

Leaders' Conference in New York Featured Best Practices for Ministry

Doug Burton and Ariana Moon
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Friday the thirteenth was a lucky day for Lovin'-Life-Ministries leaders huddling at the New Yorker Hotel in Manhattan. That day was the opener of a dynamic three-day activists' conference titled "Lead with Impact" that featured best practices for expanding the church, an intimate video travelogue of the God's Day celebration with Rev. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon (True Parents), an innovative curriculum for new members, interactive discussions of what is working out in the field, guidance on how to handle critical press, and many other topics.



Vice President of the Unification Church Rev. Joshua Cotter welcomed the leaders on Friday night and spoke about Lovin' Life's vision for 2012 the next morning.

"This conference gave evidence of a new phase of leadership of our movement," said Rev. David Rendel, one of the conference planners. He added: "Nearly 50 percent of the participants were young adults who were there because they wanted to be. They feel more inspired and empowered to take an active role in ministry, and we heard about a lot of exciting developments."



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On Friday evening, participants were entertained by a series of videos and slides illustrating best practices. Pastors Cliff and Tiff Gaines explained how they organized a Care Team in Atlanta to make guests comfortable and appreciated at the Sunday Service. Pastor Dmitry Vilchitsky presented an eye-catching video that galvanized his Boston community around a fundraising drive needed prior to renovating the Boston Center (follow-up story to be posted on *UC Newsletter* this week). Pastor Demian Dunkley of Las Vegas presented a stunning promotional video about staging a Lovin' Life service at a movie theater. Pastor George Kazakos explained how he created successful "Boost Sundays" in Los Angeles. Pastors Jario and Lena Vincenz-Gavin reported on how they had created a 12-month plan for community celebrations that could be portals for new members.



Ariana Moon presented on how to project the positive image of the movement in media.

Building Lovin' Life Ministries

According to participant evaluations of the conference, one of the most appreciated elements was a series of iPhone videos made by Jin Sung Park on Saturday morning featuring the True Family in their living quarters during the God's Day celebrations in Korea. Videos included an elevator scene in which someone remarks to True Father that his tie looks very prestigious. True Father says: "Oh you want to see what is more valuable?" He then asks True Mother to kiss the tie, after which he kisses it, and all present are smiling.



Pastors Cliff and Tiff Gaines explained how they organized a Care Team in Atlanta to make guests comfortable and appreciated at the Sunday Service.

Later that day, Mrs. Heather Thalheimer and the New York Care Team presented the goals of Lovin' Life's new mentoring handbook, *I'll Walk with You* (follow-up story to come), which is a step by step guide to spiritual mentoring. The booklet connects individuals in heart to the tradition True Father established in the early days of the church of loving and raising people in their relationship with God. *I'll Walk with You* outlines the journey from being a guest to becoming a member and encourages everyone to share his or her faith.

Afternoon breakout sessions included discussions on the Blessed Life Ministry, mentoring new members, young-adult ministry, branding, the Life Lounge experience, developing a Care Team, small-group ministry, creating video announcements, and media-outreach events.



Pastor Dmitry Vilchitsky presented an eye-catching video that galvanized his Boston community around a fundraising drive needed for church renovations.

Sunday morning, the participants joined the Lovin' Life worship featuring Rev. Kazuo Takami of Chicago, the first Japanese Unificationist to take the pulpit at the Manhattan Center service. Sunday afternoon, the conference heard from Koichi Nakai, head of the Lovin' Life design department, who presented the opportunities afforded by the brand new Lovinlifeministries.org website. The site allows communities to upload local announcements and videos onto a custom-made page with an easy-to-use template.

Doug Burton and Ariana Moon presented on how to project the positive image of the movement in media. Moon explained progress made in Philadelphia to reverse damage done by an inept story published in a campus newspaper called the *Daily Pennsylvanian*.



Pastor Demian Dunkley of Las Vegas presented a stunning promotional video about staging a Lovin' Life service at a movie theater.

Rev. Michael Jenkins, chairman of the American Clergy Leadership Conference and Rev. Joshua Cotter, vice president of the Unification Church, reported on an innovative vehicle for educating thousands of ministers – the online video conference.

Camia Gavin, one of the organizers of the conference, said, "Overall the conference was a success. From an organizer's perspective, there's always something that could be better, but the average rating from participants was an eight out of ten, so I think it was a great start. I feel the biggest outcome was strengthening our relationship as a national church; we're all in this together and we felt that this weekend. Also, it was moving and encouraging to see the development happening on every level across the nation. People are joining in big churches and small churches and there's a lot of hope from that. I look forward to seeing the collaboration between communities and what gets developed between now and the next 'Lead with Impact' conference."



