Resolution of The United Methodist Church on the Korean Peninsula

Adopted at its May 2016 General Conference, Portland, Oregon

Korea: Peace, Justice and Reunification

"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 NRSV).

Our Faith Commitment to Peace and Reconciliation

At the 10th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches held in Busan, South Korea, in late 2013, the delegates declared in a statement the following, which could also serve as a faith statement of our commitment to peace and reconciliation:

"As a global body of believers in Jesus Christ, we confess our sins in having given in to the powers and principalities of the world in their wars and military conflicts full of hate and enmity, armed with nuclear arsenals and weapons of mass destruction targeting humanity and the whole of God's creation. Also we lament our failure to adequately acknowledge the Korean people's long suffering, caused by external powers fighting for colonial expansion and military hegemony. We hereby join the Christians in Korea in their confession of faith in Jesus Christ, who came to this world as our Peace (Ephesians 2:13-19); who suffered, died upon the Cross, was buried, and rose again to reconcile humanity to God, to overcome divisions and conflicts, and to liberate all people and make them one (Acts 10:36-40); who, as our Messiah, will bring about a new Heaven and new Earth (Revelation 21-22). With this confession, we join in firm commitment with the Christians of Korea, both North and South, especially in Korean churches' faithful actions to work towards peace, healing, reconciliation and reunification of their people and their land" (WCC Statement on Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula).

The Tragedy of Division and the Urgency of Peace

Christians in Korea have spoken about the urgency of the reunification of their nation. Celebrating one hundred years of Korean Methodism in 1985, the Korean Methodist Church, in its Centennial Statement, said:

"Faced as we are with the forty years' tragic division of the Korean Peninsula, we express our longing for unification of the nation in any form possible through peaceful means in the earliest possible time. This must be done through establishing a democratic political structure based upon freedom and human rights, and must be fulfilled by working toward the establishment of a just society built for the sake of the people. Therefore, we reject any form whatever of dictatorship. Deploring the long history of our

nation in which the reality has been the sacrifice of our country's political life, and now with a definite sense of national self-determination which rejects any domination by the superpowers, we disavow any form of war or the taking of life, and commit the whole strength of the Korean Methodist Church to the peaceful reunification of our country."

For the nation of Korea, divided for more than sixty-six years, justice, peace, and reconciliation are tragically overdue. In 1945, just before the end of World War II, the United States proposed and the Soviet Union agreed to the division of Korea, which resulted in the Korean War with more than 3 million lives lost and millions of families separated. The tragedy of the Korean people continued because the Korean War did not end with a Peace Treaty. Instead, the Armistice Treaty was signed in 1953 leaving the Korean Peninsula under a state of war and tension for more than sixty years. This resulted in the separation of families, many of whom never saw each other again.

The enmity between the superpowers has been played out in the Korean tragedy of war and death, dictatorship and militarization, separation of one people into two hostile camps and divided families with no contact at all. All members of the body of Christ have a responsibility to support the Korean people in their attempts to build democracy, reduce tension, create trust on the Korean Peninsula, heal the divisions, and reunite their country. The threat to peace remains critical with the world's fifth and sixth largest armies facing each other across the Demilitarized Zone.

North-South Reconciliation Efforts

In many ways, the Korean people, north and south, have expressed their strong desire for reunification. Since 1984, there have been official contacts and conversations on economic and humanitarian issues between the Republic of Korea (ROK, also known as South Korea) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, also known as North Korea). Emergency assistance by the DPRK and ROK following devastating floods in the south and floods and drought in the north was offered and accepted by each other.

The first government-sponsored exchange of visits between divided family members occurred in 1985. Thousands of overseas Koreans were able to visit their family members in the DPRK. Christians from north and south met in 1986 in Glion, Switzerland, as part of an ecumenical process on peace and the reunification of Korea led by the World Council of Churches. In 1987, both sides offered proposals to lower military tensions on the peninsula.

