

In Time of Crisis, Pray

Neil Salonen
January 1974



In the darkest hours of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln wrote: "I do, by this my proclamation, designate and set apart Thursday, the 30th of April, 1863, as a day of National Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer. And I do hereby request all the People to abstain on that day from their ordinary secular pursuits, and to unite, at their several places of public worship and their respective homes, in keeping the day holy to the Lord, and devoted to the humble discharge of the religious duties proper to that solemn occasion."

The National Prayer and Fast for the Watergate Crisis, launched on November 30 with the publication of Reverend Moon's statement calling Americans to forgive, love, and unite, reached unexpected climaxes during the month of January. Rallies in all 48 continental states of the United States; three mass rallies in Washington, D.C.; and supportive rallies in England, Germany, Japan, and Korea captured world-wide attention, including at

least 150 newspaper articles and stories and interviews by 108 television stations.

In addition, approximately 1,200 members of the National Prayer and Fast for the Watergate Crisis (NPFWC) gathered in Washington on January 21 to speak to their home senators and congressmen about the need for forgiveness and unity at this time in America. An unprecedented impeachment ball the previous night was sparked by costumed NPFWC members and a picket line calling for unity.

A tradition begun by President Eisenhower was another occasion for calling national attention to the urgent message of Reverend Moon to Americans at this time. The Presidential Prayer Breakfast on January 31 gathered 3,000 religious, political, and economic leaders from around the United States and the world to dedicate a new year to God's guidance and direction. While the leaders prayed, 1,500 NPFWC demonstrators rallied in front of the White House, and were pleased to greet Tricia Nixon Cox and her husband Edward.



The previous day Reverend Moon returned to Washington at the close of his 21-city Day of Hope tour to attend the Presidential Prayer Breakfast. He was welcomed by an estimated 2,000 at Dulles Airport and greeted with messages from congressional and international leaders. From the airport, many of the NPFWC members went to the Capitol building to give spiritual support to President Nixon as he delivered the State of the Union message.

On February 1, Reverend Moon met with President Nixon for approximately 20 minutes. Reverend Moon used the opportunity to pray for the President and then assure him, "God needs you here; God loves you; I

love you-don't give up."



In rainy weather, NPFWC members gather for prayer across from the White House.

Listen to God

It was an eventful month. The President noted at the Prayer Breakfast: "Too often we are a little too arrogant. We try to talk to God and tell Him what we want. What all of us needs to do and what this nation needs to do is to pray in silence and to listen to God to find out what He wants us to do."

In a December 11 letter to Reverend Moon, President Nixon wrote, "I am particularly grateful for the prayers and goodwill that you and members of the Unification Church have expressed at this time.... If we keep faith in ourselves and our faith in God, I am confident that America will remain the great symbol of hope for millions around the globe."

Proclamations for a day of prayer (or day of prayer and fasting for the Watergate Crisis) were issued by mayors of the following cities: Baltimore, Maryland; District of Columbia; Fargo, North Dakota; Birmingham, Alabama; Wilmington, Delaware; Dover, New Hampshire; Manchester, New Hampshire; Portsmouth, New Hampshire; Somersworth, New Hampshire; Claremont, New Hampshire; Jackson, Mississippi; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Sioux Falls, South Dakota. In addition, the governor of Maine proclaimed January 9 as a Day of Prayer, recognizing that "the prayers of a concerned people in the spirit of forgiveness and love can be a vital first step toward bridging the gap of separation and bringing unity of purpose."



At least 8 senators and 53 congressmen, of both parties, responded with support for the spirit of the Watergate statement. Additional messages were received: "It has been a tradition of the American people to invoke God's blessing on our nation during troubled times. Any effort which seeks to bring this great tradition to the attention of all American people deserves the highest praise." - Sen. James L. Buckley (D-N.Y.)

"With God's help, and with the dedication of all our citizens, we can meet the challenges facing our country today. Let us unite in our resolve to seek what is right for our country without prejudice or

partisanship and to follow the truth wherever it leads." -- Sen. Howard H. Baker, Jr. (R-Tenn.)



A January 21, 1974 National Prayer and Fast rally at the Capitol Building in Washington.

"Your day of national prayer and fasting should be supported by every American concerned about the future direction of the nation. Faith in God has been a most important unifying fact throughout our history."-Rep. Vernon W. Thomson (R-Wisc.)

"It has been my experience that a positive effort of love and confidence, such as your prayer campaign, can only help overcome the doubts and suspicions which are such a negative force in America today."- Rep. Barber B. Conable, Jr. (R-N.Y.)

"I could only applaud your efforts for putting an end to this national crisis and agony started many months ago."- Andras H. Pogany, President, World Federation of Hungarian Freedom Fighters "I thought that his message of 'Forgive, Love, Unite' was magnificent and in the spirit of the season." - Rabbi Baruch Korff, Chairman, Citizens' Committee for Fairness to the Presidency.



State rallies stir comment

In one notable rally, a symbolic Richard Nixon was symbolically tried and released in Denver, Colorado. According to the January 11 Denver Post, about 15 members of a rally crowd of 90 presented the following skit:

"Nixon" wore gray prison stripes, a ball and chain on his foot and a gag in his mouth.

The "prosecutor" in the playlet said the intent was not to demonstrate any guilt or innocence on

the President's part.

But the script for the theatre-on-the-steps was sympathetic with the plight of the President-or rather, as the demonstrators insisted, the plight of the office of the presidency.

The prosecution in the skit had everything on its side except rational argument.

The prosecuting attorney, in white wig and robe, accused the President of high crimes. The defense attorney, wigless and clean-cut, called on "President John Adams" for support.

But the "jury"-including a cigar-chewing "truck driver," a green-visored member of the press, members of Congress and an Arabian sheik shouted "guilty."