Pastor George Kazakos explained how he created successful "Boost Sundays" in Los Angeles.

"'Lead with Impact' gave me hope and inspired me deeply," said National Youth Pastor Jaga Gavin. "The first night, I was blown away. For the last three years, we as a national team have been working tirelessly with In Jin Nim on many projects to create and improve the ministry. To be honest, I had no idea of the impact it had. I was overwhelmed and inspired to hear and see what other communities had done with the ministry. It is truly becoming a living ministry, taking many unique and beautiful forms. Each community had its own flavor, but we're still all connected on a national level.

"This weekend was about inheriting, sharing, growing and being honest with others, and it was about coming together as a team so that we can better share the breaking news of our True Parents. I'm excited for what is to come next because we have limitless opportunities for growth. We still have a lot of work to do. After all, we've only just begun."

Dr. Ann Iparraguirre, who heads ministry in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware, commented: "I was overjoyed to see the diversity of the whole group that attended the conference. It really showed me how much our movement has changed these past couple of years. Having such a diverse audience made the break-out sessions and the whole conference a better experience. When the call for people to attend the conference went out, it just said to send your ministry teams and both young and old showed up!"

Dr. Iparraguirre added: "I was also thoroughly impressed with the professionalism that all speakers had while giving their presentations. We are setting the standard higher and higher for not only internal excellence but for the external excellence as well."



Pastors Jario and Lena Vincenz-Gavin reported on how they had created a 12-month plan for community celebrations that could be portals for new members.

Participant Evaluations

In response to the evaluation question of "What worked for you?" the following comments were handwritten:

"[It is] very uplifting to see positive ideas and progress reports and videos of what is working or being down in other communities. Break-out groups were very helpful and informative."

"The quality of the presenters was excellent. The overall organization was good. The topics were excellent. Jin Sung Nim was the best!"

"What I appreciated was getting a feeling for our church as it is today – more united and more forward thinking."

"Jin Sung Nim's presentation – by knowing True Parents and True Family, we get deeper inspiration. Ariana Moon's presentation – it is so important for us to be trained to appeal to media. Testimonies of successful church activities. Q&A."

"Getting us all together. Seeing and hearing with our own senses the evidence of growth. The substantial hope of where we have come, especially reflected in the testimonies of our new Lovin' Life pastors."

"I loved that lots of young leaders were involved, networking and renewing relationships with leaders from other areas."

"[I] understood the necessity to unite with True Children through Jin Sung Nim's presentation. This presentation inspired me to offer more dedication and joy to True Parents."

"[I] enjoyed the approach in the Public Relations presentation, especially about how to turn "negative" press into an opportunity." I enjoyed the LLM Ballroom [dance presentation] and the LLM band had excellent music. The OSDP panel discussions helped me see the vision [behind it]. Overall [the events

were] organized, progressive and constructive."



National Youth Pastor Jaga Gavin presented on how to build an effective ministry team.

"[There is] so much positive energy and ideas when we come together! Especially for a micro state, it is very helpful to meet brothers and sisters from all over USA. It's a great booster and we can have access to so many resources that we didn't know were there, for instance, BFM, media information from Ariana and Mr. Burton, etc."

"Lots of good info. As much as possible, it should be made available online for our review and to reprocess it. Jin Sung Nim's presentation gave a valuable inside view of True Family and True Children. Also, his perspective on their changing roles was critically important. Thanks to all who made it possible! Love you all!"

"The conference worked! There were takeaways from all aspects and a sense of reverence for True Parents throughout. [It was] comprehensive, professional and people had fun."

"The whole media portion is very useful. If we can improve the whole presentation of our church, I think we could improve a lot. The discussion with other churches also helped in giving ideas. I'm glad to see younger faces. It certainly helped me talk to others."

"All the videos and powerpoints. [I] enjoyed Jin Sung Nim's [video] clips and enjoyed all the "Best Practices" presentations during the first evening. I liked hearing about people's experiences in other communities, especially if they had a challenge and were able to overcome it."

"I really liked the Lovin' Life pastors talking onstage. New, creative, inspirational ideas from the young spirit were present and it was definitely worth watching. That was a great way to start of the workshop. Also, Jin Sung Nim's talks are always so personal and connectable. Food was great!"

"I felt well taken care of."