In June 2000, an unprecedented historic summit between North and South Korean leaders took place in Pyongyang, DPRK. ROK President Kim Dae Jung and DPRK Chairman Kim Jong Il pledged themselves to work toward Korean reunification. Since the summit, both Koreas have had numerous exchanges such as reunions of separated families, ministerial-level talks, and other economic, social, cultural, and sports exchanges including reconnection of railways and roads through the Demilitarized Zone.

The two Koreas marched together in the opening ceremony of the 2004 Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia, carrying the Korean unification flag. In 2007, the late President Roh Moo Hyun urged U.S. President George W. Bush to resolve the Korean War by signing a peace treaty with North Korea. At the second summit between leaders of North and South Korea, President Roh and Chairman Kim Jong Il committed to resolving disputes in the West Sea surrounding the Northern Limit Line.

The relationship between the United States and the DPRK, however, has deteriorated due to the issues related to the DPRK's withdrawal from the nuclear nonproliferation treaty, its violation of the 1994 Agreed Framework, and threats by the United States of pre-emptive strikes on North Korea.

In 1991, the Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-aggression, Exchanges and Cooperation was adopted by the Republic of Korea and DPRK; and in 1992, both countries signed a joint declaration on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. In 1994, the United States and DPRK signed the Agreed Framework whose objective "was the freezing and replacement of North Korea's indigenous nuclear power plant program … and the step-by-step normalization of relations between the U.S. and the DPRK" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agreed_Framework, accessed Feb. 1, 2015). The agreement stipulated that funds would be provided to the DPRK from the United States, Japan, and ROK for the construction of two light-water electric power reactors. In addition, the U.S. agreed to provide 500,000 tons of heavy oil annually to the DPRK. In return, the DPRK agreed to forego any further accumulation of fuel rods, which could be used to produce atomic bombs.

Over time, the mandates of the Agreement were violated by both sides. It is most desirable that the United States and the DPRK, through direct negotiations, redraft or update the 1994 Agreement encompassing all vital matters of interest to both sides, including DPRK's nuclear-proliferation issues, and U.S. recognition of the sovereignty and security of the DPRK.

The Agreed Framework remains an important stabilizing element in U.S.-DPRK relations. It is one of the key tools of engagement by which DPRK uses incentives rather than threats to build inter-Korean and regional cooperation.

Historic Role of the Ecumenical Community for Peace in the Korean Peninsula

In 1986, as a result of consultations in Korea, North and South, with Christians and government representatives, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCCUSA) adopted an important policy statement on "Peace and the Reunification of Korea." United Methodist representatives participated fully in the development of this statement, in consultations on peace and reunification, and in an official ecumenical delegation to North and South Korea in the summer of 1987.

The WCC Assembly of 2013, adopted the "Statement on Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula" urging churches to "call upon all stakeholders in the region to participate in a creative process for building peace on the Korean Peninsula by halting all military exercises on the peninsula, by ceasing foreign intervention, withdrawing foreign troops and reducing military expenditures." The statement called on ecumenical partners to be peacemakers and bridge builders for the two Koreas and the world, and to embark upon a universal campaign for a Peace Treaty to replace the Armistice of 1953, bringing an end to the state of war and paving the path toward reconciliation and peace.

In an international ecumenical consultation held in May of 2013, United Methodist groups, including the United Methodist Korean American National Association Committee on Korean Reunification & Reconciliation and the National Council of Churches in Korea, issued the "Call for Peace and Reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula," stating in part: "For too long, the Korean people have been divided and suffered from political brinkmanship, the wall of ideology, and the scourge of militarism.

The Armistice Agreement of 1953 only temporarily halted the war that claimed 4 million lives and divided 10 million families. This lingering state of war on the Korean Peninsula is a major contributor to tension and instability, both regionally and globally, and contravenes the spirit of United Nations Resolution 39/11, which recognizes a people's right to peace. We Christians of different communions, gathered together in the common cause of peace, are deeply concerned about the growing tensions on the Korean Peninsula over recent nuclear testing in North Korea and U.S.-South Korea joint military exercises. We join with the Korean people, both in North and South Korea, in yearning for reconciliation, reunification and sustainable peace. Replacing the Armistice Agreement with a Peace Treaty is and should be the first step in establishing a lasting and sustainable peace on the Korean Peninsula."

