

2010 Declaration of Faith for Life and Peace

Issued by Korean Christians on Easter Day 2010

2010 is a remarkable year. It is the 100th anniversary of Kyongsul, the year of national shame when Japan annexed the Korean peninsula in 1910; the 60th anniversary of the national tragedy of the Korean War; the 50th anniversary of the April 19th Revolution and the 30th anniversary of the May 18th Gwangju Democratic Movement, both marking people's victories in the fight for democracy; and finally the 10th anniversary of the June 15th North-South Joint Declaration, a critical turning point in inter-Korean relations. Accordingly, what lies before us is the task of realizing a new revitalization based on the wisdom we have collected from the critical junctures of our history. On this Easter day in the year 2010, as Korean Christians who believe in the Cross and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, we declare a faith that seeks life and peace for the church, the people, and the world.

In joining our hands and hearts with our people in their hardships and hopes, we have a proud tradition of following Jesus Christ to resist and fight against the forces of evil. From our participation in the March 1, 1919 Independence Movement to our frontline activism throughout the democratization movement against the military dictatorships of the 1970's and 1980's, we Christians have always played an integral role in the pursuit of reconciliation and reunification of our nation, trying to overcome the aftermath of national war and division between North and South Korea. This is the context in which the "Theological Declaration of Korean Christians, 1973" and the "Declaration of the Korean Church for Unification of the Korean People and Peace on the Korean Peninsula, 1988" were formulated.

We are deeply repentant, however, for having abandoned on countless occasions the path of sacrifice and devotion to achieve salvation and liberation for our people—a path demonstrated to us by Jesus Christ, who bore the weight of the Cross on his shoulders. Most of all we repent for the shameful situation that is the current reality of Korean Christian communities. And hence we yearn to stand up once again as faithful Christians who seek to realize God's Sovereignty in our history and among our people.

Facing the grim reality that justice, peace and life are currently being destroyed in their entirety, we proclaim our faith to overcome this reality, and resolve to act on our faith. As Paul declared in Romans 8:22, "we know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now." In today's brutal reality, with all living beings placed in mortal danger, we seek to participate in God's work to liberate the

weak from violence and to reclaim the sound order of life.

The Signs of the Times and Our Repentance

In our land today, all efforts toward life and peace are under dangerous threat. The neo-liberal economic order, driven by unlimited competition, has created social polarization. In the rural areas, farmers who can till the land are rapidly disappearing. In the last 10 years, temporary and contract workers have risen in number to comprise more than half of all laborers, and youth unemployment has become a critical social issue. Government policies that benefit only the family-owned conglomerates have effectively trampled on the people's right to life. Urban redevelopment plans driven solely for capitalist profit have cast out the poor into the streets, resulting in the Yongsan tragedy and portending many similar disasters to come. The current government's policy towards North Korea has incited serious dissension and discord, destroying all progress made by the past administrations toward reconciliation and reunification. The all-powerful ruling party, with the support of the conservative press and big business, has unilaterally pushed forward policies that have created a politics completely lacking in transparency or accountability. Through its efforts to dominate and control the free press and culture through unjustifiable legislation, to purge targeted persons, and even to control the nation's judicial system, the current administration has placed democracy itself in a state of severe crisis. The euphemistically named "Saving Four Rivers Project, which prioritizes indiscriminate industrial development above all other considerations, is currently destroying people's livelihoods and life bases, and in the process is annihilating the fundamental respect for life.

This brutal reality is not unrelated to the ongoing destruction of life that is taking place outside of our national borders. In today's world, powers that threaten life and peace are reigning supreme with no signs of resistance; the forced suffering and sacrifice of human beings and all other forms of life is taking place around the globe. The neoliberal economic order and associated hegemonic military politics threaten liberty, basic rights, the right to life of humans and other living beings, and national self-determination for the people of the world.

What is more, our culture nowadays is rapidly transforming into a "death culture" in which morality and appreciation of true beauty are trod underfoot and replaced with the glorification of greed and pleasure. Though modern civilization values the utility of scientific technology to control and manipulate life wherever it exists, it is increasingly mindless of the value of life itself, as well as what makes life worth living: love, justice, and peace. As a result, the 21st century, which was to be a century of hope, has instead become a time in which our very existence is in fatal

danger. While all around the globe we witness ominous signs of environmental destruction threatening the basic order of all living things, human greed is accelerating the destruction of humankind and has even opened up the possibility of universal catastrophe.

