

Sonja Megumi Bessell a beautiful life...

April 26, 2013



Our beloved second-generation sister, Sonja Megumi Bessell, passed away on Tuesday, April 24, 2013 in Huntersville, North Carolina. She is a wonderful daughter of filial piety, dedicated wife and mother and source of inspiration to all. Let us support Sonja's family during this important time and pray for her victorious transition to a glorious new life in the spiritual world.

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District Pastor Michael Lamson welcomed everyone who attended. The gathering filled the beautiful hall of Forest Lawn West in Charlotte, North Carolina.

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We sang the hymn "Song of the Banquet."

"Song of the Banquet"

Pure new life that once was sown within the garden's fertile soil,
Sprouting seed has now become a blossom of heavenly loveliness.
Father above, Lord of all, shower your blessing upon
This holy day, bond of love forever more!
Hallelujah, Glorious Day of Joy!
Fairest flowers of the meadow, tender buds of perfect form.
Now receive the gift of life and dance in the joy of eternal spring
Heavenly host, men on earth, join us in praising this day;
Bless us to share, love's communion faithfully,
Hallelujah, Glorious Day of Joy!
Hushed we stand in awe before you, ready now to give our pledge,
To attend and serve completely with an unchanging eternal love.
Glorious King, mighty God, fill with your blessed grace,
This dearest one; holy banquet of our love.
Hallelujah, Glorious Day of Joy!
Overflowing with your love as dawn proclaims eternal life,
Earth and heaven come surround the glorious Parents of mankind,
Gather around, sing the song, fragrant the love of the Lord;
Tell all the world, Spring has come eternally!
Hallelujah, Glorious Day of Joy!

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Sonja's pastor in Charlotte, Rev. Klaus Schick, prayed.

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The Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.
Amen.

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Sonja's father, Jackson Bowman, opened his remarks explaining that he has the good fortune of hearing voices of those living in the spirit world. He said, "Don't burden Sonja with unnecessary sadness." True Father let Jackson know that he has learned that Sonja is in God, our Heavenly Parent's special care, because her parents offered that she go as a young child to live at Jacob House for many months so that they could both do witnessing activities full time.

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Sonja's mother Kiyoko Bowman let us know that Sonja told them before she ascended that she was grateful that she could bring four children into the world, that this was a part of her contribution during her lifetime. Primarily caring for her children in recent years, she has wanted to have more time to go out and do work for God's providence. Now she'll be free to do this.

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Ilona Silva met Sonja through being a Girl Scout leader for Chung Hee and Sonja's eldest, their eight-year-old daughter Shin Ang. Sonja went to Girl Scout Camp along with Shin Ang while pregnant with youngest daughter Shin Mi. At this camp, Sonja won the nickname "the trooper" as she participated in everything the others did, things like steep mountain climbing, paddle boating, and hiking.

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Dr. Kathy Winings shared that Sonja gave her hope for a new generation. While Chung Hee worked at the Unification Theological Seminary, Kathy would sometimes watch Chung Hee and Sonja together walking hand in hand. She said her heart was touched looking at them as they seemed like soul mates. They seemed to complete each other. Chung Hee is fast talking, pure energy. In contrast, Sonja's very calm. She agreed with someone else's comment, saying "Yes, Sonja had a good hug!" Kathy suggested, "Open up and Sonja will talk with you." Kathy can't imagine Sonja ever being on the sidelines. She called her "the conductor of an orchestra of love."

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Yemi Pickard sang beautifully the song "Put Your Records On."

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Sonja's District Pastor Michael Lamson asked us, "What would our lives have been like if we hadn't met True Parents?" Sonja was a wife, a mother, a missionary and friend to many. She's already side by side with our True Parents. Scripture reminds us we don't know the number of our days. God knows what it means to lose a child, a beloved. God loved who Sonja was becoming. Death is like water turning to steam; steam is still water. Likewise, one's soul continues after departure from the physical body. Sonja's touch will live on in each of us. He said, "Sonja, we love you. We're not happy that you're leaving so soon. You can tell us about it. Have a safe journey!"

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Here are the lyrics to the next presentation, a song by Idina Menzel:  
**"Defying Gravity"**

Something has changed within me  
Something is not the same  
I'm through with playing by the rules  
Of someone else's game

Too late for second-guessing  
Too late to go back to sleep  
It's time to trust my instincts  
Close my eyes and leap!  
It's time to try  
Defying gravity  
I think I'll try  
Defying gravity  
Kiss me goodbye  
I'm defying gravity  
And you won't bring me down  
I'm through accepting limits  
'Cuz someone says they're so  
Some things I cannot change  
But till I try, I'll never know!  
Too long I've been afraid of  
Losing love I guess I've lost  
Well, if that's love  
It comes at much too high a cost!  
I'd sooner buy  
Defying gravity  
Kiss me goodbye  
I'm defying gravity  
I think I'll try  
Defying gravity  
And you won't bring me down  
Unlimited (Unlimited)  
My future is unlimited (unlimited)  
And I've just had a vision  
Almost like a prophecy  
I know - it sounds truly crazy  
And true, the vision's hazy  
But I swear, someday I'll be...  
Flying so high! (Defying gravity)  
Kiss me goodbye! (Defying gravity)  
So if you care to find me  
Look to the western sky!  
As someone told me lately:  
"Everyone deserves the chance to fly!"  
I'm defying gravity!  
And you won't bring me down!  
Bring me down!  
Bring me down!

