

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Family Fed's Community Service Efforts

Knut Holdhus
June 17, 2026



[Family Federation](#) leaders, staff members, and volunteers gathered in front of the original headquarters church in Seoul's Cheongpa-dong district at the start of a neighborhood cleanup campaign on 14th June 2026. The slogan in large letters says: "We will make flowers bloom through service, sharing, and healing!"



Family Federation marks 72 Years in Korea with new volunteer organization as it launches "Social Contribution Corps" for charitable and community activities

On 15th June 2026, South Korean online news outlet TheReport (더리포트) published an [article](#) by reporter Shin Dong-rip

(신동립) describing a significant event held by the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (FFWPU), often referred to in South Korea as [Unificationism](#) (통일교). The occasion marked the [movement](#)'s 72nd anniversary (Founded on 1st May 1954, commemorated on 1st may according to the oriental lunar calendar).

The event also featured the official launch of a new nationwide volunteer organization called the "Social Contribution Corps" (사회공헌단). The [article](#) presents the initiative as an effort by the [Federation](#) to strengthen its engagement with local communities through practical service activities and to highlight what it describes as the religious principle of [living for the benefit of others](#).



Song Yong-cheon, President of the [Family Federation](#) in Korea, speaking on 15th June 2026 in Yongsan, Seoul

The anniversary ceremony and launch event took place at Cheonwon Temple Cheonseung Cathedral in Seoul and brought together approximately 350 pastors, Unificationism leaders, and members. According to the report, the new Social Contribution Corps has been established as a national framework through which local churches and regional districts can coordinate volunteer work, charitable activities, and community service projects. Areas of focus are expected to include environmental protection, support for disadvantaged and vulnerable populations, disaster relief efforts, and other forms of social welfare.

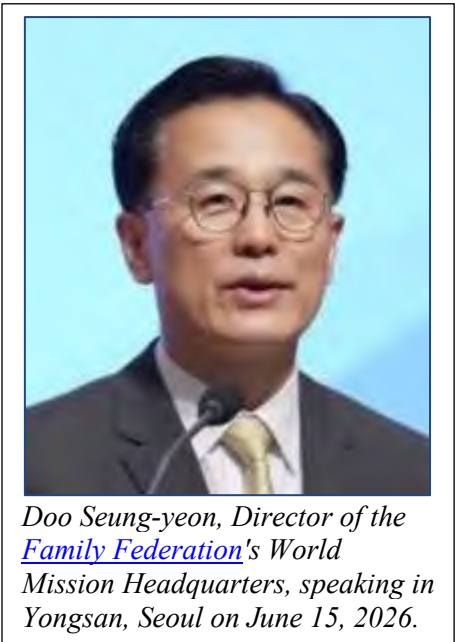
The [article](#) emphasizes that the organization is intended not merely as an administrative structure but as a practical expression of the [movement](#)'s religious teachings. [Family Federation](#) leaders described service to others as a central component of faith and argued that religious communities should contribute positively to society beyond their internal spiritual activities. In this sense, the Social Contribution Corps is presented as a mechanism through which members of the [religious organization](#) can transform

spiritual ideals into visible acts of public service.

A central figure at the event was Song Yong-cheon (송용천), President of the [Family Federation](#) in Korea and the newly appointed head of the Social Contribution Corps. In his commemorative address, Song reflected on the movement's seventy-two-year history, characterizing it as a history of practicing "true

love" in society and demonstrating devotion to God. He outlined three major priorities that he believes should guide the organization in the years ahead.

The first priority is the restoration of what he described as the essence of faith. This involves returning attention to the core spiritual principles and values that members believe define their religious tradition. The second priority is organizational reform aimed at increasing transparency and public trust. The third is a commitment to developing future generations and ensuring that younger members inherit both the responsibilities and ideals of the movement. According to the article, Song linked these goals directly to the launch of the Social Contribution Corps, arguing that active service to society can help rebuild trust while also demonstrating authentic religious commitment.



Doo Seung-yeon, Director of the [Family Federation's World Mission Headquarters](#), speaking in Yongsan, Seoul on June 15, 2026.