Current Plan and Actions Taken by Agencies and Caucuses of the UMC

The Reunification Committee of Korean United Methodist Churches, in close collaboration with other United Methodist churches, agencies and the ecumenical community, has initiated a four year Korea Peace Movement project in 2013 in response to "A Call for Peace March," a petition adopted by General Conference of 2012 (Book of Resolutions #6130):

To promote the awareness for peace and reconciliation in the Korean Peninsula;

To build an ecumenical advocacy movement to replace the Armistice of 1953 with a peace treaty;

To build a coalition of peace workers among U.S. churches as well as churches in the Korean Peninsula; and

To prepare Christian leaders and churches for the work of reconciliation and peace in the Korean Peninsula and the world,

For these purposes, the Committee and its coalition developed a four-year plan:

A petition campaign for a peace treaty in the Korean Peninsula, to officially end the Korean War, an ecumenical effort from May 2013 to May 2016.

The Korea Peace Conference: In May 2013, this event was attended by more than 120 participants from U.S and South Korea, including representatives from NCC Korea.

The Korea Peace March and Advocacy: July of 2014 in Washington, D.C., attended by 300 participants from across the U.S.

Peace visits to the Korean Peninsula, both North and South Korea, in the summer and fall of 2015.

A Conference for Peace and Reconciliation for youths and young adult Christians in 2015.

Recommendations for Action

In support of the Korean people and in cooperation with partner Christian groups, it is recommended that The United Methodist Church, its members, local churches, annual conferences, and agencies undertake the following actions through intercession, education, public advocacy, and support of programs furthering justice, peace, and reconciliation:

1. Engage in prayer of penitence and petition with the Korean people and with Christians in the north and south, scarred and pained by the division of their nation and yearning for reunion, and establish working, collaborative and supportive relationships with the Korean Methodist Church, the National Council of Churches in Korea (ROK), and the Korean Christian Federation (DPRK) to seek peace and reconciliation.

2. Commend for study and action, the "Statement on Peace and the Reunification of the Korean Peninsula" adopted by the 10th WCC Assembly which called on churches to commit to, among others, the following:

a) Work with our governments to mandate the U.N. Security Council to initiate new efforts for peacebuilding across the Korean Peninsula and to lift the existing economic and financial sanctions imposed on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea;

b) Embark upon a universal campaign for a peace treaty to replace the Armistice Agreement of 1953, bringing an end to the state of war;

c) Call upon all foreign powers in the region to participate in a creative process for building peace on the Korean Peninsula by halting all military exercises on the Korean Peninsula, by ceasing their interventions and reducing military expenditures;

d) Ensure the complete, verifiable and irreversible elimination of all nuclear weapons and power plants in northeast Asia, by taking steps to establish a Nuclear-free World and simultaneously joining the emerging international consensus for a humanitarian ban on nuclear weapons in all regions of the world, so that life is no longer threatened by nuclear dangers anywhere on earth;

e) Urge the governments in both North and South Korea to restore human community with justice and human dignity by overcoming injustice and confrontation, and to heal human community by urgently addressing the humanitarian issue of separated families, by establishing a sustainable process allowing confirmation of the whereabouts of family members and free exchanges of letters and visits, and by offering the support of international agencies where necessary; and

f) Work with the governments of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Republic of Korea in providing international cooperation to maintain a truly Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and transform it into a zone of peace. (http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2013-busan/adopted-documents-statements/peace-and-reunification-of-the-korean-peninsula).

3. Engage in a worldwide campaign for a Peace Treaty to replace the Armistice Agreement of 1953.

4. Urge all governments that have relations with the ROK or the DPRK, or both, to exercise their influence to further mediation, interchange, peace, and reunification.

