

## Project Phoenix unites generations of Unificationists from Washington DC area

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“Honoring the Generations” was the theme of a Project Phoenix weekend workshop held at the Maryland Family Center from March 3 to 5, 2017.

Project Phoenix was founded in 2016 with the goal of uniting the generations in the larger Unificationist community. At a strategic planning retreat last year, the Project Phoenix staff decided to hold regional events that would focus on Unification communities. The hope was that participants would receive inspiration, tools, and support to build bridges between elder and younger Unificationists, creating new possibilities for community growth.

More than 70 Unificationists from Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia came to the District 1 gathering in Bowie, Maryland. The weekend was filled with deep testimonies, honest discussions in “family” groups, profound prayer partner experiences, and raucous games.

The gathering was patterned after previous Project Phoenix programs but with an important distinction: Most of the participants live in the same community, and there were a number of parents and their children attending together. This led to some unexpected results.



On Friday night, after David Young’s presentation on the damaging consequences of withholding in relationships, one of the younger participants asked to share something with the larger group. She expressed how she had done things that had hurt her mother, who was also attending, and publicly asked for her forgiveness. Their embrace was a profound moment that completely changed the atmosphere in the room. All were uplifted to see this moment of reconciliation, and it gave everyone the inspiration and permission to go deeper in their own family sharing.

The “Honoring the Generations” session, although lively, became quite moving when Beverly Berndt tearfully explained what many seniors want the younger generation to understand about them.

The next session, “Through Our Lens,” which consisted of testimonies, began with a somewhat subdued feeling after the emotionalism and honesty of the previous session, but as Mark Anderson, Tasnah Moyer, Jin Kwon Kim, and Catherine Ono gave their testimonies, the intensity built and the session ended up being a high point of the program. With parents and children attending the workshop together, there were new opportunities for families to speak honestly with each other, as Gregg Jones testified at the Sunday service on the last day.

After a round of games, seniors and juniors once again split into groups to discuss the question “What does our community need?” After returning to the larger assembly, each group reported on the list it had made.



By the evening, everyone was full, internally as well as externally. The meals from Amael Rodrigues were sensational, and the powerfully emotional day left everyone filled to the brim. The day ended with affirmations within each family, reflections, and a lot of hugs and pictures.

On Sunday after the service, about 30 people held a “next steps” planning meeting. Here is a brief report from Henri Schauffler from the Maryland community:

On the specific action front, two activities are happening. Caroline Koertvelyessy, a Second Generation newer to the community, has organized a Young Adult Forum for this Sunday after church. She is working with Jin Kwon Kim and Beverly Berndt. I expect a great turnout and moving the effects of Phoenix to the next level.

Also, Sarah Oben and Susan Fefferman will be organizing ‘Continuing the Conversation’ meetings once a month for all Phoenix grads and newbies who might want to join. The original proposal was to do it in family homes, but the details are still being ironed out.

Julie Randolph-Feldsott is in the process of organizing the ‘Partnership Program’: pairing off folks who want to remain in contact for six weeks and help each other in mutually agreeable ways.

A program like this requires a lot of effort. Special thanks to Jin Kwon Kim and Catherine Ono who co-chaired the event. Jin Kwon did heroic work traveling from New Jersey to Maryland on a number of weekends to help organize the local staff. Henri and Loretta Schauffler were also instrumental in organizing many of the logistics and serving as a spiritual central point in the community.

A special thanks to Melissa Manor, Hannah Hunter, and Sarah Oben, who went from being participants to staff members and made incredible contributions to the program. In addition, Julie Randolph-Feldsott, who had never been to Project Phoenix before, became one of the key staff people for the event. They all invited their friends, participated in the program, served as staff members, and were key reasons for the success of the program. Finally, thank you to the Bulow family, the Scazzero family, Will and Clair Stein, the Feffermans and the Schaufflers for housing participants from outside the area so that they could participate.

For information on other events, go to [www.originspartnership.com](http://www.originspartnership.com) and click on the Project Phoenix link. Our next event will be held in San Francisco in July! Stay tuned for more details. We continue to appreciate your prayers, feedback, recommendations to your friends to attend, and, of course, financial support.