

Communiqué

Closing statement of the 9th German-Korean Churches' Consultation Wittenberg (Germany), 2011

From March 28 to 30, 2011 a delegation of the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCKK) and representatives of the German Protestant churches and missions met in the city of Wittenberg for a consultation on their respective experience in mission and the ecumenical movement and their expectations regarding the forthcoming Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) which will be hosted in the city of Busan by the Korean churches in 2013.

Previous bilateral consultations between NCKK and EKD/EMW were held alternatively in Germany and South Korea, for the first time in Düsseldorf in 1974 to deal with the issues of "social and pastoral needs of Koreans living and working in West-Germany" and lastly in Seoul in the year 2001 on the theme of "Reconciliation and the role of the churches". In 2004 and 2008 two international meetings were held in Arnoldshain (Germany) with the participation of delegates from the Korean Christian Federation (KCF) from North Korea to discuss more specifically the role of the churches in the process of peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula. In 2009 a delegation of the Council of EKD visited both North and South Korea to reaffirm its solidarity with the divided Korean nation.

Wittenberg, birthplace of the Reformation was the venue of this Consultation. This historical site reminded our churches of their common roots in the renewal movement that was initiated by the theologian Martin Luther. As the Protestant churches prepare for the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in the year 2017 they are called to seek renewal in their respective context (*ecclesia semper reformanda*) and to strive for greater unity for the sake of their mission in the world. As a sign of its participation in the commemoration the NCKK planted a tree in the Luther Garden of Wittenberg.

The Consultation began with a reflection on the contribution of the ecumenical movement to the life of the churches and society in Korea and Germany after the Second World War. The participants recalled with gratitude that following their confession of guilt (*Stuttgart declaration*), the German churches were invited to rejoin the ecumenical family in 1945 and that ecumenical relations had a major impact on the democratization and promotion of human rights in South Korea.

The churches in East and West Germany were challenged by the ecumenical movement not only to seek greater unity in faith and doctrine but also to help overcome hunger and poverty in other parts of the world and to combat racism. The WCC's call for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) continues to have profound influence on the life of the churches in both countries

In the course of the Consultation the understanding of mission in our time was studied from different perspectives. The challenges by other faiths and secularized western societies remind our churches of the necessity of a credible common Christian witness. Our churches recognize that their own missionary practice must undergo critical analysis in order to meet these challenges and that a renewed concept of mission must embrace dialogue and new ways of living together with "neighboring religions". Whether in our own countries or abroad, Christian mission must be respectful of other faiths and contribute to peaceful coexistence beyond all differences of religion and ethnic origin.

The delegates from Germany and Korea shared their expectation and their concern regarding the 10th WCC Assembly which will be held in 2013 under the theme "God of life, lead us to justice and peace". The NCKK faces the great challenge of hosting this international

gathering and therefore invites the various denominations to participate in the common effort. The vision of peaceful reunification of the Korean nation embedded in the greater vision of a global community and an ecumenical movement for the protection of life strongly motivates the Korean churches. As representatives of our churches we strongly support the position of the NCKK that North Korea should be involved in the preparation and realization of the WCC Assembly in 2013. We suggest that a "Peace Train" travelling from Berlin to South Korea transiting through North Korea should bring participants to the venue of the WCC Assembly in Busan.

Our churches consider the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation that is to take place in Kingston, Jamaica in May, 2011 as an important step on the way to the WCC Assembly in Busan.

Together we pray that the Spirit of Christ may move the churches to be messengers and instruments of Just Peace in all continents and nations.

Acknowledging the importance of the ecumenical movement for the life of Christians in Germany and Korea, we share in the conviction that our churches should strengthen the WCC in its important role in advocating for justice and peace and promoting Christian unity. We welcome and encourage the active involvement of the younger generation in the ecumenical movement.

In the course of this Consultation we experienced again how much we can learn from one another and that it is important for our churches to listen to each other and work together in equal partnership. We value the existence of the Korean congregations in Germany and the German congregation in Seoul, the exchanges of youth, students, pastors and other co-workers and the partnerships in the context of the existing network of missions and churches. They contribute to mutual understanding and help bridge the differences of language and culture. We look forward to the opportunity of further theological dialogue and bilateral consultations as well as to the continuing cooperation in the framework of the Ecumenical Forum for Korea.

During this Consultation we recognized that in the discipleship of their Lord Jesus Christ our churches are called to renounce all power and might in their quest for Christian unity, for reconciliation and peace between nations and in their testimony of God's glory.

Thus we turn to God in all humility and pray that we may be guided by God's Holy Spirit as our churches are preparing for the 10th WCC Assembly in the year 2013 and also as they prepare to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.

We turn to God in humility and pray that we may be granted wisdom and love in our efforts to help the people of North Korea in urgent need of humanitarian relief and in our endeavor to achieve peace and reconciliation on the Korean peninsula.

We turn to God in humility and pray that through God's Holy Spirit we become willing to change prevailing structures of the economic system and ways of life that endanger our planet and the survival of humankind.

During our Consultation in Wittenberg we empathized with the suffering Japanese people afflicted by the death bringing earthquake and tsunami that struck the island of Honshu on March 11th. We have read and heard that thousands of men, women and children have died. We have heard of the disaster at the nuclear plant of Fukushima and the radioactive contamination of wide areas. With the Japanese people we share the fear of a nuclear catastrophe with unforeseeable effects on human beings, animals and the natural environment.

Putting our trust in the promise of the Bible, that God will not break a bruised reed, nor snuff out a smoldering wick (Isaiah 42:3) we join our Japanese brothers and sisters in prayer with the words: Lord, have mercy!