The [article](#) also highlights remarks by Doo Seung-yeon (두승연), Director of the [Family Federation's World Mission Headquarters](#). In his speech, Doo stressed continuity between the movement's founding generation and younger generations. He argued that Unificationism was established according to divine purpose rather than merely human initiative and expressed hope that future generations would continue to develop the organization while maintaining its foundational ideals. His comments reflected a broader theme running throughout the event: the connection between the [movement's](#) historical identity and its aspirations for the future.

In addition to speeches and ceremonial activities, the anniversary celebration included recognition of long-serving clergy and leaders of the [religious organization](#). The [report](#) describes an awards ceremony honoring pastors who had devoted decades of service to the [movement](#). Retired clergy and those with exceptionally long records of ministry received plaques of appreciation presented in the name of the [Family Federation's](#)

founders. Other awards recognized pastors with more than fifteen years of service, exemplary families regarded as positive models within their communities, and churches that had achieved notable results in conducting the [movement's](#) Blessing programs.

The [article](#) portrays these awards as expressions of gratitude toward individuals who have spent many years supporting the [movement's](#) religious and organizational activities. By recognizing long-term dedication, the event sought to reinforce continuity between past achievements and future goals.



[Family Federation](#) members in Changwon, in South Gyeongsang Province during a local environmental clean-up campaign on June 14, 2026

One notable aspect of the initiative described in the [article](#) is that the Social Contribution Corps began its activities immediately after the launch ceremony. Rather than waiting for future projects, participants moved directly into volunteer service. More than one hundred [Unificationism](#) leaders, staff members, and volunteers gathered at the original headquarters church in Seoul's Cheongpa-dong district, an important historical site in the movement's Korean development. From there they carried out a neighborhood cleanup campaign, collecting litter throughout the streets and alleys of Yongsan District.

The [report](#) presents this immediate transition from ceremony to service as symbolic of the organization's intended purpose. [Family Federation](#) representatives emphasized that meaningful contribution begins with practical action rather than words alone. The cleanup activity served as an early demonstration of the type of community-oriented projects the Social Contribution Corps hopes to promote nationwide.

Another initiative mentioned in the [article](#) involves donations to social welfare organizations. Approximately fifty affiliated institutions and regional church districts contributed ceremonial rice wreaths, a common form of congratulatory gift in Korea. The rice collected through these wreaths, totaling one hundred bags, is scheduled to be distributed through the Social Contribution Corps to organizations that assist vulnerable populations, including food banks and community welfare centers. This effort reflects the [movement](#)'s intention to combine commemorative events with charitable giving.

The [article](#) also notes that volunteer service was not limited to the launch ceremony itself. On 14th June, the day before the main event, [Family Federation](#) congregations throughout Korea held worship services marking the [movement](#)'s 72nd anniversary and then participated in local volunteer activities in their respective regions. One photograph accompanying the [article](#) showed Federation members in Changwon, in South Gyeongsang Province, taking part in environmental cleanup efforts.

In comments quoted near the end of the [article](#), Ryu In-yong (류인용), Director of External Relations for the [Family Federation](#), described the Social Contribution Corps as a return to the spirit of the movement's early years. He argued that service to neighbors and local communities represents a fundamental expression of religious faith and suggested that the new organization offers a model in which contribution is demonstrated through action. Ryu also announced plans for a conference later in 2026 where successful examples of volunteer work would be shared and future initiatives developed.

The [article](#) concludes with a brief overview of the [Family Federation](#)'s history. Founded in Seoul in 1954 under the name Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, the movement later became known as the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#). According to the report, it promotes the ideal of "One Family under God" (하나님 아래 인류 한 가족) and maintains missionary activities and organizational networks in more than 200 countries. The launch of the Social Contribution Corps is presented as the latest effort to express those ideals through organized community service and public engagement.

TheReport (더리포트) positions itself as a knowledge-based media network that encourages participation from both experts and citizens.

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

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itself. Rather, he examined how societies talk about religion, how the media frames religious controversies, and what it means to inherit leadership of a religious movement after its founder has passed away.

The [column](#) is particularly significant because it appears at a time when the *Family Federation for World Peace and Unification* is facing intense public scrutiny in South Korea and elsewhere. The [movement](#), in Korea also known as [Unificationism](#) (통일교), has become the subject of political, legal, and media debates. Against this backdrop, Jeong argues that criticism of a religion and ridicule of its believers are not the same thing, and that the distinction matters.

