currently playing hard and advancing in both the soccer and the basketball tournaments, even though they had little to no formal practices together as a team before arriving at BCSF. Samuel King of team Canada shared, “This is my first time at BCSF. I think it’s really cool, actually. I love the young Unificationist community. I don’t live in a community with other Unificationists, so I usually only get to see my peers once a year. Coming to BCSF has always been a dream of mine—just to be with like a thousand of us or so. We’re all in one place, so it’s pretty cool.

“It’s such a good environment to be in; everyone’s so positive, so loving and caring for each other. I’m really looking forward to spending more time with people, catching up with people, and the sports, too.”

Serena Hochmuth of Maryland also shared her excitement to be at BCSF this year, both to represent her district and since this is the first year that the Ultimate Frisbee competition will be co-ed. “I’m looking forward to experiencing the unity between District 1 when we play Frisbee and volleyball this year. I’m also excited to play with the guys and the girls together. It’s going to be fun to create chemistry with them as a unified team, and because we’ve been practicing together for so long, it’s going to be fun to play together with them here for the first time.”

After the first full day of sports concluded, there were also opportunities for participants to join a League of Legends tournament in the dojo or a film festival featuring films made by Unificationists in one of the seminary lecture halls.





### Day 3

On Friday, the weather in Barrytown was humid and squelching, but competitive sports, food, friends, and the occasional breeze kept spirits high all around the UTS campus. Participants from all around the nation continued to arrive for the weekend, and were able to reunite with friends they've met during their travels, gap year programs, and other community events they've attended over the years. It truly feels like a big family reunion.

There is something for everyone here at BCSF, from a coloring station, to dancing, to rock climbing and a Pokemon Go escape room. Each day, there is also an opportunity to connect as a community on a spiritual level. Bookended by the Junction service at the BCSF opening ceremony and the upcoming Sunday Service, the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP) hosts a daily World Cafe segment from Thursday to Saturday, coordinated by Taka Sugawara and facilitated by Teresa Ferette, CARP Vice President, along with CARP members from around the nation.

The popularity of the World Cafe discussion is growing daily, with over 25 people ranging from high school age to young professionals, attending Friday's noon session. A variety of topics are discussed, from easily-accessible topics such as sharing spiritual practices and testimonies of experiences with God, to more heavy-hitting topics like issues in the Unification movement or community that people would like to help resolve.

It's another exciting year of BCSF, and participants look forward to a weekend of fun events, including a fashion show, open mic night, family day, and of course final games and awards for the winning teams.

