

The Fortieth Anniversary of the Washington, D.C. Family Church Building

Achille Acolatse
December 2, 2017



On December 2, over 300 Unificationists and local dignitaries gathered at the historic Washington, D.C. Family Church to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the building's dedication by True Parents, which took place on December 4, 1977.

The Washington, D.C. Family Church is first national church building founded by the Unification Church of America. Church pastor Dr. Achille Acolatse served as emcee for the special day, which began with holy songs, prayer and a cake cutting followed by a delicious luncheon buffet.



Local members of the Washington Unificationist community planned and prepared for several months for this special day. A committee arranged for the cleaning, painting, and decoration of the building, while volunteers landscaped the outside grounds and renovated the beautiful garden that sits at the entrance of the former Mormon Chapel. The dedication coincided with the completion of a \$2 million restoration project to repair the building's almost 90-year-old stone exterior.



District Pastor Reverend Ernest Patton led with opening remarks that were followed by an inspirational reading of True Father's "Renewed Pride" speech, which he gave at the dedication four decades ago. In his sermon, True Father said:

"I can see how hard the Washington members have worked to make this day possible and I'm sure they have learned a great lesson about how hard restoration work can be. It is common sense that it is not easy to restore something to a state better than it was originally. The Unification Church, however, has a new tradition of acquiring something old and restoring it to a state better than its original condition. That is our faith and dedication. It is very symbolic that we have restored a former Mormon Church into our heavenly temple, but we are not just talking about one church. We are going to follow this pattern to restore the nation, the world and the cosmos."

To the audience gathered, True Father's words from 40 years ago felt even more relevant in 2017.



Then the words of the Honorable Muriel Bowser, Mayor of the District of Columbia, were read:

"For four decades the Washington DC Family Church has been a cornerstone of faith for the residents of Adams Morgan. With the church's focus on the family and character education for our youth, I commend your spirit of selflessness and encourage your congregation to continue to serve the spiritual needs of our city's residents with renewed faith, determination and commitment."

The mayor was represented by Rev. Thomas Bowen, Director of the Mayor's Office of Religious Affairs. Reverend Bowen thanked the founders for creating the church and applauded the church's efforts to meet the spiritual needs of the congregation and the nearby community. He extended an invitation to work

together with the city's faith leaders to reach out to the homeless, the poor, the hungry, and to help heal the city.

Further congratulatory remarks were given by Dr. Ki Hoon Kim, Continental Chairman of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU); Rev. Richard Buessing, President of FFWPU-USA; Mr. Thomas McDevitt, President of Universal Peace Federation (UPF) International and Chairman of The Washington Times; and Dr. Michael Jenkins, Co-Chairman of the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC).



A special highlight and treat was the performance by the New Hope Singers International (NHSI). Founded by True Parents in the early years of the American movement, the group plays an integral part in the history of the Washington Family Church. Forty years ago, the group stayed at the church for several months to help raise funds to restore the pews and building in preparation for the opening ceremony.

To commemorate the 40th anniversary event, 25 New Hope Singers came to Washington from across the nation, Canada and Europe. The singers performed several selections that were sung at the historic 1976 Washington Monument rally, where True Father spoke before 300,000 people. After the audience was moved by the beautiful voices of the singers, religious leaders representing Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, and Unificationism offered a prayer for the peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula. The crowd then watched a special video presentation with footage of the actual 1977 ceremony, including True Father's sermon and the celebration afterward.

Notable attendees at the inauguration included Colonel Bo Hi Pak, who translated True Father's words and founded the Unification Church of Washington, D.C. in 1965; members of the True Family; David S.C. Kim, who began missionary work in Portland, Oregon in 1959; Neil Salonen, then-president of the Unification Church; Rev. David Hose, the first Washington, D.C. pastor; Colonel Sang Kil Han; Joong Hyun Pak; and many elder brothers and sisters.

After the video presentation, the Washington, D.C. Family Church Children's Choir led the congregation in singing the Cheon Il Guk anthem in Korean, and performed True Parent's birthday song. Mrs. Julia Moon, Chairwoman and President of the Universal Ballet, South Korea and the Kirov Academy of Ballet, Washington, D.C., gave special greetings before the Kirov Academy of Ballet performed a series of vignettes. The Washington, D.C. Family Church Sisters then performed Mugung Hwa (True Mother's Song) and young Unificationists performed the Mujogeon dance.

The program concluded with a call to action, a closing prayer, and cheers of Eog Mansei (Victory for ten thousand years).