

DECLARATION OF THE CHURCHES OF KOREA
ON NATIONAL REUNIFICATION AND PEACE

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The National Council of Churches in Korea

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We first offer praise and thanks for the grace and love of God, who has sent the Gospel of Christ to the Korean peninsula, making known to us the death of Christ on the Cross and his resurrection, and enabling us, through our faith in Christ, to be accepted as God's children and granted salvation. We also give thanks for the presence of the Holy Spirit in the history of the Korean peninsula and in the lives of all of our brothers and sisters in faith, filling us with the mission commitment that will unify the whole church in our efforts for the liberation and salvation of our nation.

We trust in one God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1), and we believe that all people are invited to become the children of God (Romans 8:14-17, Galatians 3:26, 4:7).

Jesus Christ came to this land as the "Servant of Peace" (Ephesians 2:13-19), proclaiming God's kingdom of peace, reconciliation and liberation to a world torn by division, conflict and oppression (Luke 4:18, John 14:27).

To reconcile humanity to God, to overcome divisions and conflicts, and to liberate all people and make us one, Jesus Christ suffered, died upon the Cross, was buried and rose again in the Resurrection (Acts 10:36-40).

Jesus blessed the peace makers, declaring their acceptance as children of God (Matthew 5:9). We believe that the Holy Spirit will reveal to us the eschatological future of history, will unite us, and will make us partners in God's mission (John 14:18-21, 16:13-14, 17:11).

We the churches of Korea believe that all Christians have now been called to work as apostles of peace (Colossians 3:15) ; that we are commanded by God to overcome today's reality of confrontation between our divided people - who share the same blood but who are separated into south and north; and that our mission task is to work for the realization of unification and peace (Matthew 5:23-24).

Based on this confession of our faith, the National Council of Churches in Korea hereby declares before the churches of Korea and the world ecumenical community, our position and national unification and peace. At the same time our appeal is directed in a spirit of prayer to all our Korean compatriots and to the leaders of government in both south and north.

The Mission Tradition of the Korean Churches for Justice and Peace

It has been more than a century since Protestants first preached the Gospel in this land, and during this period the churches have committed many errors before the Korean people. And yet, through the

proclamation of God's Kingdom, Korean Christians have made great efforts to realize the true hopes of our people for liberation and independence. Our forebears in the faith, strengthened by the Holy Spirit and guided by the Scriptures (Luke 4:18-19), preached the Gospel to the poor, planted the hope of liberty and independence among our oppressed people, and pursued the mission of national liberation and independence as they shared the suffering of the whole Korean people under the slavery of the Japanese imperial rule.

Korean Christians, however, could not find the true meaning of peace in the complacency and security of a life bowed down in obedient slavery.

Peace had to be the fruit of justice (Isaiah 32:17), and a peace without national independence or human liberty was only a false peace (Jeremiah 6:13-14). The peace movement of the Korean churches during the Japanese imperialist rule over our land was necessarily a movement for national independence which shared the pain of our enslaved people—a national liberation movement which proclaimed the Kingdom of God and strived to realize this faith within history.

The Christians of Korea stood in the forefront of the March First Independence Movement of 1919, resisted the policy of national annihilation by the Japanese imperialists, and shed martyrs' blood for their defiance of the enforcement of shinto worship, a deification of Japanese nationalism.

After the division of Korea in 1945, the Christians of south Korea cared for the refugees, orphans and victims of war who were suffering under the reality of national separation. The churches received into their midst the members of churches and of separated families who had fled from the north, offering them love and support.

As the division became a fixed reality, dictatorial military regimes emerged to repress human rights in the name of security and to oppress laborers and farmers under the logic of economic growth; but the churches of Korea mounted resistance to such oppression, through a faith which sought justice and peace. The human rights and democratization movement of the Korean churches in the 1970's and 1980's is direct heir to this mission movement tradition for justice and peace.

The Reality of people in the Divided Korea

The division of the Korean peninsula is the sinful fruit of the present world political structure and existing ideological systems. The Korean people have suffered as a sacrificial lamb caught in the midst of the military and ideological confrontations and conflicts of the world's superpowers.

In 1945, at the end of the Second World War, the Korean people were liberated from their slavery under the Japanese imperial colonial rule, but were again shackled by the new fetters of the division into north and south. The line of division which was established in the name of disarming the aggressive Japanese imperialist forces became frized by the Cold War structure of the Soviet Union and the United States. The northern and southern parts of Korea separately established different governments, and over the last forty years their military, political and ideological antagonism and conflict has become ever more severe.

