

# **The Declaration of South Korean Churches for the Peaceful Reunification of the Korean Peninsula**

## **1. Mission Goals of South Korean Churches for Peaceful Reunification**

This year marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Annexation of Korea by Japan, the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Korean War, and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the June 15 Declaration of the Inter-Korean Summit. We are at the critical juncture when we must concentrate all our efforts to redress any remaining issues of Japanese imperialism, seek genuine peace in the Korean peninsula, and realize reunification of Korea. Peace and reunification of Korea would not only heal the wounds of the Korean nation but also contribute to the complete end of the Cold War and to world peace.

On February 29, 1988, South Korean churches adopted the mission goals for peace and reunification by proclaiming the Declaration of Korean Christian Churches on the National Reunification and Peace (hereafter, the 1988 Declaration). The declaration not only upholds self-sovereignty, peace, and the grand national unity, the principles of the North-South Joint Communiqué on July 4, 1972, but also humanitarianism and people's participation in the reunification discussion contributing greatly to the understanding that the task of reunification and peace in Korea is part and parcel of democratizing Korean politics and society. Afterwards, brother and sister churches worldwide including the World Council of Churches welcomed and supported the declaration. This provided an opportunity for them to build solidarity with Korean churches. Taking the 1988 Declaration as the stepping stone, national reunification became an important issue in Korean society. Soon, the Special Declaration for the National Self-determination and Prosperity through Reunification was made on July 7, 1988. In December 13, 1991, the North and South agreed on the Basic Agreement outlining the basic principles for reconciliation, non-aggression, exchanges, and cooperation. Later on, the June 15 Declaration was proclaimed in 2000 and the October 4 Declaration in 2007. In the meantime, the Cold War began to retreat in the international arena giving hope for a new era in which a prospect for a historical peace settlement became real.

In the last twenty years, South Korean churches cooperated with the Korean Christian Federation (KCF) of the North as a valuable partner in the movement for peaceful reunification and national reconciliation in the Korean peninsula. In addition, South Korean churches led the humanitarian aids for North Korean brethren, observed the 'Prayer Week for Peace and Reunification' jointly with the Korean Christian Federation, composed the 'Joint Prayer for Peace and Reunification' to be used by all. These are a few examples of various efforts South Korean churches did to realize peaceful reunification. Following a biblical teaching to be peace makers and to respect life, South

Korean churches continued to organize joint prayer meetings at Geumgangsan (Diamond Mountains) and Pyongyang and organized various fellowships among lay members of the North and South Korean churches even in times of escalating tensions, conflicts, misunderstandings, and confrontations between the governments of the North and South.

Nevertheless, today the North and South are once again heading toward the path of distrust and confrontation by abandoning the fruits of reconciliation and cooperation bore through long and hard works. To make thing worse, cross-fires of vilification and demonstrations of strength are threatening not only the peace and security of the Korean peninsula but also Northeast Asia. Sadly, in South Korean society, people's interest toward reunification is fading as more and more began to accept the reality of division as given.

At such a moment, South Korean churches reaffirm the mission to let justice roll on like a river and peace spread to all nations in the earth (Jeremiah 33:9) by proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom of God to the Korean peninsula and the world and welcome the day of peace and reunification when the barbwire and the wall that divide the North and South would be dismantled.

## **2. A Vision of the Kingdom of God on the Earth**

The Kingdom of God that we envision through the eyes of our faith is 'Shalom' confessed in the Old Testament, in other words, when God's justice and peace are realized in the earth and when the nation divided shall be made "one nation in the land" (Ezekiel 37: 22). The Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus is "freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, and to set free those who are oppressed" (Luke 4: 18) and a world where the unjust will repent and "become one flock" (John 10: 16). The vision which Ezekiel saw at the valley of bones (Ezekiel 37: 2) was an apocalyptic Kingdom of God when Israel and Judah divided into north and south are reunited. The "glory to God in the highest and peace on earth among men" (Luke 2: 14) sung by the angels when delivering the news of the birth of Baby Jesus to the shepherds in the field of Bethlehem was a song of emancipation, freedom, justice and peace given by God's grace, not an oppressive peace of the Roman Empire. A vision of the Kingdom of God is the belief and hope of all Christians working for peace and reunification.

The Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus is one that demands repentance of the unjust (Mark 1: 15) to liberate and save them to join in the feast of the Kingdom of God as they are transformed to work for justice and peace. In addition, it is the world where "Jews or Greek, slave or free, male or female all" (Galatians 3: 28) become one in Christ's Love without discrimination and they worship in "spirit and truth" (John 4: 23) neither in Jerusalem nor Samaria.

Therefore, a vision of reunified Korea must go beyond ideology and systems to be equal in content with the vision of the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus. All social and political systems and ideologies are subjected to the judgment of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is the world of peace where "justice and peace kiss each other" (Psalm 85: 10), "swords are hammered into plowshares" (Micah 4: 3), and the wolf dwell with the lamb (Isaiah 11: 6). It is the world of life where green dream grows and the energy of creation is rejuvenated and the weapons of war disappear from the earth. The vision of the Kingdom of God is seeing through the eyes of faith a new heaven and a new earth of justice, peace, and full life where there is no tear, mourning, death, crying, or pain (Revelation 21: 4, 5).

Our peace and reunification movement is a movement to realize the Kingdom of God. Therefore, we urge the Christians of South Korean churches hoping for the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth to join this holy endeavor and proclaim the Declaration of South Korean Churches for Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula. Moreover, we sincerely appeal to everyone in the world including the governments of the North and South who love peace to actively participate in the Kingdom of God movement toward reconciliation and reunification of the North and South.

### **3. Principles of Peace and Reunification and Steps toward Realization**

In the past, we focused on the result instead of the process regardless of the contents when discussing reunification. Often we considered North Korea as the object, not the partner of reunification. Moreover, we tended to approach reunification as something completely distanced from the development of our society. Therefore, South Korean churches propose a "peaceful reunification" as a process based on the five grand principles laid out in the 1988 Declaration. Peaceful reunification as a process implies having faith that the process of reunification has already begun and we must start to realize it at any possible area and at the same time transform South Korea into a reunification-oriented society, in other words, ongoing and participatory reunification. Peaceful reunification as a process seeks an inter-Korean peace community and democracy that transcends ideologies and open nation-state.

First, the ultimate aim of the peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula is the creation of a peace community state. A peace community state is a community where all members of the Korean peninsula live in justice and peace by eliminating any structural elements of violence through not only prevention of a war but also eradication of political oppression, economic inequality, and social discrimination.

Second, the peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula seeks to create a democratic state that

transcends ideology. The ills of neoliberal economy that dominates the world order and lives of humanity are very serious. Cold War ideologies are still in place between the North and South causing severe tensions in South Korean society around the question of reunification. Therefore, South Korean churches promote growth and distribution free from the fetters of ideology, a peaceful reunited state that integrates freedom and equality, and a democratic state free from ideology securing peaceful life and sustainable development.

Third, the peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula promotes an open nation-state that clearly distinguishes aggressive and ethnocentric nationalism fueled by imperialism. The significance of the peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula goes beyond the members of the North and South. It shall bring hope to other nations in the world and by becoming a state of hope where humans coexist with natural environment it will bring hope to the world as we are witnessing the destruction of environment. Therefore, South Korean churches uphold happiness and preservation of the life of humanity and the created world.

Advocating for the above three guidelines for a reunified state, South Korean churches propose the following phases toward peaceful reunification that include institutionalization of inter-Korean cooperation, peaceful co-existence, North-South Confederation, and federation all as a process.

- 1) In the phase of peaceful co-existence, there must be inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation, elimination of tension, and agreement on the principle of reunification. It includes not only the expansion of inter-Korean exchanges, protection of the basic rights of all members of the North and South, and promotion of self-determination, but also all kinds of reforms such as the abolition of various discriminations in daily lives and protection of human rights and environment. In this phase the most important task is denuclearization of the Korean peninsula along with the establishment of a peace system.
- 2) The phase of the North-South Confederation is a gateway to gradual reunification as it guarantees security within the systems of North and South Korea facilitating the reunification process. Considering the June 15 Declaration and the proposal of the South Korean government, the North and South can agree on the plan for North-South Confederation. By agreeing to the plan publicly at home and abroad they can work toward forming a reunified state. In the phase of North-South Union governmental cooperation would lead to the expansion of economic, social, cultural and other fields of cooperation. Especially, it would lead to the path of co-existence and co-prosperity made possible by institutionalization of economic cooperation making the momentum of the reunification process irreversible.
- 3) Widening of the range of mutual cooperation in the phase of North-South Confederation would naturally lead to the demand for enlargement of the role and power of a central government. In other words, in the process of realizing reunification, the North and South