5. Urge all governments involved to forthright commitment to the following policy directions in support of Korean efforts for peace and reunification:

a. The peaceful reunification of Korea should be a formal U.S. policy goal.

b. A peace treaty should be signed among the nations involved to eliminate the threat of war, establish an enduring peace, and minimize tension in the Korean Peninsula. The peace treaty, replacing the existing armistice treaty, should be based on the conditions of a non-aggression pact between the

Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, with the full participation of the United States and the People's Republic of China, as well as other related countries.

c. ROK and DPRK contacts should be encouraged;

d. Bilateral diplomatic and human contacts between the United States and the DPRK should be enhanced.

e. The U.S. should negotiate to end the war and to seek a comprehensive peace settlement in Korea.

6. Encourage continued humanitarian aid to the DPRK through agencies like the U.N. World Food Program (WFP). This aid is directed to those persons most at risk and is monitored carefully. The WFP has developed productive working relationships with its DPRK counterparts and continues to push for more open access to the food distribution process.

7. Increase communication, dialogue and exchange of delegations, with church and ecumenical representatives, with ROK and DPRK. Political, economic, social, and religious delegations are a high priority with DPRK leaders. They provide Korean middle management with experience outside their country and a greater perspective regarding the situation between the Korean Peninsula and outside it. Delegations from DPRK can also be matched with exchange delegations to DPRK, which allows people from around the world to see and understand the country, share ideas, and have personal contact with Korean peoples.

8. Advocate for removal of economic sanctions against DPRK. Sanctions limit the engagement of DPRK in the regional and global economy. Removing sanctions will also facilitate foreign investment in improving the DPRK production infrastructure. Because of economic and legal obstacles, development of foreign investment will be a difficult and long-term process, even without sanctions. Removing sanctions is a high priority with DPRK leaders.

9. Continue to redraft or update policies to comply with the Agreed Framework, of which the most positive element is U.S.-DPRK relations, by supplying heavy fuel oil and supporting ROK and Japanese financing for the Korea Peninsula Energy Development Office (KEDO) light-water reactors.

10. Encourage a consistent, bipartisan, and long-range policy formulation regarding both North and South Korea by governments around the world, but especially the U.S., China, Russia, Japan and the European Union. Policies that engage the ROK and DPRK governments effectively and promote change and moderation will stand a greater chance of resolving the current crisis and bringing every party, including the DPRK, to relate according to agreed international norms and mechanisms.

11. Urge the United Nations to look into the North Korean refugee situation arising from political and economic needs, as thousands of North Koreans are crossing the border seeking asylum in neighboring countries. The United Nations should declare them refugees, assist them as they seek asylum, and provide humanitarian assistance.

12. Urge continued humanitarian assistance to North Korea, at the same time calling on the North Korean government to work with the United Nations to abide by all internationally agreed principles of human rights and humanitarian law, principles that must guide all parties addressing the resolution of the crisis in the Korean Peninsula.

When these approaches can be taken, and most of them depend on U.S. government policy decisions, there are still no guarantees that the crisis can be resolved. But it is quite clear that a U.S. policy of isolation, sanctions and military buildup directed against DPRK will stimulate North Korea to rely more on its military, even at the expense of the lives of its population, and may lead to another catastrophic war on the Korean Peninsula. Continued engagement, steadfast negotiation, and careful cultivation of cooperative relationships with appropriate DPRK organizations provide the only real opportunity for a positive resolution of the Korean stalemate.

ADOPTED 1988

Amended and adopted 2000

Amended and readopted 2004

Readopted 2008

Amended and readopted 2016

Resolution #6100, 2008 Book of Resolutions

Resolution #328, 2004 Book of Resolutions

Resolution #309, 2000 Book of Resolutions

Resolution #6135, 2008 Book of Resolutions

See Social Principles, ¶ 165B, C.