

## **MFSA Iowa Statewide Gathering The Two Koreas**

With Keynote by the Rev. Heecheon Jeon

**Saturday, April 7 –9:45AM**

**Korean United Methodist Church - Des Moines**

### **A Postcolonial Dilemma: The Two Koreas and Northeast Asian Hegemonic Struggles**

By District Superintendent Heecheon Jeon

The nuclearization of North Korea has created a complicated geopolitical conundrum that the rest of the world, including South Korea, the U.S., China, Russia, and Japan, have been confronting for their own national interests and international relations. Donald Trump and Kim Jung-Un recently exchanged provocative remarks that have escalated military tensions around the Korean Peninsula as NK continues to develop its nuclear program and missile tests for their national security. It is crucial to carefully analyze root causes of those tensions by exploring why North Korea started to develop the nuclear program since 1992, why the U.S. refuses to sign a peace treaty that acknowledges the sovereignty of North Korea after the armistice of the Korean War in 1953, and why South Korea has lost their own leverage to swing the ideological pendulum for their own national identity and to initiate peace talks with North Korea.

While South Korea has to keep its own diplomatic alliance with the U.S., Japan, Russia and China for its economic development and political stability, North Korea needs to keep its historic alliance with China and Russia for its own ideological integrity (communism and *Juche*) and national security and sovereignty. This is a postcolonial dilemma that the two Koreas have been wrestling with between great powers after the Korean War, during the Cold War and at the rise of China that has especially changed the world map of economic power and political influence in the 21st century. While the U.S. government strategically sees a nuclearized North Korea as a threat to them and their Asian-Pacific allies, it seems that as a result they try to perpetuate the tension to maintain their military presence in South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore and the Philippines in order to fend off China's emerging global power. NK's nuclear weapons program, however, indicates that while the U.S. has imposed harder economic sanctions on North Korea through the U.N. as a neoliberal agent of "sanctioned ignorance," there is a clash between the postcolonial self-determination of the two Koreas and the neo-colonial/neo-liberal great powers' interventions on the Korean Peninsula.

The bottom line is that for world peace as well as for

### **Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen**

It came to my attention through my nephew working in Qatar that a humanitarian crisis is happening in Yemen in the Middle East. The United Nations warns that Yemen could have the worst famine the world has seen in decades with millions of victims. For more than two years, Saudi/US bombing has targeted civilian infrastructure, destroying hospitals, schools, factories, sea ports, electrical power stations and water treatment facilities.

Education is now extinct in Yemen. Armed conflict has taken the lives of 12,000 people. That number is greatly exceeded by the number of people dying from malnutrition and otherwise preventable diseases including respiratory infections and measles. The destruction of the infrastructure also means the spread of water-borne diseases like cholera and diphtheria. Basic facts to know:

- As many as 8.4 million people face starvation
- US drones and Special Forces have killed civilians.
- The US Air Force refuels Saudi fighter jets
- It is predicted that the death count will surpass the Holocaust.
- 1,000+ children die each week ....143 per day.
- 1.8 million children are malnourished, including 400,000 under the age of 5 who suffer acute malnutrition.
- Three quarters of Yemen's population of 22.2 million people need assistance.

The crimes being committed are in violation of the UN Declaration of Human Rights as well as many other international treaties. Protests occurred in New York City and other cities on December 11th to "Lift the Blockade" and "Stop US-Saudi War Crimes". The protests in New York City began in Ralph Bunche Park. Mr. Bunche was one of the founders of the United Nations, and in 1950, became the first black American to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. Carved into the stone pavement are these words by Mr. Bunche, "Peace, to have meaning for many who have known only suffering in both peace and war, must be translated into bread or rice, shelter, health and education as well as freedom and human dignity – a steadily better life..."

Complacency is all too easy because we think these conflicts are happening "over there" and don't really affect us. Yet, Christ calls us to a higher standard of love and compassion. We are our brother's keeper.

