

Clergy Kids Retreat *Testimonials*

From Parents...

“Where to start... Clergy Kids Retreat is the best events offered to the CK’s (or PK’s) on the North Central Region...hands down. After living in Mount Vernon for 30 years and working at MVNU off and on for 15 of those years, I believe it is one of the best investments the university makes in the pastors and their families on the region.

Our (daughter) has attended 3 Clergy Kids Retreats - traveling last year from our new assignment in TN in order to be a part of the retreat. It is the one event in her year that she will sacrifice for in order to be there. It is her top priority. Three years ago she roomed with 3 “strangers” (other clergy kids) and those four girls have chosen to room together every year since forming a bond that keeps them connected throughout the year. That alone has been an incredible blessing. As (she) says, “They just “get” me.” In addition to these lifelong friendships, (she) has experienced great spiritual growth on these retreats. It’s a perfect mid-year boost that is experienced with kids who have the unique privilege (even though they see the bad side of it too) of living in a parsonage. They are “safe” at this retreat to express their anger, frustration and fears, not only to other CK’s but, also to adult leaders who have survived life in the parsonage.

I cannot say enough good about this retreat. The retreat is held in an incredible place but, I truly believe that the friendships and group worship/sharing are what brings these students back year after year. This retreat has been a blessing to (us as parents) without our even attending! Don’t let your kids miss it - and I choose my battles very carefully.“

“(Our son) has participated in the clergy kids retreat for the past two years and has had a blast! He was nervous the first year because he didn’t know what to expect but by the end of the weekend he was saying he couldn’t wait until next year to go again. He seemed to really open up a lot more the next year...he participated in the talent contest and won a t-shirt. He wears it proudly and tells everyone where and how he got it. He is looking forward to next year as well! I think its a great opportunity for pks to be able to come together, be themselves and see that there are many other kids that are going through the same things in life. I am a huge fan of clergy kids retreat! Thank you MVNU for hosting such a wonderful event for these young girls and boys of Christ!”

“My daughter attended the retreat several years ago. She came home just thrilled that she had the opportunity to express her true feelings about being the child of parents involved in full-time ministry. She did not have to hold back to spare the feelings and thoughts of the average church member because she was with other kids who actually understood that clergy kids face different, and sometimes difficult, expectations of church members.”

“Both of my teen-age sons have attended the Clergy Kids Retreat many times. The three most common types of feedback I hear each year upon their return are: 1. The number of new friends they made . . . 2. The variety of fun activities that were offered . . . 3. The numerous opportunities to connect with their Savior. I praise God and thank our denomination for the Clergy Kids Retreat!”

“Our daughter has loved the Clergy Kids Retreat! She looks so forward to this every year! Unfortunately, she has had to see some very sad; emotional; hopeless situations in her lifetime, that most kids never have had to endure throughout their lives. But when she comes to the Clergy Kids Retreat, she is actually able to open up and share these hurts and frustrations with other Clergy Kids and knows that she is in a safe environment to do this. So not only does she come home refreshed from the worship and growth that takes place, but she comes home being able to leave behind her biggest hurts in life!”

“The Clergy Kids Retreat has been an incredible experience for my daughters (8th and 12th graders this past school year). The opportunity for each of them to build relationships with MVNU staff/students and other clergy kids has had a significant impact on their lives and spiritual formation. For example, after several months of college visits, scholarship applications, and parental guidance, our oldest daughter went to this past year’s retreat with her mind set on attending a state university. Everything was in place. She had been accepted into the honors program, offered a generous academic scholarship, and was excited about her future prospects. Although her mother and I had encouraged her to consider attending MVNU, she resisted making such a decision – that is, until last retreat. It was then that God spoke to her heart and she realized perhaps for the first time, that she was someone whom God wanted to use to touch other people, and that MVNU was where He wanted her to be. Unexpectedly, the plans we had put in place were set aside and we were headed in a new direction – trusting God would work out the details. As the day is now drawing near when (she) will begin her MVNU career, we are thankful that Clergy Kids Retreat was there to help her hear God’s voice and follow His leading.”

“Our kids thoroughly enjoy the CK retreat. It’s a wonderful way for them to get to know students from other districts. For our oldest son, it was especially good because he met a guy his freshman year that ended up being his college roommate at MVNU his first year. We cherish hearing them talk about their interactions with kids from the region that may eventually become college buddies too. That enhances the college experience; knowing more people going into a bigger environment. The students our kids meet at CK retreat are kids that have the potential of being friends for life!”

