

A Proposal to Define the Mission of the American Unification Church

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Our newly appointed American church leadership has two things to build on right now: the quality of the people in the organization and any new demands to be made on them. To successfully build on each of these elements, it is necessary to clarify the mission and values of our church here in America. Clarifying our long-term mission and values is important in light of what our American church has endured under previously appointed church leaders who were given direct authority and influence over our American church assets and organizations. Our former church president, Hyung Jin Moon, started this process back in September 2012, but he is no longer in a leading role. Defining and clarifying our long-term mission is a task that still needs to be addressed and completed.

Here's an idea I propose for Dr. Michael Balcomb, president of the American church, and our current headquarters leadership: Create a small-group team dedicated to defining and articulating the mission and values of our American church. On this team make sure to include some individuals who do not have any official church leadership position. Gather this group at an off-site location for three days to craft an "American Unification Church Mission and Values" document. Next, get all key leaders of affiliated church organizations to agree with this mission statement. Moving forward with this process and completing it sets the foundation for our next stage of development: breaking down the long-term mission into specifics so that each affiliated organization is able to act upon the mission in a strategic way to create success.

A word of caution, encouragement and challenge

After decades of involvement with Unificationists from around the world I have observed at least two levels of personal growth and development. In the first level, an individual holds the view that there is only one true and right way of belief and practice for the Unificationist. He/she believes that adhering to the guidance and directions of Father and Mother Moon and official church authorities is of utmost importance. This view tends to discount perspectives outside of Unification Church cultural assumptions, values and beliefs. In the second level of development, the individual sees that there is not only one way to see the world and practice Unification teachings. This individual is more likely to see and embrace the liabilities, contributions, benefits and limitations inherent in any worldview or belief system, acknowledging that higher stages of growth and development are always possible both within and outside of the Unification worldview and belief system. Both views have their own weaknesses and strengths.

My perspective is that by acknowledging the limitations inherent in any worldview or belief system the individual and organization he/she represents is in a better position to grow and develop in a healthy manner. I also hold the view that this second level of development is a higher stage of personal growth than the level that insists there is only one right way of belief and doing things. Let me make clear that my position here is not a moral judgment. One level is not "better or worse" than another. Developmental stages need not have moral judgments placed on them.

Applying this perspective to the dynamics of a three-day meeting as I've described above means that participants will be in a better position to examine the following: one's own interior, subjective view of reality; the unspoken but assumed cultural values of the group; behaviors based on subjective views of reality; and one's involvement in the systems and institutions set up to carry out the defined mission of the organization.

If we really want to capture the attention, imagination, commitment and energy of more people in America, it behooves us to conduct an integrated assessment of self, our assumed cultural norms; our individual and collective group behaviors; and the systems operating in the organizations we have set up to help us accomplish our defined mission.

This is my proposal. I want to see our new American leadership succeed. Let's clarify and define our mission and values for the American church. We can do it! It will not be easy. Nothing of lasting value ever is –right? It all starts with our mission.