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Youth Pastor Benjy Uyama said, "Chung Hee, children, never forget what an amazing person you had in your life. We felt her heart of love. Yours is a lineage that can contribute to the world. Sonja's in a place filled with joy now. The love of a mother transcends time and space. Sonja, we'll take care of your family and one another."

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At the Won Jeon (burial place), District Pastor Michael Lamson encouraged us to consider taking responsibility to do what Sonja might typically take care of, doing such things as fixing the things she'd fix, being the glue to bring about unity.

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We sang "Tongil" (Song of Unity).

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Chung Hee's father Gerhard Bessell prayed, "Thank You. On this 64th day after Foundation Day, we command You to love our daughter, daughter-in-law, sister, wife and mom. This is an occasion of the unity of Heaven and earth and of the two clans, the Bowmans and Bessells. Jesus explained to us that there's no greater love than this: to give up one's life for one's friends. Sonja's is such a precious sacrifice. We've been blessed to participate in some way to make this a pure offering. This connection will not pass but will get stronger. Sonja, we've learned, was recently given a special name, 'the trooper.' Here there's a monument to those who have served in many nations. We report to You that the trooper is returning. Time is short till we also greet You. We who remain ask that You please receive her in liberty and happiness.

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Next we sent to Sonja three cheers of "Oeg Mansei" (thousands and thousands of years of victory / long life/ hurray)!

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Next Sonja's eldest sister SuGin Zarako Bowman explained, "In our family growing up, it was the tradition that on our birthdays our parents would embrace us, each one with one hand on our head in prayer." Then Sonja's parents Jackson and Kiyoko Bowman placed their hands on Sonja's casket praying for her on this "birthday" into the heavenly spiritual realms.

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At the reception following the services, I overheard that Sonja had said, smiling, to Claire Daugherty: "Auntie Claire, I can fly now!"

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Also I learned that Sonja's physicians, upon noticing that the advanced illness was contributing to Sonja being unconscious, treated her so that lucidity might return. Their treatments were successful so that Sonja could say her farewells and give guidance and direction for her children.

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Thank you, Sonja, for your kind heart, your sincerity and for the many ways you've inspired us!

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**Following is a tribute to Sonja's triumphant life from her District Pastor, Rev. Michael Lamson.**



### **Victorious Life of Sonja Megumi Bessell**

Sonja Megumi Bessell was born to Jackson (Papa) and Kiyoko (Mama) Bowman in Detroit, Michigan on March 11, 1982. Jackson and Kiyoko are an international couple – he from the United States and her from Japan – who were introduced and Blessed in marriage by True Parents in 1977 as part of the 74 Couples Marriage Blessing in New York City.

Following several moves within the United States, the Bowman family returned to “Papa” Bowman’s hometown of Aiken, South Carolina in 1985 and Sonja spent her childhood there. She is the second daughter of six children. Her older sister, Sugin; brothers Joshuah, WonGin and NamGin; and younger sister, Jordanne, all remain in close contact with their parents as well as Sonja’s family.

Sonja enjoyed sports, especially soccer and dancing, and also practiced martial arts. She was a good student and always took great care in choosing her friends. She had a knack for cultivating meaningful relationships early on and always drew strength from good friends. As a young adult, Sonja traveled abroad repeatedly for humanitarian projects. She visited Malaysia and the Philippines and participated in youth leadership programs which took her to Russia and numerous states in America as well as Europe.

In 2003, Sonja was introduced to Chung Hee Bessell by her and his parents. Chung Hee and Sonja agreed to be matched by their parents and were Blessed in marriage by True Parents on July 13, 2003. During the next nine years, they had four beautiful children: daughter Shin Ang (8 years old), sons Tong Bang (6 years old) and Taejong (3 years old) and daughter Shinmi, born in 2012.

Sonja and Chung Hee first served together as assistant church leaders in Guatemala. Afterward, they became youth ministers in South Carolina where they shared their marriage and family experiences to help raise up younger brothers and sisters in their lives of faith. They later moved their family to New York and then New Jersey where Sonja dedicated herself fully to her children and husband as a housewife while Chung Hee became involved in the Unification Theological Seminary, first as a recruiter and later as webmaster. In 2009, they moved again to Charlotte, North Carolina where they focused on their family

and Chung Hee's business. In 2012, they took an active role in the community by serving on the local Unification Church Council.

Sonja was diagnosed with late-stage breast cancer on April 8, 2013 and was admitted to the main hospital in Charlotte the next day. She fought valiantly to defeat her illness for the next two weeks with the help of her family, community and incredible staff at the hospital. Following a beautiful visit with her extended family, Sonja's life was coming to a close and she was transferred to the Levine and Dixon Hospice house in Huntersville, North Carolina on April 23, 2013. At 8:40 AM EST on April 24, 2013 Sonja, at peace and without pain, took her final breath and passed on.

To all who met Sonja, even briefly, she was an inspiration and a good friend. She is survived by a loving husband and their four children, her parents and her siblings.

Seonghwa and Won Jeon Ceremonies – Friday, April 26, 2013