

How Boston Lovin' Life Breaks Barriers with Team Building

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Rev. James Edgerly and his wife, Kinuyo.

Exceptional teamwork and strategic fundraising of the Lovin' Life Ministries team in Massachusetts has so far raised \$20,300 out of a projected \$24,000 needed to elevate sound and stage components of Sunday service in the Boston church. The News Team asked Pastor Dmitry Vilchitsky, Boston Lovin' Life leader, and Rev. James Edgerly, Massachusetts State Pastor, to explain the team building, delegation of responsibilities and systematic planning that took place and to share lessons learned.

A key aspect of Lovin' Life Ministries is for local leaders to galvanize community involvement, according to Rev. Vilchitsky, who chose to respond to that aspect by implementing a web application called Animoto that uses photos to create eye-catching video slideshows.

Rev. Vilchitsky said, "We have a flat-screen TV near the entrance of our church, and before service, we use it to feature videos through which we can share current events. In the beginning, people were impressed by the visual richness of Animoto and it definitely helped to elevate the spirit in our church."

Such an initiative sparked further creativity and a desire to invest more into Sunday service.



Pastor Dmitry Vilchitsky presented during National LLM Leaders' Meeting an eye-catching video that galvanized his Boston community around a fundraising drive needed for church renovations.

Community Survey Leads to Chapel Upgrade

"Los Angeles Pastor George Kazakos pioneered the movie-theater church in our movement, and now we want to do the same for our chapel in Boston – we want to give it the feel of a theater," said Rev. Vilchitsky. "We did a survey last fall, asking for feedback on our Sunday service, and as a response to our community's requests we decided on things such as buying a stage and making the chapel less dark and more welcoming. I wanted to make the chapel look like Manhattan Center as much as possible so that people could be impressed and young people could be inspired. Using ideas from our members, I assembled a proposal for a chapel upgrade and scheduled a meeting with our community representatives.

"We have a finance and development committee for our churches in Massachusetts consisting of representatives from each of our three church communities: the Boston, Gloucester and Worcester. The chairman of the finance committee, Mike Myers, along with District Director Rev. Buessing and the members from all three communities gave 100 percent of their support because every month, we host a district Sunday service in the Boston church to which we welcome members from Worcester and Gloucester, drawing close to 300 people."

According to Rev. Edgerly, the finance and development committee in Massachusetts has a “very conservative approach to financial management.” The Committee meets about once per month on Wednesday evenings to discuss the church’s operating budget, approve all major expenditures and consider ways of increasing church income.



The Massachusetts State Leadership Team meeting on Tuesday nights for food, fellowship and decision making.

Setting Visible Goals Mobilizes Support

Rev. Vilchitsky’s proposal for the sanctuary upgrade passed through a two-stage approval process. In January of 2012, he brought his proposal before the Massachusetts State Leadership Team (SLT), which meets twice a month in Rev. Edgerly’s home. The SLT is composed of individuals representing each of the three Lovin’ Life communities in Massachusetts and two key ministries – Youth Ministry and the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC). According to Rev. Edgerly, “having met regularly since 2006, the SLT is well trained to work quickly and say ‘yes’ to church growth oriented proposals whenever possible.”

“I created a Powerpoint presentation to explain the church-upgrade project to our team, showing them what kind of equipment we needed to buy, how we will go about raising money, but most importantly, highlighting the vision of Lovin’ Life,” said Rev. Vilchitsky. “People may question why we need to spend so much money on music equipment, but I stressed that Lovin’ Life is a music ministry. It is built on worship music and the inspiration that comes out of it.”

After receiving approval from the SLT, Rev. Vilchitsky then presented a more detailed proposal to the finance and development committee, which also embraced his ideas, yet expressed doubt that the state could generate the required \$24,000.

“The financing seemed unlikely for two reasons,” said Rev. Edgerly. “Firstly, the SLT and finance committee just recently initiated Phase One of the long overdue renovation of the 46,000 square-foot State Headquarters on 46 Beacon Street. The cost of the Phase One renovation will be at least \$350,000. Secondly, in the interest of fairness and parity, it is important that an inordinate portion of the budget not be spent in one community of the state’s three church communities.”

However, Rev Edgerly broke the impasse by stating that “We used to raise \$70,000 or \$80,000 in a few weeks when True Parents’ speaking tours came to Boston. The key is not to burden the state budget with the entire amount, which is certainly out of the question, but to expect that the community that would benefit the most – Boston – should contribute the most.”

Good Governance Model

A simple financing plan was agreed to: \$8,000 would be raised from “Generous Donors” who would donate \$500 or more, \$8,000 would be raised from “Donors” who would donate \$100 per family or \$50 per student, and \$8,000 would come from the state budget.” The Committee then created a list of potential “Generous Donors” and decided who would call each person on the list.

After Sunday service on February 19, 2012 Rev. Vilchitsky kicked off the chapel-upgrade fundraiser with a presentation of his Animoto video about the project in front of the church congregation. Rev. Buessing then explained Rev. In Jin Moon’s goal of investing in young people and why this upgrade would be a logical step towards that goal. Tommy Noda, a second-generation Unificationist, who was at that time the Boston Lovin’ Life band leader, followed up with an explanation about how the chapel upgrade would help the band’s performance and move more people.

“I think that message came across especially to the first-generation – they see our music ministry as having a providential role and understood why we were investing into it,” said Rev. Vilchitsky. “We need to share the vision of Lovin’ Life often; it’s not enough to tell it one or two times. Every person has a

moment when he or she realizes what the vision of Lovin' Life really means, and therefore we shouldn't hesitate to repeat what it's about.

“That Sunday, we handed everyone an envelope in which to place their donation, and I symbolically made the first donation of \$100. We explained that there were three kinds of donations, and we made sure to let the members know the donation wasn't mandatory and that it didn't replace one's tithe. It was simply something extra given to invest into the community. Many people donated at the kick-off and whenever we remind our congregation about the fundraiser, members continue to give. We always put the last names of the people who had donated in our local video announcements, which I think motivates people to give as well.”



The American Symphony of Soul from Tufts University were one of five bands to perform at the Coffee House.

Rallying the Community

According to Rev. Vilchitsky, one goal for this project was to improve the chapel, but another was to bring the community closer together. “I felt that by undertaking this fundraiser, people would volunteer more, take initiative more, and feel that this is their ministry. I didn't know what to expect, and I was so surprised when two young sisters, Eiko Tsukamoto and Youngshim Gontijo, came up to me with the idea of an Open-Mic fundraiser. Eiko shared that she was inspired by the vision behind the project and said how some people even had tears in their eyes when they were watching the Animoto video.

“The young people took over all the organization for the Open Mic. They contacted whoever needed to be contacted, organized the food, and coordinated the bands. Eiko and Youngshim joined forces with Hyun Moraes, a member of the Boston Lovin' Life band, and Sophie Maes, a Boston young-adults leader, but they also involved me and consulted with me as the Lovin' Life pastor. I was so moved. I helped transport band equipment and band members, but other than that, I didn't do much. I was inspired that our second-generation took ownership of the Open Mic. The entire event was so fun for me.”