

Interreligious Leadership Conference calls for peaceful reunification of Korea

William Selig
November 11, 2017



Seoul, Korea -- On the second day of the Interreligious Leadership Conference, November 11, 2017, all the delegates were invited to join a rally calling for the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula.

After a morning session on interfaith activities, in the afternoon the participants traveled to the Seoul World Cup Stadium for the 2017 Global Rally for the Peaceful Reunification of the Korean Peninsula, where the keynote speaker was UPF co-founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon.

The conference is being held from November 10 to 14, 2017, at the Lotte Hotel World. A joint effort of UPF and the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC), an affiliated organization, it bears the title "Addressing the Critical Challenges of Our Time."

In the first session of the conference, the nearly 400 participants from 65 nations heard calls for greater partnerships to provide spiritual guidance to their communities. They were urged to work to enhance harmony and a sense of peace among God's children regardless of race, creed, national origin, gender, or religious or political affiliation.

Among the presentations and informal discussions, many religious leaders expressed a sense of shame that many of the world's crises -- human trafficking, poverty, lack of education, disease -- fall heavily on society's vulnerable, particularly women and children. Although countries continue to pour billions of dollars into military expenditures (traditional security), a mere fraction, in comparison, goes toward non-traditional security issues (climate change, population growth, refugee flow, human and drug trafficking). While most people traditionally look to politicians for solutions to society's ills, the religious leaders said the way to lasting peace must be centered on a higher spiritual power.

Session I: Introduction to the Interfaith Vision and Work of UPF and ACLC

Mr. Ricardo de Sena, the regional secretary general of UPF for North America, served as moderator. The invocation was given by **Rev. N.T.I. Naisali**, elder minister and chair of the United Reformed Christian Church of Tuvalu, Kiribati and New Zealand.

Ambassador Suzan Johnson Cook, a former U.S. ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom, began by quoting the Beatles, "Give peace a chance." In a spirit-filled presentation, Ambassador Cook referenced the Jewish prophet Isaiah, whose eyes were opened to the power, authority and sovereignty of God. "Once God opens our eyes to the reality of this world and God's vision for His kingdom, then our lives can never be the same," she said. There are three qualities, the ambassador said, that are needed to bring about change: vision, vitality and victory. She described Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, Harriet Tubman and Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon as visionaries. Ambassador Cook called on the participants to step forward and make a difference in our communities.

Dr. Michael W. Jenkins, the national co-chair of ACLC, referenced Rev. Moon's autobiography, highlighting several periods in his life, including Jesus' appearance during his prayer when he was a

teenager and his imprisonment in North Korea for his faith. Dr. Jenkins also spoke about the Middle East Peace Initiative (MEPI) programs in the Holy Land and this year's "Peace Starts with Me" interfaith tours of the United States, Japan and Korea.



Mr. Thomas P. McDevitt, the president of UPF International, gave his impressions of the purpose of the conference. "We are here to make a new beginning on a couple of fronts," he said. "One, to gather the ACLC top leadership; two, bring a new assembly of faith leaders from around the world; and three, gather on a public stage in the most dangerous place on the planet -- just 40 miles from the DMZ [Demilitarized Zone] -- and call for reunification." This is a significant moment, he said. Quoting the American general Douglas MacArthur -- "Men, since the beginning of time, have sought peace" -- he noted that no instrument or alliance like a League of Nations has been successful. According to General MacArthur, "The problem basically is theological." The way to peace is not through military means but through the spirit, Mr. McDevitt said.

Dr. Tageldin Hamad, the vice president of UPF International, spoke about the outreach to the Islamic faith, beginning with a meeting between the founders and Sheikh Ahmed Kuftaro, the grand mufti of Syria, in 1989. The founders agreed that there must be an interreligious dialogue and that the world should recognize Islam as a religion of peace. Dr. Hamad testified to the numerous conferences held with Muslim leaders from the Middle East. "If Father Moon's progressive vision of God had been understood and followed," he said, "then we wouldn't be seeing the violence and suffering in the Middle East that we see." Dr. Hamad spoke about the proposal made by Rev. Dr. Moon at the United Nations to establish an interfaith council, which ultimately became the inspiration for the UN's World Interfaith Harmony Week adopted in 2010.

