

Emerging Women's Ministry in the Unification Church

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May 20, 2019



Jesus taught the early Christians that they should open their eyes, look closely at the fields and realize the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few (Matt. 9:37). Indeed, the current situation of the Unification Church is as pressing as it was in Jesus' ministry.

With the Vision 2020 deadline approaching, there is immense demand for the workers of God to labor in the field of evangelism and ecumenism for the Unification Church, particularly in pastoral ministry. From the visitation of individuals to

pulpit supply of the church, from the revival of church life to influential contributions for society through Heavenly Tribal Messiah ministry, more activists are needed.

Where can we find these activists?



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Currently, there are women who are lay leaders in local churches working behind the scenes. They are organized to support and revitalize the life of the church and provide pastoral care to church congregants in support of their pastors and church ministries. They reach in to current congregants to help them become more engaged in the vitality of the church, as well as reach out to new members and the general public by identifying, helping and serving their needs. They consult, educate, cultivate, communicate, and evangelize with members, converts and supporters.

These women juggle multiple tasks and roles of being a mother, wife, daughter, and sister at home, as well as a team leader, counselor, mentor, cheerleader, and friend in the church setting. Many times, those roles and responsibilities leave them feeling exhausted. But their biggest challenge and limitation is they feel unsupported and unappreciated.

There are two sides to the phenomenon currently in the Unification Church. On one hand, there are many lay women leaders in the church who have worked voluntarily for decades, supporting their local church ministry, keeping church life going, and maintaining the church to be functional in the local pastoral ministry.

On the other hand, even though they have the experience, ability and capacity to lead, they are often overlooked or ignored. They ought to be appreciated, accepted and acknowledged formally as teachers, lecturers, preachers, evangelists, assistant pastors or even pastors.

The Unification Church is still predominantly male-led in the actual practice, function, and roles of its providential departments and organizations. Shouldn't more women be formally involved in church pastoral ministry, such as counseling, teaching, preaching, lecturing, evangelizing, or being a pastor according to their respective talents and gifts? How can we bring a more balanced element to the church as a whole?

The Duality of God and Mothering Capacity

As we know from Divine Principle, God is our Parent with dual characteristics — both masculinity and femininity. It is clearly expressed and demonstrated in His creation. The term "Heavenly Parent" has been used often in Rev. Sun Myung Moon's teachings and speeches, appearing numerous times in the *Cheon Seong Gyeong*, both the 2006 and 2014 editions. On January 7, 2013, prior to Foundation Day, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon addressed Unification Church members worldwide, clarifying they should no longer refer to God as Heavenly Father but as Heavenly Parent.

Since God is our Heavenly Parent with both masculinity and femininity, God's parental love exists as both Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother. A woman who is standing in a pivotal position in her roles and functions as a mother, wife, daughter (or daughter-in-law), sister (or sister-in-law), and friend experiences and expresses Heavenly Mother's love through these roles. She has the potential to bring divine compassion and love to her family — her husband, parents (parents-in-law), children and siblings (siblings-in-law) — on behalf of Heavenly Parent.

The mothering instinct (or mothering capacity) is a gift bestowed by God upon all women, especially those who perform a mother's duties and obligations to their full capacity. It is due to the innate motherly nature and mothering instinct that come from Heavenly Mother's heart of femininity. If women do not have a child or children of their own, they may either adopt children or dedicate their mothering capacity to raise other people's children as their own. In history, Mother Teresa was one of numerous examples of unmarried women who were exemplary in living for the sake of caring for others.

Experiencing and Appreciating Femininity as Divine

The Heavenly Mother's Heart is the tender loving, caring, sensitive heart to hope, heal, cure, comfort, consult, encourage, lift up, inspire, and resonate with her children. This feminine characteristic love of God inspires women to share with others. This love is what a baby needs in order to grow, a husband needs in order to share and be a man, a son (or daughter) needs to demonstrate his (or her) filial piety toward parents (and parents-in-law), and a sibling needs to guide or support. This feminine love emerged through the informal and domestic training in her own household.

God surely has intentionally designed women with both child-bearing and life-nurturing qualities. Through the birthing and nurturing processes, they experience physical, emotional, and sometimes spiritual pain and suffering. God made them strong enough to love, yet sensitive enough to feel, nurture and complement men. The qualities of the femininity of God are the sensitivity of heart and power of love (God's love) that women possess. With it, man can experience God's love through her; he would experience her femininity as from God, the Divine.

Recognizing Women's Ministry in Family and Church

The feminine aspect of God enhances and supports women's ministry. Women leaders can bring motherly perspectives and gifts to their church pastoral care. They can embrace the discouraged and lost, reach out to the weak and wounded, comfort the isolated and unappreciated, and provide sensitive care and support to the larger church community. They can provide a more balanced and collaborative relationship and environment. Together with men leaders of the church, they are the agents to bring positive change, harmony, cooperation, complementarity, and a team spirit and dynamics to the local church ministry. The church needs what a mother's heart can provide because women are healers and harmonizers.

