THE LIGHT OF PEACE

The Churches and the Korean Peninsula
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Introducing the writers

**Bishop Hee-Soo Jung**, resident bishop in the Wisconsin Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church and president of the General Board of Global Ministries.

Bishop Hee-Soo Jung is based in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin (USA) and is a member of the WCC Ecumenical Forum for Peace, Reunification and Development Cooperation on the Korean Peninsula and is actively involved in peace and reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula.

**Rev. Dr Sang Chang**, WCC president from Asia. Rev. Sang Chang is based in Seoul, South Korea. Rev Sang Chang is the former Prime Minister and has served on various committees for reconciliation and reunification of the Korean Peninsula and particularly as the senior advisor to the Reunification Committee of the ROK government. In addition to her ecclesial and ecumenical commitment in Korea, she served on the executive committee of WARC for two terms.

**The Most Reverend Olav Fykse Tveit**, presiding bishop of the Church of Norway, served as WCC general secretary from 2010–2020. He holds a doctorate in theology and has worked in national and international ecumenical settings. On 5 May 2020, he received the Dongbaek Medal of the Order of Civil Merit for his work to promote peace on the Korean Peninsula.

**Peter Prove** has served since 2014 as Director of the WCC’s Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA). An Australian national, and a lawyer by profession, he has programmatic responsibility for WCC’s activities in the fields of peace-building, disarmament and human rights advocacy.
Bishop Rosemarie Wenner, is the Geneva secretary of the World Methodist Council. Bishop Wenner is based in Germany and works as liaison of the World Methodist Council to the World Council of Churches. Today the World Methodist Council works with the Methodist Church in Korea and The United Methodist Church in the USA to engage in Round Table discussions for Peace on the Korean Peninsula. They cooperate with the WCC and the Ecumenical Forum for Korea.

Erich Weingartner is the former executive secretary of the CCIA, and is now based in North Bay Ontario, Canada. He was the organizer of the Tozanso Consultation on Peace and Justice in North-East Asia in 1984 and established relations with KCF on behalf of NCCK in 1985. He has organized three Glion meetings of N-S Korean Christian delegations.

Erich Weingartner was also the founding head of the Food Aid Liaison Unit (FALU) with the United Nations World Food Programme resident in Pyongyang, the founding General Secretary of the Canada-DPR Korea Association and founder and Editor-in-Chief of CanKor Information Service.

Anne Casparsson is a journalist with a focus on peace and justice. She has a Masters in Applied Ethics. She is based in Stockholm, Sweden.

Editorial Team: Anne Casparsson, Marianne Ejdersten, Peter Prove, Rev. Dr Jin Yang Kim, Ivars Kupcis and Lyn van Rooyen.
A short introduction

to the WCC publications commemorating 70 years of involvement of the church in seeking peace on the Korean Peninsula

This booklet is the first iteration of a multiphase publication project highlighting the ongoing participation of the ecumenical movement toward peace on the Korean Peninsula.

In addition to this introductory booklet, a more comprehensive book “The Light of Peace – The Churches and the Korean Peninsula” will be published by the WCC in September as well as a later multi-media publication.

The purpose of the project is to offer WCC member churches resources for recognizing 70 years of unresolved conflict on the Korean Peninsula during 2020. The content will be drawn from a variety of contributors, each with their own experience of or expertise in the Korean journey.

This PDF booklet introduces the project and provides a preview of what can be expected in the rest of the series. Emphasizing the importance of the spiritual response, every chapter starts with a spiritual reflection, followed by a text and ends with a prayer.

**Audience**

The series will serve as an educational, spiritual, worship and formation resource, and encourage churches and individuals to pray for peace, reunification and an end to division on the Korean Peninsula. It could be used in Bible study, Korea interest and other groups.

