

FFWPU USA: Summer Camps A 'Lifeline' for Young Unificationists

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It's a beautiful summer day with the sun shining brightly. The sound of laughter and chatter fills the air. For a group of young Unificationists, it's been a blissful few days as they revitalize their faith at Camp Lone Star in Blanco, Texas.

"I felt like I was able to really connect myself with God and develop a closer relationship with Him, as well as with the rest of my team," says one camper.

At the Morgan family ranch, just west of Austin, some 80 participants from across the US came together for a spiritual camp retreat in July. "The activities and lectures not only made me feel closer to God - which was a great experience - it also enabled me to truly understand God's heart for us as our parent," says the camper.

The group, who wrote personal letters to God, bonded over a range of inspiring exercises organized by local camp leaders. The weeklong program, which featured guest speakers, reflection time and outdoor excursions, was one of several similar camps happening nationwide.

"Our summer camps are really a lifeline for our young people," says Katherine Anglin, who oversees camps year-round as the national coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministry ([YAYAM](#)). From June through August, [11 summer camps](#) were offered in person and online - depending on local Covid guidelines - which Anglin says were just the respite needed for many youth.

"Throughout the year they're up against a lot in a world that doesn't really understand the purpose and meaning of life: to serve and love one another," says Anglin. "So the summer camps really root our young people in their faith. They help them feel a sense of community, purpose, and togetherness; and I'm grateful to all the regional directors, team leaders, and creative minds who made it happen."

Anglin says the camps are a valuable experience designed to reach participants at any level of faith. At Camp Journey in Garden City, Utah, 25 middle and high schoolers enjoyed the mountainous landscape of the Rockies in late June. There, they learned more about God and how our mind and conscience connects with our Heavenly Parent.

"Before this workshop, my spiritual life was nonexistent," said one Camp Journey participant. "Even at times when God touched my heart, I rejected the thought. But this workshop was like a startup for my faith and I learned to take baby steps while doing it."

For some, these life-changing experiences and epiphanies bring about a bold new sense of self and direction. In Los Angeles, dozens of Camp One Heart participants ventured to Camp Mozumdar - a temple modeled after the Taj Mahal in the San Bernardino Mountains - where they discussed topics such as "The Bold Generation" and having strong faith.

On the East Coast, more than 30 participants at the EPIC Workshop in Gloucester, Mass., learned more about the Unification movement's founders, the late Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon. They were encouraged to actively synthesize the Divine Principle in their lives. The Divine Principle is the core teachings of the Unification movement.

"It's comforting to know God hasn't given up on humanity and is still actively working to help us," said one participant. "My goal coming to EPIC wasn't just to learn the material that was shared, but also to teach it and internalize it; and to live by the phrase, 'living for the sake of others.'"

Several campers connected online as well, with 32 participants joining Camp Kogape based in the Midwest. They enjoyed fun virtual activities and discussed topics under the theme "A Life Worth Fighting For."

"We wanted to address and acknowledge that the path of faith can be a difficult one," said Unificationist guest speaker and instructor, Gerry Servito. "By gaining a deeper understanding behind the practices of our faith, we hope participants can make the conscious decision to willingly fight for a life of true love and happiness that God envisions for each of us."

"I made the decision to fully invest in my faith," said one participant from Camp Shehaqua in Pennsylvania. She and her family were among 254 people who joined the rustic family camp, which ran three back-to-back programs in the Pocono Mountains in July. "I think one of the most beautiful and enriching things about this camp - and our faith - is that it's something that connects all generations."

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11 Camps. Best Summer Ever.



Photo credit FFWPU-USA

For many young people, fun in the sun with friends this summer is long overdue after the ongoing global Covid-19 pandemic. Eleven camps across the U.S. and in Canada—most of which are expected to be in person according to safety guidelines—have been organized regionally through the national Youth and Young Adult Ministry (YAYAM) department of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) and its affiliated programs.

“We are so excited to get our young people back to summer camps,” said Katherine Anglin, national YAYAM coordinator. “Even before the pandemic, camps were the highlight of our young people’s summers. Our summer camps are a key to feeling a part of our community of faith, especially after such a tough time and with most communities spread out from others.”

Registration is now open for various camps [scheduled](#) for middle school and high school Unificationists in the coming weeks. In the Bay Area, **Camp One Heart** is already underway in person, running from June 20 to 23.

“After a tough year, it’s so exciting for all the participants and staff to finally be able to come together, even if things may still look a little different than before with camps in person and online,” said Camarie Eaton, national YAYAM administrator.

For some of the camps, details like retreat themes are still being developed, but organizers say they still anticipate a big turnout of young people who are ready to feel inspired and uplifted during a challenging time in the world. The summer camps typically offer a range of outdoor excursions, spiritual discussions, and inspirational text and presentations to cultivate a deeper relationship with God, FFWPU co-founders Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon and her late husband, the Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon, and fellow campers.

“I think there’s a lot of us out there that have felt so deprived of connection and a sense of community that the experiences we will be able to make together this summer will be even more fulfilling and impactful,” said Eaton.

“There are more locations and options this year to make sure things are staying within local and state restrictions,” said Anglin, “so we hope that everyone gets a chance to attend. We hope that our young people can feel how much God and True Parents love them through the people they experience at camp.” True Parents is an affectionate term for Rev. and Dr. Moon.

From June 27 to July 2, **Camp Journey** in Garden City, Utah, is available to high schoolers. **Camp One Heart** (Los Angeles edition) will also take place from June 30 to July 4, at camp Mozumdar—a temple modeled after the Taj Mahal hidden in the San Bernardino Mountains. This retreat is available to both middle and high schoolers.

From July 8 to 28, **Ocean Challenge** is happening in Kodiak, Alaska; however, registration for this program closed in May.

In the Southwest, **Camp Lonestar** at Tejas Trails in Blanco, Texas, is available for high schoolers from July 11 to 17. **Camp Vonto**, which will be held online from July 12 to 16 in Canada, is available for all youth.

From July 17 to 24, the **EPIC Workshop** for high schoolers will take place at Morning Garden in Gloucester, Mass. In Pennsylvania, back-to-back retreats at **Camp Shehaqua** in Hickory Run State Park are available for all ages from July 18 to 23, and July 26 to 31. A special family weekend retreat is from July 23 to 26.

In the Midwest, **Camp Kogape** will be held online for all youth from July 19 to 23. On the East Coast, **Camp Aurora** at Morning Garden in Gloucester, Mass., is available for youth from August 1 to 7. The dates for **Camp Tongil** in Seattle are to be determined.

“I know our staff is prepared to take on the extra challenges that might come this year,” said Anglin. “I am hopeful that all of the summer camps will be an extremely meaningful experience for everyone.”

