

## Los Angeles ACLC holds a Holy Marriage Blessing Ceremony

George Kazakos  
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“This Marriage Blessing Ceremony was deeply moving and very meaningful. I want to share this experience with the couples in my congregation. Can we hold one in my church?” asked a visiting pastor after his first experience with ACLC. He observed the program on Saturday, April 30 at Christian Light Missionary Baptist Church in Los Angeles.

Beginning on March 30, the Los Angeles ACLC leadership team and twelve couples preparing to receive the Marriage Blessing participated in forty days of prayer, reading and study. Their daily readings included a passage of scripture dealing with marriage and family, and a related commentary by True Father, Co-Founder of the ACLC.

During those forty days, a greater sense of unity was generated within the leadership team. The twelve prospective couples received instruction about the significance of the Marriage Blessing, the meaning of the change of blood lineage, and the recommended conditions for a new start in their marriages.

On one of the weekends during the forty days, Bishop Michael Sykes and Minister Zena Sykes visited Los Angeles from New Jersey. They shared about the value of the Marriage Blessing and the course of restoration that Christ is now leading us through. The next weekend, Dr. and Dr. Benson continued the instruction with the prospective couples.



The event, however, did not take place without some trials. Ten days before the program, the host pastor, Bishop J. L. Briggs, collapsed from exhaustion. He spent five days in the hospital recovering from pneumonia. After his release he was still determined to officiate the Marriage Blessing Ceremony at his church. The same day Bishop Briggs collapsed, Minister Susan Munsell was involved in an automobile accident which totaled her car. The other driver was at fault, and thankfully, no one was injured. And finally, four days before the event, Bishop Jesse Edwards was also hospitalized. He was going to come to Los Angeles from Pennsylvania to lead the ceremony, but painful inflammation in his foot prevented him from travelling.

The leadership team never despaired during these trials. In fact, they were actually encouraged by the incidents, and prayed and worked even harder. The core ACLC team in Los Angeles includes Dr. Nicholas Benson and Dr. Eva Benson, Elder and Mrs. Millsap, Bishop J. L. Briggs and First Lady Peggy Briggs, and Minister Susan Munsell and her husband, Mark. Also through the process of preparation they made an enlightened discovery.



Originally they considered some of the recommended conditions for receiving the Marriage Blessing as too onerous and a heavy burden. They were reluctant to share the six steps with the prospective couples. But through the 40-day process they realized that the recommended conditions were a “value added” for the couples. Unlike a simple marriage rededication, the recommended conditions for the Marriage Blessing were a gift from God to provide a powerful new beginning for a couple’s marital relationship.

The Saturday event on April 30th was a glorious and joyful occasion. Rev. George Kazakos led the ceremony in the place of Bishop Edwards. Elder Millsap and the musicians from Sadoc Christian Peace Family Church supplied the music for the program. Due to a number of factors, including scheduling conflicts, only one couple, Deacon and Mrs. Phil Maxwell, was able to participate in the Marriage Blessing.

The Maxwells were so moved by the ceremony that the husband asked, “When is the next Marriage Blessing? There are at least four other couples who would love what we did today. I want to invite them to the next Marriage Blessing.”

Dr. Nicholas Benson, the Los Angeles Co-Chairman of the ACLC, expressed congratulatory remarks to the Maxwells and thanked all the dedicated volunteers who made the event possible.

Bishop Briggs commented, “Father Moon has allowed us to ‘right’ or correct what Adam and Eve did wrong at the beginning. Now couples can go beyond the realm of sin and conflict. Father Moon has finished his course on this side, but he has left us detailed guidelines and conditions on record that we can follow, such as the 40 days of separation and sanctification after the Blessing Ceremony and the 3-day ceremony. He has left a legacy for us to carry on.”