**Historical background**

In the introduction, the reader is provided with a brief history of the Korean people. It leads us forward to the next chapter, about the division of Korea in 1945 and how the Cold War has formed people’s identities and continues to do so today.
The division of Korea was followed by the Korean War. Some of the soldiers who served are still alive. We will meet a few of them and hear their stories. We also touch upon the tragedy of the diaspora, separated families and the longing for unification. The shock of the war cemented the tone for subsequent relations between the two Koreas, each driven to suspicion and hatred of one another following the geopolitical divisions of the Cold War. Walls were built, fields were mined, and families were separated.

**Women as peacebuilders, and local-to-global ecumenical activism for peace**

The book also highlights women as important stakeholders in building peace and reconciliation and how women have worked for peace on the ground in Korea for a long time.

The vital importance of the local churches and Christian communities in building peace, as well as the peace work that WCC has accomplished in the region and internationally, is also highlighted. The accompaniment of the global ecumenical community has had a significant impact on the process towards reconciliation and dialogue between North and South Korea.

**Praying as a method for peace**

WCC has invited all member churches to pray together annually on 15 August; a day celebrated as Liberation Day. Churches and Christian communities in South and North Korea developed praying as a method for peace. Two chapters of the publication will cover this journey. One text elaborates on the vital role of Korean churches in the peace processes as well as the 1988 Declaration.

**The Tozanso process**

The WCC initiated an ecumenical consultation in Tozanso in 1984, following which the ecumenical movement has played an important role through prayer, cooperation for reconciliation, dialogue and peaceful reunification.

The Tozanso process is celebrated as leading to more than 30 years of ecumenical efforts to bring Koreans together through their shared
Christian identity. Koreans from both sides of the divide share communion, faith and hope, but the steps are fragile and fraught with challenges.

**The peace process going forward**

It has been 70 years in a state of war, and now it is time for action to end it. The Ecumenical Forum for Peace, Reunification and Cooperation on the Korean Peninsula (EFK) seeks a new way forward, guided by righteousness, faith, love and peace. Wisdom and experience of reconciliation, dialogue and peace is shared, to help answer the question: How can we build trust and cooperation in Korea today?
Preface

By Rev. Dr Sang Chang, WCC Asia President
The year 2020 marks the 70th anniversary of the start of the Korean War. It means that Koreans in the North and South have lived in the 70-year-long hostility and confrontation since then, since a formal peace treaty was never made. Currently, more than 86 percent of surviving separated family members are over 70 years old. The division, indeed, has infringed on the human rights of the Korean people.

This year, 2020, the World Council of Churches (WCC) launched the Global Prayer Campaign: “We Pray, Peace Now, End the War,” as an ecumenical expression of both lament and hope. It is crucial in our ecumenical journey of Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace that we invite all Christians to deepen our relationship with God and each other by joining in prayer for the formal end to the Korean War and the replacement of the Armistice Agreement with a permanent peace treaty. We do this because we believe prayer would lead us to stop the 70-year-long hostility and confrontation and help us to dream of peace and reunification on the Korean Peninsula.

This publication is designed to offer historical and geopolitical background on the division and conflict on the Korean Peninsula, as well as the spiritual and theological meanings of the global ecumenical initiatives for peace and reunification for the Korean people. Each chapter will promote awareness of the pain and suffering caused by the 70 years of Korean War, beginning with a spiritual reflection that serves as a theological introduction to the chapter.

Each chapter is enlivened by personal stories, interviews, and prayers. You can enter into the booklet at any chapter to be able to learn something about Korea, to share it with others and to offer resources for engagement and solidarity within your own church and the community.

Contributors to the booklet will include church leaders, lay people, young people, scholars, veterans and victims of the Korean War, and also members of the Ecumenical Forum for Peace, Reunification and Cooperation on the Korean Peninsula (EFK). The publication will describe constructive ways in which the churches in Korea, together
with their ecumenical partners work and witness together for peace and reunification on the Korean Peninsula.

