

New Members Leadership Training Experience

Yoshie Manaka
July 16, 2012

Lovin' Life Ministries' Leadership Program recently welcomed seven first-generation Unificationists to its second summer session. The Leadership Program offers internships, or "practicums," in areas such as ministry, ballroom dancing, CARP (Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles), graphic design, guest care, public affairs, etc., and seeks to raise new leaders for the Unification Church worldwide. In the preceding spring session, Timothy Jae Malabunga (22) from Pomona, New York was the first new member to attend the Leadership Program. Seven young first-generation members are following in his footsteps for the current summer session and share their experiences on the program so far.

Noah Trimble (21) from Columbus, Ohio



Noah Trimble was introduced to the Unification Church through David and Su Young and their children in Columbus Ohio during a time of personal hardship.

"I will be attending Columbus State University to study philosophy and psychology in the Fall. I work with Junction in Ohio, and I lead several youth small-groups. I joined the Unification Church in the winter of 2009.

"Growing up, I knew Unificationists David and Su Young and their children David (23) and Alex (22). As my life got worse and worse, they were very constant. They made me feel like I was a part of their family when I didn't have one. They fed me and expressed unconditional love no matter what kind of trouble I was getting into. They even let me sleep on their couch when I was sleeping in my car – that was a big thing for me. Eventually, they took me to a church workshop in Indiana, and everyone there welcomed me. I felt very loved. I knew I was in the right place.

"I decided to come to the Leadership Program, because I knew I was supposed to contribute in some way, even though I wasn't 100 percent sure how. But I knew young people in the Unificationist community need a lot of help. They need protection from gossip and judgment from within, and they also need to understand the importance of making friends outside the faith community. I want to help through giving them tools, so I came here to figure out for myself what they need.

"The Leadership Program has been very intense! In the first two weeks, I changed a lot of my views about myself and what I want to do. I'm getting closer and closer to understanding what my role is in terms of the Providence. It's been very testing – in a good way.

"It's so nice to have such a large mix of both first- and second-generation Unificationists here in the Leadership Program. When I was watching the fireworks on the Fourth of July, I was so grateful to be here. I couldn't hold back tears, because I felt so blessed. Phillip Brown, a second-generation Unificationist from Newcastle, UK, came up and put his arm around me. He said, "I just want to thank you for being here, because through you, I can feel my parents' heart when they first joined the movement." That was very gratifying to me, because while I feel so blessed, I'm happy that my blessings can inspire those around me too."

Caleb Boucher (25) from New Brunswick, Canada



Caleb Boucher, despite working on oil rigs since he was nineteen, has "never once lost faith at all."

"My spiritual father, Arnold Steever, left the church a long time ago. While I was growing up, I grew up in the Catholic

faith and questioned everything. When I asked questions, my spiritual father gave me answers that made sense. I didn't know it at the time, but those answers were from the Divine Principle. Although he left the church, his heart never left True Parents. When I was seventeen, he told me where the answers came from and about the Divine Principle and True Parents. I made some prayer- and fasting conditions and found True Parents for myself. As I got more and more into the faith, my spiritual father did too. He re-joined the church and actually was matched recently.

“My mom was an alcoholic; she made things difficult while I was growing up. Because of True Parents and the Divine Principle and my spiritual father, I learned the importance of forgiveness and love, which strengthened my faith even more. When I was seventeen, my mother found a copy of my Divine Principle in my backpack and destroyed it. She still doesn't know that I joined the Unification Church, or that I'm here on the Leadership Program.

“I graduated high school and went to university for one year, after which I bought myself a car. Between school and the car, I got into debt. I decided that before I could do anything for education or with the church, I should get rid of that debt. Since I was nineteen, I have been working on oil rigs. This whole time, I've been trying to keep my head above water, in terms of True Parents and faith and lifestyle. But I have never once lost faith at all.

“I came to the Leadership Program because I want to get more connected with the church. I've been living around these oil riggers so long that I'm becoming numb to their lifestyle. I wanted to know that there are people who believe in True Parents, and that are giving love freely.”

