

Waging Peace

Peace Vigil and March, July 25-26, 2014

Washington D.C.

### **Prayerful Remarks for Peace Vigil and March**

Bishop Hee-Soo Jung, PhD (Wisconsin Conference)

I am so glad to have the opportunity to greet all of you today as we gather in the peace and grace of Jesus Christ to begin our vigil for peace and prepare for our peace march. Our connection that binds us to each other from our many backgrounds and experiences is our deep desire for peace. Our gathering for these two days is in part because of action taken by the United Methodist General Conference meeting in 2012 calling on United Methodists to organize a peace march for reconciliation and reunification of the Korean Peninsula.

But for most of us, it is deeper than the words of a Resolution, it is a deep sense of standing for what is right and just. I am grateful for the presence of all of you and for all you do to help the cause of bringing peace and reconciliation for the people of Korea.

We gather here in gratitude for the work that has already been done and the progress made. Thankful for the World Council of Churches and the ecumenical partners, more than 345 denominational churches in WCC 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly at Pusan, Korea, that have promised to pray for peace in Korea.

As we gather we remember the Korea Peace Conference in Atlanta, Georgia last year where those who gathered deepened our resolve and commitment for the work of reconciliation and reunification. It was gathered communities from twelve different denominations in US.

Today we deepen our commitment as we remember the story of many separated families in North and South Korea. Recently when we were Ecumenical Forum on Korea and WCC International Consultation

at Chateau de Bossey, Switzerland, we heard from Ms Gil Won Ok, a survivor of Japanese military sexual slavery and her quest for justice and peace and the reminder she offers to all of us that war and violence are not the way to peace.

We gather here because of our desire for peace, not only for Korea, but for the people of Palestine and Israel and the Ukraine, and all places where hatred and fear find expression in war and violence. We are here because we are convinced that for peace to prevail people not caught up in the direct result of war and violence must build relationships that affirm that there is a better way and a better future than continued separation and conflict. We understand for peace to prevail we must work for ways that lead to just resolution of conflict, not just the absence of violence. We gather these two days because we understand it will take many voices and much effort to deconstruct the concept of the other being our enemy and to find new ways to build mutual understanding.

I am encouraged and grateful for the four brothers in Christ from North Korea who came to the International Consultation on Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula in Chateau de Bossey, Switzerland in June of this year on behalf of the Christian Federation of North Korea. It was inspiring to witness their deep faith and generosity of spirit. Their presence and what they shared renewed me and encouraged me to continue the journey that brings me and you together today here in Washington D.C.

We are gathering in the city of Washington D.C. because we know that we cannot have peace in Korea without the support and help of the people and government of the United States. We are here because we affirm the time has come to end the Korean War and develop new avenues for negotiating for the reunification of Korea. We are here because we believe that people on both sides of the 38th parallel

have a deep desire to end the suffering of separation and we in the United States have it within our power to assist them. We come together to pray and march and petition because we know it will take the voices of many to change the hearts and minds of government leaders.

We don't claim to have easy answers nor do we think there is an easy way to bring peace to Korea, But we do affirm that the way to peace includes lifting many of the sanctions on North Korea that are such a hardship on the people there and the beginning of open, genuine dialogue that leads to the official end of the war and the possible reunification of the Korean people.

We are gathered here because, whether we are Korean or not, we love the people of Korea and want what is best for them. We are here and we pray and march because we want to put an end to the military culture of separation and violence that takes the lives of others and in its place build communities of service and sharing. We are gathered here because we are people of faith who seek to be lights that shine brightly on the hilltops for peace on the Korean peninsula and the world.

We are here, because as people of faith, we are called to stand with those who are in need and to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves, to encourage those with power to do the right thing in caring for those who are powerless. Our efforts for seeking peace are not just for the people of Korea, but our efforts here will impact relationships between many nations who are vitally interested in Korea, such as the U.S., China, Russia, and Japan. What we learn and how we navigate the peace process in Korea will demonstrate how peace is possible wherever there is violence and conflict anywhere.

Thank you for being here my sisters and brothers on behalf of the church! I am here because I am convinced that what we do here in the next two days will move us forward in the ongoing efforts for

peace. I am here and you are here and we are all here together because peace will prevail only if we are willing to demand it. We can only break the influence of darkness and violence if we shine our light of hope and together live into our expressions for peace.