I hope that this PDF as well as the subsequent larger book will inspire churches, mission organizations, and ecumenical partners to renew and strengthen their support and commitment to ecumenical efforts for peace, reconciliation, and reunification of the divided Korean people.
Chapter One

May Peace Prevail On Earth
“Reconciling Boldly”

By bishop Hee-Soo Jung

“For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation” (Romans 5:10-11, NRSV).

We need to live a life filled with reconciliation rather than living in conflict, division, discrimination, resentment, and hatred. We boldly claim it because God’s initiative of reconciliation transforms enemies into friends. It came from God who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

How does reconciliation happen? Reconciliation is not simply determined by agreement, but it is a process and an ongoing journey. It requires many initiatives of communities and individuals. Grassroots movements have been mobilizing the churches around the world to promote peace and reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula, making efforts to build solidarity at the national and international levels.

Reconciliation is impossible without God’s grace. We need gifts to engage in this journey well. We are called to be stewards of the manifold gifts and mysteries of God’s grace. God’s grace empowers us to continue in witnessing to God’s love for people locally and globally. If reconciliation happens in Korea, it can happen in Israel-Palestine, Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, South Sudan, and anywhere in the world. Let us approach God’s reconciliation with boldness, so that we may receive grace to help in time of need!

Prayer

God of reconciliation,
We give you thanks for calling us to share in the reconciling mission of our Lord, Jesus Christ, in this age and wherever we are. Amen!
WCC’s work for peace receives highest Korean honour

By Anne Casparsson

For many decades, the World Council of Churches (WCC) has worked to promote peace on the Korean Peninsula. From bringing together people from both sides of the divided country – in particular from the Korean Christian Federation (KCF) of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the National Council of Churches of South Korea (NCCK) – to building an international ecumenical network to support them, the WCC has a history of formulating and promoting a vision for peace.

An early encounter and reconciliation process between North and South Korea was launched by the WCC at the Tozanso Consultation in Japan in 1984. Since then, the WCC and its member churches have continuously supported the churches and Christian communities of North and South Korea in promoting peace and reconciliation.

This unique role hinges on relationships that have been built up over time in a region that has suffered not only from conflict but also from a long history of division, mutual suspicion and distrust which has affected not only the people of the Korean Peninsula but the entire world.

On 5 May 2020, the former WCC general secretary, presiding bishop Olav Fykse Tveit, received the Dongbaeg Medal, an Order of Civil Merit, during a ceremony at the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Oslo, Norway. The award was presented on behalf of Moon Jae-in, president of the Republic of Korea, as well as prime minister Chung Sye-kyun.

Tveit served as WCC general secretary for a decade, beginning in 2010. He reflects on his experiences, particularly of ecumenical efforts for peace on the Korean Peninsula, from that time of service.
Could you describe how the WCC 10th Assembly, held in Busan, South Korea in 2013, re-energized churches’ initiatives for peace on the Korean Peninsula?

Presiding bishop Tveit: Several thousand participants, representing member churches and ecumenical partners from all around the world, attended the assembly in Busan. It was an occasion for all of these people, and their churches and organizations, to renew their awareness and engagement regarding the continuing division of the Korean people, the unresolved Korean War, the urgent need for dialogue instead of confrontation, and the significance of the ecumenical role in seeking a just peace in this context. It was my duty as WCC general secretary to support and identify how I could help revitalize the dialogue for peace on the Korean Peninsula, which during this time was not very active. The assembly gave us a very strong mandate to do this. I promised our counterparts in both the National Council of Churches in the Republic of Korea and the Korean Christian Federation in the DPRK that I would do what I could. And during the period since then, we have worked together intensively, through a period of some of the most dangerous geopolitical tensions, and some of the highest hopes for peaceful transformation.

Describe the process and the work with the Ecumenical Forum for Korea (EFK).

