

The United Nations International Day of Peace 2018 observed in Portland, Oregon

Christine Edwards
September 23, 2018



On Sunday, Sept. 23rd, 2018 Mrs. Nancy Spanovich of the Wholistic Peace Institute delivered the Sermon for the "International Day of Peace," (established in 1981 by unanimous United Nations resolution) at the Portland Family Peace Fellowship in West Lynn, Oregon.

The following is a summary of the sermon and rich discussions that followed.

Mrs Spanovitch presented the case for embracing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights promulgated by the United Nations in 1948, three years after the end of WWII. Amongst the 30 rights listed are these basic rights:

Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person.

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care.

Everyone has the right to education.

Peace is something we all strive for, but too often fear, cynicism, bigotry, and other attitudes can predominate, producing problems as varied as anxiety, homelessness, crime, and wars. Nancy put forth the suggestion that peace is the antidote to fear. The Dalai Lama, she noted, has said that peace can only occur when people's needs are satisfied on a compassionate level. As peace seekers, we need to search within to find ways and opportunities to have empathy for and serve others. Through this, we can develop a greater understanding, and discover how to communicate with others in deep sincerity. When we overcome our own hurts and fears we can connect deeply and compassionately with others.

Following the sermon, a panel discussion on the Unity of the two Koreas was held featuring Dr. Linda Lucero-Nishikawa Regional Chairwoman for WFWP USA, Mr. Gary Spanovich facilitator of the Church of the Still, Small Voice Meditation Service, and Pastor Eric Sylte. The panelists were introduced by Roseann Kennett, the local WFWP co-chair.

Linda was the first to speak and gave an account of her father's involvement in the Korean War, which has given her a very personal connection to the nation's situation and has made her passionate about continuing the work for peace on the Korean peninsula. She preceded this with a brief account of the history of how America entered the war as one of the main participants amongst the UN forces who were sent to repel the invaders from the north, which was able to happen only because of the absence of the

Soviet Union's representative during the vote. Linda's father, Novato, first participated in WWII in the European theater with the 75th Division, 3rd Battalion of the 289th Infantry at the age of 18. After war combat, he was assigned to special police guard duty in France. He was discharged in 1946 with the EAME Campaign Ribbon with two bronze stars, Good Conduct Medal, Army Occupation Ribbon, Germany Victory Ribbon, and two Overseas Service Bars.



When Japan surrendered and WWII officially ended, the Soviet Union and the US stationed forces in Korea using the 38th parallel as the demarcation line. The Korean War -- the first act of aggression of the cold war -- began on June 25th, 1950 following a number of border clashes, just four years after the end of WWII. US Army reserves were called upon to fight with the UN forces sent to defend South Korea and Linda's father was amongst them. Novato Lucero served with the 2nd Division, 23rd Infantry Regiment, Company F on this tour of duty. His regiment landed in Busan and was sent directly to the front lines and across the Yalu River. After three months of combat, Novato was wounded in February when 12 Chinese and North Korean divisions had surrounded his regiment. A surprise attack was launched leaving only 17 of the company to survive.



Linda's father survived only because the enemy thought he was dead. Luckily he was found later and evacuated to a medical tent, then transferred to a medical facility in Busan and finally sent to a hospital in Japan where he was treated for about two months. To his surprise, he was sent back to Korea to his former company and again sent to the front line. When out scouting one day, he came under fire and jumped into a shell hole to escape the shooting, but a gas grenade landed two feet from him and burned his back. At times he thought he would never make it back home. When he was discharged he was awarded the Purple Heart and the Korean Service Medal with three bronze stars. In addition to her father, three of Linda's uncles were involved in the Korean War, one of whom was killed during his tour of duty. Linda's desire is to be able to make sure her family's efforts were not in vain and to allow WFWP's founder to see her country reunited.



Mr. Spanovich then shared his experiences of working to bring Nobel Peace Laureates to speak in the Portland area, including the former President of South Korea, Kim Dae Jung, creator of the Sunshine Policy, a policy of reconciliation based on the spiritual principle of forgiveness and the natural tendency of people to respond to warmth, as depicted in the fable of the contest between the wind and the sun to remove a man's coat. Gary also shared some of his experiences and insights regarding North Korean society, having visited the two Koreas many times, both with the Universal Peace Federation and because he is a board member of the Pyongyang University of Science and Technology. In his estimation, the North Korean country is comprised of three competing power factions: the Communist Party, the Military, and the Police. Each one vies to have the upper hand through its devotion to the Kim family. No matter how bleak the future might seem, he has hopes that reunification may come quite soon due to the efforts of President Trump, the talks between President Moon of South Korea and Kim Jong-un the North Korean leader, as well as the participation of the North Koreans in the recent winter Olympics in Panmunjom.

Pastor Eric focused on the story of Jacob and Esau. He emphasized that South Korea is in the position of having received many blessings, materially (incredible economic growth) and spiritually (representation of all the major world religions) and that, just like Jacob, it is in a position to resolve a history of fear, anger, and resentment. Jacob promoted peace by sharing his blessings with his elder brother Esau, who had come to meet him with a continent of 400 armed men in the Bible story. He also mentioned the inspired trip that Manae Pisano, a local Portland resident, arranged some years back for a group of youth to visit North Korea.

After the panel presentations, Christine Edwards fielded questions from the audience. The first question was: Can Americans visit North Korea? Gary informed us that it is currently not possible due to a travel ban by President Trump. The second question was: What can we do locally as individuals to help the situation? All panelists were asked to respond. Gary Spanovich recommended working through elected officials and or diplomats who have some leverage. He also gave an example of sending in petitions regarding particular situations.

Dr. Linda Lucera-Nishikawa emphasized recognizing the time in history in which we live, knowing who we are and our value, sharing blessings with others and being bold in our beliefs and actions. Pastor Eric

recommended listening to the still small voice of God for inspiration. The next question was: Would it be a good idea to start a sister city program with Pyongyang? Mr. Spanovich's opinion was that the time is not yet right for that, but would be a good idea for the future. The last question that there was time for was: Is it a good idea to help North Koreans escape via China?



Gary knew of a pastor who was doing exactly that and had been arrested. After having finally been put on trial and found guilty, he was banned from ever entering China again. When questioned about what he planned to do in the future, he said he would go back again. If you have the power of your convictions, nothing can stop you. You just have to be willing to suffer the consequences.

As Mrs. Spanovich said in her sermon, peace is something we all strive for and all have a right to, but people can be blinded by their fear. The history of humanity is rife with war, strife and resentment. So we must have the passion and compassion to push back and bring peace to a waiting world.

