

COMMUNIQUE OF THE 2ND WORLDWIDE ANGLICAN PEACE CONFERENCE

God, teach us to “seek peace and pursue it” (Psalm 34.14b)

*“God shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many people;
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.” (Isaiah 2:4)*

THE TEXT

“Toward peace and reconciliation in East Asia” is the prayer and vision that brought into fellowship around 80 delegates from the Anglican/Episcopal Churches in Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Australia, Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and Ireland for the 2nd Worldwide Anglican Peace Conference in Okinawa, Japan, from April 16-22 2013. This vision is based on the communique of the 1st Worldwide Anglican Peace Conference (TOPIK). It is also rooted in the Gospel of the Risen Christ when He appeared to His apostles and said “Peace be with you” (Jn. 20.19ff), sending them forth to follow His example and preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near (Eph. 2:17). We have been inspired to live out our calling to “protect the life and dignity of all human beings” and of the Five Marks of Mission, especially our Christian task to “transform unjust structures of society” and to strive to preserve the “integrity of creation”.

THE CONTEXT

This Conference was convened jointly by the Nippon Sei Ko Kai, (NSKK) and the Anglican Church of Korea. In his sermon at the opening service, The Most Rev. Nathaniel Uematsu, Primate of the NSKK, reminded us that to sow the seeds of peace involves the painstaking effort of letting go of “our own rights ... and try[ing] to protect the rights of others, or those who lack even basic rights”. We were also encouraged by The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church, who concluded her keynote address with the rallying words: “Peace and harmony in every part of the world depend on discovering our common humanity, our shared yearning for a meaningful place in this life, the hopes we have for our children and the world around us.” We were inspired as well by the message of The Most Rev. and Rt. Hon. Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, who underscored the urgency of peace in the Korean peninsula saying, “this Conference has come at the most needful time... May the initiatives you pursue contribute to the breaking down of enmities and to the establishment of a permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula.” He also conveyed solidarity with the NSKK as “you face the continuing anxiety of nuclear fallout and address the issues of nuclear power policies as well as questions around the military industry”.

We shared our stories. We heard the stories of the people of Okinawa and of the humanitarian assistance of TOPIK for the people of North Korea. We listened to the erudite thoughts of our resource speakers. What we heard and saw speaks of East Asia “groaning in travail” (Rom 8:22) hounded by the alarming threat of military escalation, the proliferation of destructive nuclear weapons, and the deadly effects of nuclear power generation. We noted the dangerous signs of our governments moving toward a war-footing. We fear that a possible revision of Japan's Peace Constitution would undermine stability in the region. We need only imagine the suffering of millions of people and the destruction of mother-earth to declare our unequivocal opposition to war as a means of resolving disputes. Never again to war! We are “not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, powers, the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).

At the same time, we also heard stories of, and saw vibrant hopes for, peace and reconciliation in the region. We commend the Anglican Church of Korea and its ministry for the peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula and humanitarian assistance to North Koreans in need. We commend the response of the NSKK to the needs of those suffering in the areas devastated by the great earthquake and tsunami. We highly value the joint witness of the two Anglican Churches in this ministry. We recognize the unwavering faith and unbending spirit of the people of Okinawa as they long for a just and lasting peace. We celebrate the solidarity of the provinces of the Anglican Communion and their partnerships in supporting those who suffer.

OUR CALL TO ACTION

In Okinawa, our varied language and thought patterns only made us appreciate more profoundly our diversity in the Body of Christ and the gift of unity such diversity can bring. Thus, united in the name of Christ Our Peace, we urge the Anglican Communion:

1. To create an East-Asia Peace Network and strengthen the existing networks in the Communion to promote the sharing of stories of peace-making, information, and other resources for peace and reconciliation as we too hope to share the fuller details of this conference in the near future;
2. To continue support for, and to join in with, the initiative of the Anglican Church of Korea, "Towards Peace in Korea" (TOPIK), which is striving to promote dialogue with, and humanitarian assistance to, North Koreans;
3. To pray for, and walk in solidarity with, those whose voices are not heard due to structural marginalization and the "colonial" situation, especially the Okinawans, the people affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake and the meltdown of the nuclear power plants, the indigenous peoples of the Philippines and other countries;
4. To join our voices with the people of Okinawa in opposing the observance of April 28 (the day when Okinawa was formally cut off from the rest of Japan by the San Francisco Peace Treaty) as the day of "Japan's Independence", and in their quest for relief from the "inordinate burden" of the military bases on their island;
5. To continue holding conferences like this in the spirit of "bearing one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2) and to ensure the participation of young people and women so that their voices can also be heard;
6. To engage in common action to oppose military expansion, stop the further development of nuclear weapons, prevent the heightening of tensions among states and promote the spirit of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, which denies the right of belligerency of the state; and,
7. To pray for all victims of wars, and to find ways to "turn swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks" in East Asia, elsewhere in the region, and the world.

The Most Revd. Paul Keun Sang Kim, Presiding Bishop of the Anglican Church of Korea, preached in the closing Eucharist, "A hard journey toward peace lies before us. Today, as we face this long and hard journey, Jesus is telling us, 'It is time to go.' Now we must respond." Bound by our common affection to one another, let us persevere in building communities of peace and justice and may the God of Peace grant us the grace to accomplish them. Amen.

Okinawa, Japan, April 22, 2013
Signed on behalf of the participants: