

Alexei Saveliev President of the Unification Church in Russia visits Lovin' Life during New York Visit

Edited by Yoshie Manaka
May 16, 2012

The following is a testimony from Alexei Saveliev of Moscow, President of the Unification Church in Russia since 2008, about his visit to the United States and Lovin' Life Ministries.



From left to right: Rev. Joshua Cotter, Alexei Saveliev, Rev. Hirofumi Sakamoto, David Eaton and Luke Higuchi at the post-production meeting at Headquarters.

Originally, I'm from Yekaterinburg in the Ural part of Russia. After I finished high school, I went to Moscow to study at the Moscow State University of Geodesy and Cartography where I majored in ecology.

In January, 1993, I met the Unification Church. My best friend participated in a workshop in Crimea [in Ukraine]. He liked the workshop. He wanted to see his group leader and took me with him. In this way, I met my spiritual mother [Kitty Wojcik]. I was 23-years-old and was just about to graduate from university and decide the future of my life.

I graduated in February, 1994. I thought deeply about whether I should continue my scientific career. After a long consideration, I decided not only to join the Unification Church but also to dedicate myself 100 percent to it, because I felt that this was God's calling. Since that time, I've been following this path.

My wife's name is Olga; she's from Arkhangelsk, in the northern part of Russia. We were Blessed on August 25, 1995 at the first Blessing in which many Russian members participated. We had a very big ceremony near Moscow. We now have three children: Igor, who is almost 12, Sasha Alexandra, 10, and Marsha Maria, 6.

Breaking Barriers in Russia

For quite a long time, missionaries took on major responsibilities for the Russian Movement. Now that all the missionaries are basically gone, native Russian members are shouldering these responsibilities.

Since 2008, there have been a lot of changes. Before, the country was split up into different regions, and different missionaries were in charge of the separate regions. They were all kind of independent, but since 2008, Russia has become kind of one body. Russian is very huge, and this is a big step forward.

We've broken down barriers, and now everybody feels like we're one big family with one goal: to restore our nation. We opened our national office at the beginning of 2009 and have been working as one team since then. We still keep the regional system: We have six regions plus two major cities, but they are all guided by native Blessed Couples who are leaders. I'm directing the headquarters team, and we are working very closely with each regional team.

Basically, since 1990, our continental leader was Dr. Joon Ho Seuk, who was a very close disciple of True Parents. He laid a very strong foundation, and all members felt close to True Parents because of it. This was a very important root laid by missionaries. We value it so much. But now our responsibility is to develop this foundation.

Because we are Russian, we are not strangers in our country and we can do anything. This is our biggest task now; to use this foundation to prosper through God's words for True Parents.

“Blessed Families Are Our Treasure”

I feel that it's very important for a leader not only to deal with administrative organization, which is important of course, but also to be close to members as a mediator. That's why I preach as much as possible, two or three times a month.

Also, we started a new tradition of having an internet service each Wednesday. It's online throughout Russia, and I lead it each week at 8:30 p.m. I give internal guidance, and members can listen or chat directly.

In Russia, we now have more than 300 Blessed families. They are scattered throughout all of Russia: from Kaliningrad, which is the most western city of Russia, to the island of Sakhalin, which is close to Japan. Sometimes there are only one or two families in one city, but in cities such as Moscow, there are 100 families. Blessed families are our treasure, and we are trying to raise our Blessed families and make many more in Russia. We have about 560 Blessed Children, and almost every week there is a new one. The oldest Blessed Child is 14- years-old.

Originally, our worship style was more traditional and not so fluid. Since our International President Hyung Jin Nim was appointed, we started to discover different ways of worshiping. We started to inherit different ways of singing church songs, moving from a long sermon to a shorter sermon and doing meditation. We are experimenting with different aspects of Sunday service. Each pastor is free to incorporate ideas and these are accessible to all Blessed families.

Learning from Lovin' Life Ministries

We're focusing a lot on Sunday school, because we believe that's very important. That was why I was interested in coming to Lovin' Life – to learn from what's already in place here, to see what's unique and what we can use for the sake of Russian development. Each country is unique, but we can inherit the best things and still keep our own way.

I was just in Alaska for a couple of weeks. It's my favorite place to go to. If you are in a leadership position, it's important to be humble in order to be open before God. Leaders have a tendency to become arrogant and controlling. This is why if I have any chance to put myself out of all external reality and be an object in front of God, I take it. For me, Alaska is the best place to do that, so I decided to visit the state as well as visit Lovin' Life.

It was a very good combination. I took something for myself individually and for my brothers and sisters in terms of developing our church. I'm very impressed by In Jin Nim because I understand that taking ownership and making decisions is very difficult. It takes honesty, passion, and very strong ideals. I can tell In Jin Nim really wants to make True Parents happy and resurrect America. I'm impressed that she is so brave and that she's giving so much ownership to native brothers and sisters. This is a starting point of a very successful providence – not being afraid and feeling out the way to make the church successful.

It's so important that she's focusing on young people and raising Blessed families. There is such a good team working at Headquarters in New York City. Teamwork is important in this dynamic age of technology. We need to cultivate all aspects of our lives: internal and external.

My vision is the same as that of Lovin' Life: to make Sunday service the center where God and His children can worship together. At the same time, I agree that we have to focus on God's words, so Russia is very focused on the *Hoon Dok* tradition. Each family should be its own small church. I really believe the family is a school of love and peace.

We hope in the future that our second-generation will become owners of God's providence. We are also trying to focus on CARP [Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles] and changing the tradition of Russian college students, which is a great challenge. Our UPF [Universal Peace Federation] team is also working very hard. We're trying to combine the spiritual with the practical. We have a lot to do and learn.

We are a young organization. That's why I'm very grateful that we have such a good example in Lovin' Life, which tries to cover all aspects of True Parents vision with professionalism and good teamwork. This is a very good model to follow.

Father often speaks about Russian-American Blessed Couples. That's why I was very inspired about coming. I'm sure that by 2013, we will have several Russian-American couples. Through them, we can set up a condition for the relationship between Russia and the United States to become clearer and more dynamic politically, economically and culturally.

This is just the beginning of our cooperation with Lovin' Life.