Here are three suggestions of what you can do:

1. Call your Senators and Representatives NOW and ask them to support the Yemen people by encouraging the US, Saudi Arabia and ALL members of the coalition to lift the blockade, stop the bombing, and assist the people in rebuilding their war-ravaged country.



## What is a Justice-Seeking Congregation?

By Rev. Josh Steward

Iowa MFSA Newsletter Editor;

NCJ Representative, MFSA Board

Your congregation cares passionately about - and takes action on - issues like these:

Climate Justice

Racial Justice

Gender Justice

Economic Justice

Reproductive Justice

Peace/Non-Violence

Rights for Palestinians

Disability Justice

Sanctuary

Justice/Inclusion in the UMC

You are a perfect fit to join a new MFSA (Methodist Federation for Social Action) program: Justice-Seeking Congregations!

To be recognized as a Justice-Seeking

Congregation MFSA asks that you:

Contact the National Office at:

[mfsa@mfsaweb.org](mailto:mfsa@mfsaweb.org) to let them know about your interest in this program! There is a brochure with details available.

Adopt a Congregational Covenant

Make an annual membership gift (suggested minimum: \$200)

Hold a yearly MFSA Sunday with a special offering

Share news of your justice work with MFSA

The Congregational Covenant is a statement that affirms several MFSA values:

Conviction: A commitment to call ourselves, our congregation and our church to expand its understanding of the call of the Gospel to be

the inclusive, anti-racist/anti-oppressive, justice-seeking, risk-taking, world-transforming Body of Christ.

Action Grounded in Faith: To be faithful witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ is to be Inspired by the advocacy of Jesus with the least, the last and the lost.

Give Voice to the Prophetic Christian Tradition: The Gospel honors the dignity and value of every human life by listening attentively and carefully to those on the margins of the church and society. We strive to speak and act in ways that honor truth over fear and integrity over comfort.

Offer Radical Welcome: We seek full inclusion in our congregations and communities. We will be agents of God's reconciliation and inclusion in our church and world.

the Interconnectedness of Oppressions: We work nonviolently to end economic injustice, institutional racism, sexism, homophobia, militarism, ableism, ageism, and the degradation of the environment. We understand that work against injustice in any one of these areas brings us closer to justice in every one of these areas. As such, we refuse to pit oppressed persons and groups against one another. We understand all experiences of marginalization and injustice are interconnected because injustice works on multiple, simultaneous levels, as do concepts of privilege and power.

If these values are your values, I encourage you to deepen your ministry/congregation/faith community's commitment to the work of justice by becoming a Justice-Seeking Congregation in partnership with MFSA.

MFSA Iowa Chapter Coordinator: Eloise Cranke [ecranke@mchsi.com](mailto:ecranke@mchsi.com)  
Visit [mfsaiowa.org](http://mfsaiowa.org) for SQB archives, the monthly events memo and more.

### MFSA Iowa Membership and Support:

Membership includes membership with National MFSA & SQB newsletter subscription. To join, contact our membership secretary Mike Biklen No dues are required, but any gift is greatly appreciated. 80% of your membership donation goes to fund the work of National MFSA. Please support MFSA Iowa financially through any or all of these three funds:

- **Organizer Fund:** Supports the work of our coordinator Eloise Cranke.
- **General Fund:** operating budget expenses.
- **Memorial Fund:** Gifts given /designated  
Donate by mailing a check to MFSA Iowa c/o Mike Biklen 515 E. 11<sup>th</sup> St., Muscatine, IA 52761-3920 or via Paypal at [mfsaiowa.org](http://mfsaiowa.org).

### MFSA Intersectional Organizing Principle:

All experiences of marginalization and injustice are interconnected because the struggle for justice is tied to concepts of power and privilege. Intersectional organizing recognizes that injustice works on multiple and simultaneous levels. Practical intersectional organizing always focuses on collaboration and relationship building. Experiences of injustice do not happen in a vacuum; therefore, it is imperative to:

- Develop the most effective strategies to create space for understanding privilege;
- Organize in an intersectional framework led by marginalized communities;
- Build effective systems of resistance and cooperation to take action for justice.