

London's Unification Church Rides the Wave of Second-Gen Talent

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Unification Church choir members of Lancaster Gate (from left to right) Soon Hee Lall, Abi Cohn, Veronica Mould and Kathleen Moloney.

Having spent a month in New York City as an intern for the news team at HSA-UWC, I took a closer look at the church communities in England in order to provide my American brothers and sisters a good view of how fellow Unificationists are faring in Europe. I currently live in Hønefoss, Norway and study business management at Buskerud College. The following report describes the structure of the Sunday services and the activities of Unificationist communities in England.

The Unification community in Lancaster Gate in London appears to be making good use of talented youth, thus steering a course somewhat familiar to participants of Lovin' Life Ministries in America. Unificationists in London have been hard at work to stage a musically-rich church Sunday service and to create a community in which their families can thrive and share their faith with people from different backgrounds. See <http://www.um-uk.org>.



(From left) Peter Graham, Kathleen Moloney, Betty Moloney, Cha Eun Lall and Hanna Huish perform as a band to welcome Rev. Hyung Jin Moon in June, 2010.

The United Kingdom currently hosts more than 1,000 Unification Church members divided into ten communities. Half of these, as well as the headquarters of the Unification Church in Europe, are located in or near London. Sunday service varies from community to community, but according to Réamonn Bateman, the music minister in the Lancaster Gate community, the worship program has been ramped up

to meet the desires of the members.

“We’ve started putting a lot of emphasis on music during our service. I went to a Christian church in our neighborhood in London and also to Lovin’ Life Ministries in New York, got inspired by their worship styles and wanted to bring that back to our own church. We now have a core team that meets every week to organize and structure our services and at the same time discuss how our services can improve. We have a band and a choir that plays and sings every Sunday, and we’ve included pop and rock songs into our repertoire.

“We made these changes with the goal of having our members feel they were attending a professional event instead of a normal family service, but another reason we did so was to make it easier for our members to bring guests. We wanted the guests to feel that even though they might have different religious beliefs than we do, they could still find inspiration through our service.” Each service is streamed live (<http://www.ustream.tv/user/FFWPU-UK-HQ>) and videotaped, so that people can watch online, and viewers from all over England are watching, especially those who live far away from their own church community, Bateman explained.



William Haines gives a lecture on Father Moon's teachings from the Divine Principle.

Outreach and Activities in the Lancaster Gate Community

Press coverage of the church hasn’t always lived up to Britain’s tradition of civility and fair play. However, the media has started to show far more respect. *The Sun*, a British tabloid, referred to the Unification Church as a “forgotten cult” in a June 24, 2010, article featuring a recently-married Unificationist couple, Robert and C. Haines. *The Sun* wrote that Rev. Sun Myung Moon’s mass wedding in 1982 “stunned the world” and that he was “banned three times from entering Britain amid fears that his faith was a cult,” yet also reported that a new generation of Unificationists, of which the Haines are a part, have since emerged, “keen to spread their church’s message.” The BBC World Service did a perfectly fair interview with Rev. Hyung Jin Moon, the international president of the Unification Church in September of 2009. According to sources in the church, four young second-generation members are cooperating with a documentary film company that will present on a major TV channel their plans to attend the next large Marriage Blessing in 2012. Cross your fingers.

Regular church activities held at the Lancaster-Gate complex range from scripture studies to sports, music to movies. According to Bateman, the community provides lectures once a week on topics taken from the Divine Principle, the holy scriptures of the Unification Church, and members are welcome to take part in the discussion group after the lecture. Every other week, the community holds a two-day workshop to which members invite guests to listen to lectures about Father Moon’s life and teachings.

Open Mic Night, called “Live Lounge,” takes place once a month, allowing young people to perform in front of an audience. Young Unificationists also invite their friends from school to attend and perform too.



The Lancaster Gate Sunday service band: (back row from left) Chris Moloney, Sean Greaves, George Ostapko, Réamonn Bateman, Jonathan Haines, S. J. Choi, (front row from left) Soon Hee Lall, Veronica Mould, Kathleen Moloney, Erena Shaw, Abigaile Cohn, Betty Moloney.

“It’s a great way of witnessing about our church and who we are to others without necessarily talking about religion or different beliefs,” Bateman explained.

Young Unificationists also have built a soccer team that gathers to play games every weekend. The members of the team often meet during the week for discussion and occasionally watch a movie related to the topic afterwards.

Contributed by Victor Lorentzen in Norway