

24+ Connect Ministry Provides Singles Ways to Prepare for Future Relationships

Crescentia DeGoede
2017



Mission:

The 24+ Connect Retreat exists to provide the opportunity and resources for the greater 24+ Unificationist singles population to **connect, grow together, and prepare for future relationships.**

Objectives for the 2017 Summer Retreat:

1. **Connect:** Participants will meet and get to know over 40 other 24+ Unificationist singles over the course of four days and three nights. They will have opportunities to connect and create community through engaging in various activities, outings, and discussions.
2. **Grow Together:** Through engaging in activities, presentations and discussions, participants will have opportunities to reflect on their life experiences, and learn more about what they believe and what they want to achieve in their life.
3. **Prepare for Future Relationships:** Participants will leave with new ideas of steps they can take to create the marriage and family they desire.



Vision Statement:

Our 5-year vision is to see a healthy, sustainable and growing community of 24+ individuals of the greater Unificationist community who support each other in their individual growth and preparation for creating a successful future partnership. This population will meet regularly both locally and nationally to connect, share knowledge and develop useful skills for relationships, as well as develop individual greater self-awareness. We envision that participants will feel empowered, excited and comfortable to share their views, learn about

themselves, receive feedback, and make action steps for their future. They will feel this is a positive and important community for them to be involved in and naturally welcome and encourage their friends to be a part of it. Participants will also play an instrumental role in future 24+ Connect events.

Who are the sponsors/organizers:

The 24+ Connect Community is supported by Blessing and Family Ministry (BFM) and Blessed Family Association (BFA)

Quotes from Previous Participants:

Why did you attend?

"I decided to attend the retreat because it seemed like the most hopeful event as far as finding like-minded people who grew up in this faith, interested in seeking a long term, committed relationship. Plus, I have never been to a singles retreat before, and thought it would be fun just to say I've been to one, and knew enough friends that were attending that I could feel comfortable being amongst good company."

"I'm single and wanted to meet some ladies! But seriously, I heard there were going to be 70+ attendees and thought it would be a great environment to break the ice and make a new friend."

"I attended last year's 24+ workshop as a way to meet and re-connect with other second generation my age. It was a great opportunity to get away for the weekend in a very scenic environment and possibly meet someone I would want to start a relationship with."

"I attended the program not only to try and find a good match to possibly get to know better and see where it goes, also I went for good tips on being a good person/match for others."

"I attended the retreat to set aside some time to be reflective about my life of faith and my future in the context of the greater Unificationist community. I also wanted to connect with others and hear their stories around these same ideas."

"My favorite part was the talk that a guest professor gave. His speech was very interesting/helpful. My

second favorite part was meeting good people for new occasions; I made family friends over that weekend."

"I felt that 24+ connect had a great staff that wanted to help their peers by providing a new way to meet others from all over the world."

"I wanted to meet new people that come from the same background but have different stories. My main goal was to learn about myself and meet new people with different points of view. I believe that there is nothing better than meeting people who can give you affirmation in who you are but to also challenge yourself and what you believe."

What was your favorite part?

"My favorite part about 24+ connect was meeting new people as well as reconnecting with friends that I haven't seen in years. It had a comfortable atmosphere with a loose structure. Nice environment to meet people. Most of the talks were informative and enlightening. What a retreat should be."

"I think for me, the best part were the moments when I was able to go off and have great heart to heart talks with people. And just being in nature was just amazing."

"The structure of the retreat was great for connecting with a diverse spread of the attendees, making it easy to network. It was also great to have Rev. Thompson at the retreat not only to speak, but also to answer any and all questions. His perspective and transparency is really refreshing."

"The whole program was enjoyable because of the atmosphere the staff creates, but I enjoyed meal times because it gave me an opportunity to sit down and meet someone new in a relaxed setting."

"My favorite part was the beach day because that's where I first got to hang out one-on-one with my now spouse, Dan."

Who would you recommend to attend this program?

"I would recommend this to anyone who is feeling conflicted, confused, or stuck about the matching or about their place in the Unificationist community. It was a great place to be reflective and hear from others. Or to anyone who just wants to meet awesome people from all over the world."

