

Il Shim faith-development program in Atlanta

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January 31, 2016



The Atlanta Il Shim program began on January 29

Nineteen Unificationist-born young people started the Il Shim faith-development program on the weekend of January 29 to 31 at the Atlanta Family Church.

Il Shim is a unique program for the children of Unificationists. While it promotes abstinence, it does more. Like the coming-of-age programs of other religious groups (i.e., bar and bat mitzvah for Jewish children, confirmation for Catholics), Il Shim is designed to help young people grow in both the knowledge and practice of their faith. Through participation in the Il Shim program, young people are challenged to inherit and take ownership of their faith tradition.

Although the program is designed for children in the sixth to eighth grades, because the Atlanta Family Church has not offered it for a number of years, the current program was opened to high school pupils as well.



Il Shim participants do team activities

The weekend included group challenges to create unity and talks on “God’s Ideal,” “What Separates Us

from God” and “Making the Choice to Be a Child of God.” There were also testimonies, a panel question-and-answer session, and a time set aside for repentance, prayer and dedication. Each participant received a personal copy of True Father’s autobiography, *As a Peace-Loving Global Citizen*, after hearing about the need to understand his life more deeply as a standard for how to live our lives.

Over the next two months participants and staff will support each other to fulfill conditions of study, prayer, fasting and service. Myrna Lapres, an advisor to the program, met with the parents of the participants after Sunday Service to go over the conditions with them and to emphasize the parents’ role in supporting their children through this process. She also said that this is an awesome opportunity for the parents to do the conditions together with their children, while relating their own path of joining the church, developing their life of faith and going to the Holy Marriage Blessing.



A group of young Unificationists gather for their Il Shim program

A key to the success of this program is the cooperation and unity of a multigenerational staff laying the groundwork by planning and praying together. Pastor Haruki Kimura asked Myrna Lapres to support the youth in Atlanta after moving here. Mrs. Lapres said that although she had had the opportunity to be part of the Il Shim program many times in Northern California, she couldn’t have been successful without working together with the young adults in the church community.

A second workshop for the Il Shim participants will be held on the last weekend in March. It will celebrate the completion of the conditions. Planned activities include working in the Atlanta Family Church Community Garden, a challenge course centering on True Father’s life and the awarding of “True Love Waits” rings to the participants by their parents at the Youth Service on Sunday morning.