I came from a Pentecostal background and saw how my mother started and raised a "house church" from our family house. Later, my husband and I supported and participated in Presbyterian Church ministry. We observed how women clergy play an important role in Presbyterian pastoral ministry in both Canada and the USA.

Since the Unification Church has such a strong theological foundation for women's ministry, Unificationist women are blessed with the privilege to understand women's role and carry out the purpose of God's creation. With True Mother, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, in our midst as the embodiment of Heavenly Mother's feminine love and spirit as well as the exemplary role model for all womanhood, Unificationist women with their God-given gifts can express motherly beauty, love and goodness while serving the church community.

The local church leadership should not disregard these lay women leaders' capacity and potential. It would be better to create spiritual and practical connections and cooperation with these lay women leaders for the sake of building spiritual vitality and mentoring environments to enhance effective church growth and development.

Women's ministry (personal or public) values the constant daily expression of God's love. Unificationist women practice a lifestyle of loving and caring for others, of discipleship and making disciples, of bearing witness (evangelism), of giving generously (of time, resources and talents), and of being godly and responsible as we invest in our children and future generations. These key elements form a lifestyle, a daily pattern, which makes a channel and instrument for God to work through, which is the foundation for women's ministry of pastoral care in local churches.

From the perspective of the nature of ministries, some seem more fitting for women leaders, while others seem more fitting for men leaders. For instance, the ministries of older women to other women who are hurt, ministering to single women, or training younger women; men's counseling ministry for men alone, and women's counseling ministry for women alone. In the case of marriage counseling ministry, it would be more suitable to be done by a clergy couple.

All ministries are significant and central to the life of the church and witness of the members of the church. The church needs to equip qualified men and women for carrying out its crucial mission and ministries, as well as their own personal ministries and services. The church needs both women and men complementing each other according to their gender strengths and characteristics, making the whole

church community strong in faith and spiritually enriched to an extent beyond what either men or women alone could accomplish without their counterparts.

Clergy Couple and Complementary Ministry

In the case of clergy couple ministry, there is a concept that women joining their husbands to serve in church ministry can enhance the closeness and considerateness of the couple's relationship. In reality, sometimes the effect is not as predicted. However, recently, due to the fact our first generation has grown more mature and experienced empty-nesting, the wives' mission may become the couples' joint effort and mission (or vice versa), which makes the relationship between the couple more intimate and harmonious. Hence, their joint efforts are more united and effective.

Based on the principle of complementarity in Unification theology for the roles of men and women, I developed the concept of "CHIP": Complementarily Harmonious Interdependence Principle. The focus is on mutual accord and complementarity between men and women. This is the fundamental background philosophy that can be applicable to Heavenly Tribal Messiah ministry, women's ministry in the church, as well as in the general workforce.

With this mentality, the clergy couple works together and provides spiritual, emotional, as well as physical support for each other in the fashion of complementarity, harmony and interdependence. Their joint effort contributes to the larger and higher purpose in order to be productive and effective, even with regard to their differences in approach, means and strategies. They unite on their common goal, focus on their strengths, skills, and talents in a collaborative, cooperative, and complementary fashion for the purpose of accomplishing their joint mission.



Conclusion

While God's providence is proceeding — the harvest is ripe and vast, the workers are in demand — those who are qualified men and women leaders in the Unification Church need to be identified, enhanced, acknowledged, recognized, and ideally even ordained. Especially lay women leaders currently actively participating in local church ministries, who are ready, willing and able, need to be encouraged to remain active to contribute to their families and church communities.

Some may say it is a matter of women's roles in the church; others might say it is a matter of the equality between men and women. However, it is not a simple question of "a woman's place in the church." It involves a bigger question — God's divine design in the relationship of man and woman in His creation.

This is not a matter of chauvinism or discrimination, but an issue of need. Does our church need more women's input, involvement, contribution, and leadership? Especially on the local church level, do we need to appreciate and recognize those lay women leaders who are spiritually oriented and uphold God in virtue and attitude with godly character and attributes? Can they be formally recognized and participate in the works of teaching, lecturing, evangelizing, preaching, ministering, and pastoring in local church pastoral ministry? The Pacific Rim era being the age of women (of which Rev. Moon often spoke), it is time to understand the Heart of God in Her femininity. Women have much to offer in this regard, and it is time to recognize it.

While female leadership is on the rise in the Unification Church, on the local church level there are tasks to be done. The awareness of God's femininity needs to be promoted, the living experience of Heavenly Parent's motherly love ought to be cherished, and the collaboration in church clergy between men and women should be emphasized. Then women's perspectives and insight will be taken into account, more gifted leaders can be involved in the shared ministry, and more women's inspiration and resources can emerge to facilitate and resolve the issues facing pastors and the church.

The church needs both women and men with a variety of spiritual and worldly gifts, wisdom, and talents to meet the pressing needs and massive demands of church life in the 21st century.

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