



Telling Our Stories

250 Years of United Methodism
in the New York Area

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Korean Community Leader and Pastor of First UMC of Flushing

1936-1998



Image courtesy of First UMC of Flushing and the Rhee Family

Amos Seung Won Rhee

Rev. Amos Rhee was a man of energetic spirit, warmth, and humility. When he was a child, his family suffered persecution in North Korea for their Christian beliefs but was able to escape to South Korea. At Seoul Methodist Theological College he was involved in local church ministry and the national movement for evangelization of industrial workers.

He came to the U.S. in the mid-1960s and in 1972 was ordained an elder in New York. Over the next 10 years he established two Korean congregations, in Lawrence and in Yonkers. From 1981 to 1983 he served as Associate General Secretary of Religion and Race for the denomination. This involvement continued throughout his career; he held leadership positions in the Asian-American Caucus of the Northeastern Jurisdiction and in the National Association of Korean-American UMCs.

Rhee oversaw a rapid growth in church membership in his 15 years at First UMC in Flushing, NY (1983-1998). His congregants remember his warmth and uplifting sermons, his emphasis on mission responsibilities, and his attention to each individual church member. In his obituary, his parishioners described his dedication: "Pastor Rhee never stopped or rested. He always wanted to be a good and faithful servant of God. Every single minute his thought was on one thing - God's work in the growth of the church."

For Discussion

- Rev. Rhee's family suffered persecution for their Christian beliefs in North Korea. Where and how do people suffer persecution for their religious beliefs today?
- Rev. Rhee led one of the largest Korean congregations in the nation, yet his congregants remember his personal connections. What are the challenges of maintaining such connections within a large congregation?

New York Annual Conference
Commission on Archives and History
C. Wesley Christman Archives
archives@nyac.com - 914-615-2241