The shouts died when a character playing Abraham Lincoln asked for divine guidance in time of crisis, and the "judge" asked guiltless members of the jury to step forward. None did.

The "press" removed Nixon's gag, and the "judge" removed his ball and chain.

"There has to be a point where we say 'no more,' and head in a new positive direction."

(Philip Burley of Denver, the regional coordinator of the Prayer and Fast Committee)



Neil Salonen, NPFWC President

The weather was often unfavorable to the early January rallies. But whether audiences numbered 100 or 0, the ralliers continued their programs. In most Northern states, ralliers were greeted by below-freezing or even sub-zero weather. A shivering Chicago policeman was quoted as saying: "You've got to admire their dedication, especially in weather like this."

The New York City rally on Wall Street featured speeches by Hamilton Fish, former republican representative and Rabbi Baruch Korff, chairman of the National Citizens Committee for Fairness to the Presidency. The New York Times report of the rally included a photograph larger than 5 x 8".

The Montpelier, Vermont rally was noted for the presence of many state government leaders. State house speaker Walter Kennedy said it was time to put the Watergate scandal aside and turn to more important domestic and foreign issues. Former state attorney general Gen. James Jeffords believed that Nixon was "the best qualified person to be President." Representative Kenalene Collins pleaded that Nixon be allowed to govern as he was elected to do.

More concern voiced

NPFWC leaders continued to voice their concern for America during the month of January. Executive director Dan Graydon Fefferman stated: "If we strongly pray and support our President, we feel the country can pull together and the best way will become apparent. We believe it is God's will to lead the nation through the President, into a strong period and that both need us right now."

"By causing us to re-examine our moral and ideological foundations," Neil Albert Salonen, NPFWC president said, "Watergate could, in fact, spark an ideological revolution. Conscientious people today seek a leader or leading ideology which can clarify the moral alternatives, point the way to go, and pioneer the path to new levels of American achievement."

In his January 9 Day of Hope speech in Denver, Colorado, Reverend Moon further explained his conviction: "Your bicentennial celebration is the critical time of American history. The way I look at it, the ten years prior and the ten years after the celebration is the most critical time for American people in the sight of God. You will be tested on one criterion whether this nation shall remain God's nation and whether the dwelling of God will continue to be made a reality in America, or whether this nation will go its own way, apart from God."



NPFWC delegates from Mississippi visited Senator Stennis to explain Reverend Moon's Watergate Statement.

Washington rallies

This unforgettable month was climaxed with the return of Reverend Moon to Washington on January 30. At the airport he was greeted by a crowd of some 2,000, who had set up a special platform apart from the airport terminal. Flowers, banners and pennants highlighted the warm welcome.

After a welcoming speech by Mr. Salonen, Miss Nguyen Thi Phuong-Dung, representing the Embassy of the Republic of Vietnam, gave a message of gratitude and welcome to Reverend Moon. She told the well-wishers at the airport that they were the "hope of your nation," and invited Reverend Moon to come to Vietnam soon "to bring us hope."

A telegram from James Shen, Ambassador of the Republic of China, read in part, "Your work is greatly needed and we note with deep appreciation the great success at your Day of Hope speaking tour."

The day was concluded with a demonstration outside the Capitol building, during the State of the Union message. Among the various groups there, the approximately 1,500 members of NPFWC outnumbered the rest by at least 20 to 1.

National leaders meet for prayer

At the prayer breakfast the following morning, the personal testimonies of two senators moved the hearts of some 3,000 listeners. Senator John Stennis (D-Miss.) had been shot in an attempted holdup on the streets of Washington about a year ago. He credited his eventual recovery to the power of prayer. "My chief surgeon told me, 'A high hand entered your case.' Later, I knew he was right." He said he was aware of the thousands of prayers for him from the time he gained consciousness after six hours of emergency surgery.

"My daughter was sitting by the bed holding my hand and saying, 'Daddy, people in Mississippi are holding prayer meetings and mother and I and all of us are praying that you will be all right.'" NPFWC members from Mississippi who visited the Senator on January 21 were touched with the deep concern he has for our nation and his personal testimony to the power of prayer. At age 72 he still radiates energy and hope.

Senator Harold E. Hughes (D Iowa) gave the principal speech at the prayer breakfast. Leaving the Senate at the end of his current term to become a religious lay worker, he told how religious faith had rescued him from alcoholism more than 20 years ago.

"I was beaten to my knees in despair," he said. "I cried out to God, and from that moment my life changed." He continued with a ringing testimony to salvation through Jesus Christ and urged the nation to

resort to God's revealed truth concerning the destiny of individuals and nations. Don't rely on human wisdom to untangle today's problems, he urged his listeners.

In addition to urging men and women to turn to God in silent prayer to find out what God's will is, President Nixon acknowledged the tendency of Americans toward arrogance. "We can only have peace in this world as we respect the rights of our neighbors and friends in this world."



Tricia Nixon Cox calls for national unity at NPFWC prayer meeting across from White House, January 31, 1974

After the prayer breakfast, Nixon's daughter Tricia and her husband Edward Cox greeted some 1,500 NPFWC members who had spent the morning singing and praying for national unity in front of the White House. Tricia accepted "Forgive, Love, Unite" buttons and pennants and thanked the crowd for its support of the presidency. Echoing her father's speech the previous night, she emphasized, "One year of Watergate is enough."

Project coordinator Dan Fefferman concluded: "The response we have received from American leaders and the American public has been truly overwhelming. When I think of our starting out on nothing but hope and a prayer and ending up with front-page stories in which President Nixon urges all Americans to unite and seek God's guidance humbly in prayer, I know that truly our Heavenly Father has been at work."