“God used the CK retreat in a powerful way in my daughter’s life at a time right after we had to make a very difficult move. God gave her hope, healing, and great friends at a time when she was heading down the path of bitterness and poor decisions. She didn’t miss one year of retreat after that! In addition to the emotional and spiritual benefit, the waterpark is unbelievable, and amount of down-time built into the weekend for fun and connecting is amazing.”

“Our oldest son had the opportunity to attend two years and our youngest two sons attended one year. All three boys had a great time. As parents, we felt this was great opportunity for them to not only receive support and encouragement from other people who “have walked in their shoes,” but it was also an opportunity for them to compare their experiences of “parsonage life” with another PKs. Our sons, who had often complained about being PKs, soon saw that their experiences were wonderful compared to some. We were fortunate to have been in a very loving and accepting church, who allowed the PK’s to be themselves, “typical kids.”. They were able to be supportive to those PKs whose experiences were not too kind and learn to be appreciative of what they had. We would strongly encourage parents to send their children to the Clergy Kids Retreat. It is a great experience for your children. I wish each region/district offered this event. Side note: the cost needs to be kept low. The first year it was offered, we were unable to send our two oldest because of cost. The second year, the cost was lowered and just our son was able to attend as our daughter was too old.”

From Student Participants...

“The first time I ever even heard of CK retreat was when I got a postcard in the mail during my 8th grade year. I’ve always been a shy person, so I didn’t really think much of it. Why would I want to go somewhere with a lot of people I didn’t know for a whole weekend? That’s just not the kind of thing I would want to do. But, for some reason, I kept thinking about it. It took me a long time to come to a decision about going or not, but I finally decided that it’s only 3 days, why not give it a shot? If I don’t like it, I don’t have to go back next year. So, I joined the CK retreat group on facebook, and then I got a friend request from (future friend), and I didn’t know her. Then I realized that she was from the CK retreat group. So, I ended up accepting her friend request, and she just started talking to me. I felt like that was definitely something God did, because I would have felt completely alone if I had never even talked to anyone at the retreat before. So, by that time, I was getting more excited than nervous about the retreat because I actually kind of knew someone there.

So, the day came for me to actually go on the retreat. That’s when I got really nervous. Like I said before, I was really shy, and going to Kalahari would mean being in a van with a bunch of people I had never met before. I was definitely scared. But, once the van left, we all introduced ourselves, and we started talking, and I realized that it really wasn’t that bad. I met a few new people, and I told myself that everything would be fine.

Once we got there, I had no idea what to do or where to go. But, I stuck with people from the van, and I figured it all out. I got to my room, and everyone was extremely nice to me. Once we figured out who was in the room, and where everyone was going to sleep, we went down for the first meeting. That’s where I met (my new facebook friend) for the first time.

That weekend really changed my perspective on some things. I have always been a good kid that followed the rules and everything, but I had just started to get that pre-teen girl attitude, I didn’t really respect my parents much, and I just wasn’t very happy most of the time. But, one night, we each got a letter from our parents. As soon as I started reading mine, I just sat there and cried. I don’t know why, but reading that letter

and being surrounded by people my age that actually understood where I was coming from was absolutely amazing. We had our small group that night, and I remember just crying. And I hate crying in front of people, especially people I don't know. But I felt like I could say anything there, and I wouldn't be judged or anything. I don't remember the details of much after that, but I know that after that weekend, I came home changed. My mom has even told me before, "I don't know what happened on that retreat, but you have definitely changed." I had a completely new attitude, and I respected my parents, and what they did, even more.

Needless to say, I couldn't wait for the next CK retreat. I just kept thinking, "If this much happened in one weekend, I can't wait to see what happens next year!" So, once I got the postcard for the next CK retreat, I signed up as soon as I could. I didn't know how anything could top my first year, but, thankfully, the next year got even better.