Though we live in such an age of danger and despair, we Korean Christians are not following the example of Jesus Christ. First and foremost, we confess our own sins of turning away from Christ, who bore the suffering of all creation on the Cross and thereby gave birth to a new life order.

We have not lived as the Bible commands: "But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (Amos 5:24) Instead, in worshipping idols of mammon which are indeed silver and gold (Psalms 115:4), we have sinned by submitting to greed and by participating in a cruel social order that demands the constant sacrifice of the poor. We have sinned by tolerating a savage society where dominance and violence have become routine, where the law of the jungle and "survival of the fittest" are condoned. Despite the costly lessons of the tragic Korean War, we have become indifferent to the division under the Cold War system whereby we treat our fellow people in the North as enemies, while relying on military force and weaponry to maintain our separation. We must repent of the sin of silently sanctioning war ideology and accommodating the aggressive reorganization of the global order through an imperialistic system.

We have sinned by turning our faith into a mindset and system in which the weak are made captive and the order of life is trampled. In the name of rationality and efficiency, we have bought into the false promises of modern science, which has fragmented and manipulated the order of life. We have become addicted to a materialistic culture which offers luxury and comfort at the cost of other life forms. Instead of aspiring for the wisdom to foster the natural beauty contained in all that lives, we have neglected efforts even to safeguard the basic joy that is the right of every living being. We have lost sight of the communal ideals and truths evident in society, history and the universe, and instead thrown in our lot with a culture of death based on submission to greed and consumption. We are deeply penitent for our sin of standing by and bringing about the crisis of environmental destruction.

Rather than living to advance God's Sovereignty on earth, the church has abandoned its spiritual ideals and conscience and instead has become addicted to continual conflict driven by dogmatic exclusivity and ecclesiastic arrogance. We have sinned by dreaming of individual church growth only, while maintaining an anti-democratic order and system within the church, taking for granted all sorts of discrimination, and being devoted to an imperialistic missionary project that violates

reconciliation and peace--the true spirit of religion. We repent that we have fallen into a religious indolence seeking wealth in this world and salvation in the next, rather than placing on the altar of history and of heaven the fostering of "a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair" (Proverb 1:3).

Our Confession of Faith, Pledge, and Call to Action

Today we once again reaffirm our faith as Christians, pledge to follow a new path based on the teachings of the Bible and our religious conscience, and call upon all Korean Christians to join us on this path.

(1) We affirm our faith that God created the sun, the moon, the stars, the universe and nature and all forms of life as recorded in the Bible. Since all life originated from God, all living things are endowed with the inalienable right to lead and find fulfillment in their lives. God created human beings in God's own image, created humans as male and female, and gave us the responsibility to protect and nurture all living things (Genesis 1:27-29).

We believe that the prosperity and growth of civilization is the continuation of God's creation and preservation. All that is natural in the universe as created by God lives communally and symbiotically, depending on others for existence. In this way, the order of the universe is just and balanced only when all things serve their roles and form proper relationships with one other. Demanding unilateral sacrifice from any specific portion of what exists in nature is contrary to God's will. We believe that peace is attainable only when we can restore and protect the natural order of creation, where all living beings can pursue happiness and fulfillment within a framework of mutually harmonious relations.

Thus, our vision of a new culture and faith is one in which we celebrate and lift up this truth: that all things in nature must be allowed to enjoy peace and security under a harmonious order. To pursue individual power and luxury instead of seeking God is idol worship. Waging war and dominating others for profit and gain is a sin and a crime. We believe in the necessity of working towards the mutual and symbiotic existence of all things under the sun. Under such a system of communal living, what is required most of all is the training and nurturing of spiritual self-sacrifice, as well as an appreciation and passion for the beauty of life. For this, we are most of all opposed to war. War is the greatest evil, destroying peace and life alike. Through cross-national and cross-ethnic understanding, communication, and cooperation, we must continually and actively root out the conditions and factors which encourage war. War must be suppressed and made institutionally impossible not only on the Korean Peninsula, but all across Asia and

the rest of the world. In particular, warfare based on imperialistic and hegemonic instincts must be put to an end, and all nuclear weaponry, designed for the strong to control the weak and employing the potential for global destruction as leverage, must be put into permanent disuse.

