

WFWP USA 2020 Leadership Retreat - Empower, Collaborate, Impact

Katarina Connery
November 14, 2020



Every year, the WFWP USA Leadership Retreat brings together women of all ages to be educated in leadership skills, learn the latest updates from the organization, reconnect in heart to WFWP's vision, share best practices with each other, and have some fun together as women. This year presented a special challenge due to restrictions on travel and larger gatherings. However, we decided to not let that stop us and moved to a virtual format. During a time when we need those interpersonal

connections more than ever, 135 women signed up to join. In fact, the new format allowed twice as many to participate compared to previous years! Even a delegation from WFWP Canada joined in the informative and empowering workshop.

As the women signed up for the retreat, they gained access to pre-recorded sessions to review before the live sessions held from November 12 to 14 via Zoom. The pre-recorded sessions featured topics such as Vision, Mission and New Developments for WFWP, Principles of Peace Leadership, Financial Stewardship for WFWP, Presenting WFWP in an Exciting Way, as well as technical trainings in Zoom meetings, Social Media, and Microsoft Word/Google Docs. As they were driving home from work, washing the dishes, or in between various tasks, participants watched the videos on their own time, writing down their questions, and preparing for some fruitful live discussions.



WFWP USA Vice President Katarina Connery

And what a time we had! Facilitated by WFWP USA Vice President Katarina Connery, with women from across the United States -- from Maine, Tennessee, Arizona, California, and as far away as Hawaii -- we launched the live sessions with the Opening Session on Thursday, November 12. After a brief explanation of what to expect at the retreat and an icebreaker, WFWP USA President Angelika Selle gave some very relevant guidance for calibrating our mind- and heart-sets for this era as women leaders and for WFWP. She spoke on the importance of each one of us becoming the turning point for peace by transforming what

comes our way into God's way and some practical pointers to do that such as knowing our passion, being aware of our own strengths and weaknesses, and building a spiritual connection with our Creator through prayer and reflection. That way, with love and compassion we can transform a toxic culture into a culture of heart. The evening concluded by reflecting on the words of the song "Restless Heart" by Jessie Early, and God's embracing love for us.

This was a perfect spiritual backdrop from which to start the main sessions of the retreat the following morning. Throughout the day, on Friday, November 13, participants had an opportunity to ask deeper questions about WFWP's newest developments, the exciting direction we are heading in the next few years, and how we can create that future together. The ladies shared with each other their personal passions and interests in WFWP's activities. One of the greatest challenges of being a leader for peace, which is very different from any other type of leadership, is leading ourselves. Therefore, we also took a dive into discussing what it actually takes to become a peace leader, in our families and in our communities. President Selle shared many pointers from her own journey in leadership and lessons learned from Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, WFWP co-founder, and her leadership style. With tremendous warmth, the women shared some of their own personal challenges in leadership and how they strive to overcome them.

The day's sessions also included a practical session on financial stewardship for WFWP, presented by Financial Administrator Irmgard Baynes and Membership Coordinator Hana Deshotel. While this session was primarily for chapter leaders and those dealing with finances and membership, many others reported they gained so much from learning how precious resources are used with heart and transparency. Many unique suggestions also came out for continuing to cultivate heartistic relationships with our members of WFWP.

The day concluded with a session on self-care. While we usually have live sessions and activities for self-

care, this year we had four interactive virtual breakouts from which participants could choose. After a short introduction by President Selle on "why" we need to take care of ourselves well, everyone joined in either Healing Rhythm with Patsy Onatah, Dealing with Stress with Kim Evans, Dress with Success with Tamara Starr-Perry, or Heal Thyself! Health and Wellness for Women with Rev. Juanita Pierre-Louis. In addition to practical guidance on dealing with stress and finding affordable pieces to enhance our beauty, many laughs and smiles were shared during the activities to stretch and move our bodies in sync with our inner rhythm.



WFWP Outreach Coordinator Kiyomi Schmidt introducing the Global Friends feature

The second full day of the retreat, on Saturday, November 14, brought out many conversations about bringing WFWP's messages and programs to a wider stage through networking, public relations, and outreach. We discussed some of the most recent developments with the Global Women's Peace Network in North America and participants discussed in regional groups their ideas for developing local involvement in this project. Some of the greatest excitement generated was around the [Global Friends](#), an aspect of the GWPN project through which organizations can partner with WFWP for meaningful change. One of the main highlights of the day was also a

discussion on Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon's recently published memoir, [Mother of Peace](#), and some of the messages which are relevant to promoting heart-centered feminine leadership which is needed now. Many unique ideas were brought forth as well as heartfelt testimonies of women who were personally transformed from reading about Dr. Moon's life and single-minded devotion to peace and love for God.