Presiding bishop Tveit: Yes, the Ecumenical Forum for Korea – or to give it its original full name, the Ecumenical Forum for Peace, Reunification & Development Cooperation on the Korean Peninsula – has been a very important instrument in this process. The EFK was created in 2006, building upon the experience of churches and ecumenical partners engaged in the humanitarian response to the North Korean famine in the 1990s. Since the Busan Assembly, we have been widening the circle of ecumenical partners engaged in this forum. One of the significant initiatives undertaken through this instrument in October 2015, was the visit by a 12-person international ecumenical delegation - comprised of EFK members and observers - to the DPRK. During the visit a formal EFK meeting was convened in Pyongyang on 28 October.
2015. This was the first time an international ecumenical gathering was able to meet anywhere on Korean soil – North or South – with the official participation of both the KCF and the NCCK.

_Then you met with Moon Jae-In, the president of South Korea, shortly after he was elected in 2017._

**Presiding bishop Tveit:** Yes. The president confirmed the vision and role of the WCC as being something he wanted to support. He encouraged us to continue the work and saw great value in the churches’ involvement in initiatives for peace in the region. We were honoured to have been received by him so soon after his inauguration as president.

**How do you feel about receiving this award?**

**Presiding bishop Tveit:** It has been a special privilege to have been involved in this work as the general secretary of the WCC. I am very honoured to have received this affirmation of my role in this regard. The award is primarily a recognition of the work of the WCC and all the people who have been involved in the process during these years, and during the preceding decades. I also think that the award inspires us to recognize the important contribution of churches in the peace process.

**How is the WCC’s role unique?**

**Presiding bishop Tveit:** Working for peace is the WCC’s calling; it is what the WCC has to do. It is also a call from Jesus Christ to the church, and from people’s own longing for peace. All people are affected by this unresolved conflict on the Korean Peninsula. It is therefore very important for the ecumenical movement to continue to give this priority, to take new initiatives and continue to be the faithful partner for peace. The WCC has a potential that goes beyond what others can do for promoting peace in the region, because of the nature and source of its calling. Peace is possible, but it will take all the skills, both of diplomacy and of political creativity. Another thing I have learned, is that the exceptional and unprecedented sanctions, even if approved by the UN, are making
things worse rather than better. They do not lead to positive change but bring a lot of suffering to ordinary North Koreans. How can you motivate people to work for peace with all the suffering and division caused by sanctions and confrontation? It makes a huge difference and I think it is part of the conflict rather than part of the solution.

*Over your decade as WCC general secretary, is there progress for which you are grateful?*

**Presiding bishop Tveit:** It has really been a blessing to work with the Korean partners and to understand both their deepest wishes and prayers for peace, and that they don’t give up. They also inspire us not to give up. I am deeply grateful for this experience. The support of others is extremely important during times of war and conflict. The deepest way of supporting is by praying. Both North and South Koreans need the spiritual support of others, and the support by churches all over the world is important. It is our task to believe in peace and cultivate a deep commitment nurtured by hope.
Prayer

Together we pray that God of life will strengthen our hope, to see and believe what is not seen yet, to go beyond the alternatives of pessimism or optimism, to continue a powerful and demanding commitment to peace. May this moment be an inspiration to continue to do what is needed and what is possible, to support nuclear disarmament in the Korean Peninsula and the entire world, to keep the vision for the peoples to meet, to live and to love — together. May God of life bless the people of Korea, in the North and the South, and give us all peace. Amen.

By The Most Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit

생명의 하나님께서 우리의 희망을 더욱 견고하게 하시어 보이지 않는 것을 보게 하시는 믿음을 주시고, 일시적인 비관이나 낙관에 치우치지 않고, 평화를 이루는 날까지 우리 모두 끝임없이 현신하게 하옵소서. 지금 이 순간의 감격이 한(조선)반도와 전 세계 핵무기 폐기로 이어지게 하시어, 주님의 사랑으로 인해 사람과 사람의 만남으로 이어지게 하옵소서. 생명의 하나님께서 한(조선)반도의 백성들을 축복 하셔서, 영원한 평화를 허락하여 주시기를 주님의 이름으로 기도합니다. 아멘!

