

Couples Renew Vows at Belvedere Blessing Ceremony

Crescentia DeGoede
July 9, 2016



On Saturday, July 9, 2016, a Marriage Blessing Ceremony was held at True Parents' Belvedere Estate in Tarrytown, NY. The ceremony took place in the tea garden in the backyard of the Main House, before a lovely backdrop of swaying trees. With support from family and friends among the Unificationist community, four couples renewed their marriage vows and began their life as Blessed Couples.

The program was emceed by Rev. Daryl Clarke, pastor of the Brooklyn Family Church. The opening benediction was given by the pastor of District 2, Rev. Edner Pierre-Louis. Bishop Jesse and Pastor Tanya Edwards, pastors of the New York City Family Church, gave the opening remarks, sharing about how their relationship with one another was enhanced through receiving the Marriage Blessing from True Parents, and offered encouragement to the couples about what God is going to do in their marriages through this Marriage Blessing.

Two musical selections were performed in the spirit of the day by The Keys, a choral group from the New York area. Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) USA President Dr. Michael Balcomb and his wife, Fumiko, officiated the Blessing Ceremony. After sharing some insights they received from True Parents regarding the significance of the Marriage Blessing, Dr. and Mrs. Balcomb led the couples in the Holy Wine Ceremony, Holy Water Ceremony, Vow Exchange and offered a benediction for all the newly Blessed Couples.



In his opening address, Dr. Balcomb recollected on his Marriage Blessing experience, "I thought rather than give you a formal speech, I would just recall the most special moment in Fumiko and my life. It was June 14, 1981 and we were also in a garden in Germany. Rev. Moon came forward to administer the Holy Wine, and to the best I can remember, this is what he said, 'You have no idea the significant and the magic of this moment and the Blessing you are about to receive. Even from an external point of view, finding the Holy Wine and receiving permission from God to make Holy Wine that has God's authority to end the lineage of the fall and begin a new lineage of God.' He said, 'It's like trying to find a single penny on the floor of the Pacific ocean with a pair of chopsticks the are too short to reach the bottom. It cannot be done. By human hand, it is impossible to undo the thousands of years of history of sin. But as Jesus said in the Gospel of Luke 18:27, 'The things impossible with men are possible with God.' And today we are here to celebrate God's new possibility. That in His mercy and grace, he sent to this earth our True Parents with the authority hard won through sacrifice and tears, to share the Blessing of God on marriage anew to all humanity."

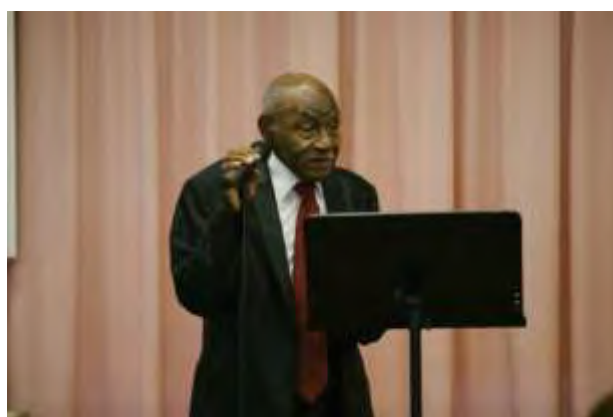
North American Continental Director of FFWPU Dr. Ki Hoon Kim gave the congratulatory remarks to the couples at the conclusion of the ceremony, welcoming the couples on their new path as Blessed Couples, and encouraging them to share the Marriage Blessing they have received with others, so as to

strengthen America as a God-centered nation. There was joy and excitement in the air as all in attendance gathered together for a photo and offered three cheers of Og Mansei.

Dr. Kim gave the congratulatory message to the couples, “Congratulations to those who have received the Blessing from our beloved True Parents and Heavenly Parent. Why do we call it the Blessing? Why do we not call it just an ordinary and secular marriage, but a Holy Wedding Blessing? This is prepared by God, and prepared by True Parents for each one of us. This is the real Blessing. Let us make many, many God-centered families. This is the great hope for God, True Parents, and this country of America.”

