



Hoboken Grace Trip 2016



In the month of May, we at the LiNK ROK office had the joy of hosting our supporters from Hoboken Grace Church, New Jersey. Hoboken Grace has been supporting our work for a long time and have sent a team to South Korea every spring since 2013 to learn more about our work, North Korea, and how they can contribute to the cause and empower North Korean people.

This year, we had a team of four people come visit us: (from the left) Anthony (a pastor), Micah (a financial advisor), Wanda (an instructional designer), and Jeremy (a videographer). They spent a week with us in Seoul, joining us in our work with the North Korean people. We had many great experiences together- let's take a look at a few of them!

Career Mentoring Workshop at Young Leaders Program

On the first day Hoboken Grace arrived, they headed over to our Young Leaders Program (YLP) to give a workshop on career mentorship. The Young Leaders Program is a series of 10 full day workshops carried over a period of 6 months, covering topics such as personal growth, professional skills development, and career exploration. This year there are 9 North Korean-born college students/college graduates/students who are preparing to go college, participating in YLP.

Each of the Hoboken Grace members shared about their careers and the path they took to get there. Their stories included going from studying Shakespeare to becoming a pastor, providing financial support in an office setting, and shooting videos for the National Football League. Anthony, the leader of the team, shared a story about how he was able to find his path with the help of others. “When several people that I trusted started telling me that I was good at something, I began to realize this was true,” he said. “It was helpful to have other people speak into my life. It helped me see things in myself that I didn’t before.”



Over lunch, YLP fellows had the opportunity to eat with Hoboken Grace and ask questions. All in all, it was an informative and engaging time for everyone involved. One of the fellows said, “What left an impression on me was how each of the Hoboken Grace members bravely changed their career paths as they learned what they were good at, and how they consistently stayed true to who they were throughout the process.”

Surprise Birthday Party for Yoon Ha

Yoon Ha, a North Korean woman who arrived in South Korea through LiNK, wasn’t able to celebrate her birthday with anyone this year so Jihyun, Julia, and the Hoboken Grace team decided to throw her a belated surprise party! They prepared a cake and a handwritten birthday card and went to visit her home where she lives with her beautiful baby daughter.

There, they enjoyed her favourite food for lunch: pigs’ feet (족발), boiled pork belly (보쌈) and noodles (국수). Afterwards, Yoon Ha went to the supermarket to run some errands and while she was gone, the LiNK staff and Hoboken Grace team prepared her birthday cake. She returned to a cake lit up with candles

and the team sang Happy Birthday to her in both English and Korean. Once again, happy birthday to you, Yoon Ha!!



Along with the Happy Birthday song, the Hoboken Grace team members came prepared with two North Korean songs to sing together (반갑습니다 Nice to Meet You + 휘파람 Whistle). Yoon Ha, who has always loved singing, shared some songs that she had sang in her hometown as well. She had a wonderful time, and so did her daughter! At first, her daughter was afraid of Anthony because he looked very different than anyone she had seen before, but through his fun facial expressions and playfulness, she soon grew to trust him and the two became friends.



Visiting Hae Sun at Her University

Jihyun, Julia and the Hoboken Grace team also visited Hae Sun at her university. Having heard her story via LiNK's website and Facebook, it was a great opportunity to meet her in person. Hae Sun gave them a tour of her campus and the group enjoyed a delicious dinner together, all the while sharing stories and learning about each other's lives.



Cultural Cooking Exchange

On the second day of Hoboken Grace's visit, we had a Cultural Cooking Exchange. We gathered together with a group of North Korean people in a community kitchen and made American food, North Korean food, and South Korean food! Splitting up into food teams, we made a feast of grilled cheese sandwiches, hot dogs, coleslaw for American food, tofu rice (두부밥) for North Korean food and tuna rice balls (참치주먹밥) for South Korean food.



As we made food together, the North Korean people and the Hoboken Grace supporters got to share stories about their lives, and also their cultures through the food they were preparing. The atmosphere was lively as tofu was fried, carrots were chopped, and music was playing in the background. In between food preparation, one North Korean student taught a few Hoboken Grace members the Korean alphabet and how to write their names in Korean.

