

Moon was 'unifier on the world stage'

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Peace was his focus, peace the lifelong theme of his preaching. Beyond a devotion to love and family, the third persistent theme in the teachings and ministry of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon was the search for ways to promote peace in the world, articulated in often surprising ways by a man who approached the theme through both lofty concept and down-to-earth practical application.

"Rev. Moon has emerged as a great peacemaker and unifier on the world stage," former Secretary of State Alexander Haig once said. "He is a leading force for interreligious dialogue and understanding between people of all backgrounds, and for global peace and security."

The commitment was not just rhetorical, as his efforts helped spawn dozens of institutions and programs in his native Korea and around the globe, all charged with a mission of promoting peace in ways big and small, theoretical and practical.

Rev. Moon, who died early Monday in South Korea, got started at a young age.

"Love completely even those who hate you," he wrote when he was 16. In later years, Rev. Moon described himself as a "peace-loving global citizen," which became the title of his 2009 autobiography, leaving him with this conclusion:

"My prayer is that every person on earth will be reborn as a peace-loving global citizen, transcending barriers of religion, ideology and race," Rev. Moon wrote in the last line of his book.

Associates say he was single-minded and strategic about the quest for peace, and went about realizing his vision of peace with methodical precision, founding a spectrum of organizations aimed at specific audiences.

Putting peace into practice

Launched in 2001, the Ambassadors for Peace program was a mainstay of Rev. Moon's outreach, built around core principles that include "living for the sake of others in service to God and humanity" and a spirit of harmony and cooperation among races, religions, nationalities and cultures. The group now has chapters in more than 160 countries ranging from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe.

The Universal Peace Federation was also a primary focus of his efforts. Founded seven years ago, it began with a 100-city international tour that took Rev. Moon and his wife, Hak Ja Han, on a search for like-minded folk who believed that authentic peacemaking started on a family level. The federation also stressed a "new future" for the United Nations, complete with a widening of the world body's peacemaking mission beyond the traditional elite-based realm of politicians, diplomats and generals.

“Peace is not simply the absence of war or a term that applies only to the relationships among nations. Peace is an essential quality that should characterize all relationships,” the group notes in its mission statement.

Many spinoffs

The effort spawned many spinoffs, often targeting specific groups or regions torn by conflict and division. Among the many organizations that fall under the Universal Peace Federation umbrella: the Marriage and Family Peace Initiative, the Middle East Peace Initiative, the Balkans Peace Initiative, the South Asia Peace Initiative, the Global Peace Council, the Office of Peace and Security, and the Women’s Federation for World Peace International.

The theme continues. Rev. Moon also established the Peace Cup, an international professional soccer competition; the more casual Play Football, Make Peace program; and a Professors World Peace Academy for college-level academics.

Among other entities are a Global Peace Festival, a Global Peace Convention, a World Interfaith Harmony Week, iPeace TV, Universal Peace TV, the Universal Artists Association for World Peace and the International Peace Highway.

Rev. Moon envisioned a roadway linking multiple countries via asphalt, bridges, tunnels — framing the project as a modern-day Silk Road that would require the cooperation of many nations and thus generate cross-border understanding in difficult times.

“There will be no roadblocks. The entire world will be interconnected,” he reasoned.

The theme of peace and peacemaking remained a central theme of his work and thought to the end of his life.

Family as the foundation

In 2011, the reverend linked his themes of peace and family explicitly in a conference in Abuja, Nigeria, as part of the Universal Peace Federation “Founder’s Peace Tour,” which attracted some 3,000 people to a country facing economic woes and religious tensions between its Muslim and Christian populations.

“The tradition of peace that God wants to see in Africa must be firmly established in the family,” Rev. Moon told the gathering. “Every family must establish a pure tradition. Then, even if the family’s fortunes go up and down, even as far as the sun falling below the horizon, eventually the light will return.”

In July, just weeks before he fell ill, Rev. Moon established a leadership organization for women meant to reintroduce a feminine perspective in peacemaking at the United Nations. It would signal “dramatic change,” Thomas G. Walsh, president of the Universal Peace Federation, told a crowd of 12,000 who gathered in Korea to celebrate the idea.

“The leaders who disregard or can’t look straight to the new global reality will be swept away by the changes surging like a tsunami,” Rev. Moon told his enthusiastic audience. “I believe that it is time now to go forward, daring to receive new opportunities and values.”