Statement of Faith 2002

Peace Declaration

Preamble

"Blessed are the peacemakers," declares the Lord Jesus. The world today is, however, filled with hatred and hostility. In the world of massacre and retaliation despair seems to rule the world.

The crucified Lord brings to the world judgment. He also brings to us reconciliation. The Lord proclaims liberation and peace, and the resurrection of the Lord leads us to life. Amid discord and turmoil both strident and shrill, we hear the still voice of the Lord Jesus. We know that the Church of those who have been saved listens to his voice. And the people of the church become still and remain silent in order to hear the voice speaking to them. They listen and they respond to that voice.

God liberated the people from Egypt, the land of bondage, and gave them the Ten Commandments so they would live lives responsive to God's work of salvation. The Cross and the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ brought the Commandments to completion. Therefore, we, as the followers of the Lord, must not invalidate the Commandments. The Church will abide by the Lord's Commandments.

I. We will follow the Lord Jesus.

We who have received the grace of the Cross will follow the Lord Jesus. We who believe have been liberated from all bondage other than to the Lord Jesus, and we are called to obedience. We are set free only by submission to the Lord Jesus.

The First Commandment: You shall have no other gods before me. [*]

We will revere only the Lord Jesus, and we will listen to His voice alone. We will not boast of ourselves but only of the crucified Lord Jesus. We pray for the Lord's will to be done. We will live as the poor

in spirit who know no Lord other than Jesus Christ. We will find peace by living in this way.

II. We will not obey anyone or anything other than the Lord Jesus.

Obedience to the Lord Jesus means refusal to obey anyone or anything else. There is no obedience that does not entail disobedience. We who are submissive to the Lord give up even those things that are most important to us.

The Second Commandment: You shall not make for yourself a graven image.

Nations, races, ideologies, the economy, wealth, religious and political authorities, freedom and justice, morality, conscience, emotions, feelings, life, our own selves, our loved ones: none of these will be the object of our obedience. We will not make any of these things gods before whom we bow down and serve.

The Third Commandment: You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.

The Church must not deceive others by falsely claiming to do God's will. It is inexcusable for the Church to use the name of God to condone violence, retaliation, or "just wars."

The Fourth Commandment: Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

When we ignore the essential difference between worship and the world, we begin to obey what we must not obey. Worship is an act of submission to the Lord Jesus, and it requires giving up the world. We will make worship primary.

III. We who follow the Lord Jesus will not kill.

We who have been liberated and given life by the Lord Jesus Christ can no longer kill. If we do kill, we are obeying what we must not obey and are denying the grace of the Lord. We who have been liberated and given life by the Lord are permitted only to forgive, to love, to share, and to give life. Only by doing these things can the Church obey the Lord and rejoice in His grace.

The Fifth Commandment: Honor your father and your mother.

Having been liberated and given life by the Lord Jesus we will respect the aged who are physically weak. In wartime, often people who are thought to be of no value are killed. By our living together with weak and "worthless" people, we reject war's value system. The Church lives as the people who are useless for war.

The Sixth Commandment: You shall not kill.

Having been liberated and given life by the Lord Jesus we cannot take the lives of others nor negate their existence. Where there is killing, there is no peace. We will not kill. Where there are military armaments, there is no peace. We reject acquiring armaments preparing to kill. Where there is cooperation in war, there is no peace. We will not cooperate in any attempts to build systems which are linked to killing. Where there is violence, there is no peace. We reject any opinions, positions, and attitudes, attempting to justify violence and killing. The Church which follows the Lord loves its enemies and prays for those who persecute it.

The Seventh Commandment: You shall not commit adultery.

Having been liberated and given life by the Lord Jesus we cannot commit adultery. Adultery insults the dignity of others because of selfish sexual passion. War justifies adultery. Where there is adultery, there is no peace. We will not commit adultery. The Church will not violate the dignity of others in matters related to sexuality.

The Eighth Commandment: You shall not steal.

Having been liberated and given life by the Lord Jesus we cannot steal. Yet the world, which was created by God, continues to be despoiled as it is constantly exposed to exploitation and plundering. Exploitation and plundering produce some wealthy people and many poor people, and this is a primary cause of conflict. In order to protect their interests, the wealthy wage war. Where there is exploitation and plundering, there is no peace. We will not steal. The Church shares the grace given by God.

The Ninth Commandment: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Having been liberated and given life by the Lord Jesus we cannot bear false witness. False witness is a form of self-protection and a means to justify evil. False witness concerning history has hindered reconciliation with our neighbors in Asia. Where there is false witness, there is no peace. We will not bear false witness. We who have been forgiven by the Lord Jesus no longer need to bear false witness for the sake of self-protection. By confessing its sins, the Church desires to be reconciled with its neighbors.

The Tenth Commandments: You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

Having been liberated and given life by the Lord Jesus we cannot covet. Our covetousness and desire to monopolize everything has hurt our neighbors, destroyed the environment, and led to war. Even the dead are coveted and used as instruments of war as they are made into war heroes. Where there is covetousness, there is no peace. We will not covet. The kingdom, the power, and the glory all belong to God. The Church gives everything to God and lives to serve.

Conclusion

The Church has cooperated with the waging of war. We have failed to keep the Ten Commandments. Moreover, we have not appreciated the saving grace of the crucified Lord Jesus, which gave us new life to respond to it.

We have mistakenly thought that the grace of God made it unnecessary for us to obey the Lord's Commandments. Thus we have degraded the grace of the Lord Jesus. Even so, the Lord Jesus is still calling us today from the Cross.

We acknowledge that the extreme situations, such as to protect our loved ones from an assault, may arise. Such situations tempt us to justify the use of violence. And we may resort to violence. However, if violence were used even to protect our loved ones, we would fail to answer rightfully to the love of Jesus and therefore be judged under the saving Cross of the Lord Jesus. We can live out the Ten Commandments only when we live under the Lord's judgment and forgiveness.

The Church follows the Lord Jesus Christ. The Church will not hold onto anyone and anything other than Christ. The Church will respect the

weak. The Church will not kill, will not commit adultery, will not steal, will not give false witness, will not covet.

Reconciliation has already been accomplished by the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. The darkness of despair has not overcome it. We have been given resurrection of life, and we commit ourselves to peacemaking. The Lord will be with us to the end of the age.

On the Last Day, the Lord will bring the complete end to all hostility and killing, all retaliation and despair. The Lord Jesus will wipe away every tear from the eyes of those who have been made to suffer. The Church will proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. The church will continue to uphold the Gospel of reconciliation.

Lord Jesus, go before us, go with us, renew us.
Holy Spirit of God, cleanse us and make us instruments of peace.
Father God, may your Kingdom come.

Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!
Come, Jesus, Lord of peace!

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Translated by the Japan Baptist Convention Committee for the Promotion of the "Peace Declaration."

[*] The Ten Commandments are found in Exodus 20:1～17.
The Revised Standard Version is used in this translation.