

Over 50 Couples Receive Holy Marriage Blessing in Las Vegas

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“The first of many,” said Rev. Raymond Giddens of the Unity Baptist Church, Las Vegas, Nevada, on the recent Unity Baptist Church Holy Marriage Blessing Ceremony.

The day dawned cold and bright on Sunday, November 29 in Las Vegas, Nevada. The excitement and warmth of Rev. and Mrs. Giddens at Unity Baptist Church welcomed the small party of Rev. George Stallings, Dan and Pamela Stein and ACLC Executive Director Mrs. Kay Yamaguchi. The group had arrived a little after 10:00 to attend the Sunday service, and later that afternoon the Blessing Ceremony for more than 50 congregant couples.

The large and beautiful one-year-old church building boasted a large, bright and airy reception foyer; the group entered an open, spacious, high-ceiling chapel with light pouring through stained glass side windows. The structure included seating for 500 and a large fellowship hall which afforded hours and hours of lively events.



During Sunday Service, after an hour of praise music by the church choir and musicians, Rev. Raymond Giddens Sr., who with his wife Linda received the 2013 Foundation Day Blessing in Las Vegas, introduced Rev. Stallings to give the sermon on the theme, “What a Work the Lord Has Made in Man,” revealing to the congregation what it means that God made man in God’s image: “male and female were they made”. Rev. Stallings continued to reveal the purpose of creation and the sorrow of God by the loss of the divine lineage at the fall of man. Not disappointing expectant hearts, Rev. Stallings’ superb sermon

edified the congregation with drama, laughter, poignancy and at the end: “now is the hour to change the blood lineage back to God by rededicating your marriages this very afternoon at the Blessing Ceremony.”

How did such a marvelous event come to happen at the Unity Baptist Church in Las Vegas? It is a testimony to the power of understanding the true mission of Jesus by one minister, the Reverend Raymond L. Giddens Sr. After he and his wife Linda received the Foundation Day Marriage Blessing in 2013, Rev. Giddens studied the Divine Principle more deeply with Dan Stein and Kay Yamaguchi as his teachers. He realized that his entire church needed to receive the Marriage Blessing, and determined to see it happen.



He realized in fact, that all churches across America needed to participate in this Marriage Blessing movement for their congregations—that it is the responsibility of Christianity in America to restore and strengthen families, communities and the nation by restoring the lineage of God. With determined intention, Rev. Giddens sent two of his pastor assistants and their spouses to the Blessing Ceremony hosted at the Las Vegas International Peace Education Center on October 3, 2015. As participants and observers, the two couples came back with positive reviews. To organize the Blessing Ceremony for his church, a November 29 date was set and a preparation protocol was put in place. A Blessing Preparation Committee was formed that included:

- A hospitality committee formed to take care of the reception following the Marriage Rededication.
- A decorations committee to make the event festive.
- The music department joined the team to choose songs for the event.
- The church ushers controlled the entrance and exit of the couples and assisted with the ceremony.



Every Saturday, Rev. Giddens met with willing couples and together with Kay Yamaguchi, educated them and explained the meaning of the Blessing Ceremony. Rev. Giddens worked hard to spread the news of the Blessing. Pastor Giddens dedicated himself to marketing and advertising the Blessing, not only to the Unity Baptist Church congregants, but also to other churches in the area. Ten other church ministers were invited to observe the event.

