

Iparraguirre, Sensini, De Sena, Moraes, Morales and Sanchez Families Expand Hispanic Ministry in the Unification Church USA

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The Hispanic Ministry meeting in June 2012 addressed the need for national support for local initiatives.

The fruits of a national effort to create a “Hispanic Ministry” for the Unification Church in the United States are becoming evident. The purpose of such a ministry, which was initiated on June 1, 2012 by the Iparraguirre, Sensini, De Sena, Moraes, Morales and Sanchez families from New York and New Jersey, is to provide a national resource center for the various Spanish-speaking Unificationist communities across the nation.

The mission of the Hispanic Ministry states: “To bring the Breaking News of True Parents to 50 million Spanish-speaking Americans; to Bless those families at Foundation Day; to improve lives by empowering families with knowledge of the Divine Principle and activities that celebrate life as an expression of faith (such as soccer, music, dance and spiritual revivals); and to unite as a focused ministry and leave behind divisions, inside and outside the church, due to nationality, historical enmity and political boundaries.”

Since its founding, the ministry has initiated a translation service for nationally-broadcast Sunday Services via conference call as well as for educational materials produced by Unification Church Headquarters in New York City. Each community participating in the Hispanic Ministry is led by a family that feels called to this vocation of coordinating ongoing educational- and social activities. A member of each of these families connects the congregation to the heart of True Parents through Sunday Service and by participating in weekly Skype calls with other Hispanic church leaders.

The ministry underwent a jump-start on June 23, 2012 when approximately 50 families gathered in the New Jersey Clifton Church to report on effective models that were implemented and to discuss the future of the ministry. Local residents who function as representatives from Brazil, Peru, Argentina, Mexico, Ecuador and other Latin American countries were present at the meeting.



Aldo Sensini, Lourdes Swarts and Doris Shirato share a laugh before an Amando La Vida meeting.

“In this age of Tribal Messiahship, the focus of the church organization is to support families to accomplish their mission,” said Pablo Iparraguirre, one of the founders of the ministry. “Various issues

were discussed, such as the fact that holding a service in Spanish is preferable to translating the service yet doing so would actually serve the first-generation immigrants to this country, since most of their children speak English. The needs of Spanish speaking families are varied and diverse since they share a common language but often come from very different cultures. Music and food are universally inspiring elements of any gathering and everyone agreed those should be done well.”

Since the meeting, several initiatives have begun throughout the Spanish-speaking communities in Elizabeth and Clifton, New Jersey. The Hispanic Ministry began holding Sunday Service at the Clifton Church at 4:00 p.m., which received favorable feedback, and plans to do so once a month. In addition, a social gathering in the Clifton church with dinner, music and festivities was scheduled for the third Friday evening of each month. Because many Hispanic members are Blessed in marriage to spouses from different nationalities, such as Filipino and Japanese, the socials attract a culturally diverse attendance. Furthermore, District 3 (New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware) recently hosted an instructive speaking tour that featured Jhon and Marina Acevedo, a Unificationist couple that has created a successful outreach ministry focused on Hispanic people in Chicago.

“It is so great to see our families come together in fellowship,” said Jana Iparraguirre, a young adult activist in the Clifton-based church. “At a Hispanic get together, there will always be great food, music and lots of love. When helping create this ministry, we all knew that focusing on families was how we would reach the larger Hispanic community.”

"I have been able to give out the Spanish version of True Father's autobiography and the Divine Principle to many in Dover, NJ, including a Pentecostal pastor!" said New Jersey resident Olga Tobin. "I am hoping that we can create more witnessing activities in Dover with the support of this Hispanic Ministry!"



Elenice Sensini introduces herself at the first Hispanic Ministry meeting in June of 2012.

Unificationists for a World of Peace

In a separate but related networking effort, Spanish-speaking families are transcending geographical boundaries and banding together online through a Facebook group called Unificationistas por un Mundo (UMP), or “Unificationists for a World of Peace.” There, they connect with brothers and sisters of faith from around the world in order to study the words of the late Rev. Sun Myung Moon and study texts such as the Divine Principle, Cheon Seong Gyeong, and Rev. Moon’s autobiography.