When all the food was complete, we set the table and shared a meal and it felt like a family dinner bridging across cultures. There was a natural flow of laughter and conversation as people passed each other second and third helpings of all the delicious food on the table. Wonda and Micha, the two Hoboken Grace members, enjoyed the North Korean tofu rice so much they asked for the recipe so she could make it in the States.

After the meal, conversation continued. The resettled North Korean refugees shared stories about some of the obstacles they've encountered or are currently facing as they rebuild their life in South Korea. Those who have been resettled for a while longer shared encouraging words with newly re-settling North Koreans. Their words were full of wisdom and understanding. All in all, it was a night of great community, connection, and a memorable meal for everyone at the table.



Inspiring Sun Mu



During their time in Seoul, the Hoboken Grace team was able to visit Sun Mu's studio. Sun Mu is an artist from North Korea who resettled in the South in the late 90's. Back in the North, he worked as a propaganda artist. Now in South Korea, he creates art that reflects the situation in North Korea, painting images of hope for North Korean people and pictures of the North, the South, and the rest of the world living together in coexistence and peace.

The Hoboken Grace team got to see Sun Mu's art pieces and hear about his past experiences as well as the things that he hopes for in the future. They too were able to share about their lives and why they want to help North Korean people. As they shared about their time in Seoul so far, making North Korean friends and partaking in cultural activities with them (like cooking!), Sun Mu began to smile. So many of his art pieces are inspired by this very hope that North Korea will become friends with the South and the rest of the world. Perhaps one day we will see a painting inspired by our Hoboken Grace supporters :)

LiNK Staff/Intern Day

With the desire to not only empower North Korean people but the LiNK Staff Team as well, the members of Hoboken Grace led the ROK LiNK staff and interns in an Empowerment Workshop. With a wide range of skills and experience in their hands, we believed that they could teach us many valuable things about how to work together and strengthen our inner community.



Through a variety of icebreaker games, workshops and interactive teambuilding activities, they taught us useful tips and skills on clear communication and improved work efficiency. We went through models of healthy confrontation, schedule building, and methods on how to listen to one another in a way that is edifying.

Their teaching was very beneficial for us as a staff team to bond and learn more about how we can support one another. It was also a fun time full of laughter!

Q2 Community Gathering



On Children's Day in South Korea, LiNK's ROK office had its second 2016 quarterly gathering for resettled North Korean refugees. There was a turnout of about 20 North Korean people, as well as our supporters from Hoboken Grace and our LiNK staff and interns. It was a sunny, warm day, perfect for a park gathering!

Hoboken Grace came prepared with two North Korean songs (반갑습니다 Nice to Meet You + 휘파람 Whistle) and we began our gathering by singing them all together. It was very fun for the North Korean people to hear songs that they were familiar with performed by American supporters and to enjoy them as a group.

Afterward we played a team ball game (공 많이 튀기기 게임). Each team was given a circular wooden panel attached to ropes and each member would hold onto a rope to keep the panel up. Then they would see how many times they could bounce a ball off the panel and up into the air, moving the wooden panel together. It

required a lot of teamwork and communication. The winning team was able to bounce the ball over 30 times! Following that game, we had a hacky sack competition (제기차기), a popular game that many North and South Korean people played in their childhood.



For lunch, we partnered with Ddaksori (딱소리), a business launched by South Korean university students passionate about making and sharing North Korean food with people. Through their catering, we enjoyed a meal of delicious North Korean dishes like tofu rice (두부밥), North Korean style soondae (북한식순대, North Korean blood sausage) and corn noodles (강냉이 국수).

After eating, everyone enjoyed relaxing and talking with one another or playing sports together. Joo Ri, one of the North Koreans who came to the gathering, enjoyed chatting with other people. She came to South Korea in her mid 50s after being repatriated from China five times and enduring severe conditions and beatings in re-education camps. “When I first came to South Korea, I was a complete grandma,” she said. “But since I’ve been here, I’ve had so many reasons to laugh and be happy, I feel like I’ve grown younger.”



Conclusion

Just as the North Korean people were encouraged and empowered by our friends from Hoboken Grace, they find strength in our supporters from all over the world. Thank you for the ways that you support North Korean people! Your partnership has an incredible impact and we are so grateful that you are part of the movement towards liberty in North Korea.