

Lovin' Life Welcomes New Member Jae Malabunga from New York

April 19, 2012



Jae Malabunga, 22, has been a member of the Unification Church for about a year.

The following testimony is from Timothy Jae Malabunga, 22, from Pomona, New York. He has recently finished studying cinematography at the New York Film Academy and is currently a member of the Leadership Initiative Module at the Lovin' Life Learning Center.

I was 20 years old when I was first introduced to Lovin' Life Ministries. I was gathering inspiration for a film project around Bryant Park when two Special Task Force (STF, now Generation Peace Academy) members approached me and asked me about religion. Initially, I didn't want to take any part in the conversation and considered them to be like one of those mediocre religious-marketing folks I meet every now and then. I continued on my task and another STF member approached me. I still rejected him but from there, I started having thoughts about God and the purpose of life.

On the same day, later that afternoon, I was on my way to Grand Central terminal when a man named Mr. Takagi Shunichi approached me. Mr. Shunichi didn't utter a single word but he handed me a card that asks the reader to pick one of the questions written on it. I chose the first question, which said, "Does God exist?"

He nodded and said, "Yes." He told me if I want to learn more about God, I should watch a video at the Lovin' Life Learning Center at 43rd Street. I was in a hurry at that time, so I just left him at the corner of 42nd street and 5th avenue. I came to the Learning Center the next day and met him.

I studied the *Divine Principle* gradually, and at the same time, learned from Mr. Shunichi. He taught me so much about the spirit world and how spirits are around us all the time. He gave me a new perspective on life and I had so many realizations that motivated me under his guidance.

I stopped going to the Learning Center after two months. I got caught up in the busy life of New York and completely got disconnected from Mr. Shunichi.

Nine months later, I was on my way home from work when I had a sudden thought about Mr. Shunichi. I decided to stop by and visit him that day and went to the Learning Center, hoping to see him. Instead, I met Olga Mazhitova and Jina Lee.

I spent the whole afternoon there and later found out that Mr. Shunichi had passed away to the spirit

world. I was so shocked. I came home very disheartened. I prayed and sobbed the whole night for him and made a commitment that I would invest my heart for what Mr. Shunichi believed in.

The Lovin' Life Community

What attracted me to Lovin' Life was the people. When I met Olga, Jina and Andrew Love, they created such a warm atmosphere for me. I was shocked to see a group of people with different backgrounds interacting with each other in a very platonic and sibling-like way. I was shocked at how hospitable and considerate everyone is. I don't see that often here in the United States. I felt I could be myself when I was with these people.

I use to be very introverted, stubborn, impatient and short-tempered. I grew up in a Catholic school and was taught about God. But after discovering the Catholic Church's history of scandals, I became agnostic. I knew God existed, but I always wondered whether He cared about people. Therefore, my way of interacting with people was very skeptical. I find it even difficult to find friends and get close to people because I thought it was pointless. I've witnessed the lives of my two physical older sisters get wrecked at a very young age because of unprincipled love and pre-marital sex. I didn't want my children to live in a world where morality and values were declining. My initial thought was that love is just a highly overrated phenomenon.

After meeting the Unification Church and learning about the *Divine Principle*, True Parents and true love, I became very inspired. I've always been ambitious about changing the world, but I was afraid and I didn't know where to start. Now I know that it starts in me. Being with Andrew, Olga, Jina and everyone on the Care Team (now called the "Grow Team") helped me a lot by allowing me to receive love from a family. I consider each one of them as my actual brother or sister. Because of the courage I gained from them, meeting new people isn't as difficult as it was before. They gave me a new perspective on life and God. Much like Mr. Shunichi, they continued investing their hearts for me, and I intend to return the favor by staying close to them.



Jae, second from the top right, poses for a photo with other new members and the Grow Team at Andrew Love and Uyanga Khuukhnee's Marriage Blessing Ceremony on March 23rd.

The Leadership Initiative Module

Andrew asked me to work with him on a video project called "Bring a Friend Campaign." He introduced me to Toshi Tagawa, who is the head of the video production team, and Kevin Yoon, the head of the LLM design team. They supported our project, and Toshi asked me to help him during Sunday Service. I feel like I learn a lot from Toshi. He works very hard and I admire him for that. I definitely want to continue working for the video team.

Toshi and Andrew wanted to hire me to work with them. However, Rev. Bruce Grodner suggested that I intern through the Leadership Initiative first, which I agreed to do. I believe that for in order to fully invest myself in this movement, I'd like to learn more about it and learn where my faith in True Parents really stands. I also believe it will help me find myself and learn what my limitations are and exceed them.

When I signed the papers for Leadership Initiative (roughly two weeks before it started), I felt very nervous. I was sweating and could not breathe properly. For two weeks, I was daunted by the idea that it would be very awkward for me to be around so many second-generation Unificationists who knew each other already, while I didn't know anyone at all. I was contemplating backing out, but I knew I would let down a lot of people who had high expectations from me. I probably would've hid in my room all day, but thankfully, William Thalheimer, Andrew Love, Naomi Froelich, Thanh Le and many experienced couples and church leaders were there to support me. It's very difficult for me so far, but I'm getting to know more people. I'm starting to feel a bit at ease. It's quite an experience, and I'm really glad I'm here.

Being a part of this church even for such a short time has had such an impact on my life. Even though the majority of the people in my life don't know that I'm a part of such great movement, I'm still committed to my promise to Mr. Shunichi. If his spirit had not moved me that one afternoon, I probably wouldn't be back here. I would still be looking around trying to find an answer for life's biggest question. And thanks to him, I love God.