울라프 픽스 트베이트 감독
세계교회협의회 전 총무
노르웨이교회 의장 주교, 2020년 5월 10일

The Light of Peace: The Churches and the Korean Peninsula
Chapter Two
A long journey towards peace with justice

By Bishop Rosemarie Wenner, World Methodist Council – Geneva Secretary

Peace is a journey, not a static condition. Christians connected through the World Council of Churches are on a long pilgrimage for peace on the Korean Peninsula. One important milestone was the conference on Peace and Justice in Northeast Asia in Tozanso, Japan in 1984. After intensive conversations and prayers, the participants agreed to cooperate in working for peace. In 1986 Christians from both North and South Korea and ecumenical partners met for the first time in Glion, Switzerland. Since then the Tozanso process stands for listening to the voices of Korean people, for face-to-face conversations, for visits to North and South Korea, for prayer, advocacy, humanitarian aid and for adhering to the vision that peace with justice and nuclear disarmament will be realized.

As a German I have personal experiences of the impact of Christian fellowship in a divided country. But I do not dare to assert that I can totally empathize with the difficulties and pains of Korean sisters and brothers.

Seventy years after the beginning of the Korean War in 1950 there is still only a ceasefire, no peace treaty. Families are separated. Militarization has increased. North Korean people suffer many hardships.

Yet the legacy of the Tozanso Process is alive. Both the National Council of Churches in Korea (South) and the Christian Federation of Korea (North) continue to pray and work together and the ecumenical accompaniment from around the globe is well organized and lively. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic we cannot physically meet at important commemoration dates this year. But we follow the lead of our Korean siblings in praying and acting together.
Love Engenders Hope: The Spirit of Tozanso

By Erich Weingartner

The Tozanso YMCA Conference Centre in Japan was the venue of a 1984 WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) consultation that reached an unexpectedly courageous conclusion. During a time of military dictatorship, South Korean church leaders requested that the WCC do for them what their government would not permit them to do: make contact with Christians in North Korea on their behalf. The (North) Korean Christian Federation (KCF) responded positively. The resulting inter-Korean encounters, accompanied by the international ecumenical community, became known as the Tozanso Process.

The first task in this process was to create opportunities for Christians of North and South to meet directly—face-to-face—beginning with a series of encounters in Glion, Switzerland, convened by the CCIA. During the first of these in 1986, we witnessed the emotional impact that such direct contact generated after so many years of division. A meeting that started with enormous prejudice, distrust and suspicion on each side ended with tearful embraces during the concluding Eucharist. When individual delegates spoke the words “Peace be with you” to one another, the walls of division seemed to dissolve in the flowing tears. That experience gave us a glimpse of what the power of the Holy Spirit can accomplish.

The meeting in Glion was followed by an impressive series of activities by churches worldwide. Conferences in numerous parts of the world began to invite both KCF and NCCK delegates. Church delegations began to visit both sides of Korea, carrying messages back and forth. Churches and ecumenical councils advocated for Korean peace with their own respective governments. They produced educational materials, they educated the media, they spread the news, not only about the tragedy of Korean division, but also ideas about how to move forward, highlighting opportunities for peace and reconciliation.
The second aspect to emphasize about the Tozanso Process is that it acknowledges a shared responsibility. Korean division is the unresolved scandal of the Second World War. Korean division is the leftover scandal of the Cold War. And Korean division is the continuing scandal of geopolitical competition among today’s great powers that surround the Korean Peninsula. This means that the Korean division is not only a problem for Koreans to solve, but a problem that the world community has a responsibility to solve.

That is why the idea of “accompaniment” is of primary importance to the Tozanso Process. Our shared responsibility moves us to confess our shared sin of division: division among ourselves, division on the Korean Peninsula, and the division of humanity throughout this planet. Not only have we divided people from each other, we have also caused an unequal division of the resources that God gave to us to share on this earth. The Korean “problem” is a regional and global problem.

