

Youth and Young Adult Ministry's Winter Workshop in Yellow Springs, WV

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From January 9 to 15, the Youth and Young Adult Ministry (YAYAM) held a Winter Workshop in Yellow Springs, West Virginia under the theme "Get Grounded," where a total of 30 participants attended. Workshop staff member Daniel Drost, a 25-year-old Maryland native and former YAYAM leader, now co-directs young adult Divine Principle workshops with his friends.

This year's Winter Workshop was both powerful and unique. Our main lecturer was Uncle William Haines from London, supported by talks by Patrick Hanna and Yebuny Hanna who are also from London. The workshop was co-coordinated by Aiwa Hunter, Cecile Caron, Alex Covone, and myself.

We explored two angles of the workshop theme "Get Grounded." One angle looked at being grounded as a dignified stance; strongly standing by our values and beliefs with peace and conviction, digging to the core essence of our spirituality, and relating to societal topics in a way that is real and true to us. The other angle looked at being grounded as someone whose spirituality is down-to-earth, applicable to our everyday lives and relatable to the world in which we live.

Uncle William's vast knowledge of philosophy and history helped create a learning environment catered to the young adult audience. Rather than supplying simple tips and explanations, he presented university-level lectures that allowed the group to discuss complex issues and ask questions. The content was

explored through the lenses of the Divine Principle and Biblical teachings. It challenged the workshop participants to understand the root causes of why we think the way we think and to dissect the philosophical underpinnings of our communities and society. The common theme participants experienced was that we must take ownership of finding the answers which we base our lives around. In order to have true conviction in our beliefs, we need to dedicate sincere thought and effort into it.

This intellectually stimulating content was balanced with testimonies from Patrick and Yebuny. When they provided guidance on getting grounded in the Marriage Blessing, we discovered many young Unificationists are yearning for more clarity on this topic. We heard powerful stories from Patrick and Yebuny, showing us the value of having standards, the difference between the Blessing and a regular marriage, and focusing on the idea that our journey does not end with the Blessing, but rather the Blessing is part of the journey.

Several participants shared that the workshop offered them a newfound perspective and clarity about the matching and Blessing, and a stronger sense of what the Blessing can actually be for them.

The theme of getting grounded really rang true for many of the participants, with a common takeaway being a determination to take ownership and responsibility toward developing an opinion of societal issues, being active in personal matching and Blessing paths, and developing their communities.

This was our fifth workshop in the last few years, and we've started to see a real change in the participants who have been consistently attending these workshops and investing in themselves and in each other. We have a lot of hope moving forward and want to continue encouraging and challenging each other to take ownership in our own communities, to continue building and improving ourselves, and to seek the Blessing as a way of life, not a final destination.