In particular, the Korean peninsula, in which we live, is in dire need of peace without threat of war. We believe peace on the Korean peninsula can only be achieved by ending the division and achieving reunification. In preparation for reunification, the current cease-fire agreement must be replaced with a peace agreement, putting an end once and for all to the Korean War. Both North and South should reduce their armed forces, halt their provocative war exercises, speed the withdrawal of foreign military troops, and allow for true self-determination by the Korean people. We must open all possible pathways for North-South communication and exchange, and encourage an atmosphere for peaceful reunification. We must take as our mission and responsibility to spread this peace throughout East Asia and the rest of the world.

Furthermore, we believe that a true confession of our faith in God the Creator must include reestablishing a righteous relationship to earth. In our current civilization, earth--which represents "life"--is treated in material terms; and the value of agriculture, which is the source of human life and culture, is gauged by production quantity and numerical value. The Bible records that the descendants of a family separated from the earth cannot but rely on a city culture based on consumption and violence. Today this tragedy is being reenacted at a society-wide level. We must recover a way of life that believes in the earth as "life." This belief demands that we restore the vitality of agriculture and the creative cultural inheritance associated with working the land; in this way we must proclaim our faith that God is the creator.

(2) "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14). This is God's affirmation of the human being, the world, and the physical body, and marks how God lowered God-self from heaven to show us how to achieve justice and peace. Indeed, the life and teachings of Jesus Christ reveal God's justice and peace.

Jesus Christ prayed and lived for the realization of heaven on earth: where the poor can feel joy, where the ill and infirm walk and run, and where the weak who were treated as sinners are embraced as God's children. Jesus Christ did not accept as given the world's concept of property and vested interests, but instead labored to realize God's Sovereignty of justice and peace. For this reason the powers in the Roman Empire, along with the existing dominant religious system,

crucified Jesus on the Cross for political crimes and blasphemy. However, it was confessed that Jesus Christ's death was "for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself" (Hebrews 7:27). Seeing this event of the Cross being reenacted today in various places of suffering, we pledge to fight evildoers until wrongful death and sacrifice is no longer possible.

Our pledge and dedication is strengthened by Jesus Christ rising from death. Through resurrection, Jesus ensured that the powers of death and decay would in the end be defeated. The powerful of the world hold us hostage by threatening death, forcing us to submit to the worldly order. But the poisonous sting of death, which forces us to compromise with injustice, was made harmless by the risen Christ, confirming that truth will overcome in the end (Corinthians 15:55-58).

Jesus Christ proclaimed the peace of heaven. This peace is a condition in which all things under the sky are related properly to each other and together pursue the fulfillment of life. This peace is the fruit of love and justice. Jesus Christ, the king of peace, entreats all of us Christians who follow him to work for peace.

We believe that God's Sovereignty on earth as Christ dreamed of it is a world of peace and justice (Isaiah 45:7-8). We further depend on democratic politics to create a just and peaceful world. Thus, we believe that the central government and local public organizations must be guided by true democratic principles. In order to escape the pitfalls of representative democracy, we must gather, in a bottom-up fashion, the voices that emerge from various walks of life. In short, what is necessary is a pluralistic politics where democratic activism in civil society functions as intermediary with the people.

A true democracy requires that basic human and social rights are protected. Freedom of conscience and religion, as well as freedom of the press, publication, organization, association, etc. are among the basic rights that must be safeguarded to lead a life of decency. Similarly, because the complex modern society threatens the livelihood of isolated individuals, it is important to foster solidarity and association, which empower justice.

In order to achieve justice and peace, a democratic economics is also essential. Economic rationality must be examined through the lens of social solidarity. Growth and prosperity must go beyond simply maintaining balance; we must set as a goal the eradication of the suffering of the have-nots. In particular, while the concept of private ownership is necessary to protect individual liberty and dignity, it is not a sacred, inviolable right that is exempt from social responsibility for public welfare. Thus, we must construct a system where capital is socially

responsible and does not impoverish the livelihood of the people. Only through such measures can we begin to hope for a just and peaceful community.

(3) We believe the Holy Spirit is God's life-giving spirit, and God's power that grants us justice and peace. The Holy Spirit asks us to bear the Cross as Jesus did, and it also confirms the victory of his resurrection. The Holy Spirit sends us forth to bring to fruition a world of justice and peace where life is in abundance. In this world we live in, complex interests co-exist with various religious and cultural values. We believe this diversity is the foundation for humankind and all living things to lead plentiful lives. The Holy Spirit grants us wisdom and courage to overcome individual and group interests and differences, and urges and motivates us to create a new community where we are united as one.