The Korean Conflict which began on June 25, 1950, brought about the tragedy of internecine war and intensified the international conflict.

The quantity of bombs dropped on Korea during this conflict exceeded the amount dropped on the whole of Europe during World War II; the entire peninsula was reduced to ashes. This war resulted in

220,000 south Korean, over 600,000 north Korean, 1,000,000 Chinese, 140,000 American, and over 16,000 United Nations military casualties, and if the number who died from disease during the war is included, a total of 2,500,000 soldiers' lives were sacrificed. If the 500,000 south Korean and 3,000,000 north Korean civilian casualties are added to this total, the blood of six million persons was spilled upon the earth of this land (statistics from the Encyclopedia Britannica, 1970 edition). In addition, three million refugees and ten million separated family members were produced by this conflict.

In the time both preceding and following the Korean Conflict, Christians of north Korea who confronted the north Korean communist regime endured suffering and death, while hundreds of thousands of Christians from the north left their home communities and churches and underwent the hardships of refugee life as they fled to the south. During the Korean War a considerable number of south Korean Christians were kidnapped or subjected to cruel, tragic executions. Communist sympathizers became victims of ideological warfare and were ostracized from society as "traitors".

The Korean peninsula, reduced to ashes by the war, continued to be entangled in the international political conflict of the east-west Cold War structure, and as a result there was a steady escalation in military competition, mutual vilification, distrust and hostility between the north and the south. Peace on the peninsula was destroyed, and the general belief grew that national reconciliation would be impossible.

With the hardening of the "armistice line"--originally intended as a temporary measure following the signing of the Armistice in 1953--into a "dividing line", the wall between north and south loomed ever higher, and in this context of separation and confrontation the two systems in the north and south became ever more hostile and aggressive toward one another. The mutual military rivalry has been accelerated to a state of armed readiness that counts 840,000 troops in the north and 600,000 in the south, for a total of some 1,500,000 troops on the peninsula; and the nuclear weapons now deployed here or targeted upon the peninsula constitute a destructive force more than sufficient to obliterate the whole Korean people.

The prolongation of the division has led to violations of human rights under both systems, in the name of security and ideology; thus we have seen repression of the freedoms of speech, press, assembly and association. And the complete suspension by both sides of postal service, travel, visitation and communication has turned the two halves of Korea into the two most distant and different countries on earth. The education and propaganda activities of north and south share the goal of mutual vilification, each perceiving the other as the most hated enemy to be weakened and eliminated through the competition of the two systems.

As a result the people of both north and south are not only ignorant of the life and culture of their fellow Koreans, but have been trained to believe they must not know about one another. Both systems are teaching their people to see their blood brothers and sisters as their most feared enemy.

Dialogue between north and south was begun in 1972, and the July 4th Joint Communiqué of that year raised hopes for an opening that would lead to further dialogue, cooperation and exchanges. The Red Cross talks between north and south were reopened in 1985, and although some separated families were able to visit their home communities, their numbers were extremely limited, and dialogue and negotiations remain fruitless.

Up to the early 1980's, south Korean Christians were unable even to verify the existence of a church or Christian believers in the north; and their long-standing, deep-seated mistrust and enmity toward the communist regime--intensified and hardened as the division itself became hardened--kept Christians blindly attached to an anti-communist ideology.

A Confession of the Sins of Division and Hatred

As we Christians of Korea proclaim this declaration for peace and reunification, we confess before God and our people that we have sinned: we have long harbored a deep hatred and hostility toward the other side within the structure of division.

1. The division of the Korean people is the result of the structural evil reflected in the world's superpowers in their east-west Cold War system, and this reality has also been the root cause of the structural evil present within the societies of both North and South Korea. Due to the division we have been guilty of the sin of violating God's commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself". (Matthew 22:37-40)

Because of the division of our homeland, we have hated, deceived and murdered our compatriots of the same blood, and have justified that sin by the political and ideological rationalization of our deeds. Division has led to war, yet we Christians have committed the sin of supporting rearmament with the newest and most powerful weapons, plus reinforcement of troops and expenditures, in the name of preventing another war. (Psalm 33:16-20; 44:6-7)

In this process the Korean peninsula has become dependent upon outside powers, not only militarily but politically, economically and in other ways as well: it has been incorporated into the east-west Cold War structure and subjugated under that structure. We Christians confess that we have sinned during the course of this subjugation by abandoning our national pride and by betraying our people through the forfeit of our spirit of national independence. (Romans 9:3)

