

## FFWPU USA National Children's Ministry Director's visits to Fort Lauderdale, FL

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*Before the COVID-19 travel restrictions, Leena Vincenz-Gavin, director of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) National Children's Ministry, visited Fort Lauderdale, Florida from March 6-9 to host a weekend of Children's Ministry activities to engage young families and build connection, community and momentum. Unfortunately, Leena had to cancel her April trip to Columbus, Ohio for her own health and safety.*

On Friday March 6, I arrived in the beautiful sunny city of Fort Lauderdale, Florida with palms and flowering trees all around. I spent most of the weekend together with Pastor Joe Young, his wife Keishu and their sweet baby Alexandra. In addition to having an amazing Music Ministry and Sunday service experience, some serious renovations have been going on in the church building to offer an amazing welcoming and professional environment for their community and guests.

We focused on two of the Children's Ministry rooms where the new flooring had already been laid, popcorn ceilings torn out and new lighting installed. The rooms were ready for paint, updated kid furniture, storage, decor and a lot of love!

This visit was different from some of my [previous ones](#) where I created a proposal ahead of time and we did the makeover on the spot. Florida was a neat experience because I spent the weekend getting to know the space in person, the pastor's vision, and the community's culture. Immersing myself in the vibe of Fort Lauderdale impacted the design elements and decisions we'd make together throughout the weekend. It took us from my arrival on Friday until late Monday morning for the design plan to click and for us to finalize the proposals.

It was really neat to be able to go through this process together with Joe and Keishu and help them bring their vision to life. I felt like an interior designer in one of those HGTV shows! They had put so much heart and thought into their children's spaces, and I was able to bring it all together and help them bring clarity on the Children's room purposes, set up and design.



Before the trip, I had done research on the city of Miami, on their church community, colors, vibe and feel. Upon arrival, I realized that a lot of it was spot on, but Fort Lauderdale was the culture I should be studying. While Miami is full of bright colors and nightlife, Fort Lauderdale is more known for its boating canals and chic, muted-toned buildings.

After plenty of discussions, the first thing we gained clarity on was which room would be used for which age group. We decided one would be a Nursery and the other a Sunday School room. The nursery would be more of a quiet zone with lights that dim and a welcoming, soothing atmosphere for moms and babies especially. The Sunday School room would function as both a playroom and learning space, much like a preschool class with various centers. We also decided to use an additional learning center space as a multifunctional room for older Sunday School students.

After walking through the spaces, visiting Ikea and Hobby Lobby and a lots of discussion, we finalized the themes for each room.

At the [Family Church of South Florida Sunday service on March 8](#), I was able to give an inspirational message on the greater value of Children's Ministry and its impact on church growth. I spoke about how Children's Ministry not only serves the kids but also parents and supports creating healthy, happy families. That Sunday was the first Sunday where most joined virtually. However, I did get to meet several people and have wonderful engaging conversations.

While some of the gatherings we had planned were cancelled due to COVID-19, it was a successful visit! The community was inspired and the local vision for Children's Ministry came to life! New volunteers stood up to get involved in Sunday School and plans are underway to bring the Family Church of South Florida's Children's Ministry to the next level as a top-notch experience for local young families and new guests.