The [article](#) begins with an observation about the nature of courtrooms. Courts, Jeong writes, are places governed by evidence, testimony, legal arguments, and judgments. Personal conviction, faith, tears, and a sense of divine mission do not carry legal weight. Normally, people appearing in court focus on defending themselves against allegations or challenging the claims of others.

According to the author, however, [Hak Ja Han's](#) courtroom appearance departed from this pattern. After addressing accusations directed at her, she spoke about her life’s purpose: her efforts to promote peace around the world and her belief that she has a mission connected to what she calls our “Heavenly Parent”, the term she uses to refer to [God](#).

Some commentators viewed this as inappropriate or irrelevant in a legal setting. One online media outlet, OhmyNews (오마이뉴스), characterized her remarks as a “ten-minute solo explanation of doctrine”.



It is here that Jeong introduces his central argument. He does not object to criticism of religion. In fact, he explicitly states that journalists have every right – and indeed a responsibility – to investigate religious organizations, scrutinize religious leaders, and expose wrongdoing when it exists. What troubles him is something different: the use of language that moves beyond criticism into mockery.

For Jeong, phrases such as “solo doctrine lecture” carry a dismissive tone that implicitly treats the faith of believers as absurd. He argues that a journalist could simply describe what happened without adding wording designed to provoke ridicule. In his view, language shapes perception. The choice of words can influence whether readers approach a subject critically yet fairly, or whether they are encouraged to laugh at it before considering the facts.

To reinforce this point, Jeong cites another example from the same media outlet. During an earlier legal dispute involving figures connected with [Unificationism](#), the publication reportedly described the proceedings as a “dogfight”. The columnist acknowledges that legal battles can be harsh and contentious. Nevertheless, he argues that when journalists use highly emotional labels, they stop functioning primarily as observers and begin acting as participants who guide readers toward a particular emotional reaction.

The author’s concern is especially acute because of the current situation facing the [Family Federation](#). The [movement](#) is being intensely persecuted, and the left-leaning president of the country, Lee Jae-myung (이재명), has even introduced the idea of dissolving what he perceives as a conservative religious opponent. Yet Jeong reminds readers that behind headlines and controversies are ordinary believers who have organized their lives around sincere religious convictions. One can disagree with those beliefs, he argues, without treating the believers themselves as objects of contempt.



Portrait of **Choe Si-hyeong**

From this discussion of contemporary media and religion, the column shifts to a historical analogy. Jeong introduces Choe Si-hyeong (최시형), better known by his religious title Hae-wol (해월), the second leader of the nineteenth-century Korean religious movement Donghak (동학 – literally “Eastern Learning”) [\[See editor’s note 1 below\]](#). This comparison forms the emotional and philosophical heart of the [article](#).

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(최시형), also known as Hae-wol (해월). Photo: National Museum of Korea (국립중앙박물관). License: [Korea Open Government License Type 1](#). Cropped



Choe Je-u (최제우), also known as Su-un (수운). Unknown author. [Public domain](#) image. Cropped

Donghak [See editor's note 1 below] was founded by Choe Je-u (최제우), also known as Su-un (수운), in the mid-nineteenth century. After the founder was executed by the Joseon government in 1864, the movement faced severe persecution. Followers were hunted, the organization seemed likely to disappear, and its future appeared bleak. According to Jeong, Hae-wol inherited leadership under these extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

Unlike the founder, who is remembered for creating a new vision, Hae-wol's task was simply to keep the movement alive. Forced into hiding, he spent decades moving from village to village carrying only a small bundle of belongings. This earned him the nickname "Choe with the Bundle". Through years of hardship, he preserved the movement until it survived long enough to develop into what later became known as Cheondogyo (천도교 – Cheondoism, literally "Religion of the Heavenly Way") [See editor's note 2 below].

Jeong cites a well-known saying among followers of that tradition: "Su-un founded it; Hae-wol preserved it." The phrase captures a distinction that he believes applies broadly throughout religious history. Founders often receive admiration because they create something new and inspire people with a compelling vision. Successors, by contrast, inherit problems. They must defend institutions, navigate internal disagreements, withstand external attacks, and maintain continuity during times of crisis.