The next year, I was definitely less nervous to go to Kalahari. I ended up being in a room with (my same new friend), and (two new girls). I had no idea that I would become so close to these 3 girls. One of the nights, I don't remember exactly which one, but the speaker talked about how the Pharisees were these people that looked good on the outside, but they weren't that great on the inside. As an illustration, he had an M&M in his hand, and he held it the whole time he talked. He just kept talking about how people can look like great Christians to other people, but on the inside, they really aren't true Christians. That was a big thing for me. I realized that I had been living like that. I had just been doing the right things, following all the rules, and answering questions the right way. I didn't even realize that I didn't really have a relationship with God. I became a Christian when I was probably about 5 or 6, and I'm sure I meant it then, but after a while, it just didn't really mean much. That night, though, I rededicated my life to God. I decided that I didn't want to be one of those fake Christians anymore. I wanted to live my life for God and have a real relationship with Him. During worship that night was the first time I actually felt God's presence in the room with me. I could hardly sing along because I was crying so much. I just completely gave my life to God. Since then, I can't say that everything has become perfect, or that I'm always happy and nothing ever makes me angry or sad, but I have been a lot happier in general since then. Before, I was typically really negative about most things. Since I rededicated my life to God, though, I've become much more optimistic and just happier in general.

Since that retreat, each year has just helped my faith and my relationship with God become stronger. CK retreat is something that I look forward to every year, and I'm really sad that next year will be my last. But I'm glad that I've made friends on this retreat that will definitely last, and that I'll be able to talk to about my typical pastor's kid problems, long after CK retreat.

So, basically, CK retreat is awesome. It has changed my life, helped me have an awesome relationship with God, and has given me some lifelong friends.

"I was so excited about the water park before I went, but honestly, retreat could be held in a cardboard box, and it would still be awesome. CK retreat is a chance to be 100% genuine about everything without being judged or worrying about how it will affect one's family. My leaders and members of my small group helped me through some of the most difficult times in my teenage life, and God's presence has never failed to be there in abundance."

“Clergy kids retreat has helped me to see that I’m not alone, and that there are other kids out there who know what I’m going through. It’s really spiritually uplifting, and I’m so glad I went. I only wish there was one for college students!”

“Clergy Kids Retreat has allowed me to talk about the hardest times in my life. From my heart being broken by loved ones to eating disorder problems I had when I was younger and sexual abuse. Life is not always simple and especially not as a CK, and the adults and students at Clergy Kids Retreat understand that. This Retreat has giving me countless times to become closer to God. There are countless priceless moments that have been provided to me within this Retreat. I have made tons of friends including my 3 best. I have one year left to experience Clergy Kids, my 6th year, and I would not miss it for the world. If someone asked me if I can see God present within Clergy Kids Retreat I would smile and tell stories of how many people I have seen come back to God through this Retreat. I have been through alot as a CK. I have been in 9 schools in 4 states and 13 houses. I would not change who I am for the world because it has made me the girl God called me to be. I could go on and on about what being a CK means and what Clergy Kids retreat means to me.

Without the friends this has provided me only God knows were I would be right now. On days the hurt is still so real of the past, I could chose to live in it or let God grant me peace. It has taken me years to become at peace with parts of my life, with Gods help. Bad days still come around and my inner peace be weak on those days, but I know on those days I can rest in God’s hands and the love of the friends He has given me within clergy kids. For a long time I would not share my testimony because I feared how people would look at me. I, as the PK, have always been seen as problem-free at church. Parents ask why their kids are not like that. As a PK sometimes the only proper thing to do is not talk about your problems or your family’s problems, but I can be open at CKR.

I have shared my story with my small group in clergy kids over the last few years and they don’t look down at me for what I have done or what has been done to me over the years. It is a place you can feel safe and free to be yourself. CKR is part of my clergy kids story because it has provided me with friends, mentors, and life-skills I truly need as a CK.”

From Retreat Leaders...

“I loved being a part of Clergy kids retreat. It was a great time of connecting with other people who share the same unique situation of being the child of clergy or missionary parents. It was so special to talk with others who really understand where you’re coming from when sometimes being a PK I’ve felt all alone. Being a leader at this retreat really was a great experience. I loved being a part of the small group times where the girls really opened up and real issues were dealt with and great relationships were created. If I had the opportunity, I’d definitely do it again, no question!”

"I loved the clergy kids retreat. It was honestly a fantastic weekend. I definitely enjoyed just hanging out and being able to meet some students and really make a connection. Plus we played pool basketball and I got to dunk on some cats head! The coolest thing for me though was just sharing my experience as a pastor's kid. It was awesome that we all had that in common and I thought it was cool to bring my perspective while at the same time hear the perspectives of other people's experience. Looking back, I think the most valuable long-lasting thing for the students and for me is being a part of such a large group of people who have a common thread. It was a great picture of community and I'd say lots and lots of connections were made between the students. I hope you guys still keep rocking that each year!"