The third key principle of the Tozanso Process was the need to discuss reunification with both sides of the divide at the same time. It is easy to agree on how to achieve justice, peace and unification if you are talking only to one side of the divide. The hard part is finding agreement when both sides are present face-to-face at the same time.

There have been Christian churches and individuals who have decided to relate only to the North. There are others who have decided to relate only to the South. But at Tozanso, the ecumenical community committed itself to relate to both sides at the same time. They committed themselves to keep lines of communication open between North and South, no matter how cumbersome or politically inconvenient. In this year that marks the 70th anniversary of the beginning of the Korean war, I believe that the lessons learned from the Tozanso Process are as relevant as ever today:

1. The Tozanso consultation of 1984 took place at the halfway point between the division of Korea and today. During the past 70 years, the struggle for reunification has produced many martyrs. Division continues to cause instability and tremendous suffering to this day.
2. The struggle for peace and the struggle for justice are one. In the same sense, the struggle for human rights and democracy, and the struggle for reunification are one. Neither can succeed alone. Each reinforces the other. The enemies of both are the same.

3. The principal actors in the struggle for reunification are the Koreans themselves. No one else will, can or should do it for them. No one can rush the process any faster than the Koreans themselves want it. On the other hand, outside forces have repeatedly obstructed Korean moves toward rapprochement.

4. Support for Korean efforts in the struggle for justice and peace requires that churches in the ecumenical family establish and maintain contact with churches and Christians in both parts of Korea whenever this is possible.

5. Christians will achieve neither global unity nor national unity unless they deal with their own divisions. The ecumenical community can contribute to the unity of the oikos (the whole inhabited earth) by combining their efforts with likeminded partners, including people of other faiths. Jesus pushed us even further when he admonished us to love our enemies.

6. Christian mission will be accomplished neither through Christian expansionism nor through denominational chauvinism, but only in the context of the struggle for justice and peace.

7. Christian efforts for peace must be ecumenical in the broadest sense. This is not only a moral imperative: the objective of Christian mission is union with God and therefore the unity of all creation. It is also the only effective course of action from a political point of view. Divided efforts can most easily be exploited by malignant political forces over which we have little or no control.

8. Ecumenical action begins within us, with God’s gift of conversion. An effective contribution toward peace with justice has to begin with self-appraisal, self-criticism, and changes within ourselves and in our social context.
9. Given the fact that general knowledge about the Korean situation continues to be skewed in the direction of demonization, it is more urgent than ever for churches and Christians to revise negative attitudes towards Korea.

10. Church agencies need to continue their work of providing humanitarian and development aid to the people of North Korea, and to press their own governments to lift sanctions that disrupt such aid.

Many who committed themselves to the Tozanso Process in the past hoped that by 1995 we could usher in a “Jubilee of Reunification,” 50 years after the division of Korea. That obviously did not happen. Inter-Korean relations have had numerous ups and downs since then, with hopes raised and dashed repeatedly. There are many who believe the task of peace and justice through dialogue and persuasion is simply impossible. They hold that only force and coercive pressure can solve intractable problems.

The road to reconciliation is difficult to travel. It takes determination; it takes endurance; it takes discipline. And that is exactly the word we used. We called it the “Tozanso discipline.” Disciples who carry the cross of Christ are not afraid of discipline. They believe that discipline is an expression of love. And it is love alone that engenders hope.
Prayer

God of love,
We confess
that we have been unable to love our enemies, as you have commanded.
We confess
that we have been more efficient in waging war than in negotiating peace.
We confess
that we have lost our trust in your guidance as the Lord of history.
Grant us faith
that peace is possible on the Korean Peninsula even after 70 years of war.
Grant us hope
that our feeble efforts to promote peace with justice will bear abundant fruit.
Grant us love
that encourages us to overcome suspicion and hatred with open hearts and minds.
Prince of Peace,
help us to discover the truth in ourselves so that we can become agents of reconciliation; pour your mercy upon Korea, and likewise on the rest of this troubled world.
Amen.

