

Jaga Gavin, Maio Biacco, Debby Gullery, Tyler Hendricks, David Hunter and Philip Schanker organize *Lead with Impact* conference

Krista Moon
May 8, 2013



Leaders from across the country assembled at the “Lead With Impact” leadership conference in Barrytown, New York, April 16-20, 2013, and the lessons learned already have borne fruit in the field, according to participants. The three-day pastors only conference featured best practices for expanding the church, an innovative new curriculum for members, interactive discussion of what is working in the field, etc. The conference focused on the theme “Reinvent Yourself, Reinvent Leadership, Reinvent Church.”

Partly as a result of the dynamic conference, coordinated by Jaga Gavin, Maio Biacco, Debby Gullery, Dr. Tyler Hendricks, David Hunter and Rev. Philip Schanker, Unificationists have begun or will implement special efforts for Divine Principle evangelism.

Rev. Andrew Compton, district pastor of New York, said, “One strategy we are planning on using is Home Witnessing.” Rev. Compton referenced David and Julia Okamoto as examples of Unificationists who are practicing home witnessing. The Okamoto’s use their home in Valley Cottage, New York to host dinners for friends of their children and parents of their friends, and everyone in the Okamoto family gets involved to entertain them. Mrs. Okamoto wrote of her families methods, “When our guest feels at home and welcomed, we naturally discuss family issues and spiritual issues depending on their interest. When we find a moment to introduce the Divine Principle, we sometimes bring a white board next to the dinner table and give a Divine Principle lecture. We also created a small lecture room and are ready to give an introductory Divine Principle lecture. The key is family teamwork, and everyone plays a very critical role such as server, cook, entertainer, closer, lecturer, etc.”

Other strategies Rev. Compton says he is implementing include guiding people through fliers and local advertising to their new website– familyfedny.org. In addition, he explained his intent to experiment with conducting small-group meetings in public areas. Rev. Compton wrote, “We will invite people who live in the area, and those we meet on the street while distributing True Father's autobiography, to meet with

us in a local restaurant where we will have an introductory type small-group meeting for new guests. From there, we plan to invite them to our regular small groups and to Sunday service.”



For Rev. Larry Krishnek, district pastor of district 10 (Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington) he wrote to Unification News, “The highlight of the Lead With Impact conference was the consideration given to Church Planting and Replanting.” He added: “In this age of UC ‘perestroika’ [restructuring], it had been challenging for me to see how to create something truly new and effective that is deeply grounded in our principles and core tradition. The sessions that dealt with church planting provided me an encouraging way forward.”

Natural witnessing is a method employed by members in district three (New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware), according to Dr. Ann I., district pastor of district three. In Philadelphia, Pastors Leighton and Cresentia DeGoede have weekly Divine Principle Study Groups and Sunday friend and family friendly gatherings, which make it easy to invite guests. To bolster witnessing, Dr. I. explained that creating a model for publishing successful stories is the way to go. “I honestly believe that one gap in our practice in [going out to witness] is simply telling the stories of what works well. Once people know what it looks like and sounds like to witness, as they hear other people's stories, I think we will see a lot more success that is reported,” according to Dr. Iparraguire.

“I, with others, have waiting a long time for a conference like ‘Lead With Impact —a venue in which pastors could share best practices and biggest challenges,” wrote Dr. Tyler Hendricks, developer of ministry and curriculum at Family Federation, and one of the organizers of the conference.

Rev. Richard Buessing, district pastor for the New England region, told Unification News: “I thought the conference was excellent. First it was all pastors. We had a consciousness that we were a community of leaders. I also really like the breakouts. After a presentation and response by three people, the pastors could spend up to an hour with the presenter and ask lots of questions.”

He also credits Rev. Kevin Thompson of the Bay Area Church for giving excellent guidance on how to give an effective sermon. “He was precise, he made it simple and practical. One of the pastors in our district took notes and then gave a sermon that following Sunday that showed incredible improvement,” according to Rev. Buessing.



Participation Evaluations

The following remarks, compiled by Dr. Hendricks, are from participant Evaluation Forms at the end of the Lead With Impact leadership conference.

"I had a lot of fascinating and useful conversations with old associates and new folks. The staff did a great job. Thanks!"

"I did not expect so much [from] this conference before, but I am satisfied very much,"

"The challenge is to figure out what to use and apply in particular communities."

"We need more ongoing education on how to create a Sunday service program."

"This was the first conference I really felt a sincere effort to be real, with the situation facing us after True Father's ascension. I truly admire this effort. We are however still left with a theological crisis about what our message is about True Father's passing on to spirit world. Maybe we are still in search of how we ignite a Pentecostal fire?"

"Overall excellent idea to have a pastor's training seminar. Perhaps the first one in the history of Unification Church in America. However, I'd like to emphasize that 'less is more'. It would be better to choose two or three areas and provide more time and depth. The schedule is full and needs not be."