

## An Interview with Michael Balcomb on the first Interim National Council meeting

Krista Moon  
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Dr. Michael Balcomb, president of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), participated in the entire weekend of the Interim National Council meeting. Unification News caught him for an interview, to gain his perspective on this unprecedented gathering.

“I believe this is a good mixture of first- and second generation, men and women,” said Dr. Balcomb. There are 18 elected members on the council: 12 men and six women. Six of whom are second-generation Unificationists.

The council is addressing four areas of concerns for the church as a whole, according to Dr. Balcomb:

“The first one is church growth and how to turn around a situation where the church has not been growing for 20 years or more.

“The second area concerns our public image — some call it branding — and the way we can improve the use of media, public relations, service programs and other initiatives to better position the public’s understanding of who we are.

“The third area is family. We are a church that has, among its goals, the establishment of the Blessing and Blessed family life. As our movement matures and people move through the life cycle, we need programs to care for people at all stages of their spiritual life, including elder singles and we need to think about couples entering their retirement years, as well as our traditional focuses on the Matching and the Blessing.

“The last area is governance. We want to create a mechanism by which the members’ voices can be heard and concerns from the districts can be brought to the attention of the executive leadership.”

Currently, the council serves as an advocacy and advisory group. Dr. Balcomb, impressed by the council members during the meeting, said, “I can say that over the course of the weekend, they [the National Council] came up with ideas and suggestions that would have taken me months to think up myself, if I could have even done it at all.”

He continued: “In that respect, the National Council meeting was very successful because there was some great brainstorming and idea generation. Everybody was fully engaged and fully involved. I knew that the ideas being brought forth really did represent the broad spectrum of what are on members’ minds and hearts at this time.

Dr. Balcomb added that the National Council, like all of the council structures, is an interim body. “Our goal is by the time of the next scheduled elections in November, we will have a much clearer plan of how we would like the permanent council to look and to also provide better guidelines of district- and local councils and how to best proceed,” he said.

The next face-to-face council meeting has been penciled in at the end of July or early August, he said, adding: “One of the things we want to have accomplished by then is our provisional national charter. That will be governing this association and providing guidance to all other councils around the country.”

If members in the field have items they would like to suggest to be brought up for discussion at future meetings, “The best way to do that is to communicate with one of their representatives [on the national Council] directly,” he said. “All districts have one or sometimes two representatives. They can also do that through their district pastor and their district council. We did have a session in this weekend where we specifically listened to some of the comments, questions and concerns that came directly from the districts; and that was very helpful,” Dr. Balcomb said.

Dr. Balcomb noted that reports of the National Council meeting will be available to members, reported by Dr. Tyler Hendricks, who is not representing National Headquarters but the New York District.