

## Gloucester, MA Unificationist community hosts District Four leadership retreat

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The Gloucester, Massachusetts Unificationist community hosted the recent leadership retreat for District 4 on Friday and Saturday, February 24th and 25th. Pastors from all over the Northeast were in attendance, including participants from Vermont, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Connecticut.

These pastors came together to reflect on the past year and to make new goals and determinations for the year ahead. There was time for team building and fellowship, as well as a chance to share best practices from each state.



The first night began with sessions allowing participants to share about themselves, their childhood, and their experience in the Unification movement. This allowed everyone to get to know each other and build a bond going into the workshop.

Saturday morning started off with a reflection of the year 2016, highlighting accomplishments and challenges.

Next, participants set goals for 2017. With the help of session leader, Naokimi Ushiroda, who coached the pastors on goal setting, they connected each goal to practical applications like creating a new habit.

Heather Thalheimer also gave a presentation on her new book about the Marriage Blessing.

After lunch, Heather Thalheimer shared about her new book about the blessing, [More Than Marriage: Love as God Intended](#). “I wrote the book based on my desire to introduce people to the Holy Marriage Blessing,” said Heather. “As many people, including individuals of other faiths, do not hold the Bible as a reference point, I turned to Unification Thought to provide context and an explanation of the Blessing.”



Mika Deshotel also shared about the Blessing Ceremony that she and her husband Abe conducted in Bridgeport in January of this year and how the event helped build her confidence in conducting similar ceremonies in the future.



The pastors were excited to also hear from Andrew Love, who was able to join via internet and spoke about his upcoming [High Noon Summit](#) in Las Vegas.

Mark Beaudoin then shared about project “Pilgrimage,” a program he has been involved with for the past three year, which invites Japanese students to travel to the United States to learn the history of the American Unificationist movement.

Many of the pastors expressed deep appreciation for the event. Alex Nimick of Vermont said, “I’m very grateful the New England pastors took the opportunity to gather for a weekend in the beautiful and historic setting of Morning Garden. Through the sharing and small group activities in particular I gained a deeper appreciation of the value of our lives and that each of us is just where we need to be to make the best contribution to the Providence.”

Heather Thalheimer also commented, “Coming from a very small community, it is important for me to be able to come together with others and connect to something larger. It was wonderful to experience our Unification family.”

Ricardo Machado said, “It was great, well organized, and the pastors participated well. It’s very inspiring to hear other people’s testimonies.”

The participants ended in prayer, and left with new inspirations to bring back home to their local communities.

