The Board of Directors recommends this resolution be sent to a Committee of the General Synod.

A CALL FOR PEACE, JUSTICE AND REUNIFICATION
IN THE KOREAN PENINSULA

Submitted by Wider Church Ministries
(A Covenanted Ministry of the United Church of Christ)
A Resolution of Witness

SUMMARY

More than sixty years after the close of the Korean War, there is still no formal peace treaty between North and South Korea. Communities and families separated by the division of the Korean peninsula desire reconciliation before generations pass away without reuniting with loved ones. Suspicion, hostility and recurring incidents of violence persist as a result of the unresolved state of conflict and extensive militarization of the peninsula, worsened under the current U.S. policy of repositioning substantial forces to the Pacific and to South Korea in particular. 2015 is the 70th Anniversary of Korean Independence from Japanese occupation, but the peninsula remains divided and occupied by the threat of war. This resolution calls on the United Church of Christ to rededicate itself to accompany our partners in efforts to seek reconciliation and reunification of the peninsula and its people, and to call on political leaders to commit to sign a final peace treaty ending the Korean War and to turn from policies of militarization and confrontation between North and South Korea.

BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND HISTORICAL GROUNDING

Paul assures us “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” (Eph. 2:14). As Jesus Christ broke down the walls of hostility that divide God’s people, we too are called to seek reconciliation and peace. The Armistice Agreement of 1953 only temporarily halted the war that claimed 4 million lives and divided 10 million families. For more than 60 years, the Korean people have remained divided and disturbed by extensive militarization of their land, policies that reinforce separation and suspicion, and a Cold War ideology that sustains a climate of hostility and provocation between North Korea and South Korea and the U.S. This unresolved conflict not only risks violence and warfare on the peninsula, but in the region and globally.

The United Church of Christ, together with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) through Global Ministries, has a deep partnership with the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK). We respond in solidarity with the PROK and ecumenically with the National Council of Churches in Korea and the Korean Christian Federation in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, in efforts to seek a sustainable peace, reconciliation, and reunification of the Korean people. Many of these efforts we support are humanitarian or aimed at fostering dialogue and exchange between people and churches in the U.S., South Korea, and North Korea. We also advocate for a U.S. commitment to pursue international negotiations toward peace rather than military commitments that lead to episodes of confrontation, to reduce rather than increase its
arms and forces positioned on the peninsula, to prefer dialogue over distrust. Most notably our 
partners and the ecumenical community globally, led by the World Council of Churches (WCC) 
at its 2013 Assembly in Busan, Korea, are advancing a campaign for a Peace Treaty to finally 
replace the Armistice Agreement of 1953. After 60 years the message is that replacing the 
Armistice Agreement with a Peace Treaty should be the first step in establishing a lasting and 
sustainable peace on the Korean peninsula.

This resolution invites the General Synod to go further than the resolution passed in 2003 at the 
Twenty-fourth general Synod “Advocating Peace and Reconciliation in the Korean Peninsula,” 
which focused largely on supporting a political process of peace and disarmament negotiations. 
This resolution would call our church to accompany our partners in a processes aimed at political 
reunification and intentional reconciliation and reunion of families and communities separated 
by the conflict. Beyond a Peace Treaty, this is the solidarity that would bring justice to the 
families divided by war and hostility. This is the moment for our united Christian witness to the 
peace and reconciliation made possible in Christ.

In addition to the solidarity expressed in partnership relationships and visits undertaken by 
United Church of Christ constituents and conferences, Global Ministries staff and 
denominational leaders in advocacy and ecumenical cooperation with all churches in Korea, 
including the Korean Church Federation in North Korea, as well as with various civil society 
organizations with whom we share common goals. This expression of partnership with Korean 
churches commits us to pursue those objectives of mutual cooperation, accompaniment, and 
advocacy toward peace with justice that derive from Global Ministries’ core values.

A main focus of our advocacy is participation with international ecumenical initiatives aimed at 
advancing Korean peace and reunification. Some of this activity corresponds to a long-term 
peace and dialogue process initiated by the WCC called the Tozanso Process. This initiative of 
the world-wide ecumenical community to dedicate collective action to seek peace and 
reunification in Korea began in 1984 in Tozanso, Japan, following on an earlier 
interdenominational meeting of Christian scholars and church leaders from North and South 
Korea and representatives from North and South Koreans living in Europe and North America, 
which met on November 1981 at Albert Schweitzer House, Vienna, Austria. This important 
movement was renewed at the 25th anniversary of the Tozanso Consultation marked at the 
International Consultation on Peace, Reconciliation and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula, 
held in Hong Kong, in 2009, and been carried forth through our participation in the 2013 WCC 
Assembly in Busan and more recently in the WCC International Consultation on Peace, Justice, 
and Reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula at Bossey in June 2014.

A complementary initiative to the global churches’ commitment to peace and dialogue has been 
the work of the Ecumenical Forum for Peace, Reunification and Development Cooperation on 
the Korean Peninsula. The Ecumenical Forum serves as a cooperative endeavor of churches, 
national councils of churches, mission organizations and church-related development agencies in 
cooperation with the WCC, Christian Conference of Asia and other ecumenical bodies. The 
goals of the Ecumenical Forum are to mobilize dialogue and cooperation for peace and 
reunification and to improve chances for the church leaders of South Korea and North Korea to 
meet together in order to engage in mutual peace and development efforts.
MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The United Church of Christ and Global Ministries maintain a close partnership with the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK), and ecumenically work with the National Council of Churches in Korea, the Korean Christian Federation in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, and various agencies and projects in Korea, all of whom are stakeholders with whom we engage in expressions of mutual support and accountability. Our United Church of Christ constituencies participate in visits and exchanges with Korean partners to communicate and reinforce common commitments to peace and reconciliation, not just on the Korean peninsula but globally as well. Global Ministries’ staff and denominational leaders participate in efforts that promote a sustainable peace, reconciliation, and reunification of the Korean people, including advocacy, dialogue and witness through the WCC Tozanso process and related ecumenical, development, and justice initiatives like the Ecumenical Forum. We will be expected to continue support for ecumenical engagements toward peace and reconciliation, including promoting the campaign to finally replace the Armistice Agreement of 1953 with a Peace Treaty and the commitment to recognize and resource the Sunday before August 15, Korean Independence Day, as the “Sunday of Prayer for the Peaceful Reunification of the Korean Peninsula.”

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

The resolution would require no additional financial or staff support. The resolution advances the public witness of the United Church of Christ and provides a new focus for partnership and advocacy on Korea by shifting the message to an urgent call for sustainable peace rather than militarization, and reunification of families and communities separated by the conflict.

PROBABILITY OF INFLUENCING SOCIAL CHANGE

With this Resolution of Witness the General Synod affirms its shared commitment to seek Just Peace, to work with partners and others to advance initiatives in South and North Korea that reunite people in the short and long-term, and in the U.S. to advocate and support policies that reduce militarization and commit to a Peace Treaty, fostering a change in the climate of hostility in the peninsula and region.
TEXT OF THE MOTION

WHEREAS, the Korean War ended on July 27, 1953 with the signing of an Armistice Agreement and creation of a demilitarized zone between the two Korean regimes, which was designed by the U.S. and Soviet Union in August 15, 1945 as only a temporary political arrangement, and yet after sixty years a formal peace treaty has never been reached, leaving the peninsula and its people divided by fear and hostility, and subject to recurring incidents of violence;

WHEREAS, 2015 marks the 70th anniversary of Korea’s independence from Japanese occupation, enabled by the U.S. through the Taft-Katsura Agreement in 1905, yet the Korean people are still not free from the occupation of extensive militarization, and of antagonistic domestic policies and Cold War international politics, intensified in recent years as South Korea, a client of U.S. military hegemony in North East Asia, has been the apex of an aggressive U.S. policy to “pivot” or reposition arms and forces into the Pacific;

WHEREAS, for more than 60 years the U.S. has led sustained economic sanctions on North Korea, continues to wield wartime operational control of South Korea’s military, and has planned to deploy the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-ballistic missile system in the country to intercept missiles from North Korea, China and Russia, further threatening the peace and security of the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia;

WHEREAS, communities and families separated by the Korean War and subsequent division between the North and South desire reunion and reconciliation before generations pass without ever seeing or knowing the fate of loved ones; and separated families have rarely been able to communicate or visit across the border, but rather have been kept distant, disconnected, and often are used as leverage in political negotiations;

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ maintains a close partnership with the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, which together with the National Council of Churches in Korea, the Korean Christian Federation of North Korea, and with the World Council of Churches 10th Assembly meeting in 2013 in Busan, Korea, have called on the international community to advance a new era of commitment to work for peace and reunification in the Korean peninsula;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Thirtieth General Synod of the United Church of Christ, reminded that the Twenty-Fourth General Synod in 2003 resolved to advocate for “Peace and Reconciliation in the Korean Peninsula,” being grieved that the Korean people remain divided and disturbed by recurring violence and hostility more than 60 years after the end of the Korean War, faithfully joins our partners the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea and the National Council of Churches in Korea, as well as responds to the World Council of Churches 10th Assembly, in recommitting our communion to work for peace, justice and reunification in the Korean peninsula;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Thirtieth General Synod, recognizing that 2015 is the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Korea from occupation at the end of Second World War, and yet that the peninsula remains occupied by militarization and nuclear weapons, including by U.S.
arms and troops intensified under the current U.S. “pivot” or policy of repositioning military forces to the Pacific, advocate with the U.S. government and international community to commence a new process of peace-building across the Korean peninsula, that includes a commitment by all parties to replace the Armistice Agreement of 1953 with a permanent peace treaty, finally bringing an end to the state of war; and a mutual commitment to end provocative military exercises on the peninsula, to reduce military expenditures, and to eliminate nuclear weapons on the peninsula, establishing a model for peace and demilitarization in North East Asia;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Thirtieth General Synod, trusting that Christ “has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us” (Eph. 2:14), rededicates itself to accompany our Korean partners in their efforts, working with the governments in both North and South Korea, with the churches and Christians in both North and South Korea, and through religious, humanitarian and advocacy initiatives, to seek the reconciliation and restoration of families and communities long divided by conflict and hostility, so that social, spiritual and psychological healing can occur between the people of Korea;

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Thirtieth General Synod calls upon its members and congregations to accompany our partners in Korea by praying for peace with the peoples and churches of Korea, recognizing the Sunday before August 15, Korean Independence Day, as the “Sunday of Prayer for the Peaceful Reunification of the Korean Peninsula”; by expressing solidarity through bridge-building trips, in partnership with Global Ministries as their ecumenical partner, to churches in North and South Korea; by supporting efforts like the World Council of Churches’ Tozanso Process and complementary initiatives to foster dialogue, reconciliation, and mutual support between the North and South; and by advocating with the U.S. Congress and Administration to change U.S. foreign policy and military strategy and pursue policies of peace and reunification.

FUNDING

The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.