

Norfolk, Virginia's Young Unificationists' Blessing, and the Investigation of Truth

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Today, many young Unificationists who were raised with the values of their parents struggle to know where their parents' faith ends and theirs begins. Some take for granted the information in the Divine Principle because they have heard it all their lives. Others are hesitant to question the basic tenets of Unificationism because they fear judgment or rejection.

Young Unificationists T. Nomura, J. Daugherty, and J. Yang looked around in their Virginia neighborhood and realized that they desired a community that encouraged real dialogue about life's questions. With this in mind, they decided to host a weekend retreat for their peers to discuss faith and values without holding back. "Adolescence and young adulthood are times in life when individuals begin to think for themselves," said organizer T. Nomura. "This retreat enabled these young adults to be heard and acknowledged. ... The opportunity for participants to voice their thoughts and hear from their brothers and sisters greatly contributed to an environment which ultimately served as a foundation for them to receive content with open minds."

From May 24 to May 27, 20 young people banded together in Norfolk, Virginia to explore the themes Belonging & Community, The [Holy Marriage] Blessing, and The Investigation of Truth. "I felt that it was a very open-minded environment that allowed for everyone's opinions to be heard without judgement," said one participant of the four-day weekend.

Participants spent a relaxing and exciting first two days getting to know one another and discovering a sense of community through fellowship. In between games and activities, they explored nature together at First Landing State Park and Virginia Beach. The last two days were filled with content and allowed participants to engage in insightful discussions with their peers. The information presented on the Marriage Blessing was unique because it allowed participants to see not just the beauty but also the difficulties of marriage. "The knowledge and experience shared by the Blessed couples changed the way I saw the Blessing," said one participant.

Other topics included the need for young Unificationists to support one another on life's journey. At the retreat, one participant saw for the first time a greater potential for genuine connections with her peers. "I felt hints of an ideal world during the workshop, and it gave me much more motivation and vision," she said.

Another participant agreed. "I want everyone to be able to experience this atmosphere and environment. It's very nice to always know that we have this community with us no matter where we go."

T. Nomura, J. Daugherty, and J. Yang plan to organize a similar retreat in the future to dive even deeper and address topics that were left unexplored. "Additionally, we hope to better emphasize the spiritual significance of the Blessing and to encourage a positive, clear standard for purity and healthy brother-sister relationships," says T. Nomura.



REFLECTIONS

"My experience here was like a wake up call for me to find what I believe and not what others think. The biggest thing I gained from this retreat was the investigation of truth. What I never realized before was that I need to find my own answers."

"This workshop really inspired me and gave me insight on our value as [young Unificationists]."

"There was a level of maturity that I liked here and the ability to discuss more complex and deep topics was incredible."

"The biggest thing I gained from this workshop was the perspective to think bigger and dig deeper."

"I think I finally realize what I value and wish to uphold."