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August 15, 2005

The Most Revd James Toru Uno  
Primate, Nippon Sei Ko Kai

### August 15 Message of Peace

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Peace of our Lord be with you all. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II. In this important year, we wish to express our concerns about the recent situation in Japan, and also to express our determined desire for world peace.

On this day, sixty years ago, Japan accepted defeat in a war of aggression it had begun against other nations of the world. This defeat signaled the end of the path of imperialism and militarism which Japan had followed since the start of the Meiji Restoration in 1868. Throughout the unfolding history of modern Japan, we in the NSKK failed to stand up for the gospel of the boundless love of God for every human life as revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ, and lacked the courage to stand up in opposition to the war. Furthermore, we were not able to prevent the many forms of victimization nor the taking of life, either abroad or at home. A decade ago, both at the 1995 NSKK Mission Consultation and at the 49th General Synod the following year, we adopted a Statement on War Responsibility of Nippon Sei Ko Kai, in which we confessed these failures to God and to our neighbors. We in the NSKK resolved to be mindful of our call, as the people of God, to do justice, and to turn our ears, as an instrument of Christ's peace, to the pain of division and the cries of suffering of the world.

From this standpoint, as we survey the current situation in Japan, we find cause for great concern. Since the end of the Cold War, and especially since the 1991 Gulf War, a series of bills relating to Japan's defense policy have passed in parliament despite doubts about their constitutionality. It is our sense that powerful forces are at work to change Japan from a country with a "Peace Constitution" into a nation which is once again capable of waging war. In fact, under the rubric of so-called "recovery support," Japan's Self-Defense Forces have been deployed to Iraq. Even the revision of the country's "Peace Constitution" is on the agenda of some politicians.

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Such shifts in Japan are taking place against the background of economic globalization being driven by the United States and other developed nations. Such globalization forces countries and individuals to make a stark choice between being strong and being weak. Nationalistic movements are gaining momentum in many countries under pressure to establish a place among the “strong” nations. This causes the further deepening of conflicts between nations. Moreover, within many societies, an aggressively competitive spirit is taking root which leads to a sharp distinction between “winners” and “losers” in those societies, and gives rise to various social ills. We are especially concerned about the profound effect of such trends on the spiritual and mental development of young people.

In Japan, we have come to understand the horror of war and immeasurable value of peace through the horrible experience of ground warfare in Okinawa and the continual hardship caused by the location of large American military bases there. We are also learning a great deal from our neighbor churches, with whom we share faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In particular, we have strengthened ties with the churches in Asia. Fellowship with these churches enables us to more clearly perceive our past errors in Japan, and motivates us to discover ways of living together in Christ. With Christ, we seek to form relationships with the weak and marginalized in society, and through such relationships to build a society in which all people can live together and share one another’s joys and trials.

The 55th General Synod of the NSKK in 2004 resolved to oppose the revision of Article 9 of the Constitution, in which Japan renounces war and the use of military force. We wish all our fellow Christians to know that we are steadfast in our resistance to such revision of our “Peace Constitution.” Article 9 conforms with the mind of our Lord Jesus Christ, who said, “Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Matthew 26:52). All of us who belong to NSKK will join in prayer that we may all be made into peacemakers and receive the promised joy of our Lord.