

Together on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace

Letter to our Sisters and Brothers in South Korea and Japan

Blessings to you, in the name of God,
the Creator of diversity and unity,
the Reconciler and Savior,
the Comforter.

We, members of the German East Asia Mission (DOAM, founding member of EMS-Evangelical Mission in Solidarity and BMW-Berlin Mission), guests from Korea and Japan, participants of the conference on “Just Peace in East Asia” are gathered in Wittenberg, Germany (29 September – 1 October 2014).

During this occasion, we are celebrating the 130th anniversary of our German East Asia Mission agency, remembering a rich history of encounters with you, our Brothers and Sisters in Korea and Japan, recalling the mutual trust that has grown amongst us over the decades and through the many struggles for democracy, human rights, justice and peace, giving thanks for the many gifts we have received from you.

In addition, we look into the future and discern together, what we are called to be today, and how we could give expression to the responsibilities, which we have accepted in our continuing ecumenical and missionary journey.

Having been inspired by the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Busan one year ago, we welcome the invitation to an *Ecumenical Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace*. Churches from around the world, including you and us, have committed themselves to this common journey of spiritual renewal and prophetic calling. We know that we need each other on this journey and that we can build on the longstanding relationships between you and us.

Today in Wittenberg, we ask: what are the appropriate steps on this Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace – for us in Germany, for you in Korea and Japan, and for us together?

We start by listening to God:

“I will listen to what God the LORD says;
he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants—
but let them not turn to folly.
Surely his salvation is near those who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land.
Love and faithfulness meet together;
righteousness and peace kiss each other.



Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,
and righteousness looks down from heaven.
The LORD will indeed give what is good,
and our land will yield its harvest.
Righteousness goes before him
and prepares the way for his steps.“ (Ps 85)

Writing this letter, we want to inform you about our deliberations and invite you to share your ideas, your concerns, and your prayers with us on this new joint pilgrimage. We intend to walk together with you.

During our conference on “Just Peace in East Asia”, we reflect on our own experiences and shortcomings in regard to building peace and advocating for justice, and we have been informed about the situations you are confronted with at this very moment. In particular,

- we have heard about the ongoing fear and suffering from the nuclear catastrophe in Fukushima – as well as the wonderful examples of believers from different religious traditions working together in efforts of counseling and support for the victims.
- We have heard about the growing militarization in the whole region of East Asia – as well as the outstanding courage of some individuals and groups, who take all risks to stand up against the construction of new military bases in the region, like Gangjeong in South Korea and Henoko at Okinawa/Japan.
- We have heard about the criminalization and hardship of conscientious objectors to military service in South Korea, the neglecting of this fundamental human right, and the injustice of imprisonment of COs – as well as the outstanding witness of those young men, who, despite all discrimination and experiences of exclusion, follow their commitment to a non-violent discipleship of Christ.
- We have heard about the threats to Article 9 of the Japanese Peace Constitution and the latest trends of a re-militarization within Japanese society – as well as the energy and courage it takes to stand up against those political powers.

We begin to realize how the demands are growing for you, as well as for us, to be ‘companions’ – those who share the bread – on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. At times, walking this path might lead us to unpopular decisions, and put us in minority positions, even in opposition to “principalities and powers”. We need each other.

We offer to you our prayers, our continuous support, our visits and invitations, our commitment to accompany you on your ways, as we ask you to accompany us.

We pray that you may find the wisdom to discern those societal and political threats in light of the Word of God, the strength and the courage to follow the call to God’s way of justice and to Christ’s way of peace.

In particular, we ask you to support those who

- advocate for the rights and governmental support to those who suffer from the results of the nuclear catastrophe in Fukushima; and those who advocate against the use of nuclear power and for a ban on nuclear weapons;
- protest against the construction of the military marine port on Jeju-Island and on Okinawa.
- defend the *human right* to conscientious objection to military service, who hold the government of South Korea accountable to international law (freedom of

conscience and religious freedom), and who provide counseling *to all*, who suffer from exclusion, discrimination, and imprisonment.

- work for healing, reconciliation, cooperation and a peace treaty on the Korean Peninsula
- advocate for an interpretation of Article 9 of the Japanese Peace Constitution, that follows the original intention of no military engagement.

In our faithful partnership, we ask you – in return – to hold us accountable, and to alert us to needs and demands, that you might see for us, our churches and our governments. At times, we might be caught up in our own limited contextual or cultural or even denominational and institutional awareness, we might be ‘blind’ or one-sided in our ways of thinking, reasoning, and acting. We trust that you will help us to see what is necessary in order to be faithful companions on the Pilgrimage *of* Justice and Peace.

Together we pray: God of life, lead us to justice and peace!

cc to

National Council of Churches in Korea and Churches in South Korea
PCK, PROK, Methodist Church, Mennonite Church

National Council of Churches in Japan and Churches in Japan
Mennonite Church, United Church of Christ in Japan,
Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, Japan Baptist Convention,
Nippon Seikokai, YWCA of Japan, Korean Christian Church in Japan

Presbyterian Church in Taiwan

National Council of Churches in Germany (ACK) and Churches in Germany
EKD–Member Churches, Mennonite Church in Germany, Methodist Church

Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS)
Berlin Mission (BMW)
German East Asia Mission

World Council of Churches
International Fellowship of Reconciliation
World Communions
Mennonite World Conference
Lutheran World Federation
World Communion of Reformed Churches