Ms. Jennifer Gray, the director of interfaith outreach at the U.S. state of Maryland Governor's Office of Community Initiatives, spoke about her role as interfaith director. Faith leaders, she said, "have a moral imperative to help those in need or suffering. ... Often faith leaders are the first to know and are on the front lines of defending those suffering." Ms. Gray said, "Every faith organization plays a major role in our communities. It is the responsibility of faith leaders to help improve the human condition." She called on the leaders to "get out of our silos ... and make a difference."

Archbishop George Augustus Stallings Jr., the national co-chair of ACLC, said he finds strength and direction in Paul's letter to Rome: "For none of us lives to himself alone, and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord." The archbishop said his life belongs to the Lord, and when he is asked, "What is the purpose of life?" he responds with the words of the prophet Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart," meaning that our purpose is not determined by humans but by God. Archbishop Stallings called on the participants "to make this world a better place, make a difference." Change, he said, begins within each of us, as he quoted the singer Michael Jackson, "If you wanna make the world a better place, take a look at yourself and then make a change." He concluded by praising the founders, because "they remind us of our mission. We are the peacemakers!"

Global Rally

In the afternoon, the participants traveled to the Seoul World Cup Stadium for the 2017 Global Rally for the Peaceful Reunification of the Korean Peninsula. Beneath sunny skies UPF co-founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon delivered a message to more than 80,000, calling for peace on the Korean Peninsula and, more broadly, throughout the world.

The purpose of this event is very serious, Dr. Moon said. "The destiny of the world is at stake. We have gathered to move heaven and earth. When we look at the world situation, there are many serious issues affecting the world. These can't be solved with human efforts alone." She noted that the UN is nearing its 80th birthday, yet still "problems persist because nations cannot work together."



Dr. Moon said, "Faith alone is not enough"; we must actively fulfill our responsibility by "welcoming God in our families. That is the task we are faced with." The peaceful reunification of the peninsula and peace in the world will not happen by human effort alone: "It must be centered on God. When God is in our families and nations, then God's eternal blessings will fall on us." She called on everyone to share Heaven's blessings centered on the *Hyojeong* culture, meaning to always have God in our hearts.

Other speakers before and after the keynote address included **Ambassador R. James Woolsey Jr.**, a former director of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, who called for peace on the Korean Peninsula and praised the relationship between the United States and the Republic of Korea. "Our two countries have a bond of heart that was forged in the fires of the Korean War. The shared blood of Korea, the United States and the 15 other nations that was spilled into the soil of Korea in the fight against tyranny – makes us brothers and sisters forever. The world came to Korea at one time to protect this country, and the world has once again gathered together on this sacred ground."

Bishop Don D. Meares, the senior pastor of the Evangel Temple in the U.S. state of Maryland, thanked "Mother Moon [for] encouraging all faiths to work together for peace. We are also thankful for *The Washington Times*, which they founded, and which has worked tirelessly toward that spirit of unity by boldly lifting up the banner of freedom, faith and family."

Archbishop Dr. Johannes Ndanga, the president of the Apostolic Christian Council of Zimbabwe, said, "As people who believe in the God who watches over us, our hearts grieve over the situation in the Korean Peninsula. There is a grave crisis that is dividing this land. As religious leaders, we are called by our conscience to do the right thing. We are commanded by the Lord our God to do what we can to bring about the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula. By the wisdom of our UPF [co-]founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, we are gathered together at this Global Peace Rally to pray for the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula."

Rev. Dr. Marcus Braybrooke, the joint president of the World Congress of Faiths, United Kingdom, said: "For real change to happen, people of faith have had to relate to those who wield political and economic power, and to educationalists, and to those who work in the media. We need a shift of consciousness, where the welfare of others is our priority. As Jesus said, 'You cannot serve God and money.' Gandhi said, 'The world has enough for everyone's need, but not enough for everyone's greed.' Many people around the world are praying for peace on the Korean Peninsula, and may that day soon come," he said.

The conference participants were inspired by the discussions and presentations and particularly by the rally and the words and demeanor of the UPF co-founder. There was general agreement that the universal values in our diverse traditions have the power to bind us together and that the vision for a better world will not be achieved by human effort alone; God must be at the center of our lives.

Related article about this event: [Diverse coalition of religious leaders call for Korean reunification in interfaith rally](#) By Guy Taylor - *The Washington Times* - Saturday, November 11, 2017

Diverse coalition of religious leaders call for Korean reunification in interfaith rally

Guy Taylor
November 11, 2017



Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon observes the festivities on Friday (Aug. 28) surrounding the awarding of the new Sunhak Peace Prize in Seoul, South Korea. Source: Segye Times

SEOUL — The risk is higher today than ever that threatening rhetoric between the U.S. and [North Korea](#) could spiral toward war, says a former [CIA](#) director who joined a massive rally here of religious leaders from around the world on Saturday in call for peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula.

“The danger of harsh talk slipping suddenly into all out war is much greater today than it has ever been,” [James Woolsey](#) told the crowd of some 60,000 inside Seoul’s World Cup soccer stadium, just days after President Trump also embraced a softer-than-usual tone toward Pyongyang on his own visit to [South Korea](#).

[Mr. Woolsey](#)’s appearance raised eyebrows at Saturday’s rally, a gathering that was unique for the sheer diversity of faiths represented, featuring prayers and speeches by prominent figures from Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Sikhism, Shintoism, Jainism and Bahaism.

The event was organized by the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification. It was headlined with a speech from Hak Ja Han Moon, widow of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon and the leader of the Unification movement that grew from the Unification Church the Rev. Moon founded in 1954 — a year after war between North and [South Korea](#) was frozen by an U.S.-backed armistice.

“What do you hope to see?” Mrs. Moon asked the crowd. “It must be to see North and [South Korea](#) become one, and to live in that peaceful unified country.”

Her remarks drew a roar from those in the stands, an audience that also included tens of thousands of young and old from across [South Korea](#), who’d weathered the cool November temperatures to attend the rally at the vast outdoor stadium.

Mrs. Moon has led the Unification movement since a few years before the 2012 death of the Rev. Moon, whose ministry grew from a tiny, embattled church in his native [South Korea](#) to a global spiritual movement and an affiliated commercial empire comprising real estate, manufacturing and agricultural operations, and media properties including The Washington Times.

[Mr. Woolsey](#), 76, referenced the newspaper in his own remarks. “I’m here in part because The Washington Times’ hard hitting news and commentary is strengthening the resolve of America’s leaders to achieve peace and — God willing in time — freedom as well for the entire Korean Peninsula,” he said.

“We never forget that what divides North and South in this country is an artificial and arbitrary political wall of tyranny. All the men women and children of the Korean Peninsula are one people and they have been for some 4,000 years,” [Mr. Woolsey](#) said. “You have existed as one family since the dawn of recorded history and you will continue as one family for millennia to come.”

While he headed the [CIA](#) during the Bill Clinton administration from 1993 to 1995, [Mr. Woolsey](#) had a more recent influential role in Washington as an advisor Mr. Trump’s presidential 2016 campaign.

His comments followed a stop Mr. Trump made to Seoul as part of the president’s ongoing tour of East Asian nations. Nerves were on edge surrounding the visit by Mr. Trump, who made global headlines in August by threatening to “rain fire and fury like the world has never seen” on [North Korea](#) in response to Pyongyang’s increased missile tests and nuclear provocations.

However, the president took a far more nuanced approach in a speech to South Korea’s National Assembly on Wednesday, drawing repeated applause by praising the freedom that has allowed [South Korea](#) to flourish politically and economically and criticizing the “horror” being inflicted on North Koreans by the authoritarian dictatorship ruling Pyongyang.

While Mr. Trump’s rhetoric was notably softer, his military resolve appears to have grown more shrewd. In what military officials describe as a clear warning to [North Korea](#), Saturday saw U.S. and South Korean forces open their largest scale joint naval exercises in the region in nearly a decade.

