Worldwide prayer campaign begins to end 70-year Korean War

A war erupted on the Korean Peninsula 70 years ago that divided Korea and that has yet to end. So, the world's churches have launched a "70 Days of Prayers - Global Prayer Campaign" for peace.

A global prayer campaign for peace on the Korean Peninsula was announced via live streaming on 6 February at the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Geneva, with similar events the same day in Washington, DC, and earlier in the day in Seoul.

“This year, 2020, marks the 70th anniversary of the start of the Korean War. Seventy years! Koreans in the North and South have lived in pain and hatred for a long time,” WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit said in a message at the Geneva launch of the prayer campaign.

“During this period of prayer, churches around the world will hear the heartbreaking stories of those who have gone through the suffering from the division. They will also hear about the people who have already lived out lives of reconciliation and peace beyond the division.”
Tveit said that since the 2013 WCC 10th Assembly in Busan, the WCC has renewed and strengthened its commitment to increased ecumenical efforts for peace, reconciliation, and reunification of the divided Korean people.

Rev. Dr Jin Yang Kim, WCC programme executive and assistant coordinator of the Ecumenical Forum for Korea, opened the proceedings by beating a distinctive gong in Korean fashion, and Korean singer Baekeun Cho delivered a moving rendition of Agnus Dei.

**Replacing armistice with peace treaty**

“We sincerely aspire to end to the Korean War, declaring the replacement of the Armistice Agreement with a peace treaty,” said Tveit.

*WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit invites churches worldwide to join prayers for peace on Korean peninsula. Photo: Ivars Kupcis/WCC*

The campaign will last from 1 March to 15 August, during which hundreds of thousands of people worldwide will say: “We Pray, Peace Now, End the War!”

The Korean War that divided the country in two was fought from 1950 to 1953, but fighting ceased only with an armistice, and a peace treaty is yet to be signed. At least three million people are thought to have died in the fighting and families were wrenched apart by the division of the country.
Representatives from the Korean Christian Federation of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and from the National Council of Churches in the Republic of Korea were invited to reflect on the significance of 70 years and share their hope for the future.

The campaign issued a clarion call for a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula as part of a nuclear-free world.

“The ongoing 1945 division and the unfinished 1950 Korean War have become a socio-geopolitical ‘original sin’ against Korean people’s life security,” said Rev. Dr Hong-Jung Lee, general secretary of the National Council of Churches in Korea.

‘Prayers are key of peace’

“We believe that the prayer campaign will be a key of peace to open the gate of God’s grace, a breath of peace to cultivate forgiveness and reconciliation, a fountain of peace to revitalize a global ecumenical solidarity, and a milestone of peace toward the God-recreating Korean oikoumene.”

Tveit said the prayer mission looks to the letter of Paul to the Ephesians 2:14: “For he is our peace; in his flesh, he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.”

On 18 November 2019, the National Council of Churches in Korea at its General Assembly in Jeongdong decided to proclaim 2020 as a “jubilee year” marking 70 years since the Korean War.

The prayer of Korean churches as well as by the WCC was read from Seoul by Rev. Dr Sang Chang, WCC Asia region president.

“Oh Lord God of history, please hear our prayers. Seventy years since the Korean Peninsula was divided, we seek peace and reunification.” She said the division has led to “woe and Cold War deepening the pain of our people.”

Rev. Frank Chikane, moderator of the WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) spoke from South Africa via a phone link saying he had met the people from both North and South Korea who want peace. “We pray that the Lord will help them.”

“I see Korean peace as a kind of Litmus test for all of humanity. If we cannot find a way to end the insanity of a 70-year-old war on the Korean Peninsula, how do we expect to solve the most urgent problems threatening the survival of our entire planet?” said Erich Weingartner, former executive secretary of the CCIA from Canada.

Mimi Han, vice president of the Young Women’s Christian Association, said from a “freezing Seoul” that international support from world churches is needed to support the South Korean government’s desire for contact again with the North.
“Each of us is able to take part from wherever in the world. All of you are able to join the campaign,” said Marianne Ejdersten, WCC director of Communication at the start. She also called attention to a social media kit as well as a special website that will offer resources to help people across the world pray and reflect in meaningful ways.

The campaign will end on 15 August, celebrated as Liberation Day in both North and South Korea, the date in 1945 when Korea won independence from Japanese colonial oppression, yet it also was the day when the peninsula was divided into two countries.

"We Pray, Peace Now, End the War!" - 70 days of global prayer announced for Korean Peninsula, WCC press release 05 February 2020

Light of Peace campaign resources, prayers and social media kit

Photos from the Launch of the Global prayer campaign for peace in Korea

Video recording of the Global prayer campaign launch event