The Holy Spirit, spirit of life and source of peace, protects us as we dream of the vision of a new community. We overcome ideological barriers to support and work together with our brothers and sisters who are suffering in North Korea. We overcome differences in skin color, language, and culture to create just relations through which immigrant laborers in Korea can be assured of their labor and human rights. We hold dear the richness and diversity of the religious and cultural values formed through the long history of Korea. We strenuously oppose the "Four Rivers Development Project" and other such developmental economic policies that treat the natural environment as a profit-generating commodity, and will work tirelessly to protect the organic linkage between humans and nature. We are devoted to realizing a just peace in which all life is respected, a peace that reaches beyond national boundaries and encompasses the citizens of East Asia and the world as a whole. We will work until this vision of life and peace extends to all life and to the ends of the universe.

In the name of the Holy Spirit, the spirit of life, we believe the church is a community joined in the love and body of Christ. The church is a new creation accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit, a place where we strive to create the best example of proper relations among all forms of life. The church in and of itself is not the final goal; the church is a community where we follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ to work for God's Sovereignty. We pray that the Korean church will join this path to life and peace.

The Korean church must overcome its obsession with size and magnitude and become a community serving those who have been left behind in society. The church must become a community that welcomes the infirm and looks after the poor and the weak. Gender discrimination in the church must be weeded out, and the church must be a place of welcome for immigrant laborers and multi-cultural

families. The church must overcome closed and exclusive sectarianism, reforming itself as an open community that dialogues and forms bonds of solidarity with other traditional religions in Korea. The church must participate in the movement for social reform, for life, and for peace. The Korean church must end its subjugating, unilateral missionary activity at home and abroad, converting such activity to true missionary work characterized by service and sacrifice to God's Sovereignty.

To achieve all of these things the Korean church must operate according to democratic principles. The church's authoritarian power structure must be replaced with a new system that eradicates the customary hierarchical organization with a head-pastor at the top. The church's offering collection and finances must be used transparently according to the teachings of the Bible. Our theological seminaries, whose goal is to produce future ministers, should provide a theological education that is open and inclusive, allocating proper numbers of graduates according to each church's need for ministers.

A Solidarity for Life and Peace

We pledge to commit ourselves to life and peace, and swear that wherever we may be, we will act as follows:

From a local perspective, as local Christian churches, we will strive to overcome religious barriers to form solidarity with other neighboring religious organizations through dialogue and cooperation. Through civil society networks, we will encourage true understanding and unification of the people, and seek to create a vibrant community together. We will encourage and participate in various civil society movements for reform, such as education for college admission, problems in mass media, expansion of women's rights and interests, reform of the patriarchal family structure, environmental protection, collaboration with labor, eradication of racial discrimination and movement for multi-cultural community.

From a national perspective, we will pressure the government to operate according to democratic principles, to solve political and economic issues responsibly, and to actively work to create international networks that restore the balance between humans, labor, and the environment. We will be vigilant to recognize the problems of our time, will submit sincere proposals to the government for the solution of these problems, and will stay true to the public responsibility commissioned to the church. To face these and other tasks, we will urge plenary assemblies of religious organizations such as the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK) and the general conference of each church denomination to propose to the national government political and economic alternatives that promote life and peace.

From a regional perspective, keeping in mind the current environment where multi- and bilateral trade agreements are being systematized at a rapid pace, we will seek to promote lucid and responsible political and economic alternatives. We oppose and will seek to point out the evil effects of unfair free trade agreements (FTA), which suppress local socio-economic growth and human development. We will work to impede the expansion of the free-market-as-panacea ideology, which destroys the socio-cultural traditions and livelihoods of local communities. We will seek to ameliorate and stand guard against harmful decisions made by business and government, and will work to form bonds of solidarity with church organizations from various continents for the purpose of preserving life for humanity as well as for the ecological system in which we live.

From a global perspective, we will encourage the life and peace movement through organizations such as the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) in order to address the various problems arising from the process of neoliberal globalization. Through debates on achieving the Just, Participatory, and Sustainable Society (JPSS), forums on the Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of the Creation (JPIC), and other means, we will engage in efforts to solve problems facing global society together with brothers and sisters in the world's church who share our vision of life and peace. We will work to realize this vision through international organizations, and by presenting alternatives that promote life and peace in the world.

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Galatians 5:1, 13, 14).

<2010 Korean Christians' Declaration for Life and Peace>

Signatories (following)