

Letter to Community Regarding Dr. Drissa Kone

Kester Wilkening

July 18, 2016



Dear Belvedere Family Church community,

The Council and Dr. Kone would like to inform you of a recent development with the job situation of our Head Pastor, Dr. Kone. Before you read on, please be aware that this is still only a possibility, and there is a chance that nothing will change. However, Dr. Kone and the Council are sending these letters in an effort to communicate clearly so there are no “back-room” discussions and the potential for misunderstanding.

Please see the attached letter from Dr. Kone for his explanation and sharing of his heart. Here is a brief summary:

Two months ago Dr. Kone was called by a Navy recruiter about applying to be a military chaplain for the Navy. This was something he applied for in 2011 but it did not go through and he had since laid it to rest. After praying and reflecting about this opportunity and discussing with his wife, Dr. Kone feels called by God to go through the application process to possibly serve as a Unificationist chaplain for our military. He has discussed this with, and gotten approval from, our district pastor Rev. Edner and our national president Dr. Balcomb.

Dr. Kone still has to go through the application process (~2 months), and there is always the possibility that he will not be accepted. We do not know if acceptance is likely or unlikely, candidates can be dismissed for any number reasons. If Dr. Kone was accepted, he could know as early as the beginning of September, with training to begin as early as November of this year. The Council is preparing a backup plan in case that happens.

At the July 11 Council meeting we discussed this at length with Dr. Kone and had a very open, honest conversation about how the Council members feel about this. One aspect that was clarified: Dr. Kone had not been actively pursuing this possibility until the Navy recruiter called him. There are certainly mixed feelings; we are happy for Rev. Kone about the potential this has, and we know that sometimes we need to think bigger than our own community in order to align with God’s direction. If Dr. Kone can move the providence forward in a larger way through being a military chaplain, we want to give him our blessing. At the same time, it is obviously very difficult and sad for us to have our Head Pastor being willing to leave after so short a time. Some Council members are disappointed with Dr. Kone’s decision to pursue this effort, and it pains us as we consider the needs of the families in our community.

We don't think there is a "right answer" for this, and it is a very challenging issue to discuss: we ask each person to pray and reflect. When discussing in-person with Dr. Kone on July 11, we were able to reach a deeper place of understanding, even with quite diverse opinions and feelings. Written communication is limited and cannot adequately convey matters of the heart, and if you have questions or concerns we encourage you to talk with Dr. Kone or a Council member.

Again, there is the chance that this will not go through, but we wanted everything to be clear so there are no hurt feelings based on mistaken assumptions. We send our thoughts and prayers to you and your families, God Bless you.

Sincerely,

The Belvedere Family Church Council

Chair Kester Wilkening

Vice Chairs Chris Perkins and Jessica Sattinger

Treasurer Yuki Jones

Administrator Peter Reiner

Scribe Sun Ae Patterson

Communications Lynn Walsh

Refreshments Akiko Morris

Dr. Kone's Letter

Drissa Kone
July 5, 2016

Dear Belvedere Community

I would like to officially inform you about a recent development in my personal and professional life.

I had a long-term personal and professional commitment to military chaplaincy.

In the seminary, I was very inspired to serve in the military. The main purpose was to serve at the national and world-level, bringing the True Parents to the military and to soldiers of all faiths, bringing the Divine Principle perspective to tough moral issues the military is dealing with, bringing the Unification vision into the interfaith / multi-faith environment.

For that, I had filed an application filed with the DoD (Department of Defense) for several years.

Even though, it was always denied, but unexpectedly, a month ago, a Navy recruiter reached out to me and she is very interested in me serving as a chaplain.

I have been praying about this and talking with my wife, and finally I decided that I would like to move in that direction, to fulfill my long-term vision. It is a tough decision, because I love serving the Belvedere community and it is a very great blessing for me to be here.

I still have many steps to go through with the military, and I might not get accepted. Even if I am accepted, it will be a process of several months.

To move forward I need HSA-FFWPU's endorsement, and HSA wants me to communicate well every step of the way. I have Dr. Balcomb's support and Rev. Pierre-Louis's support, and now I needed to inform the Belvedere Family council as well as UTS by whom I am also employed which would be most affected by my departure.

Please support me in your prayers and let us prepare together this possible transition and how to inform the community.

Sincerely,

Dr. Drissa Kone
Belvedere Family Church Pastor.