UMP was founded by New Jersey residents Ricardo and Niede De Sena out of an inspiration to bring together Latino Unificationists after the sudden passing of Rev. Moon and to create a loving atmosphere that encouraged respectful dialogue and study of scripture. Ricardo De Sena graduated from the Unification Theological Seminary with a Master’s of Religious Education and a Master’s of Divinity degree and is attending the Doctor-of -Ministry Program.

As De Sena explains, “The last few months have been full of accusations and attacks within our church, and we needed to do something to change this atmosphere. Therefore, I thought of creating UMP, the name of which was inspired by the following quote from True Father’s autobiography: ‘I have lived my life with just one thought: I wanted to bring about a world of peace, a world where there are no wars and where all humankind lives in love.’ Then, I chose September 21st, which is the International Day of Peace, to launch UMP on Facebook.”

Since the date of its launch, the UMP group has grown to include more than 1,500 Spanish-speaking Unificationists from across the United States and Latin America. “I didn’t expect that we would have such success so quickly,” said De Sena.

According to De Sena, the purpose of the group is to “Give joy to God and True Parents by becoming their true objects of love, the true agents of change to transform this fallen world into the ideal world of peace, love and happiness.” Words from Rev. Moon’s prayers, celebratory announcements of brothers’

and sisters' birthdays, personal testimonies and passages from the Divine Principle, the Cheon Seong Geong and Rev. Moon's autobiography are uploaded onto the Facebook page daily.

“We are now organizing online Divine Principle Study Groups, OSDP Workshops, Marriage- and Family Enrichment Presentations and Leadership Development Trainings,” said De Sena. “The idea is to empower each brother and sister, couple and family to become substantial contributors to the development of each local church and to have a heavenly impact in the community.”

Frankie Sanchez of Ohio describes his experience with UMP as “kingdom building” and says that through UMP, he receives inspiration from Spanish-speaking brothers and sisters around the world and that their families' stories of struggle, faith and success uplift his own family.

Helena Moreno from Illinois said, “UMP can be represented as ‘Lotus Flower,’ because it was born in the middle of the pain, despair and confusion that our members were suffering. Just like the beautiful lotus flower, the love from our Heavenly Father and True Parents moved the hearts of brothers and sisters from all Latin America to create UMP.”

Ricardo Gómez from Argentina wrote, “UMP came to us at the right time. The church was going through its worst time. The sudden departure of our beloved True Father left us with a void in the soul difficult to measure. Amid a climate so dark, this truly inspiring idea appeared. It is a place to centralize our desire to be better people centered on True Parents. In UMP, we focus on our unconditional love for True Parents and our full support for True Mother at this crucial time in preparation for Foundation Day.”



According to Unificationist Gerardo Alcaraz, a Divine Principle workshop was held on November 10-11 in his hometown of Tucumán, Argentina because of the inspiration received through UMP.

In the past, Latin-American church communities were either limited by geography or in some cases, as in the United States, members felt isolated by language and culture, De Sena says. UMP addresses these issues by facilitating the emergence of a virtual community of Spanish and Portuguese-speaking members.

“When I think back on my work serving several Latin-American countries and more recently in the Universal Peace Federation Office of UN Relations, I can see that the time was right to have a program that serves members and transcends national boundaries like UMP,” said De Sena, who had served as a national leader in Argentina, Uruguay and Venezuela. “My wife and I have three children – Ricky, who was born in Uruguay, Simon, who was born in Venezuela, and Maria, who was born in Argentina. One of the reasons we are inspired to serve and empower the Latino Unificationist communities is precisely because my wife, my children and I were all born in South America. I thank God, True Parents, my family and each brother and sister for the birth of UMP, in which we all come together with a single purpose in our hearts: give joy to God and True Parents!”

“With the inspiration received from UMP, we held a Divine Principle workshop on November 10-11 in my hometown of Tucumán, Argentina,” said Unificationist Gerardo Alcaraz. “Four of the attendees who clearly understood who Father is regretted not having found his words before and asked for more in-depth lectures! Despite the fact that we didn't have a physical location for the workshop and that we had no financial support from Headquarters, we were able to commit to the workshop by using the energy we received from several countries through UMP, from reading Father's words! Thank you to all who are part of Unificationists for World Peace!”