By Erich Weingartner, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
Ending the War; Building Peace

By Peter Prove

The search for peace and an end to division on the Korean Peninsula is a bumpy road indeed. Events and reconfigurations in the wider world – in particular the invention of the ‘Axis of Evil’ – brought a premature end to the ‘Sunshine Policy’ of President Kim Dae Jung’s administration, and the burgeoning ecumenical encounters and dialogue engendered by the Tozanso process wilted in the chillier geopolitical climate.

At the WCC 10th Assembly in Busan, the ecumenical movement sought to re-engage in the search for answers to the unresolved conflict and division in Korea, against a background of deteriorating political circumstances that led inexorably to the point of deepest crisis, when catastrophic nuclear conflict on the Peninsula seemed an imminent possibility. From that nadir, we bounced once more to a new apogee of hope, with the Pyeongchang Olympic peace moment and the succession of high-level summits that suddenly made peace seem miraculously imminent. But now, that euphoric optimism is crashing once again into a slough of disappointment and disillusionment.

One cannot travel this road without sturdy shock absorbers filled with stout hope.

This is a moment in which to hold on to the vision that so recently seemed so close – though now receding into the distance – with a determined and patient hope. In the view and experience of the ecumenical movement, the prescription for this persistent and recurrent crisis is a simple one: dialogue and encounter, in which people are enabled to meet each other as fellow human beings, including as fellow Christians, and to build relationships and mutual understanding. It is the most powerful and effective antidote to the enemy images and mutual suspicions that otherwise infect relations in the region. The alternative, of confrontation and maximum pressure, has not only proved over many years to have been ineffective but also, especially
in this context replete with nuclear weaponry, carries an inherent and unconscionable risk of conflict with truly catastrophic consequences.

For the sake of peace, demonization has to end. In the history of division and conflict on the Korean Peninsula there is more than enough blame and guilt to go around. No one comes to this table with clean hands. But it is primarily the Korean people who have been the victims, in terms of lives lost, profligate destruction, division of nation and families, and futures clouded by insecurity and the constant threat of devastating conflict.

As deeply as we may regret the development of nuclear weapons and missiles by the DPRK, we cannot willfully ignore the historical background of the deployment between 1958 and 1991 of hundreds of American nuclear weapons in South Korea, in violation of the terms of the Armistice Agreement. Nor can we see the elimination of North Korean nuclear weapons as a sufficient condition for the ‘denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula’, or for a world free from the threat of nuclear weapons.

Subsequent contributors to this publication will provide important information on the division of Korea and the causes and consequences of the Korean War – essential background for understanding the current situation, for responding to it, and for rebuilding hope for the future. It is also essential background for understanding the critical and urgent necessity of ending the 70-year-old Korean War now, and replacing the 1953 Armistice Agreement with a Peace Treaty.

As the Joint Ecumenical Peace Message issued for this anniversary occasion declares, “it is time to acknowledge that [the Korean War] ended long ago. New challenges to peace and stability in the region have arisen in the meantime, but we do not believe that the resolution of those challenges will be facilitated by keeping that 70-year-old conflict open. On the contrary, we believe that the conditions for pragmatic dialogue and negotiation on current realities on the Peninsula could be greatly enhanced by recognizing the end of the war. We expect that this long overdue recognition of historical reality, and a peace treaty to document it, would be a pivotal contribution to reducing tensions and hostility in the region,
and to restoring a conducive environment for resumption of the stalled process of the Panmunjom and Singapore summit outcomes.”

I hope that through this publication, you may be encouraged and empowered to amplify and strengthen this appeal, and to join in renewing hope for peace on the Korean Peninsula and throughout the world.