

## Blessed Life in Chicago

Jario and Lena Vincenz-Gavin  
May 9, 2012



*Throughout the weekend, Rev. Schanker had the opportunity to speak before large groups as well as spend one-on-one time with individuals and couples.*

Living a blessed life is part work, part communication, grace from God and True Parents, and a whole lot of joy. This past weekend, on May 5, 2012, Chicago was visited by the National Blessed Life Team: Rev. Philip Schanker, director of the Blessed Family Ministry, Mrs. Debby Gullery, director of counseling and co-director of education, and Mrs. Ayako Heller, director of Japanese family ministry. Their purpose was to help launch the Blessed Life Ministry here in Chicago, but our community was also blessed with encouragement, healing and some great tips to create the Blessed families we've always hoped for.



*The first event for the Chicago Blessed Life Team was a Valentine's Barn Dance.*

The weekend began with a one-day seminar on the purpose of our Blessing and a look at our marriage as a path to spiritual renewal. We are all on different legs of our journey, but this insight was just in time for everyone. The seminar was held at a local community center from 9 a.m. through 6 p.m. with a total of 80 participants. The presentations were great, giving new insights into the history that led up to our being able to receive God's blessing in marriage today. How lucky we are to be alive in the age of the messiah and receive this awesome grace! We also discovered techniques in handling conflict in our marriage. Through intentional investment, we can make those challenges into strengths for our relationships. We discovered more how to build the strong families that can shape God's Kingdom. We finished the seminar with a commitment to make "ideal" families and to put new energy into making a lasting, loving relationship.



*Mrs. Gullery speaks to the 80 participants who attended the one-day seminar on the purpose of the Blessing.*

## Facilitating Group Discussions

On Sunday, the team joined us as we worshiped together. Mrs. Fumie Ikeda was recognized for her 12 years of dedication to the Blessed Family Department. Then we had breakout sessions in English and Japanese. The Japanese families worked together to identify key areas that our community can work on for our families. This was a great opportunity for our community to meet Mrs. Heller, who is leading the Japanese Ministry. The English-speaking group, with Mrs. Gullery, shared about the new process of the Matching- and Blessing process. The sharing went on for nearly two hours and we all gained great insights.

Sunday evening, more than 30 young adults gathered in the home of Lovin' Life Pastors Jario and Lena Vincenz-Gavin to speak more specifically about entering the Matching- and Blessing process and how to communicate better with parents and with their spouses. After an hour of sharing, the group divided between those who are already Blessed and those who are anticipating their Matching process. Both groups had deep, insightful and humorous discussions about the challenges of communication between families and opposite sexes. The evening closed with a prayer, and participants were left with a clearer understanding of the path that lies ahead of them. It was a beautiful evening.



*From left to right: Pastors Jario and Lena Vincenz-Gavin, Rev. Schanker, Rev. Takami, Mrs. Ikeda, Bishop Kim and Rev. Rendel attended Sunday service in Chicago.*

## Meeting the Needs of Our Families

On Monday, members had a lot of personal time to share one-on-one with Rev. Schanker, Mrs. Gullery, or Mrs. Heller. On the final evening of their visit, we hosted a community-brainstorming meeting on the needs and wants of our Blessed families. Below are a few areas that came to our attention:

- **Informing the community about the resources already available**
- **Creating regular, local Blessing workshops**
- **Equipping new Matching Advisors**
- **Holding couples' retreats**
- **Creating a Blessed-Wives Club/Husbands Breakfast Club**
- **Marriage enhancement book clubs**
- **Re-learning fun**

We are so grateful to In Jin Nim and the Blessed Life Ministry for re-emphasizing the importance of ideal families. Creating loving Blessed families is the best way to testify to the grace and love of salvation through our True Parents. The Blessed-Life weekend gave our community a new vision for creating ministries that have a lasting impact. Chicago is now excited and empowered to build up our Blessed Life Team. We also look forward to hosting the upcoming Parents Matching Convocation from June 8-10, 2012 in Chicago.