can move from the union phase to the federation phase. It is encouraging that Article 2 of the June 15 (2000) Declaration recognizes the similarity between the Confederation proposal of the South and the lower stage of federation proposal of the North. Such a phase process is a rational way for reunification as it recognizes the difference between the North and South, thus, reducing the confusion from the rapid reunification and the tension built up by the long-term division. On the other hand, it also opens the road for stable co-prosperity of the nation based on national homogeneity, reconciliation, and cooperation.

#### **4. 10 Grand Tasks for the Peaceful Reunification of the Korean Peninsula**

As part of the efforts to realize peaceful reunification as a process here and now South Korean churches propose following 10 grand tasks to the North and South Korean governments and other related states.

First, the North and South must improve inter-Korean relations based on the observation and implementation of the June 15 Joint Declaration and the October 4 Inter-Korean Summit Declaration. The North and South must institutionalize the development of inter-Korean relations by establishing a joint management body that oversees inter-Korean cooperation projects to be stable and continuous. In addition, they must have various high-ranking officials' meetings such as the summit, ministerial meetings, and parliamentary meetings regularly.

Second, the Korean peninsula must be a peace zone without any threat of nuclear war. Any development of nuclear weapon or any military exercise involving nuclear weapons must not be allowed under any circumstance. The North and South must cooperate in making the Korean peninsula a nuclear-free zone. Since making of a nuclear-free Korean peninsula is closely related to nuclear disarmament of Northeast Asia and the world, it must be carried out concomitantly with nuclear disarmament efforts of all nuclear powers.

Third, the Cold War structure that exists in the Korean peninsula must be dismantled and be replaced with a stable peace regime. Not only the North and South but the parties of the Korean War must declare the end of war and sign a peace treaty. At the same time, the North and South should call for a meeting of arms reduction to lead a peace treaty process. In doing so, they must actively consider a proposal where the North and South themselves manage the peace in the Korean peninsula with the support of the neighbor countries. In addition, at the finalizing moment of the establishment of a peace regime, South Korea should consider the idea of changing the mandatory military service to voluntary and expanding the existing alternative military service program.

Fourth, the North and South should create a world peace park and a peace city where North and South Koreans live and work together in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and the West Sea Peace and Cooperation Zone. They should also stop any military exercise within 40 km of the both sides of the DMZ.

Fifth, South Korea and the international community must continue to send aids to North Korea for survival and basic needs of North Korean people based on the spirit of humanitarianism on one hand and for long-term development of North Korean economy on the other. In the process, North Korea and the international community must develop a mutually equal relationship of cooperation. Especially, South Korea must actively initiate a creation of fund in preparation of the reunification at civilian including churches and governmental levels.

Sixth, the North and South must realize that economic cooperation plays an important role in bringing peace and reunification and expand the ongoing cooperation. Accordingly, Geumgangsan tourism and Gaeseong tourism must resume immediately. Economic cooperation such as the Gaeseong Industrial Complex and the development of the Nampo region must expand. To do so, the North and South must reform any related regulations and clear any problems.

Seventh, the economic relations between North Korea and the international community must also be improved. International economic organizations such as the Asia Development Bank and UNCTAD must actively participate in the economic development of North Korea. For this, the US and other countries must lift various sanctions against North Korea and cooperate to provide a material base for North Korea to become a member of the world economy and carry out normal economic activities.

Eighth, considering the fact that the division and war have devastated the people in the Korean peninsula, the North and South must do their best to resolve any humanitarian issues. The separated families and missing persons during and after the war must be verified and reunions and communication exchanges between survivors must be allowed along with free travel.