Officials said the battle groups of the USS Ronald Reagan, the Theodore Roosevelt and the Nimitz are successively entering the exercises that will run until Tuesday, and will involve 11 U.S. ships equipped with Aegis missile defense technology, as well as seven South Korean naval vessels, including two Aegis ships.

The drills mark the first time since a 2007 exercise near Guam that three U.S. carrier strike groups are operating together in the Western Pacific, according to the U.S. Navy’s 7th Fleet. Japan’s Maritime Self-Defense Force said the U.S. carriers will also participate in separate exercises with three Japanese destroyers on Sunday, according to The Associated Press.

The sudden military activity seemed to underscore a feeling of urgency at Saturday’s rally in Seoul, titled the “2017 Global Rally for the Peaceful Reunification of the Korean Peninsula.”

The event coincided with a special Unification movement-backed “Interreligious Leadership Conference” being attended in the South Korean capital by more than 200 religious and political leaders, scholars and freedom advocates from more than 100 nations this week.

The conference has featured interfaith discussions and seminars. Several of those attending it spoke at Saturday’s rally, including many Americans, such as Bishop Don D. Meares of the Evangel Cathedral in Upper Marlboro, MD.

“We ask for peace and not for the ravages of war between north and [South Korea](#), as Korea is a nation flourishing with the Christian faith and all of God’s people while demonstrating respect and cooperation with all faiths,” Bishop Meares told the crowd. “We faith leaders from America and every corner of the world join in support of [South Korea](#). We proclaim that we commit ourselves to God’s spirit of unity and prayer for the peaceful reunification of Korea.”

Despite the sober nature of the remarks, the mood was festive inside the stadium. Jewish leaders could be seen exchanging ideas with Muslims. Buddhist and Hindu priests snacked on cookies in a V.I.P. area beneath the stands, where Christians of various denominations mingled with each other.

Many wore traditional religious outfits, including turbans and robes.

A particular high-point came when tens of thousands suddenly broke into dance to the thumping performance of American Gospel singer Bishop Hezekiah Walker’s “Every Praise” by Bishop Walker and the joint choir of the American Clergy Leadership Conference. “The Muslims were dancing to it too!” someone was overheard saying joyously afterwards.

Some in attendance wondered aloud how the festivities might be perceived by the government in [North Korea](#), where the freedom of religion does not exist.

“Religious and political leaders, public opinion makers and social celebrities together from more than 100 countries, representing all major religions, came together here today to express wholehearted support for the peaceful reunification. That’s a powerful message that the world community is sending to the two

Koreas,” said Alexandre Mansourov, who was there as part of a delegation of East Asia scholars and former U.S. officials.

“This spectacular event could put a lot of pressure on the North Korean authorities in the race for competitive legitimization on the peninsula,” Mr. Mansourov said. “The North Koreans may feel hard pressed to put together an event as representative and powerful as this if they want to send their own message to convince the world that they have a better vision for Korean reunification.”

Mr. Woolsey, meanwhile, embraced a faith-filled tone. “God is checking us to see if the men and women of God have the strength of faith to pull together to unite as one to rally together, not for ourselves or what we will get out of it, but unselfishly for the peace, prosperity and freedom of both South and North Korea,” he said.

The reason heated rhetoric between the United States and North Korea is so dangerous today stems from the reality that “the speed at which information, misunderstandings and events move in the world of advanced technology is unprecedented,” Mr. Woolsey said.

The former CIA director also expressed concern of the potential for a non-conventional attack by North Korea. “Now that the North has successfully put satellites into orbit and has successfully tested nuclear weapons, they have the technology needed to launch an Electromagnetic Pulse attack against the South or against Japan or against the U.S.” he said. “Such an attack could destroy the attack area’s electric grid, putting us instantly back into the 19th Century and leaving our cities with no way to communicate or to get food and water.”

“The world came to Korea at one time to protect this country and the world has once again gathered together on this sacred ground,” Mr. Woolsey said. “May God bless all of us and fulfill the dream of a unified and free Korean Peninsula.”