

## Youth Pastors Refuel, Rebuild and Share Best Practices

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January 28, 2015



Forty-three youth pastors and leaders from around the nation gathered at Camp Tejas Trails in Blanco, Texas for an uplifting and transformative weekend retreat. The youth pastors were split into small groups based on community size and were asked to focus on three goals during the retreat:

- To refuel hardworking youth pastors
- To build a framework for the national youth ministry identity
- To offer relevant practices to enhance local ministries.

Each small group participant shared best practices relevant to their community size and each youth pastor took the time to share with other youth pastors in similar situations to their own what they were facing.



## **Refuel Hardworking Youth Pastors**

Our youth pastors are incredibly hard working individuals. Most of them are full-time college students, have a full time job or are juggling public ministry and growing families. They are all young and trying to navigate a ministry that is full of transformation. As they get to know God's heart for His and Her children they often feel valued for their investment, encouragement from their community and support for the ideas they feel can help those they pastor. They are trying to meet the demands of senior pastors, congregations, parents, staff and youth all while trying to maintain spiritually healthy habits themselves.

In an effort to refuel the young leaders in our communities, participants read letters of appreciation from our local pastors, spent time praying for each other to overcome challenges and difficulties, and challenged themselves to overcome those obstacles so that they could become the best older brothers and sisters possible. They spent time nurturing their own personal relationships with God through a prayer walk and ongoing reflection throughout the retreat.



## **Build a Framework for National Youth Ministry**

Our National Youth Ministry Coordinator, Kaeleigh Moffitt, shared several models that she encouraged and challenged the youth pastors to adapt in their local ministries. She introduced the five elements of youth ministry: Connect, Inspire, Empower, Contribute and Expand as models for clarifying the purposes of youth ministry programs and events. She also asked the youth pastors to use these five elements as educational themes for the upcoming months.

Kaeleigh shared her model for effective ministry planning, which consists of clarifying the purpose for programs and events and identifying the target audience reached within the programs. Overall, the youth pastors felt more connected as a national ministry and have hope for building a future with a stable and effective network between local youth ministries.

## **Relevant Resources and Best Practices**

The entire weekend was focused on a constant exchange of ideas and input in small groups. Participants were fortunate to hear from Youth Pastor Sungil Fleischman from the Bay Area, California, who shared great points about how to raise new leaders in local ministry. Toyo Hagiwara from New York shared how to nurture hard working youth leaders over time like a flower that needs continuous water. They also discussed ideas for how to include parents in the local ministries to enhance the experience for the youth.

On Saturday they spent time analyzing and editing the curriculum for the Divine Principle that the National Ministry Team has been developing at the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) headquarters in America and made plans for how to grow local ministries. Kaeleigh challenged the youth pastors to follow up with three points from the retreat when they returned home: share their

experience with their local pastor, host a local staff training to share new plans and participate in small group web calls throughout the semester to share ongoing best practices.



As the National Youth Ministry Coordinator, Kaeleigh's goal is to support the development of local youth ministries in an effort to raise healthy young Unificationists who can support a healthy growing community. Our goal as a faith community is to bring the people of our world back to their Heavenly Parent. However, transforming a culture that has been rooted in selfishness for all of human history is a difficult task. That's why Youth Ministry is so essential. Transforming that culture needs to start a young age.

Along with parents, Youth Ministry exposes the principles and values God intended us to live with at the time of creation. When our youth are introduced to this type of lifestyle at a young age they naturally become people who are role models of living a principled lifestyle. Our Youth Pastors and Youth Ministries need to be supported so that we can continue to change our world through raising spiritually healthy and happy youth. Let's continue to make Youth Ministry a priority and support our incredible Youth Pastors around the nation!