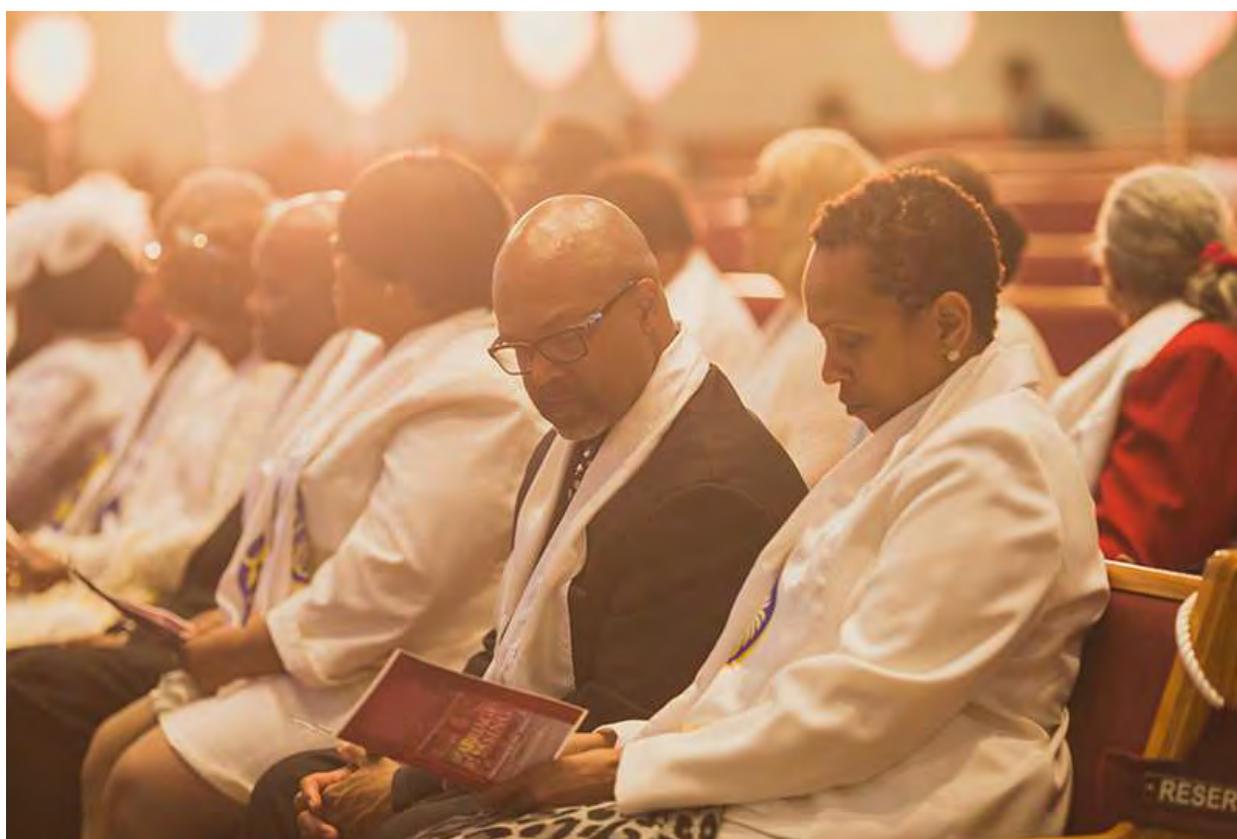
After Sunday Service, participants in the Marriage Blessing Ceremony regrouped at 3:00pm. Supported by the entire church, Rev. and Mrs. Giddens confidently took the role of officiators.



Also attending and participating in the event were three other minister couples from different churches: Rev. Emanuel Wasson, who gave Opening Remarks; Rev. Hudson and Mrs. Shelea Griffith as attendants—both are Blessed Couples from the 2013 Foundation Day Blessing in Las Vegas; and Rev. Will and Jennie Cherry who attended as participants and are also two of the 172 ministers who met with True Father in a historic conference. Other Blessed couples attending were Mr. and Mrs. Noboru Okada, Rev. Andrew and Lydia Compton, and Rev. Hudson and Mrs. Shelea Griffith.



After the couples proceeded down the aisle, Rev. Stallings gave a powerful introduction. He explained the different parts of the ceremony, especially the importance of the Holy Wine Ceremony. Rev. Wasson, in his opening remarks, testified to the Blessing and the miracles that occurred in his marriage, specifically with regard to his wife's health. He said they are praising God for the past three years and being able to love each other more deeply than ever. In the Blessing Address, Rev. Stein congratulated the newly Blessed couples telling them how happy Jesus was at that moment, even walking among them.



The final musical offering, in the form of a love song-prayer, brought many couples to put their arms around each other in a long, loving embrace.



The fun-filled reception was held in the Fellowship Hall, the room joyfully decorated and a simple repast waited at each table. The highlight of the reception was a scrumptious wedding cake that gave all one 150-plus participants a generous helping, with more left over.

Rev. Giddens made final remarks: "May this be the beginning of many such Marriage Blessing Ceremonies throughout Las Vegas and the nation!"

