

## Interview of Rev. Ricardo de Sena - Latin American Ministry

Krista Moon  
July 10, 2013



*Rev. Ricardo de Sena (second row, center) with his wife and two sons and daughter*

With his official appointment in April 2013, Rev. Ricardo de Sena has pursued his vision for a ministry in which Latin -American Unificationists can experience a deep spiritual life in their native-Spanish language. There are two official Latin-American Ministry Church plants – in New York City and Miami Florida, with two more up-and-coming church plants on the way.

In November 2012, Rev. de Sena spoke with Dr. Michael Balcomb, President of FFWPU about creating a national Spanish-speaking ministry. In December 2012, Rev. de Sena began working and preparing for planting the first church. He told Unification News, “In April 2013, I officially became the National Director of Latino Ministry Development. We are not the ‘Hispanic ministry’ because the term ‘Hispanics’ is limited to those who only speak Spanish. If we used that name, we would have, for example, excluded the Brazilians, who speak Portuguese. ‘Latino’ is more inclusive and is widely used in academia, politics, economics, etc.”



*The Latin American Ministry planted its first church at 4 West 43rd Street in Manhattan, New York on January 1, 2013.*

The “*Ministerio Latin Americano*” or Latin American Ministry began on January 1, 2013. The first Sunday service was held on January 6, 2013 at 4 West 43rd Street in New York City.

“In order for a church to be planted, it has to meet the following requirements: 1) to have a pastor 2) at least three members or families committed to that church plant; 3) a mission statement; 4) a Divine Principle teaching schedule and 5) at least once a month Sunday service,” said Rev. Ricardo de Sena, the National Director of Latino Ministry Development, to Unification News in an interview.

“We discussed with Rev. Andrew Compton, the district pastor of New York, about a church plant in Manhattan, and we found Jose Raphael Sanchez, who was willing to be a pastor and have three families who are committed,” said Rev. de Sena. At the Latin American Ministry Manhattan church at 4 West 43rd street, originally we were planning to have Sunday service only once a month. But the brothers and

sisters themselves said, “Why just once a month? Let’s try every Sunday.”



*Pastor Jose Rafael Sanchez is the pastor of the Latin American Ministry Manhattan church.*

“I said to them, ‘Well, we don’t have a fulltime pastor, because there is no budget. But what we do have is someone who is working full-time that is willing to be a part-time pastor,’” according to Rev. de Sena.

However, the members of the Latin American Ministry Manhattan church were determined to have a weekly Sunday Service, and there has been a service every Sunday since January till now. There is an average of 45 to 50 participants every week.

Every Saturday there are Divine Principle lectures at the Manhattan church for guests, which cover the Introduction to the Divine Principle, the Principle of Creation and the Fall of Man. On average seven to ten guests participate in the lectures.

Within the last six months, two new people joined and became members of the Family Federation for Word Peace and Unification (FFWPU) at the Manhattan Latin American church. The two new members were eager to sign a form to officially join the church. At the moment, the Latin American Ministry is developing a membership form and translating and adapting the new membership Journey Curriculum into Spanish (English copies are available for purchase here: [leadwithimpact.org/shop/](http://leadwithimpact.org/shop/)).

The Latin American Ministry in the New York Metro area has three small groups. One group meets at 43rd street, another meets in Jackson Heights, Queens, and the other one meets in Jamaica, Queens, New York.



*Rev. Ricardo de Sena (front row, center) worked together with Rev. Gary Chidester (second row, center), Pastors Richard and Mari Curry, pastors of Miami church, and newly appointed pastor, Carlos Chavez, to plant a Latin American Ministry’s second church plant in Miami, Florida. Front row, from left: Pastor Carlos Chavez, Jorge Chamizo, Rev. Ricardo de Sena, Calos Soto, Ritsuko Soto; Back row, from left: Pastor Mari Curry, Pastor Richard Curry, Rev. Gary Chidester, Sangbo Kim and Felisberto.*

On Friday June 21, 2013, Rev. de Sena had a foundation meeting in Miami together with Rev. Gary Chidester, the district pastor of the Southern States region, and second-generation Pastors Richard and Mari Curry, the pastors of Miami, to plan the formation of the second Latin American Ministry Spanish-speaking church plant in the United States. “Rev. Chidester, Pastors Curry and I met, prayed and planted the church plant to make it official,” said Rev. de Sena. “The pastor of the second Spanish-speaking church in Miami is Carlos Chavez. The Latin American Ministry Miami church has a ministry team, at least three committed families, a book-keeper, a mission statement, a weekly Divine Principle Saturday lecture schedule, and they will have their first Sunday Service July 28, 2013.”



