

Aloha Leadership Workshop at East Garden

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December 31, 2015



At the Aloha Leadership Workshop at East Garden from December 28-31, 26 youth from all over the United States started the New Year with a revitalizing experience.

Among the group were workshop leaders, Sunday school teachers, youth group staff and alumni of past Aloha workshops. These young leaders came eager for fellowship and learning and enjoyed a fun day of icebreakers and introductions to start off the workshop.



Exciting presentations, “Napkin Lecture Training,” and personal goal training were just a few of the highlights from the first full day. To close the day, participants rotated between different activities that represented different ways to connect with God’s heart. The four sessions included nature, traditions, meditation and prayer.

On Wednesday, the second day of the workshop, many participants were moved hearing about True Mother's childhood in readings from the Cham Bumo Gyeong. "One topic that came out was how impressed they were with her resilience and determination," said one staff member.

An exciting and popular addition to the workshop was a special song session in the afternoons. Musically talented participants volunteered to play, even giving up their break time to practice. It was more than singing around the campfire; the students put a lot of effort into rehearsing and performing polished songs full of creativity and energy. It lent a new level of atmosphere for the sessions that followed. The songs were hand-picked to support the themes and talks of the workshop. The music session also served as a training session to teach skills in leading a worship team.

After morning service, the group gathered at the holy rock on the grounds of East Garden. Staff commented, "This experience by far was the most moving experience for our participants." The simple act of praying together and touching the rock brought deep insights and experiences to many. "Many of the young people were able to connect in heart with God and many shed tears," said the staff. "One brother expressed a transformation of heart and felt overcome by both God's sadness and God's hope. He was moved to tears."

Throughout the workshop, participants were able to visit and learn about many of the historical places and things in the area. A tour of East Garden and a visit to the museum was planned, where participants eagerly asked questions and some even gave donations.

Mixed in with informative sessions like "Principles Leadership Training," and "Church Leadership," there was plenty of time for bonding and fun activities. Together in groups, which they called "families", participants engaged in dance competitions, games and challenges, and learned a song and dance routine to send to True Mother. It was amazing to see the participants grow so close and work together with joy and excitement.

In preparation for the closing ceremony, participants met in groups by region and had a chance to talk about and come up with ideas on programs they would like to see in their own communities. Some of the initiatives included activities to heal child/parent relationships, interfaith activities and weekend workshops for middle and high school students.

An intimate reflection period with families followed, where participants expressed highlights of the workshop leading up to the final midnight prayer. For participants able to stay for the evening, they were led on a prayer walk to the holy rock where they reflected on 2015 and began 2016 with prayer and cheers of celebration.