This leads to the [column](#)'s broader reflection on religious leadership. Jeong suggests that successors are frequently lonelier than founders. While founders are remembered for their charisma, successors bear the burden of sustaining communities after the excitement of creation has passed. Their role is less dramatic but no less important.

Seen through this lens, [Mother Han](#) appears in the [article](#) not primarily as a defendant in a legal controversy but as a religious successor carrying what the author views as a heavy historical responsibility. When she became emotional in court and spoke of her spiritual mission, Jeong says he was reminded of the many religious figures throughout history who have devoted their lives to preserving communities amid criticism and uncertainty.

The [article](#) concludes by emphasizing a principle of civic discourse. People are entitled to disagree about whether a religious mission is valid or misguided. They may criticize doctrines, institutions, and leaders. However, Jeong argues that there is no need to turn a person's lifelong convictions into an object of ridicule. Public criticism can be rigorous and even severe while still maintaining a basic respect for human dignity and sincere religious belief.



Jeonju Donghak Revolution Memorial Hall (전주 동학혁명 기념관). The museum, located in the sothwestern city of Jeonju in North Jeolla province, was established by the Cheondoism (formerly Donghak) community to commemorate the Donghak Revolution and contains exhibits on the movement, its leaders, and its historical legacy. Photo: Jjw / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#)

In essence, the [column](#) is less a defense of any particular doctrine than an appeal for restraint in public discussion. Jeong asks readers to distinguish between critical examination and reckless ranting

to distinguish between critical examination and mockery, and to remember that behind every religious controversy are real individuals whose identities, values, and sense of purpose are deeply connected to their faith. Whether one agrees with them or not, he argues, that reality deserves recognition.

Text: Knut Holdhus, editor

Featured image above: Hak Ja Han, aka. Mother Han in 2023. Photo: FFWPU, improved for higher resolution and sharpness by Grok xAI, 16th June 2026.

[Editor's note 1: **Donghak (동학, "Eastern Learning")** was a Korean religious, philosophical, and social movement founded in 1860 by Choe Je-u (최제우 – 1824-1864) during the late Joseon Dynasty (1392-1897). It emerged as a response to growing foreign influence, especially Western Christianity ("Western Learning", *Seohak*), social inequality, corruption, and political instability.

Donghak combined elements of Korean folk beliefs, Confucian ethics, Buddhism, and Daoism. Its central teaching held that the divine is present within every person (*Innaecheon*, "humanity is heaven"), emphasizing human dignity, moral self-cultivation, and the spiritual equality of all people. This idea challenged the rigid social hierarchy of Joseon society.

The movement gained a large following among peasants and marginalized groups. In 1894, dissatisfaction with government corruption and economic hardship contributed to the Donghak Peasant Revolution, a major uprising inspired in part by Donghak ideals. Although the revolt was suppressed, it helped trigger broader regional conflicts and reforms.

After persecution, Donghak evolved into Cheondoism ("Religion of the Heavenly Way"), which remains active in Korea today.]



Son Byeong-hui (손병희 – 1861-1922), the founder of Cheondoism. Unknown author. *Public domain image.*

[Editor's note 2: **Cheondogyo** or **Cheondoism (천도교, "Religion of the Heavenly Way")** is a Korean religion that developed from the earlier Donghak ("Eastern Learning") movement. In 1905, the movement was reorganized and renamed by Son Byeong-hui (손병희 – 1861-1922) to emphasize its spiritual character and adapt to the changing political conditions of Korea under increasing foreign domination.

The central doctrine of Cheondogyo is Innaecheon ("Humanity is Heaven"), the belief that the divine resides within every human being. As a result, all people possess inherent dignity and should be treated with respect and equality.

Cheondogyo stresses moral cultivation, social responsibility, and the improvement of society through ethical action rather than withdrawal from the world.

Unlike many religions that sharply separate the sacred and the secular, Cheondogyo teaches that everyday life is the proper arena for spiritual practice. Historically, its followers played a significant role in Korea's modernization and independence movement, including participation in the March First Movement against Japanese colonial rule.

Today, Cheondogyo remains one of Korea's indigenous religions, preserving the humanistic and reformist ideals inherited from Donghak.]



The flag of Cheondoism. Photo: Aethelwolff Emsworth. *Public domain image*

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