

Korea: Diplomacy that Opens the Door to Healing and Reunification

An Open Letter to the President of the United States, Donald Trump From
Bishop Hee-Soo Jung, United Methodist Church

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Mr. President, I respectfully write to you with four appeals.

First, I want to appeal to you for exemplary leadership in the case of North Korea. In a volatile and dangerous situation, a calm, cool, well-reasoned response is necessary. Our American media gives a limited, and somewhat biased view of what is happening on the Korean peninsula. Certainly there is evidence of rash and short-sighted decisions; but such evidence demands a more mature and measured response from global super-powers. North Korea needs to be taken seriously, and offered an opportunity to relate on the global stage. Name-calling and angry threats cannot make this situation better. But diplomacy that opens the door to healing and reunification is vitally important. The Korean War is yet to end, and the armistice in place is no substitute for a peace treaty. Further violence and damage is unneeded and unnecessary. Continued diplomatic conversations – such as those with South Korea and Japan – must include leadership from the DPRK (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea). At the very least, the United States must rise above the caustic rhetoric to offer a better way. We must offer a witness of peace, not violence. Jesus Christ reminds us, “blessed are the peacemakers.” (Matthew 5:9a)

Second, I appeal for a commitment to lead the globe, and not just our own country. Economic justice, access to education, open source technology, and freedom of movement provide our entire world with hope for the future. By keeping open borders, we allow those most likely to become enemies to become friends and allies. Young people of all races, creeds, countries, and ethnicities contribute to global peace and security as they obtain greater promise of economic justice and equal opportunity. Our DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) policies are a bright and shining hope for our whole planet. The more we support the youth of the world today, the more we lay a foundation for peace and security for our future. We have more than enough to share. We should be the country of open hearts, open minds, and open doors – a visionary commitment of The United Methodist Church. Open hands, as well, are a gesture of peace and hope for the future. This is what makes America truly great. Again, Jesus admonishes, “For if you only love those who love you, what reward have you?” Matthew 5:46a)

Third, I implore you to call for unity and reconciliation throughout the country. The growing

polarities threaten to tear us apart, and when comments are made to further divide us, it does irreparable violence to our country. Racism, sexism, bigotry, insult, and attack have no place in our country; and they undermine our ability to provide leadership in the world. We are developing a planet-wide reputation for intolerance, injustice, prejudice, narrow-mindedness, and incivility. We must follow an ethical high road. Where others resort to insult, mockery, and coarse language, we must maintain dignity, integrity and grace. Where others resort to weakness and violence, we must maintain strength through reason and common sense. When a Charlottesville occurs, we must name the evil as unacceptable behavior for what it is, and we must stand for what is good, right, and just. When professional athletes exercise their inalienable rights to protest, we should not attack and insult them, calling them names and shaming them for their heartfelt beliefs. Again, hear the teaching of Jesus: “For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get.” (Matthew 7:2)

Fourth, Mr. President, I want to appeal to you to make politics secondary to service. The poor, the marginalized, those needing healthcare and social rescue are not enemies, nor are they a problem to be eliminated or destroyed. As far as the Affordable Care Act, fix what is broken, but do not destroy the good that has been achieved. Democratic leaders are not enemies; they are opponents. The legacy of the Obama Administration does nothing to reflect on you as our leader now. Please do not waste time “dismantling” what has come before. You won the election. You are President. Nothing your predecessors do, did, or said means anything at this point. Please do not look backwards; look ahead. Please do not destroy, but work to create. Do not tear down, but build up. For the stronger we are, the better we will lead. Jesus offers the instruction to build upon solid rock, rather than shifting sand. (Matthew 7:24-27) We need a firm and solid foundation upon which all can stand.

Mr. President, our country – our world – needs LEADERSHIP. We have a unique opportunity to make our global community strong, safe and productive. We need allies. We need connection. We need to take seriously the Biblical metaphor to be light in the darkness, a grand and glorious city on the hill. (Matthew 5:14) You said that you wanted to make America great again. Please keep this promise, and be a leader for peace, for progress, for unity, and for promise.

Grace and Peace,

Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

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