

District-eight pastors gathered in Des Moines, Iowa for our annual pastor's retreat

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(District 8 covers Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota.)

District 8 pastors gathered in Des Moines, Iowa for our annual pastors' retreat from October 15-16. The retreat began at 1:00 p.m. with everyone meeting at the Des Moines Family Church.

It was so nice to see everyone together again after one year. We felt so much support from the simple act of coming together to meet and share our stories.

The theme of the retreat was "Connect, Share, and Support," and our purpose was to draft goals for District 8's contributions to Vision 2020 in America. We also discussed who to appoint as the strategic directors of the District 8 Blessing and Family Ministry, Evangelism Ministry, and Youth Ministry, who will act as liaisons between District 8 and the National Ministry Team.



I opened the retreat with welcoming remarks, sharing the Vision 2020 USA goals and the purpose of our retreat.

Alan Jessen, our National Council representative, presented the results of the recent nationwide survey sent out by the National Council. We could see from the survey results that there is work to be done to build better relationships between first- second-generation Unificationists and how a relatively small percentage of older Unificationists are the ones supporting our local churches financially.

A presentation by Bjorn Ottosson, our St. Louis Family Church pastor, took a realistic look at Tribal Messiahship and what he and his wife, Carol, have done to try to build up their tribe in their small town of Crystal City. One statement he made stuck with me more than any other from the four presentations that day. He said, We should not look at Tribal Messiahship as a mission, but rather as a lifestyle.



The next day began with Hoon Dok Hwe, and after eating breakfast together, we heard two heart-felt presentations. The first was given by Cindy Pfeiffer and by Carl Swearson, our North Dakota and Iowa state pastors, about the current state of the Unification movement in America. I also gave a presentation on the Eight Great Textbooks. With Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) USA President Dr. Michael Balcomb and his wife Mrs. Fumiko Balcomb there to help answer questions, both presentations gave us all a much needed perspective on what is currently happening in our movement and why we should remain hopeful that, historically, God has always been able to work miracles through a dedicated core of believers.

Our final discussion was on how our district could fulfill our portion of responsibility in achieving the USA Vision 2020 goals. Our determination to begin hosting Marriage Blessing Ceremonies for couples in our home states did not include large numbers, but our discussions helped us to begin thinking seriously about how to start achieving the national goals for America.

A final lunch together with Dr. and Mrs. Balcomb at the Hibachi Grill was a happy one. We will continue to discuss what each pastor presented and continue to connect, share, and offer support to achieve the goals of Vision 2020.

