

Bay Area Family Church Il Shim program's graduation ceremony for 28 students

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In an elegant and joyful graduation ceremony, twenty-eight middle and high school students completed the Il Shim program on Sunday, April 2 at the Bay Area Family Church (BAFC). The graduation ceremony, which served as the conclusion of forty days of education and growth, was attended by the participants' families and the broader church community.

Il Shim, which is Korean for “one heart,” is the coming-of-age rite of passage for Unificationists. Though young Unificationists throughout the country do the Il Shim program at different times of the year, they are united by a common curriculum. Youth ministry staff of the BAFC used the thorough material provided to them by FFWPU USA national headquarters and built upon them with their own inspirations. The entirety of the content and homework was divided into three miniature workshops, with several weeks in between each workshop.



This year's participants learned about Heavenly Parent, how the family is the school of love, and what it means to be a Unificationist. Most importantly, Il Shim is the signature program for young Unificationists to learn about the incredible value of preparing themselves for their future spouses.

To embark on this path of preparation, they learned about the value of being a selfless person by performing a community clean-up. They had opportunities to experience empathy by talking to strangers about faith and what matters to them in their lives. They also received eight presentations filled with the kind of nutritious content that grows hearts as well as minds. And of course, the staff put together some fun activities such as a Super Smash Bros themed gladiator battle.



Along with their group leaders, who were mostly high school upperclassmen, the participants completed challenges meant to position them as owners of their own faith.

After completing tasks such as a fast, serving their parents, and writing responses to readings, the participants could begin to understand the Unificationist ethic of continuous growth and self-reflection in one's life.

To encourage the participants to include habits of faith in their lives going forward, the staff presented them with a team competition lasting 21 days after the graduation ceremony. The participants were truly inspired to make conditions for themselves, such as reading Hoon Dok Hwe (scripture) or helping with the chores more, not just to win a prize but also to better themselves.

Ultimately all of those that participated in Il Shim 2017 gained much more than a ring to wear, which itself is a significant symbol. Memories made, bonds forged, and a kindled sense of purpose are just some of the other things Il Shim gave to these youth.