2. We confess that throughout the history of our national division the churches of Korea have not only remained silent and continuously ignored the ongoing stream of movement for autonomous reunification of our people, but have further sinned by trying to justify the division. The Christians of both north and south have made absolute idols of the ideologies enforced by their respective systems. This is a betrayal of the ultimate sovereignty of God (Exodus 20:3-5), and is a sin, for the church must follow the will of God rather than the will of any political regime. (Acts 4:19)

We confess that the Christians of the south especially have sinned by turning the anti-communist ideology into a virtual religious idol, and have thus not been content to treat just the communist regime in the north as the enemy, but have further damned our northern compatriots and others whose ideologies differ from our own (John 13:14-15; 4:20-21). This is not only a violation of the commandments, but is also a sin of indifference toward our neighbors who have suffered and continue to suffer under the national division; it is, moreover, a sin of failure to ameliorate their suffering through the love of Christ. (John 13:17)

The Basic Principles of the Churches of Korea for National Reunification

So that God's Kingdom of justice and peace may come, we Christians must practice the Gospel of peace and reconciliation (Ephesians 2:14-17) by sharing in the life of suffering of our own people. It is only through such sharing that national reconciliation and reunification can be accomplished; thus we recognize that our concern and efforts for unification are an issue of faith. By overcoming the division

which threatens the life of the Korean people and endangers world peace, reunification becomes the path leading us from conflict and confrontation to reconciliation and coexistence, and finally to one peaceful national community.

Through a series of consultations beginning in 1984, the National Council of Churches in Korea has established the following basic principles of the churches toward national reunification.

The National Council of Churches in Korea believes that the three broad principles articulated in the first north-south negotiated Joint Communique of July 4, 1972, namely 1) independence, 2) peace, and 3) great national unity transcending the differences in ideas, ideologies and systems should provide the guiding spirit for our nation's reconciliation and reunification. In addition to these, we Christians believe that the following two principles also should be honored in all dialogue, negotiation and action for reunification.

1. Reunification must bring about not only the common good and benefit of the people and the nation, but must provide the maximum protection of human freedom and dignity. Since both nation and people exist to guarantee human freedom and welfare, while ideologies and systems also exist for the sake of the people, primary consideration must always be given to humanitarian concerns and measures, which must never be withheld for any reason.
2. In every step of the discussion process to plan for reunification, the full democratic participation of all the people must be guaranteed. Most importantly, participation must be guaranteed for the minjung (common people), who not only have suffered the most under the division, but who--despite the fact that they constitute the majority of the population--have consistently been alienated and excluded from the decision-making processes in society.

The Proposals of the Churches of Korea to the Governments of South and North

Based upon the above principles, the National Council of Churches in Korea urges the responsible authorities in the governments of both north and south to exert their utmost efforts for dialogue so that the following may be accomplished as soon as possible.

1. For the healing of the wounds caused by division
 - a. First of all, the separated families, who--as the victims of the division--have endured all sorts of suffering during the past 40 some years, must be reunited and allowed to live together, and must be guaranteed the right to move freely to whatever place they choose to live.
 - b. Even before reunification is achieved, all persons living in separation from family members in north or south must be freely permitted to visit their relatives and home areas for definite periods, on an annual basis(perhaps at Chusok¹ or some other holiday season).
 - c. The unjust social discrimination which still prevails against some persons because of their momentary errors or the past records of their families or relatives, problems which inevitably arose during the solidifying of the national division, must be ended at once.
2. For the promotion of the people's genuine participation to overcome the division
 - a. Neither government, north or south, may exercise a monopoly over information about the other side, nor monopolize the discussion on reunification. Freedom of speech must be guaranteed so that the people of both north and south may participate fully and freely in the process of discussing and establishing policies for reunification, and there

must be systemic and realistic guarantees of the activities of civilian organizations engaged in research and discussion of the reunification issue.

- b. Both North and South Korea must grant maximum freedom for people who oppose either system or ideology to criticize freely according to their conscience and faith, and both must abide by the International Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations' Human Rights Covenant.

Korean Thanksgiving day

3. For a great national unity of the Korean People transcending the differences in ideas, ideologies and systems.

If Korea is to realize national autonomy, the people of both north and south will have to transcend their differences in concepts, ideologies and systems, and both populations must be able to clearly confirm for themselves that they are one people sharing a common fate. For such a mutual confirmation, north and south must be able to put firm trust in one another. It follows that those things which enable mutual trust must become the most basic starting point for all efforts directed toward reunification. To foster such trust, all factors giving rise to mistrust and hostility must be eliminated, while mutual exchanges should be expanded to broaden our base of mutual understanding and rapidly restore our sense of common ethnic identity. Because all such measures aimed at fostering trust are the most essential part of the process of overcoming division, even in the case that discussions between the official representatives of the two governments do not show progress, or agreement are not forthcoming, there must nevertheless be non-governmental channels through which the citizens themselves may seek progress.

