

A JOINT STATEMENT ON PEACE AND REUNIFICATION OF KOREA

**Presbyterian Church of Korea
Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
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Jesus Christ came into the world as the Prince of Peace, and He calls us to be His peacemakers—those who are called “the children of God”(Matt. 5:9). As people who have experienced the pain and suffering of war, we are acutely aware of our failure to faithfully carry out this responsibility. We are especially concerned at this time about the rising tension on the Korean peninsula. While much of the world’s attention has been on the war on Iraq, the confrontation between the government of the United States and that of the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea remains the primary focus of concern on the Korean peninsula.

For more than 119 years, Presbyterians in Korea and in the United States have been working together with the people of Korea to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to bring compassion, justice, democratization, and peaceful reunification to all the Korean people in the face of oppression, injustice, and division. That long journey, marked by great faithfulness and joy, as well as by much struggle and pain, has resulted in the phenomenal spread of the Gospel, not only in Korea but also around the world, including in the United States.

The commitments that have undergirded that mission were lifted up and renewed in June 1983, when the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) was formed out of the divided family of U.S. Presbyterianism, North and South that had been separated for 122 years. That General Assembly celebrated the fruits of the Gospel among the people of North Korea, lifted up the plight of separated families on the peninsula, and promised to use “every means at our disposal to work for the cessation of hostilities on the Korean peninsula and to achieve the peaceful reunification of the Korean people.”

To follow up on those commitments, representatives of the three churches met in San Anselmo, California, in 1986. Together we pledged to work for peace and reunification, to overcome the “enemy images” that stand in the way of reconciliation and to seek opportunities for exchange with Christians in North Korea. In 1988, the National Council of Churches in Korea adopted “A Declaration on Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula.” At the time, it was the most influential and historic document for the Protestant churches in Korea. It has become the guiding principle for the peace and reunification of the Korean Peninsula. The agreements made among us have been reaffirmed on numerous occasions, including the PC(USA) General Assemblies of 1991, 1995, 1997, and 2000. Especially moving was the celebration at the PC(USA) General Assembly in Cincinnati, Ohio, when the church delegations from South and North Korea each brought a piece of wood from their respective regions. During the assembly, those two pieces of wood were fashioned into a cross, symbolizing our unity in Jesus Christ and expressing our hope that in the providence of God, the people of Korea will be reunited and the divided peninsula will be one.

We rejoice that God has blessed these efforts with evidences of openness and exchange between the peoples of the North and the South. Because we believe God has already been at work in many ways to bring peace and reunification to the people of Korea, it is all the more urgent that we join together, once again, to address the crisis of confrontation between the governments of the United States and the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea (DPRK), affirming the mediating role of the government of the Republic of Korea and renewing our call for peace that will remove the artificial barrier between them and make of one people all who live on the Korean peninsula.

To this end, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Presbyterian Church of Korea, and the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea declare the following:

1. The implementation of the policy of engagement and reconciliation toward North Korea must be intensified.

The Presbyterian Church of Korea, the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have made every effort to be faithful to the joint *Statement on the Reunification of Korea* adopted in 1986. We, along with other churches around the world, have made efforts together to work for reconciliation and reunification on the Korean peninsula, especially within the Christian communities. When the people of North Korea were experiencing difficulties with a series of natural disasters, our churches provided humanitarian support through food aid and medicine to North Korea. The governments of the United States and South Korea also shared food aid and medicine and pursued a policy of engagement with North Korea, which resulted in an historic joint declaration between North and South Korea on June 15, 2000. This led to numerous reunions of separated families, tours of the Diamond Mountains in North Korea, exchange visits of religious groups that included people of all walks of life, and the re-joining of the rail system and the reopening of a highway between the North and South.

These positive changes have enhanced the cooperation and reconciliation efforts on the peninsula. The North has begun exploring an open economic policy, even designating the Shineuju Special Economic Zone in the North, which is a sign of internal reform and an effort to be open to external exchange. We view these significant changes positively and believe them to be a result of the cooperation and reconciliation program. One hopeful confirmation of the effect of these efforts is that today many Koreans no longer speak of Korea as “North” and “South”, but only as “Korea,” one people divided, who are on their way to becoming one again.

In order that these gains not be lost, we believe the reconciliation and engagement policy must be intensified, especially on the part of the United States and South Korea, as well as the international community. Furthermore, we encourage not only food aid and medicine, but also the resumption of effective aid to be applied toward the North’s energy and electricity needs in line with the Agreed Framework Between the DPRK and the U.S. adopted in Geneva, October 21, 1994. It is also imperative that all forms of economic sanctions against North Korea be lifted. We believe this approach can be the most effective way to defuse the current crisis over nuclear issues.

2. The current nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula must be resolved by peaceful means, and the confrontational policy of the United States toward North Korea must stop.

For the peace of the Korean peninsula, Northeast Asia, and the world, we support a Korea free of nuclear weapons of any kind. Specifically, the production, distribution, and use of nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula must be prohibited, and the suspicion of nuclear development in North Korea must be resolved peacefully. Military tension on the Korean peninsula produced a tragic war more than fifty years ago, and we must not allow another war on the peninsula that would threaten the lives of the seventy million people of Korea. We are grateful for the role of the government of South Korea in continuing to call for a peaceful resolution to the nuclear crisis and to urge the United States government to enter into direct negotiations with the government of North Korea. Irrespective of the regional issues that need to be resolved, there are specific issues that involve the U.S. and North Korea and they must be addressed face-to-face. As long as the U.S. takes a confrontational position, demanding certain pre-conditions for such talks or calling upon other partners to serve as “messengers” between the U.S. and North Korea, the issues are not likely to be resolved. The Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea was founded on the principle of self-reliance. This clearly informs the demands of that government that they be accorded the respect of direct talks on issues between them and the U.S. Failure by the U.S. to recognize this and to offer, instead, more confrontation can only increase tensions on the peninsula and impede progress toward a peaceful resolution. We urge the U.S. government to enter into direct negotiations—without conditions—with North Korea. We also urge North Korea to abandon its reckless and provocative nuclear policy, to cooperate in resolving questions of nuclear development, and to return immediately to its status as party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

3. A permanent structure for peace must be established on the Korean peninsula.

In order to bring a lasting resolution to the fundamental issues on the Korean peninsula, a permanent structure of peace must be established in Korea. To achieve this, North and South Korea must honor both the spirit and the letter of the Joint Statement of July 4, 1972, the Basic Agreement between South and North, February 19, 1992, and the South-North Joint Declaration of June 15, 2000.

Formal negotiations of a non-aggression treaty must also begin between the U.S. and North Korea. When that is complete, the truce signed in 1953 can be replaced with a peace agreement that brings to an end the Korean War and provides a foundation for lasting peace on the Korean peninsula. In the pursuit of these goals, the encouragement of both parties by the governments of China, Japan, Russia, and the European Union can be of immeasurable help; moreover, a lasting peace in a unified Korea will not only provide the first genuine security for the region in decades, but will also enhance the spread of peace throughout the whole world.

In order to realize peace and reunification on the Korean peninsula, all parties must do everything in their power to support these efforts. As partner churches within the Presbyterian and Reformed family and members of the whole Body of Christ, we affirm our common commitment to:

- a. Pray and work for peace, justice and reconciliation in Korea and the world.
- b. Support and encourage the South Korean government to continue development of its engagement policy toward the North and to work for peace and reconciliation.
- c. Urge the U.S. government to give up its practice of confrontation and return to the policy of engagement, accompanied by a commitment of resources to help North Korea meet the needs of its people for food, medicine, and energy.
- d. Strongly oppose military means to resolve the nuclear issue in North Korea.
- e. Commit to work together for peaceful reunification and for lasting peace on the Korean peninsula.
- f. Continue providing medicine and food aid to the people of North Korea as long as there is need.

At the beginning of the 21st century, we witness people who are increasingly evading God's call for love, justice, peace, and reconciliation, and who instead are engaging in war in the name of their own self-interest. Moreover, many are misusing God's gifts of reason and creativity to develop ever more sophisticated military weapons of mass destruction and death, rather than using those gifts to give life. A specter of war is hovering over the Korean peninsula. We declare that the killing of innocent people and the mass destruction of properties must not be allowed anywhere in the world, including the Korean peninsula.

We affirm the sovereignty of God and we declare that God, who came to us in Jesus Christ, can overcome any violent forces in the world. We confess that we are weak before violent forces, yet the Lord of Life has already triumphed over death and evil. Therefore, we are confident that God will fill us with strength where we are weak and enable us to work and pray without ceasing for the peace of Korea and for the rest of the world. May God's will be done on earth as in heaven.

