Cultivating Peace, Proclaiming Hope for Korea

Background: On March 7, 2018, the World Council of Church (WCC) issued a Communique in Celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the 88 Declaration called *Cultivating Peace, Proclaiming Hope*.

The 1988 Declaration of the Churches of Korea on National Reunification and Peace affirmed five principles: Independence, Peace, Grand National Unity, Humanitarianism and People’s Participation. The WCC noted those principles are still necessary for resolution of division today. The Communique invited Christians around the world and all people of good will to join the WCC to walk the path of peace with our God proclaiming the promise that God will one day redeem this whole creation.

The WCC Communique states in part:

“For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.” (Ephesians 2:14)

God’s vision for this world sees swords being beaten into plowshares (Isaiah 2:4), nations gathering together under the light of God’s justice and peace, sisters and brothers once in conflict embracing each other, and all God’s children fearing neither hunger, nor thirst nor threats of war. So long as nations practice invading each other, developing bombs and missiles to destroy each other, and refusing to sit at the table until unrealistic conditions are met then we move further away from God’s vision for our world. . . . After a period of explosively escalating tensions, we have welcomed the PyeongChang Olympic Truce and the new steps toward dialogue between North (DPRK) and South (ROK) as a historic opportunity.

In particular, we have been blessed to be meeting during the very days of the most hopeful developments for peace in the region for many years, with the South Korean delegation visit to Pyongyang on March 6– the first high-level direct talks between the two Koreas in more than a decade – and the announced commitment to a peace summit in April 2018. We give joyful thanks to God for these developments. . . We call for the international community, and

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1 The entire communiqué can be read at: https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/public-witness/peace-building-cf/cultivating-peace-proclaiming-hope
especially the United States of America, to respond affirmatively to these signs of hope, with reciprocal tension-reducing and trust-building measures.

We heard stories of the agony of division from the people of the Peninsula and the Korean diaspora, and shared hopes for peaceful coexistence and reunification. Peace-loving Christians and citizens shared visions for peace and reconciliation, and policy experts and former government officials proposed realistic ways of achieving a sustainable peace system on the Korean Peninsula. . . .

We again call ourselves, as Christians, to repent that too often we have turned ideologies of domination and imperialism and Cold War antipathy into idolatries that affirm and sustain the divisions separating North Korea from the South, from countries in the region and the West, and among factions within South Korea and each of our societies. . . . We call for those who would follow the example of Jesus to seek peace by challenging not only the predominant powers of empire and war, but also the cultural values, social assumptions, and gender norms based on power and privilege.

Peaceful resolution to the continuing crisis on the Korean Peninsula can only come through authentic dialogue at the table to which the ROK and DPRK have now returned. We call on the United States of America to join them at the table of dialogue, so that hope for peace may be strengthened. We also call on China, Russia and Japan to work together with them for peace on the Korean Peninsula, and to develop a Northeast Asian common peace and security system.

The ecumenical community has affirmed that God's peace and justice is based on the belief that without justice for all everywhere we shall never have peace anywhere. Indeed, peace in the world depends on realizing peace on the Korean Peninsula. In the 30 years since the 1988 Declaration the WCC have been dedicated to cultivating peace. Like the persistent widow mentioned in Luke 18, we can claim hope as the fruit of our persistence, described in our conference as a "fierce patience." Paul's letter to the Galatians encourages us to "not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up" (Gal. 6:9). We recognize the political events of the day present us with Kairos moment. We stand at the edge of possibility, and with God's grace we proclaim that the time for peace on the Korean Peninsula is now.
In our Annual Meeting of 2018, we—the Alliance of Baptists—join with the World Council of Churches in celebrating the recent steps toward dialogue between the nations embroiled in the conflict in Korea. We urge the United States, China, Russia and Japan to join the Republic of Korea and Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in authentic dialogue with our pledge of support for peace and security for the people of Korea, indeed for all the people of the world.

We—the Alliance of Baptists—urge the U.S. Congress to adopt the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons that seeks to eliminate nuclear weapons not only from the Korean Peninsula but from the entire world. These weapons, the most destructive and indiscriminate weapon of mass destruction ever devised by human beings, must be considered condemnable from any ethical point of view, and certainly from our perspective that all the people of the world are beloved children of God.

We—the Alliance of Baptists—reaffirm today our Statement on Nuclear Disarmament from July 30, 2010. We pledge to raise our voices in advocacy for peace for all God’s children in communications with our U.S. Senators and other political leaders. We call on our Alliance of Baptists congregations to lead in prayer, teaching, and preaching about the biblical, spiritual and moral basis for God’s peace and shalom.