

FFWPU USA: Chicago Family Church's Lasting Love Blessing Anniversary Celebration

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Photos courtesy of Chicago Family Church

Unificationists in Chicago have been celebrating new developments and milestones in their community. Leaders organized the "Lasting Love" Blessing Anniversary Celebration on Oct. 15 to honor the many couples who participated in the 1982 Marriage Blessing.

"We had 80 blessed family members join and celebrate their anniversary," said Rev. Kazuo Takami, FFWPU USA Midwest director, in an Oct. 25 report to national leaders. "We enjoyed many beautiful testimonies from different couples and had a live music performance."



The Chicago Family Church was decorated by local youth who volunteered to create a one-of-a-kind, intimate setting with elegant floral arrangements, balloons, dinner seating, and a display table of Blessing

photos of the 1982 couples. The spouses enjoyed the warm and inviting atmosphere as their families celebrated the 40-year anniversary together with them.

"It was a beautiful, fun moment to see all of the couples' photos," said Rev. Takami. "Some people didn't change much, but some people greatly changed."

Each couple was also given an engraved crystal award to commemorate their anniversary, but Rev. Takami said the most touching moment was still to come. "The highlight of the program was the couples standing together, facing each other, as they expressed their gratitude to their spouse," he said. "That unexpectedly brought me to tears."



The following day, on Oct. 16, a new Chicago Korean Ministry was launched during Sunday service. Local leaders aim to revive the Korean community and generate more active involvement, said Rev. Takami. The ministry will be led by former assistant pastor of Sun Moon University, Rev. Dong Hun Lee and his wife, Jung Im Oh.

"[Rev. Lee] has been in ministry for more than 10 years, so we are very grateful to have him," said Rev. Takami, who mentioned that Chicago previously had a thriving Korean community in the 1980s and 90s.

A new Midwest family ministry coordinator, Ivan Lozano, was also recently appointed to develop a young family ministry program. "We have no solid program [in our region] for young couples and their children," said Rev. Takami, "so we want to build up this area of our ministry."

Lozano, who felt inspired to be more involved and give back to his community after regularly participating in the Morning Devotion and Achieve programs, was seeking a meaningful way to contribute. "The BFM team approached him," said Rev. Takami, "and he thought, 'this is God's voice.'"

The Chicago community has seen [an uptick](#) in member participation this year as the church building undergoes renovation to expand its classrooms, offices, and create a space for young mothers. The construction project, led by Rev. Takami, has had community members across generations come together to help. "The engagement has been really fantastic," said local leader Rev. David Rendel back in September. "We have a goal of becoming a model church in America, and we're moving forward very quickly with that."

Midwest

New Sunday School Program Amid Renovation Unites Chicago Community



Photos courtesy of the Chicago Family Church

A new Sunday school program, amid renovations to the Chicago Family Church building, recently began for all Unificationist youth from first grade through high school. “We’ve aimed to improve our building to meet, in particular, the needs of our young families and children,” said Rev. David Rendel in a report to FFWPU USA leaders on Sept. 13. “We have a goal of becoming a model church in America, and we’re moving forward very quickly with that.”

Rev. Rendel outlined phases of the renovation project, which is being led by Rev. Kazuo Takami, FFWPU USA Midwest regional director. He said the construction work has brought the community together, with many young people now more involved and invested. “The result has been fantastic,” said Rev. Rendel, describing a cross-generational crew of volunteers separated into two teams. “We’ve been doing a lot of demolition, expanding rooms and making new classrooms by taking down walls to extend offices,” he said.

Four years ago, in Sept. 2018, the Chicago community acquired a modern 20,000 square-foot building in Schaumburg as their [new church facility](#) after an extensive search. The building, which is located 30 miles northwest of Chicago, is in the heart of where

many Unificationists live. Rev. Rendel said the renovation project spurred a community-wide prayer condition for its success. “One of our prayer points is that we can all contribute to God’s providence in a special way during this time,” he said.

Community support quickly ballooned, as crews got to work remodeling Sunday school classrooms and establishing a designated ‘toddler zone.’ “So many of the young moms in our community are engaged now,” said Rev. Rendel. “Six or seven of them with young kids are coming out to get involved, and it’s amazing ... One of them is an interior designer, so the moms are coming up with their own design for the toddler room.”



Rev. Rendel said they anticipate moving into the new space by the end of October. For now, with Sunday school underway, the focus has been on the spiritual development and connection of the youth. “The elementary teachers’ meeting [earlier this month] was full of our high school kids who wanted to become Sunday school teachers,” he said. “The engagement has been really fantastic.”

The new Sunday school program now features four core staff, and 24 teachers and assistants – 18 of which are young Unificationists, and six are community elders. “This is a big step for us in Chicago,” said Rev. Rendel. “We have never been quite this organized with our Sunday school program. I think we’re off to a really great start, and we’re eager to keep going.”

Unificationist leaders were inspired by the steady progress in Chicago. “It’s really great to see not just the renovation, but how Chicago is really engaging the community members to really be part of making that a reality and naturally bringing the community closer

together,” said Rev. Naokimi Ushiroda, FFWPU USA president. “This gives them a sense of pride and ownership—and a great foundation for the growth and development of their church.”

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