After the ceremony, the newly Blessed Couples were celebrated at a reception in the Training Center featuring a delicious catered meal. Bishop Michael and Minister Zena Sykes opened the reception with a rousing congratulatory toast to the couples and offered a prayer over the meal. Entertainment included another performance by The Keys. At the conclusion of the reception, the newly Blessed Couples were invited to share any insights or inspirations. The following inspirations were shared:

Rev. Moses Wehye of New Jersey, shared, “I am sitting here today with my most beautiful wife of 46 years, 8 children and 16 grandchildren. Today when we were standing facing each other to receive the Blessing, my wife said something. She said, ‘For a very long time we have not stood looking at each other.’ As I was standing there, the more I looked at her face, the more I thought ‘thank God for such a beautiful woman.’”



Elder James P. Page, who recently celebrated his 93rd birthday, gave a heartfelt testimony, “Thank God for the American Clergy Leadership Conference. I don’t believe there is any other person who has done more for the cause of Christ than Father Moon. Father Moon has left a mark. I want to thank God that I am able to stand here to make this statement. That the mark that Rev. Moon left cannot be forgotten.”

Rev. Henrietta Wehye shared, “We just want to thank God this day for the Blessing. I’ve fallen in love with such a wonderful man. What is very good in the eyes of man? To embrace or to reject? Rev. Moon established something so that everyone can feel important and feel embraced. He embraces every religion. The important point is that everyone comes together to feel the love of God.”

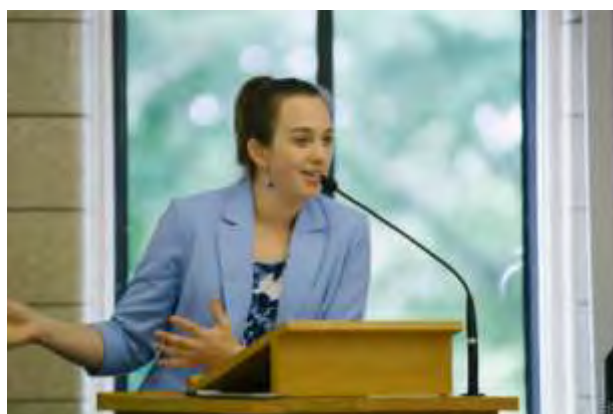


Rev. Kevin Palmer from Los Angeles shared, “This is one of the most blessed trips I have taken in my life. It’s not only temporary, but it’s eternal. This is something that is not only for me and my wife, it will last for generations. I can take it to my kids, to the family, to the community, to the neighborhood. This is something Rev. Moon has done, that we can take all over the world.”

Donna Palmer, wife of Rev. Kevin Palmer, from Los Angeles shared, “First I want to give honor to God, the head of my life, to my wonderful husband, and to all of the ministers, family, and friends that we’ve met here. I am so inspired to take what I’ve learned here back to Los Angeles and get involved with Women’s Federation for World Peace.”

At the end of the reception, Crescentia DeGoede, Director of the Blessing and Family Ministry, offered a heartfelt congratulatory address:

“Ever since I received the Blessing, God has been working in my life in an incredible way. I see that what I understood to be God’s love when I was single was only a smidgen of God’s love, and what I’m experiencing now as a Blessed Couple, and especially as parents, is a lot more of God’s love. I am realizing that it’s an unfolding journey to experience God’s love and then to share every blessing that I’m given to others. I want to congratulate each of the couples here today. You are truly an inspiration to me. I see God working so powerfully in your couples, and I see the love that you share. It’s incredible to see how God is working through your couples. My prayer and my hope today is that you will experience more and more abundant love and will have even more to give and share in your ministries, which are powerful works of God. Thank you for being here and thank you to everyone who helped put this on.”



The celebration was jointly organized by Unification pastors of Districts 2, 3 and 4 and the National Blessing and Family Ministry. The decorations, food preparation and servers, greeters and ushers, attending couples and entertainment were provided by Unificationists from Clifton, NJ, Elizabeth, NJ, Tarrytown, NY, and Harlem, NY. Also, several members of the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC) were in attendance in support of their fellow ACLC members receiving the Marriage Blessing that day. Thank you to all those who were involved in making this ceremony a success!

