

## The New Year for FFWPU USA's Youth Ministry begins in September

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The New Year for FFWPU USA's Youth Ministry began last month, in September, welcoming new students to their respective elementary, middle and high school programs, as well as new youth pastors. Each month, the National Youth Ministry focuses on one of five core themes which also inspire their activities: Connect, Inspire, Empower, Contribute, and Expand. September's theme, Connect, is intended for the youth to meet new people, deepen their relationships, and push past their comfort zones. Local youth ministries shared how they incorporated "Connect" into their youth group activities last month:

### Little Rock, Arkansas



The Youth ministry team in Arkansas centered their theme on a celebration by throwing a youth bash. They visited a farmer's market and then had a picnic by the river, where they rolled down grassy hills, and played card games, Pokémon Go, and Frisbee. After cooling off in a small walk-through fountain, they finished the day with ice cream.

### Kansas City, Kansas





Early autumn is also apple picking season. The youth ministry of the Omaha and Kansas Unificationist communities used that time to visit an apple picking festival which was held in Nebraska City. Youth pastor Gabriel Melgarejo said that both communities were able to connect well through this outing.

### **Bowie, Maryland**



The Bowie Youth Ministry of Maryland did a spin-off of their regular weekly program RTEC (read, talk, eat, chill) through GTEC (games, talk, eat, and chill). During their district-wide monthly program, they had a competitive family games night and held a deep discussion about their own families. They then showed their appreciation to each other by writing on post-it notes and sticking their compliments and gratitude to each other.

### **Tempe, Arizona**

The Tempe, Arizona youth ministry held their program, Phoenix Club, where they talked about the importance of having role models. Young Unificationist Mitsuyoshi Fukuzaki said he learned that when we don't have someone in this position, we often face the same situations they have without their help.

“Facing many tribulations in our daily life is tough. Having an elder there to help you will greatly improve your experience growing up,” he said. “God gave us the gift of a worldwide family network just for us.”

### **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**





The Philadelphia Family Church youth ministry wanted to bring a genuine and real connection with their youth group. They planned an activity called “If you really knew me” to bring out vulnerability and honesty with the group.

“I find the more I know about someone, flaws and all, the more beautiful they become,” said youth pastor Karen Suzuki. “That is something mind blowing about God. God knows everything about us and still loves us for it.”

“It was incredible to see how everyone opened up,” added Karen.

### **Saint Louis, Missouri**



The youth ministry of Saint Louis, Missouri kicked off their 2016-2017 Sunday School and music ministry with a huge success. By using the Divine Principle Curriculum on the Youth Ministry website, everyone enjoyed their first day.

### **Omaha, Nebraska**



In Omaha, the youth ministry made reflection notebooks for each other.

“It was nice to see them making effort and using their creativity to offer something special to one another,” said youth pastor Aimi Asanuma. “I plan to give them reflection topics each month based on the theme and let them share any thoughts, ideas and experiences they reflected on that month.”

The Omaha youth ministry also reflected on what ideal relationships look like, what actions need to be taken to improve certain relationships in their lives, and where they want their relationships to be.

### **Northern Virginia**



On October 1st, the youth ministry of Northern Virginia held a wonderful community night. Youth, young adults, as well as parents came together to share through activities like the Human Knot. Youth pastor James Jenkins said he was amazed and entertained to see everyone work together and was glad the group was able to come closer in friendship.

“We had this activity called Back to The Future,” he commented, “where adults shared their experiences when they were the age of the youth in their groups. They gave reasons and meaning behind the names they gave their children as well as interesting facts.”