"I have been involved with Clergy Kids Retreat every year since it began. I continue to go back no matter what is happening in life, because of the dynamic and ongoing impact I have seen it make on the lives of these students, and us adults. It is such a powerful experience to share and hear from other clergy kids, young and old, about their stories, their struggles, their blessings, their victories and their life as a CK. Every year I see lives changed and a new depth of relationship emerge among these students. I have seen this retreat give life and hope to students and I have experienced it refreshing and renewing me. A community has developed from these retreats, and I continue to see that community lived out whenever I see the CK retreat alums together!"

"It is a blessing to be at the retreat. As an adult leader it is great to get to share your story with other pk's. I think it is THE BEST place that I have ever felt safe sharing the struggles and expectations that have been placed on us all. The junior high and senior high students have shared some things for the first time and it has started a process of healing in their lives. It's just things that you don't talk about with other people but when you get in a room with other pk's there is a feeling of it's okay to not be okay and I can share my 'stuff' in a place that will be safe. Having a parent in ministry is tough but also a blessing. Every year these students need to connect with other pk's. I wish this was around when I was in high school. I am honored to give my time and energy to be with these students."

"Clergy kids retreat is an incredible opportunity to connect students who have been born into ministry! As a leader and a clergy kid myself, it was incredible to support students with a story similar to mine. Growing up there were very few of my peers that understood what my life was like and this retreat provides a venue for students to connect in that way. It is also a method in which students can support each other! The connection that is made over those few hours has lasted to the next year and beyond!" To be part of God's work in this way is incredible!"

"I've always found there is a unique bond between pastors' kids – no matter what the age difference. The parsonage can be a lonely and pressure-filled environment at times, so it was wonderful to watch kids connect with others who understood their experiences. I felt humbled and encouraged that my presence and my experience as a grown pastors' kid (who myself has decided to be a pastor) could bring hope and encouragement to a younger generation. Pastors' kids see the "belly of the beast," as it were. If they decide to

stick it out, love Jesus, and serve the church, I believe their contribution to the Kingdom will be hugely significant. On the other hand, if their experiences lead them to resent Jesus and the church, we lose not only them but all the potential of their leadership. We cannot take off the pressures of being a PK or un-do past hurts in a weekend. But the Clergy Kids Retreat is an awesome opportunity to provide encouragement and community, which can make all the difference in the world."

"It was very touching to me to see these teens come together for a great weekend of fun (and it was a lot of fun), but then really connect with each other on the deeper issues they are facing. What I experienced in our breakout sessions was a group of girls really feeling like they could open up about what is really going on in their lives. It seemed to me that they didn't always feel like they could be completely open with their family, and this gave them that opportunity. Many of them told me how nice it was to see that there are others who are dealing with the same things they do. They didn't feel so alone.

I personally walked away from the experience invigorated and looking forward to another opportunity to be a part of a group like this. Outside of the amazing youth I got to spend time with, I truly enjoyed our worship services! The presence of the Lord was very real and you could feel it and see it in the faces of everyone around you. What a great thing it is that God is doing with this retreat! Whether or not I am able to participate again, I know that those who attend will be truly changed by the experience."

"My experience at the retreat was one of healing and connecting with much releasing of bitterness and frustrations. Even as an adult leader I was amazed to hear the stories that sounded so similar to the frustrations with which I had grown up as a PK. It was comforting to know that I wasn't alone, yet I wished that this event would have been available when I was a teen. I think of all the poor choices that may have been dodged had I known there were others going through similar situations. These connections made at the retreat are incredibly important and uplifting. I released so much bitterness toward loved ones and made some wonderful relationships with both other leaders and students. It was amazing to see how God could use such an experience to bring that specific group of people together. God is good, all the time!!

Thank you SO much for thinking of me. I still keep up with a few of the kids on Facebook and even had one of the girls send me a message a couple of weeks ago thanking me for a talk I had with her. She happened to remember it and was given the courage to talk things out with her mom. She said if it hadn't had been for remembering our conversation, she wouldn't have done it. I love how God works!! God bless you."