*On June 22, 2013, the Latin American Ministry Miami Church held its first Spanish-speaking Divine Principle Seminar given by Rev. Ricardo de Sena (seated, third from left), the National Director of Latino Ministry Development.*

The Latin American Ministry has two “church-plant-to-be” locations—church plants that are not officially planted because position of an official pastor is empty—in the United States. One is located in Fairfax, Virginia. There are six families who have gotten together since May and have held Saturday Divine Principle lectures and decided to have a Sunday service the last Sunday of each month. Though it is not an official church planting, it is supported by the Virginia state pastor. The other “church-plant-to-be” is located in Bridgeport, Connecticut and there will be a Sunday. Also, in Bridgeport, Connecticut, on the first three Sundays at 12:30 p.m. there will be a Divine Principle lecture, and on the last Sunday of each month the congregation will hold a regular worship service.



*The Latin American Ministry planted a new church on June 21, 2013 in Miami, Florida.*

In the United States, there are more than 100 Spanish-speaking members in the Latin American Ministry according to Rev. de Sena’s mailing list. The Latin American Ministry will be similar to the Korean Evangelical Association, in that it will become a separate entity with its own separate service and pastors.



*Guests and members break up into discussion groups during the weekly Saturday Divine Principle lectures.*

“The reason LAM started was the need for an environment where members can have a deep experience in their spiritual life and growth, whether it is through Sunday Services, Divine Principle lectures, or marriage counseling,” said Rev. de Sena. During Lovin’ Life Ministry there were simultaneous translations of the Sunday Services. But when everyone went back to local churches, it became a

challenge for the Latin-Americans.

“There were some challenges, such as the feeling of being divided from the Unification Movement. We understood it as a reality that there is going to be two different communities and worship services.



*At a Latin American Ministry church member's home in Rego Park, Queens, New York, members' practice teaching the Divine Principle.*

“In terms of witnessing, because the Spanish-speaking members' English is limited, most of their contacts are also only Latin Americans. Since there are only English programs and English-language materials it limits their participation in church activities. The Latin American Ministry members are unfortunately not actively going out to the field to bring guests. Rather, in terms of our outreach activity, we are reaching out to our contacts and inviting them as guests to our small groups, to Sunday Service and to the Divine Principle lectures. The same thing is happening in Miami, Fairfax and Bridgeport.”

He added: “When you look at the Catholics, Protestants, Methodists, Mormons, Baptists, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc., they all have a ministry in Spanish. According to the last United States Census 2012, there are 53 million Spanish-speaking people in the United States -- the largest and fastest-growing ethnic or race minority. It is projected that in the middle of the century, people of Hispanic origin will be the majority.”



*Latin American members meet for small group meetings at other member's homes.*

However, even though the Latin American Church will primarily be separate, Rev. de Sena envisions for there to be integration with the American church. “My proposal is to have service projects in which all Unificationists and guests speaking any language—English, Spanish, Korean, Japanese, etc.—can come together and serve the community, for example, every other month. Also, we could host local cultural events like music or sports festivals for peace.” In addition, he said that the Latin American Ministry would also like to serve as a support for English-speaking members who have Spanish-speaking contacts who want to learn more about the Divine Principle and the Unification movement.

It would be best to have a separate Spanish-speaking ministry—in terms of worship, divine principle education and marriage counseling, ultimately spiritual growth, which is the purpose of our FFWPU organization—to facilitate the spiritual growth of sons and daughter of God.

“We are all extremely grateful to God, True Parents, Archbishop Kim, Dr. Balcomb for allowing us to have the Latin American Ministry and to conduct Divine Principle education and Sunday Services in Spanish.”