

## Retreat at Kingdom of Heaven on Earth in Benton Harbor, Michigan

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*More than 80 young-adult Unificationists attended the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth (KOHOE) Young Adult Retreat in Benton Harbor, Michigan to rejuvenate and to explore their faith as Unificationists.*

On Friday, August 16 to Sunday, August 18th an inspiring Young Adult Retreat was held at the beautiful Jesper family home campsite of KOHOE (Kingdom of Heaven on Earth) in Benton Harbor, Michigan. More than 80 young adults came from across the Midwest including Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and even some from Nebraska, Minnesota and other states. It was great to see so many young Unification adults getting together from different walks of life. The group consisted of active young adults who volunteer regularly in their local churches to those who haven't come in a couple years. Everyone had a great experience and everyone felt a drive to come, see each other and see what's going on in the Unification faith today.



*Participants enjoy the sunset.*

Being a "retreat" and not a camp or workshop, it was quite laid back. Arrival was on Friday night and we spent the evening getting to know each other through hanging out, playing board games, playing sports, going for a late night swim, etc.



*Pastor Jario Gavin, seen with his daughter, gave the Sunday sermon, "Building Your Life."*

On the 17th, Saturday morning started with (optional) Yoga at 8:00 a.m. and an (optional) *Hoon Dok Hwe* at 8:30 a.m. At 9:00 a.m. we had a delicious breakfast and at 10:00 a.m. we started our internal session, based on interactive discussion. We offered three questions: "What does it mean to be a Unificationist?" "What values do you cherish and want to pass on to your future family?" "What would you like to see from your local church ministry"? We broke off into small groups and discussed these topics for one hour. Each group was free to take it where it went. One group spent the whole hour discussing question #2- the values we want to pass on and discussed hot topics like drinking. Another group spent the whole hour discussing question #1 - what it means to be a Unificationist. It was a deep and honest discussion that allowed many different viewpoints to be brought forth. Everyone was open to hearing and learning from each other. No one judged. It was very real and actually very spiritually nourishing. Then we got together and finished off with a question- and answering session. Six young blessed couples served on the panel and shared their views on different questions that were asked about the life of faith, God, the matching and Blessing, etc.



*KOHOE participants prepare their meals for lunch.*

After this, we had lunch and spent the whole afternoon and evening in the beautiful town of St. Joseph, Michigan. We lounged on the beach, went swimming, played volleyball, went to cafes, shops and had dinner out. We all came together at the top of the hill to watch the sunset over Lake Michigan. It was a beautiful sight and one of the loveliest St. Joseph traditions. At the end when the sun completely set, everyone clapped! It was like the whole town was cheering for God. Everyone arrived back at KOHOE after 9:00 p.m. People played games late into the night, shared about their day, went swimming or went to the dance party.



*Young-adult Unificationists from across the Midwest came to attend KOHOE from August 16 -18, 2013.*

The morning of Sunday, August 18th started off again with 8:00 a.m. (optional) yoga, 8:30 a.m. (optional) *Hoon Dok Hae* followed by breakfast at 9:00 a.m. and Sunday Worship Service at 10:30 a.m. We actually worshiped with the lights off to worship music videos and were amazed at the atmosphere created. Pastor Jario Vincenz-Gavin gave a sermon on "Building Your Life" and shared about the freedom that God gives us and the responsibility we need to take to make our life worthwhile. It was an applicable and real message with many examples and analogies given. Several felt tears at the end as we sang "How He Loves" one more time. We ended with prayer, and prayed for our Wisconsin Aunt, Debby Anderson, who had passed away the evening before. Several people had deep discussions with friends after Sunday Service. Then there was lunch and free time. Some went to the local chocolate stores; others went peach picking at an orchard or back to St. Josephs; others just hung out at the wonderful campsite of KOHOE. We concluded all together at 4:00 p.m., closing in prayer and ended the retreat with dinner at 5:00 p.m.





*One of the activities at KOHOE allowed for participants to explore the downtown scene at Benton Harbor, MI.*

We would like to thank the Jesper family for hosting all our summer camps. Our gratitude extends to Rev. and Mrs. Lamson for cooking. It was great to relax, get away and rejuvenate before the new school year. Many shared that they appreciated having the freedom and choice to attend different activities. They enjoyed not being told what to do but rather making their own decisions. We felt this is necessary, because as young adults our faith is like that – we need to discover and create it ourselves; it's our choice. It was also inspiring to see that Ohio, Indiana and Illinois all have young Unificationist Pastors actively trying to apply the Divine Principle in their lives and bring God's love to others.



*Young couples shared their perspectives about a life of faith, God, the matching and Blessing with the young adult participants at the KOHOE retreat.*