Capping off the entire weekend of interactive discussions, including some personal sharings over lunch by President Selle on her health tips to stay young and wisdoms learned from being in leadership for many years, was a panel of four amazing women leaders of WFWP. WFWP USA Western Regional Director Dr. Linda Nishikawa shared how she approaches becoming a leader of the heart through first and foremost connecting with God, always having a heart of gratitude, and also finding a circle of women for mutual support. WFWP Arizona Chairwoman Rhia Nkulu then shared about her experiences reaching out and building connections. She eventually was able to achieve her dream of having a radio program by first building a heartistic connection with just one person who opened all the doors for her. That way she could find a platform for sharing WFWP's vision. Be brave and authentic!



Clockwise from top left: Linda Nishikawa, Natascha Phillips, Rhia Luz, and Kathy Ross

WFWP Westchester Chairwoman and Northeast Regional Co-Director Kathy Ross then shared about the Westchester chapter's approach to cultivating membership. First and foremost is the connections we build and finding ways to support each other with love and care. Rounding off the evening of sharing from our leaders, WFWP Southeast Regional Director Natascha Phillips shared on looking to the future and some ideas for engaging the next generation. WFWP USA is continuing to develop this area of engagement, so Natascha shared a few practical tips which chapters could think about implementing, including making engagement relevant and concrete and

giving space for young women to learn and grow (and even make mistakes).

Of course the retreat wasn't only business! Though we couldn't have our traditional dance party, the sessions were punctuated by impromptu dancing, music, and quick fun activities. Once all participants were prompted to run and get an item that was orange to win an extra entry in the raffle prize drawing. The winner? Glenda Lambert's orange fly swatter!

With a bittersweet feeling we concluded on Saturday evening with some final guidance from President Selle, especially for developing our internal and external goals and looking toward the next milestone of 2027. In this time when we can't meet in person so easily, we were still able to build such an incredible atmosphere of love and embracing support for each other. Each in our own way we are striving to impact the world around us, by first leading and caring for ourselves, and extending that compassion to the people around us and beyond. This retreat was only the first step of what is to come for WFWP USA and Canada in the coming years! Through our computer and cellphone screens each of the women's shining faces were beaming with love for each other, even those we just met over the weekend, and with hope for

what we will be creating together in 2021 and beyond!



Reflections:

"My main purpose for attending was "connection" and it happened exponentially! What an amazing group of women -- so much love and talent and divine femininity. I realized that WFWP gives us all freedom to express our true nature, our passions, our contributions, our creativity. Yay for WFWP!" - RoseAnn Kennett

"Thank you for this great program. Glad to have met all the wonderful women here. I love all the sharing. I can see how God's work of embracing all His children with His great love can happen through the Women's Federation for World Peace." - Rosie Dijan Muyongo

"First, Angelika's guidance, presence, spirit, energy, depth, beauty were very inspiring and so genuinely connected to the founder's vision; everything about her was (and is) so exemplary, educational, enriching and uplifting. Katarina's spirit and content throughout were also excellent, beautiful and loving, and the same with all the staff. Really it was so incredible to spend time together with everyone, going over all the points, internal and external, exchanging ideas and I am truly amazed that I belong to such a group." - Mary Ellen Legay

"This conference has been my first encounter with WFWP. I am amazed at the power of love and unity that I have witnessed. I can only imagine how wonderful this is in person. I'm so honored to have been invited." - Regina Cook

"I observed the cooperative spirit of young and old members of this organization, and that it is so important when a young woman like me is willing to take the torch to continue what our elders have pioneered. I observed my mom, who is the Chairwoman of PA, and through her as well as other women leaders I saw great examples of how a mother can be a light bearer to our home and to our community." - Precy Dohou

"My inner soul is elated with the vision statement of Mother Moon, who founded WFWP. She believes that through the "logic of love" we are able to create a world of peace and not "by the logic of power." The WFWP leadership platform strengthens individuals, families, organizations with the same vision, women within communities and nations for the greater good to become a peace loving global family providing for one another. We, as sisters, mothers, daughters, and wives, will let this nurturing platform be a light unto our faithful feet and walk the trodden path of Mother Moon whose faith is unshakable and become the true women we are all called to be." - Roslyn Russell