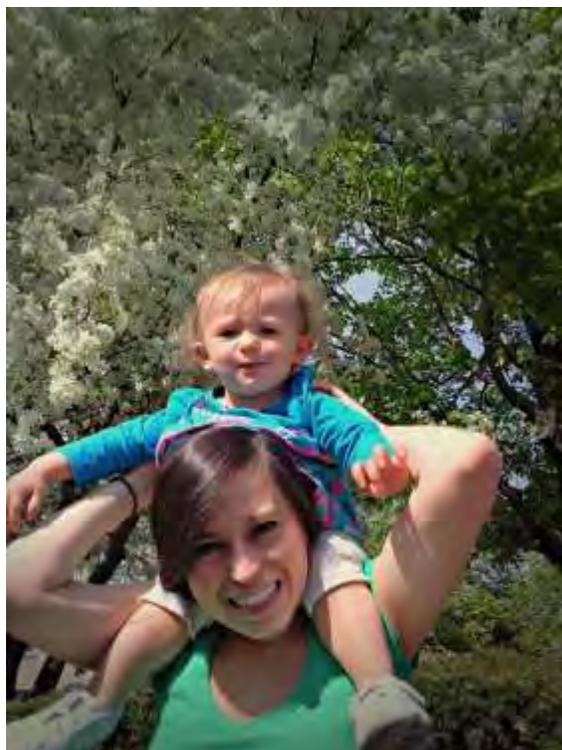


## Starting a 2nd Unification Church in the Chicagoland

Leena Vincenz-Gavin  
July 25, 2013



Dear You,

My name is Leena and am married to my wonderful husband Jario. We were blessed 2007 in Korea. That summer Jario moved to Chicago. Ever since we've been very involved in our local Chicago Church. We ran youth ministry together for 4 years and then became Co-Pastors for almost 2 years of the Chicago Church. It's been a great experience and we've learned a lot.

Now we feel called to a new mission of starting a 2nd Unification Church in the Chicagoland area. I think True Mother's vision for tribal messiahship/home church is really what is needed right now to grow.

True Father has always said there are 12 different personalities in the world. So there must be at least 12 different ways to reach people! I truly believe that the more churches we have -- the more avenues are out there for people to connect to God, True Parents and Jesus' love.

I think Rev. Balcomb's goal of 500 churches by 2017 is inspiring and possible! We're just doing our small part; where we feel called. Our church will be focused on ministry, reaching new people and reaching out to Unificationists who haven't come to church in many years. We feel called to find that 1 lost sheep out there. I think each church has a unique calling and identity, style and that is ours. But to get started we need some support. Here are ways you can help. We greatly appreciate it.

Support or Donate:  
[fundly.com/odyssey-unification-church-starter-fund](http://fundly.com/odyssey-unification-church-starter-fund)

Follow our Blog:  
[odysseyuc.wordpress.com](http://odysseyuc.wordpress.com)

# THE ODYSSEY

... a chronicle of our journey.

## The Look & Feel

Posted on [July 23, 2013](#) by [jarioleena](#)



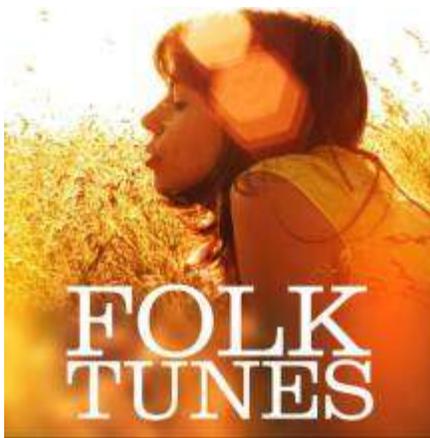
Our ideal future location is a renovated barn. We love the warmth and homeliness of the rustic wood tones. Our barn church will be a welcoming atmosphere, a home away from home. It's not the typical church you would expect but that's because we're not your typical church.



As you arrive, the front porch will be our welcome center.



The weathered wood throughout, reminds us of the odyssey of life. We're not perfect; we all have our scars and imperfections. But it's beautiful and real. We welcome you no matter what life has taken you through.



Music and the arts will be a large part of our culture at *The Odyssey*. Expressing our love for God and others is done in many ways but some of the most beautiful expressions are through the lyrics of a song or the pure movements of a dance.



Whether you're sharing about life over a hot cup of coffee or a delicious homemade pie by the Swensons, we hope to create an atmosphere where you can feel loved, embraced and welcomed. We will try to model the love of God, True Parents and Jesus through our way of life. We will strive to create a community where each member can feel free to be him or herself.





After engaging discussions, delicious homemade soups and taking turns keeping the babies entertained during meetings, we came up with the following Core Values that represent what we're about at the Odyssey Unification Church:

- **Children of God-** All people are made in the image of God, we value everyone because God's unique attributes are imbued within. We strive to take people from where they are to where God is leading them. We acknowledge that we all have room for growth and support one another as we struggle with our shortcomings. Our community will strive to create a culture that embraces all people, regardless of their background so that they can know that they are loved by God, our Heavenly Parent.
- **Word and Deed-** God's Word is revealed through the Divine Principle and we believe its application guides us all to become our best self. We uphold the teaching in every aspect of our ministry so that we might live out the word. Teachings should be applied to every aspect of our lives as we seek to make God's plan for each of us a reality. Our community will strive to study God's word throughout our life and seek to apply His teaching to the way we live our life.
- **Lost Sheep-** God is calling all his children to come home; we value sharing our faith and introducing people to the Divine Principle so that they might come home. Everyone who has been saved has a responsibility to help others find that salvation. There are not bad people just lost people and we stand as a light to bring them to the pasture. Our community will continually seek to invite people into a personal relationship with God.
- **Family Foundation-** God's original purpose for creating the world is the creation of human family where love is learned, cultivated and passed on. We encourage all people to learn healthy relationship skills and learn to love through their families. Our community promotes a healthy family environment and encourages development of loving and stable families.
- **Reviving Community-** God has called us not to be a blessing only to ourselves but to use our God given abilities to serve the world around us. Service (volunteerism, service projects) is not primarily for the sake of evangelism but for simply living out the love of God that we received. Our community will make effort to constantly impact those around us with the love and compassion of God through practical application.
- **Co-Creatorship-** We are all designed to create like our Heavenly Parent. Each one of us has something unique to share with the world. God hopes that we can share these talents to continue to build a more beautiful and meaningful world. Our community encourages continued creativity in building a culture through: music, arts, dance, writing and sports...etc.

## Why "ODYSSEY"?

Posted on [July 6, 2013](#) by [jarioleena](#)



At our first meeting together we each shared about our vision for the new Unification Church Plant. There was a common thread that seemed to keep tying them all together and that was the word "Journey". Here are some of our common threads from the discussion...

***At our church we want to:***

- Take people where they are at and take them on a journey; encourage them to become better but accept them where they're at.
- Reach new members & also reach out to members who haven't come to church in many years by creating a loving & embracing culture, living out the teachings of the Divine Principle.
- Be Missional/Service oriented- living out the scriptures and the Principle. Be a part of a church that cares about impacting lives, the community and world through serving. Not just a church helping people towards salvation but affecting positive change in the community.
- Walk through life with each other.
- Separate Witnessing & Education. Oftentimes when someone is being witnessed to that is the main time of education; we believe it should be a lifelong journey. Witnessing: inviting people and sharing about our faith. Education/Discipleship: lifelong! Discipleship is for every member. We should all be learning and growing deeper in our faith and understanding of God and the truth together throughout our lives.
- Inspire other UC communities.
- Encourage the creation of our own culture through creativity and the arts.
- Minister through music and family festivals; engaging sermon series; relationships seminars- marriage preparation and family support; and leadership excellence.

We all feel a calling on our hearts to accept people for where they are at on their journey. We want to encourage each other, be a community and walk together through the ups and downs of life and our individual faith journeys. It's not about where we've been but what we're creating and learning and where we'll go together. We want to be involved in the local community serving and impacting

lives. We believe that faith, understanding of the Bible and Divine Principle and a relationship with God is a lifelong journey. Everything seemed to lead to the word “journey.”

But it was too simple. After more pondering, the thesaurus, ideas and prayer we felt drawn to the word:

## Od·ys·sey

1. an epic poem attributed to Homer, describing Odysseus’s adventures in his ten-year attempt to return home to Ithaca after the Trojan War.

2. a long series of wanderings or adventures, especially when filled with notable experiences, hardships, etc.

And that was it! That is how we became the: **ODYSSEY Unification Church.**

## Meet the Pastors...

Posted on [July 4, 2013](#) by [jarioleena](#)



Jario and I were blessed in marriage by Rev. Moon on July 5, 2007. We just recently celebrated our six year anniversary! It’s been a wonderful journey of ups and downs and going through life together. Shortly after getting married, Jario moved from his hometown of Minnesota to be with me in the northwest suburbs of Chicago. We now have a beautiful 19 months old daughter Mirelle. After 6 years of being involved with the local Unification Church ministry as volunteers, Youth Pastors and Co-Pastors for a year and nine months, we’ve experienced and grown a lot.

One of our highlights was definitely in Youth Ministry, when a kid would come to camp just because it was the thing to do. Then during camp through the atmosphere created, the real honest reflection time, prayers, worship, applied Divine Principle talks, sports, fun, the beach, and challenging activities... they experienced God. It was the most rewarding feeling to know you could help someone experience God’s love and to be a part of a life changing moment. Even as young Unificationists who grow up in the faith, they make a choice at some point whether it’s of value to them and they choose to believe in the teachings making it their own or to walk away because it didn’t impact their life. And that’s okay. We’re all on a journey, the odyssey of life and come to find God at different times.

Now we feel called to pioneer like our parents did and try new things. We are embarking on an adventure planting a new church from scratch; *The ODYSSEY Unification Church*. We’ve felt a calling on our hearts. We’re going on faith, leaving behind our security to go where we feel called to. We want to be there for that 1 lost sheep that’s out there. A wonderful “Send Off” Sunday was held by the Chicago Church on June 30 and we would like to share our hearts of gratitude for all of the love, support and donations. Together with a few families we’ve been meeting together for the past 3 months praying and discussing together about our vision, core values and more. We plan to visit a

lot of churches in the summer and learn best practices. We also want to start by doing service projects in the town we will be located. The summer will be a time of preparation for our launch in the Fall. We hope that our efforts can inspire others to make their dreams a reality. God has implanted unique talents, passions and interests in each of our hearts; it's up to us to decide what to do with it. Photos of some highlights of the past few years that led us to this point:



We'll be sharing updates on this blog with photos and stories along the way. Here it goes!