- a. North and South Korea must put an end to all mutual hostility and aggressive inclinations, and must eliminate the exclusivism which leads to the slandering and vilification of one another. In addition, each must modify its extreme, emotional censure of the other's differing ideology and system and offer in its place mutually constructive criticism.
- b. For the promotion of mutual understanding, north and south need unprejudiced, objective information about each other's situation; therefore exchanges, visits and communications must be opened.
- c. In order to restore the sense of common ethnic identity, north-south exchanges and cooperative research must be promoted in such academic areas as language, history, geography, biology and natural resources; while exchanges must also be carried out in the areas of culture, the arts, religion and sports.
- d. Since economic exchanges between north and south will not only benefit the people but will also provide opportunities for mutual understanding, they should be opened to the greatest possible extent.

4. For reduction of tensions and promotion of peace between North and South Korea

- a. In order to prevent war and reduce tensions on the Korean peninsula, a peace treaty must immediately be concluded to terminate the existing state of war. To this end, it is urgent that negotiations be opened by the governments of North and South Korea, the United States, China which participated in the Korean Conflict, to replace the Armistice Agreement with a peace treaty which also includes a non-aggression pact.
- b. At such time that a peace treaty is concluded, a verifiable state of mutual trust is restored between north and south Korea, and the peace and security of the entire Korean nation is

guaranteed by the international community, then the United States troops should be withdrawn and the United Nations Command in Korea should be dissolved.

- c. The excessive military competition between North and South Korea is the greatest obstacle to peaceful reunification and is moreover counter-productive to economic progress.
- a. Therefore, following negotiations between north and south, mutual military strength must be reduced and military expenditures must be cut, with a switchover to industrial production for peace.
- d. Nuclear weapons must never be used under any circumstances. North and South Korea together must block from the start any possibility of the use of nuclear arms on the Korean peninsula. This means that all nuclear weapons deployed on the peninsula or aimed in its direction must be removed.

5. For the realization of national independence

- a. There must be no foreign interference or dependency upon neighboring superpowers in negotiations, conferences, or international agreements between north and south; the Korean people's self-governing and subjecthood must be protected.
- b. Both North and South Korea must either revise or abrogate all diplomatic agreements and treaties which undermine rather than support the life and interests of the Korean people.
- c. North and south Korea must also reach mutual agreement in regard to all international alliances and associations, examining them to make certain that the common good of all Koreans is their primary objective.

The Task of the Churches of Korea for peace and Reunification

We believe that Jesus Christ is the "Lord of Peace" (Colossians 1:20), and that God's mission of salvation and liberation for humankind is being realized also within societies that have ideas and systems different from our own. Even though the confession of faith and the appearance of the churches of Christians living in other social systems may be unlike ours, we believe that since they are bonded to the one God and the one Christ, thereby they are members with us in the same Body (Corinthians 12:12-26).

Within the last few years, in an amazing development, the world ecumenical community has greatly strengthened this conviction of ours, by making contacts with our sisters and brothers in faith in North Korea, and bringing us news of them.

Again we give thanks for God's liberating action in the history of the Korean peninsula, and pray for God's grace and blessing upon our sisters and brothers in the north who are steadfastly keeping the faith even under difficult circumstances.

Based upon this confession, the National Council of Churches in Korea, in order to fulfill its mission for peace and reconciliation, to share in the suffering division has caused, and to respond to the historical demand to overcome the division, now in a spirit of repentance and prayer announces plans to initiate a movement for a Jubilee Year for Peace and Reunification, as follows.

1. The National Council of Churches in Korea proclaims the year 1995 to be the "Year of Jubilee for Peace and Reunification".

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me
to proclaim release to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord". (Luke 4:18-19)

The "Jubilee year" is the fiftieth year following the completion of a cycle of seven sabbatical years totaling 49 years (Leviticus 25:8-10). The year of jubilee is a "year of liberation". The proclamation of the year of jubilee is an act of God's people which reveals their complete trust in God's sovereignty over history and their faithfulness in keeping God's covenant. The jubilee year is the overcoming of all the social and economic conflicts caused by the repressive and absolutist political powers, internal and external: the enslaved are liberated, the indebted have their debts forgiven, sold land is returned to its original tillers, and seized houses are returned to their original inhabitants (Leviticus 25:11-55); the united covenant community of peace is restored through the establishment of Shalom based on God's justice. The Korean churches proclaim 1995, the fiftieth year after Liberation, as a Jubilee Year, to express our belief in the historical presence of God, who has ruled over those fifty years of history--indeed, over all of human history; to proclaim the restoration of the covenant community of peace; and to declare our resolution to achieve this restoration in the history of the Korean peninsula today, As we march forward with high aspirations toward the Year of Jubilee, we should experience a revitalized faith in the sovereignty of God, who works within our people's history, and renewed commitment to the calling of God's mission.