"I would recommend this program to someone who is willing to put church concepts to the side and treat this weekend as an icebreaker. Don't expect you will leave the weekend initiating a matching process, don't put that pressure on yourself. The program is an opportunity to be curious in other people, and make some friends. Eventually that friendship may become something more. That's how it worked for me anyway."

"That's a hard question because I think that a lot of people went for very different reasons and that's OK. Some people were uber gungho about learning about and getting matched, others just wanted to see their friends, others were just mildly curious as to who's out there and some, like me, wanted an escape and to meet new people. So I guess I would say anyone over 24 who wants to enjoy nature and possibly experience something positive should go. I'm not looking for a spouse, if it happens in its own good time, then great. I'm looking for genuine friendships and relationships first. You never know what will come your way with an open mind and heart."

"I think anyone who is open minded and interested in meeting new people while exploring a different part of the country should attend. The retreat provided a relaxed environment to meet and hang out with friends old and new."

"Anyone looking to meet cool people and to gain some new insight on self-improvement and relationships."

"I would suggest anyone who is looking for a good partner match and also anyone who just wants good life tips in general and tips on being a good loving person to all—even yourself."

"There are all sorts of people who come from all walks of life, and every single one of those people are God's children, and every single one of those people deserve to find someone who they can fully love, and be loved by. People are constantly discouraged by the limited chances to meet amazing people within the same faith, but this retreat allows similar ages, and interests to come together to network and get to know people from around the world. If you are unsure about attending or not, I highly recommend you at least check it out once. Life is too short to regret missed connections because of fear. If you want something in life, you go up to it and drop a line like, "you're so beautiful, you made me forget my pick up lines."

Questions and Answers



Q: How can I contact the staff or get more information?

A: Reach out to us at 24connectretreat@gmail.com or on the 24+ Connect Facebook page.

Q: Who is this retreat for?

A: This retreat welcomes all individuals 24-39 years of age, who are single, and part of the greater Unificationist community who are open to building new friendships, networking and are interested in the possibility of finding a potential life partner.

This retreat is not geared towards any "generation." It's about building connections, and we encourage all potential participants to let go of any labels and simply come to build relationships, and make friends with members of the same national and international community.

Q: Where will this retreat take place?

A: 190 Western Ave. Gloucester, MA 01930

Q: What will be different for returning participants?

A: Participants are the ones who make the program. This year, we expect to have both new and returning participants from all over the country. In addition, the setting will be on the lake at Gloucester, with a whole new variety of activities, speakers, and activities from last year. We will be incorporating new activities based on feedback from last year.

Q: How are the participant costs decided?

A: The costs are decided based on the cost of the facility, programming and staffing, and through generous subsidies from national headquarters, helping keep costs at a reasonable amount.

Q: Is it okay to come with the intention of just meeting new people and not necessarily looking for someone to get matched to?

A: Yes, many participants come for a variety of reasons, sometimes not completely known to them until during the retreat. These reasons have ranged from hoping to make friends, to meeting a potential life-partner, to taking an opportunity to explore one's beliefs. The most important thing is that individuals come with an open mind to meet and connect with others, and to have fun and enjoy surrounding nature.

Q: Can I still attend it if I don't consider myself a Unificationist or believe in the Unificationist teachings?

A: Yes. You do not need to be a practicing Unificationist to attend, but it is important that you are comfortable with the Unificationist community and the Unificationist approach to marriage traditions and history – the frame of reference for the retreat.

Q: For someone who is shy, will there be support for meeting new people?

A: For both shy and outgoing individuals, we have included a mix of both deliberate and structured activities into the program to help foster communication between participants. Opportunities will be created for everyone to converse, connect and get to know each other. On the other hand, we do encourage you to create your own goals for attending and to keep in mind that this experience, like everything else, will be what you make of it.

Q: I'm at the very bottom/top of the age limit, will there be others who are the same age as me attending?

A: What we like about this program is that while the age range is quite large (24-39), age is not a major factor in the activities, outings, content etc.... We encourage participants not to worry about age but to keep an open mind and connect with others based on interests, passions, goals, etc. ... We won't know who's attending until later in the year, but we hope that no matter who attends, participants are accepting of it, and open to getting to know all types of new people.