Rena Komine (28) Tokyo, Japan



Rena Komine (far right) aspires to take what she learns about Lovin' Life Ministries to her hometown in Japan.

“I came to North Carolina two-and-a-half years ago to study English, and I lived with my uncle and his wife – Toshio and Stephanie Nishida. I wanted to be like this family. I was able to observe how they think, how they act, how they talk to people, and was so impressed. My uncle gave me Divine Principle lectures one by one in Japanese.

“I just finished an ESL program in May, and I plan to go back to Japan at the end of August. Before I go back there, I want to build my faith more strongly, internally and externally. I spent time with cousins who had a very good experience as part of the Generation Peace Academy [formerly known as the Special Task Force] in New York. I thought this was a great opportunity to have a similar experience. I also want to learn about Lovin' Life Ministries and to find who I am and what I can do for Japan in the future.

“I'm very scared about going home because I heard from Luke Higuchi, president of Survivors Against Forced Exit (SAFE), about the kidnappings and faith-breaking going on in Japan. My family has a negative image of the Unification Church, and so did I before I came to America. Of course, I don't want to lose my faith, and for that, I need courage. But I know I want to witness through my attitude. I want to guide my family in a natural way.

“The Leadership Program is amazing! Every day something is happening, and at first it was hard to find a rhythm, but I'm having wonderful experiences and opportunities. I'm happy to meet many leaders who are making Lovin' Life a reality, and many wonderful members. I want to keep in touch with them forever as friends of faith. In North Carolina, there were no new members, but here, there are seven of us.

“I was so overwhelmed watching the fireworks on the Fourth of July, because I could really feel Senior Pastor Rev. In Jin Moon's heart. She saved the best view for us, and I heard so much about the New Yorker Hotel and how many first-generation Unificationists worked so hard to buy this hotel. It just felt so precious to be there.”

Jorge Espinosa (19) from New York, New York



New Yorker Jorge Espinosa was an active volunteer of the Care Team at the Lovin' Life Learning Center before joining the Leadership Program.

“Right now, I’m going to Berkeley College in Midtown Manhattan, and I’m also working in the Mayor’s office to combat domestic violence as a peer educator.

“One day I was walking home from Berkeley College, which is right down the street from the Lovin’ Life Learning Center. I just so happened to be spotted by Shunichi Takagi, who was inviting people to watch videos of the Divine Principle, and I was walking down 42nd St, and he asked me whether I had any interest in some of these questions he showed me. I picked one of those questions, and he asked me to watch a ten-minute video. From there, I learned about the entire Divine Principle, got super excited about the breaking news, and I decided to be a part of the Unification Movement.

“I decided to do the Lovin’ Life Leadership Program, because I go to school so close to the Learning Center, and I have been coming here all the time and volunteering. I’ve been involved in witnessing with the Care Team, and I wanted to find one clear way that I can clearly contribute to the Unification Church. I know that the Leadership Program can help me find exactly how I can find that thing that I love to do and use to contribute to the Unification Church.

“So far, it’s been great. I’m so happy that I found the Ministry Practicum, because one of my future goals is to be a minister. I’m very excited about the new educational content coming out for the Lovin’ Life communities, such as *I’ll Walk With You*, which is a guide to becoming spiritual mentors and raising new members. One of the lessons that I’ve learned since being here is that it’s “better to understand than to be understood.”

Matthew Quantz (20) from Little Rock, Arkansas



Matthew Quantz says that he was "really inspired" by the Divine Principle and strives to be a youth pastor for Lovin' Life Ministries after the Leadership Program.

“I’m a full-time student at the University of Arkansas, Little Rock. I’m majoring in health-sciences. I’m also a part-time youth minister for Lovin’ Life in Little Rock.

“Three years ago, I played soccer with Aaron and Sean Jackson from Arkansas, and I would give them rides home everyday from practice. We became great friends, and I started asking questions. They invited me home for dinner, at which I heard my first Divine Principle lecture. I just couldn’t get enough from there.

“I was really inspired – the Divine Principle tends to do that to people, and I was so excited to be around these great people. I wanted to do something. My pastor, Rev. John Jackson, told me that they needed a youth pastor, so I told him I would try.

“I decided to come to the Leadership Program for several reasons. I really wanted to participate in the Generation Peace Academy (GPA), but my financial aid would not allow me to take a year off from school. I consider the Leadership Program a substitute program. Also, professionally, I want to be a minister for Lovin’ Life Ministries, so I thought this would give me a taste of what to expect. Finally, I want to support True Family, so this is the perfect program for that. The program has been great so far. It’s packed full of content, and I’m tired all the time, but in a good way.”

Mason Tyler Hannold (19) from Tulsa, Oklahoma



Mason Tyler Hannold, who described his life previous to the Leadership Program as full of "agony," is confident that he is now "where I need to be."

“Right now, I’m living in Tulsa, OK, with my mom, my four younger sisters and aunt. I want to be an engineer. I aspire to create a business that helps small, innovative businesses, but at the same time, promote education. That’s partially why I’m here on the Leadership Program. At home, I’m going to be entering my second year at Tulsa Technical School, where I’m learning skills that will help me as I pursue higher education.

“I felt that I had a lot of agony in my life, and I had no idea why. I was involved in drugs for a little while, and while I was in that situation, I was in a lot of internal pain and got very depressed. I was very distant with my family, and didn’t feel love. I met Trueson Daugherty (22), my spiritual father, and Guinyu Ngoran, who is also on the Leadership Program, at the same time. We met at a skate park, right up the road from my house. As I was skating, I saw these two kids, and I kept looking at Trueson. Sometimes I get a vibe about people, and when I saw him, it was very strong. I felt pushed to talk to him, so I did. The first thing I did after he told me his name is ask him what he believed in. And the more he told me, the more I was interested.

“At the time, I was searching for truth. I was going to a Baptist church, a Pentecostal church and a Catholic church. I felt unfulfilled by those other faiths. But every time I heard more about the Unificationist faith, I just felt so excited, and I wondered why I’d never heard about it before.

“I felt like I needed to come to the Leadership Program, and after I spoke to two people, it suddenly was a reality – only two days before the program was scheduled to start. The Leadership Program has been amazing. It’s been an intense few days, and I miss my family a lot. I have never been away from them for this long, ever. But we all feel like this is where I need to be. We’re all here to grow and to become better people, and I can see so much growth in myself already.”

Song-A Shin (24) from Busan, Korea



Song-A Shin joined the Leadership Program at the recommendation of Moon Shik Kim, who had also taught her the Divine Principle.

“I’ve been in America for one year and one month. I came to America to study English and go to college here. In August, I plan to enter community college at Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC). I hope to study international business.

“I was going to English school, and I had to find an apartment. But before I found an apartment, I stayed at a dormitory at the New Yorker Hotel for three weeks.

“One Sunday, I was on my way to a Christian Korean church. As I got on the elevator, somebody asked me to stop. It was Beryl Green. She noticed that I was Korean and told me that she wanted to learn Korean and suggested that we should practice together sometimes. She didn’t mention anything about the church. It was nice that she spoke to me, because I was new in the country and didn’t know anybody.

“We met a couple of times, and then she asked me if I was interested in dancing. She asked me to help her with something, and that day, she brought me to the Lovin’ Life Learning Center. I met a few people like Andrew Love and Jorge Espinosa and Jaga Gavin, and I thought this place was interesting, but I still didn’t know about the church. I kept coming here, and I got to know people little by little. Then I was introduced to Moon Shik Kim, who taught me the Divine

Principle a couple times a week.

“I finished studying the Divine Principle and my English program. I don’t start school until September, so I had some free time. Mr. Kim suggested that I join the Leadership Program to learn more, and not waste time. I knew a couple of people who had done the program before, so I had an idea about it.

“My English is not so good, so it’s difficult to understand the lectures, and at times it’s been challenging. But many people are helping me. What I really want to do is witness, which I get a chance to do here. The Leadership Program is fantastic, and I love it!”