

## Equipping Families to Navigate the Matching Process through the Family Matching Convocation

Crescentia DeGoede  
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On May 19-20, the BFM held a Family Matching Convocation (FMC) at the Unification Theological Seminary in Barrytown, New York. The purpose of the FMC is to help Unificationist parents and young adults learn about the Matching process, strengthen their parent-child relationships and gain tools for navigating the ups and downs of the Matching process. It also provides an opportunity for parents to meet and network with other parents. The Convocation was attended by 45 parents and 11 young adults, hailing mostly from the Northeast, with some traveling as far as California and Canada.

On Friday evening participants listened to presentations from BFM Director, Crescentia DeGoede, on "Creating a Legacy of Love". During the presentation, Crescentia had the parent participants visualize the Blessed Marriage and family they want for their children/themselves. She emphasized that God wants this and more for each person and family, and will be with them every step of the way as they work to bring this about. After the presentation, participants broke into groups and shared about their experiences with the matching process so far, and what their hopes and concerns are for their family's matching process going forward.

One participant shared, "It was an excellent opportunity to feel again the common culture we share and to not feel alone in this matching process."

After HDH on Saturday morning, Canadian BFD Director and Matching Support Coordinator, John Abelseth, gave a presentation on "The Matching Process". John took the participants through every stage and step of the matching process, and introduced them to the many tools and resources they can use to make the process easier.

One participant shared, "I came here ignorant of the matching process and I am leaving knowledgeable and confident that this is a matching process that works."

In the afternoon, the parent and young adult participants separated, and marriage coach and educator, Debby Gullery, gave a presentation on "Deepening the Parent-Child Relationship" to the parents and Crescentia DeGoede gave a similar presentation to the young adults. Then they all came back together to practice the listening and communication skills they had just learned.

"The discussion of the parent-child relationship by Crescentia was very insightful. It shows the value of being open and honest in this process."

For the first time at a BFM Convocation, Debby Gullery gave a powerful talk on "Challenges with Pornography in a Pornified Culture. Throughout the presentation she emphasized the importance for

parents and children to talk about the harms of pornography with one another, and strive to have sexual integrity. To the parents, she stressed the importance of being ready to listen with an open heart and mind when their children come to them wanting to talk about pornography. The presentation was followed by a Q&A session with a panel of the staff. Participants expressed appreciation that this tough topic was addressed, even though some of the information was painful to learn.

Before dinner, John Abelseth gave a tutorial on how to use some of the online tools and resources to support families in the matching process.



The highlight of the whole program for many of the participants were the testimonies from young Blessed Couples about the process by which they were matched, and from parents who shared their trials and errors while matching their own children. A young adult participant expressed that the, “Testimonies are the most meaningful part to me because it gives me hope and encouragement to continue in my search for a spouse.”

Throughout the Convocation, parents with children of Matching age (18 years and older) also had the opportunity to view profiles of eligible candidates for the Matching from around the country and world.

In reflection about the overall Convocation participants shared that:

“I was glad we came as a family. Still don’t know exactly where we’re at in the process, but I’m confident with the tools we have plus God’s help we’ll work this out. I think this new format of having parents and children together is a success. I like having my child here – I knew what he heard and can now follow-up on it.”

“It was very informative and well organized. Many years of experience has led up to this convocation. We look forward to moving ahead on this matching process.”

“I feel embraced in the love of a community that wants to do the very best to bring happiness to Heavenly Parents, True Parents and our future generations.”

On Sunday, a Matching Supporters Training was also held to equip and certify individuals in guiding first generation Unificationists and Blessed Families through the Matching process. Four new Matching Supporters were certified by participating in the training.