2. As a part of the "Great March toward the Jubilee Year" the Korean churches will carry out a vigorous church renewal movement aimed toward peace and reunification.

- a. In order to fulfill their mission responsibility for peace and reunification, the Korean churches must overcome their self-centeredness and their preoccupation with ecclesiastical power, while greatly strengthening mission cooperation for church unity.
- b. The churches of Korea, proclaiming the Year of Jubilee, must reform their internal structures which have restricted broad participation. Accordingly there must be a resolute opening and expediting of full participation in lay mission activity which will include women and youth.
- c. In order to bring about economic and social justice in our society, the churches of Korea must continue to perform a prophetic role.

3. As a part of the proclamation of the Jubilee Year, the churches of Korea, as a community of faith resolved to achieve peace and reconciliation, will carry out a broad program of education for peace and reunification.

- a. The churches of Korea will widely disseminate Biblical and theological peace studies and peace education materials, and will promote research and exchange of information among the various theological and Christian educational institutions.
- b. To increase concern among the churches for the national reunification issue, the Korean churches will promote unification education which will foster recognition of the historical, social and theological validity of national reunification through an understanding of the structure and history of the division, as well as through a deeper theological understanding of the problem.
- c. Through theological reflection and commitment to the Christian faith, the Korean churches will seek a broader scientific understanding of the communist ideology and will promote research and education on ideology as needed for substantial dialogue.

4. Through the proclamation of a Jubilee Year festival and liturgy for peace and reunification, the Korean churches will seek to bring about a renewal of faith and genuine reconciliation and unity.
 - a. The churches of Korea will establish a "Sunday of Prayer for Peace and Reunification" to mark the Year of Jubilee, and will develop a form of worship for this purpose, which will include prayers for reunification, confession of the sin of division, recognition of calling and commitment for unification, prayers of intercession for the victims of division and the divided people, a confession of faith for national reconciliation, proclamation of the Word (proclaiming the Jubilee Year), hymns and poetry, and a sacrament for peace and reconciliation.
 - b. Until the time when communication between the churches of north and south becomes possible, we will seek the cooperation of the would churches to enable the joint proclamation in both north and south of the Jubilee Year for Peace and Reunification, and will promote the common observance of the "Sunday of Prayer for peace and Reunification" and the joint preparation and use of "prayers for peace and reunification".
 - c. With the cooperation of the world churches, the churches of Korea will search for ways to confirm the status of separated family members, explore the possibility of exchanging letters, and develop a movement to search out relatives, church members and friends separated between north and south.

5. The churches of Korea will work continuously to develop a solidarity movement for peace and reunification.
 - a. The proclamation of the Jubilee Year for peace and Reunification, as an act of confession of faith, will be developed into a continuously expanding "solidarity movement for peace and reunification". This must be a comprehensive movement embracing all the churches at local, denominational and ecumenical levels. The National Council of Churches in Korea especially will make efforts to include not only its member churches, but also non-member denominations and the Roman Catholic Church in this movement for confessional action and practice for peace and reunification.
 - b. As the mission calling to peace and reunification is the universal task of all Christians on the Korean peninsula, the churches of South Korea will pray for the faith and life of the Christian community in the North and will work for North-South exchanges between our churches.
 - c. Because peace and reunification on the Korean peninsula is a key to peace not only in Northeast Asia but throughout the world, the churches of Korea will consult closely and develop solidarity movements with Christian communities in the four powerful countries related to the region--the United States, the Soviet Union, China and Japan, as well as with churches throughout the world.
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 - d. The Korean churches will expand and deepen dialogue with other religious groups and movements, and through joint research and cooperative activities, will work to promote ever stronger solidarity for the realization of peace and the reunification of this nation.

February 29, 1988

The National Council of Churches in Korea

* Such activity is already in progress, and the National Council of Churches in Korea endorses the proposals and positions which have been expressed in such published consultation reports as: "Findings and Recommendations" of the 1984 Consultation in Tozanso, Japan; Message of the Fourth Korean-North American Church Consultation, 1986; the policy statement and declaration of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., "Peace and the Reunification of Korea", 1986; and the joint statement of the Sixth Korean-German Church Consultation, 1987.