Ninth, civilian exchanges that fueled the inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation must continue without constraints and actively regardless of the inter-Korean political situation. The North and South must continue to expand the civilian exchanges. Moving toward the direction of recognizing the civic groups as their valuable partner, the North and South must reform or abolish any laws or rules that hinder reunification.

Tenth, the neighboring super powers must acknowledge their historical responsibility of

continuing the Cold War structure and the division and war in the Korean peninsula and announce their support for the peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula. The US, Russia, China and Japan must acknowledge that their ideological and military confrontations caused the division and devastation of Korea. Especially, Japan must publically apologize for the historical crimes of colonial rule and compensate the damages to comfort women and other victims. Furthermore, the US and Japan must normalize with North Korea and contribute to the establishment of permanent peace in the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia.

## **5. Action Plan and Vows of South Korean Churches for Peace and Reunification**

Having lived through the suffering of losing one's country, the pain of fratricidal war, and the years of division, we, Christians, dream of a peaceful Korean peninsula without war, tears, hate, and unfairness. Now, South Korean churches vow to act upon the following in order to realize the vision and hope of the Kingdom of God where the world of creation is preserved and the North and South become one and share their lives together.

- 1) South Korean churches believe that national reconciliation, peace, and reunification are their mission and must act to realize them.

We believe that only through reunification our divided and torn land will be healed and recovered. This is a creative process forming new values and culture. A peaceful reunited world would be what the Kingdom of God on earth would be like. For this, Christians united regardless of the differences of denominations and doctrines shall participate in the society-wide reunification movement in cooperation with NGOs and other religions.

- 2) South Korean churches shall repent and overcome the hostile and confrontational attitudes between the North and South.

We shall pray for North Koreans with God's love that transcends ideology and system and accept each other with warm and open heart. Firstly, we shall do our best to do away with the rigid application of reciprocity. South Korean churches shall continue to cooperate with the Korean Christian Federation of North Korea in mission work and support it to play the role of the light and the salt in North Korean society.

- 3) South Korean churches shall follow the principles of reconciliation and peace for inter-Korean survival and co-prosperity.

In order to complete the "10 grand tasks for peaceful reunification" laid out in the Declaration of South Korean churches, we shall endlessly work on the institutionalization of peace education and faith trainings. We shall promote new values and culture that would

replace the Cold War culture within the churches, nurture the next generation who will realize peace and prosperity for the entire nation and ecclesiastically participate in making a peaceful future.

- 4) South Korean churches shall pursue community lifestyle where one humbles oneself to raise one another.

South Korean churches shall actively practice neighborly love of sharing, serving, considering, and caring with their quantitative growth and revival in the past as a positive strength. We shall practice our servitude to neighbors like minorities and the socially weak as part of fulfilling God's mission according to our Christian confession of faith.

- 5) South Korean churches shall do their best in globalizing peace.

By working together with North Korean, Japanese, and Zainichi (Koreans in Japan) churches in commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Japanese colonial rule, we shall overcome the colonial legacy and admit our mistakes. In addition we will jointly form a mission association with North Korean churches to overcome the division system of the Korean peninsula and work in cooperation with the world churches.

- 6) South Korean churches affirm that we are part of the world churches working to realize God's Shalom.

Just as the 1984 Tozanso Conference in Japan became the starting point for the process of peace and reunification of the Korean peninsula we shall contribute to peace in Asia and the world by working in solidarity with the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), the World Council of Churches (WCC), and brother and sister churches in the world. Especially, we will strive to make the 10<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the WCC taking place in Busan in 2013 a turning point for the peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula.

"I will pour over My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions" (Joel 2: 28).

We Christians believe in God who liberated the Hebrew nation who were slaves in Egypt and remember so many people who wandered in the barren field for 40 years while dreaming of the promised-land, Canaan. The old people of this land who lived through the pains of losing one's country, national division, and the tragic history of fratricidal war are now dreaming of a new reunified country. The young people of this land are now seeing a vision of the day to come, the day when we enter into the peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula and world peace. We Christians thank God in faith and hope for that day and pray that God's Holy Spirit be with us all.

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**The National Council of Churches in Korea(NCCK)**