

[INT-15]On Advocating for a Peace Agreement in the Korean Peninsula

## Assembly Action

*On this Item, the General Assembly acted as follows:*

### **Approve**

Electronic Vote - Plenary

Affirmative:362

Negative:0

Abstaining:

### **Final text:**

The Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse overtures the 225th General Assembly (2022) to do the following:

1. Endorse the [Korea Peace Appeal](#).
2. Call on Presbyterians, including individuals, sessions, presbyteries (particularly peace and justice committees), and synods, to support the Korea Peace Appeal and add their signature to the campaign.
3. Direct the Stated Clerk to ask President Biden and the current administration to proceed deliberately to negotiate a peace agreement to end the Korean War.
4. Direct the Presbyterian Mission Agency to create a new single-print resource and a video articulating: the realities of the 70-year-old Korean conflict and the factors that get in the way of making peace on the peninsula, including the role of the United States, and the benefits of the Korea Peace Appeal as a means of working together as agents of peacemaking.
5. Direct the Presbyterian Mission Agency to update as necessary previously prepared educational resources related to peacemaking on the Korean Peninsula currently uploaded on the PC(USA) website.
6. Direct the Presbyterian Mission Agency to communicate electronically via website news and articles as well as targeted emails to Presbyterian individuals, sessions, presbyteries, synods, and other appropriate Presbyterian entities, both the new resources and the updated resources along with the working links for these resources on the PC(USA) website.
7. Call on Presbyterians to inform their representatives in the United States government about the Korea Peace Appeal, to draw their attention to the bills currently before Congress (four as of December 2021) that address Korea peace, and to advocate with their representatives to actively pursue a peace process on the Korean Peninsula.
8. Direct the Office of Public Witness to prepare and distribute electronically the names and contact information of congressional subcommittee members and chairs related to Korea peace and encourage all Presbyterians to inform those legislators about the Korea Peace Appeal and ask for their support for the peacemaking efforts in those bills.
9. Encourage Presbyterians to utilize all available resources to promote and support the PC(USA) "Season of Prayer and Reflection in the Korean Peninsula" June 25 (the date the Korean War broke out in 1950) through August 15 (the date when Korea was liberated from Japanese occupation in 1945).

## Rationale

Seeking peace and pursuing it is our calling as followers of Jesus, the Prince of Peace (Psalm 34:14, Romans 14:19, Hebrews 12:14, I Peter 3:11). The Korean Peninsula is one of the many places in the world that is in critical need of peace.

Presbyterians in the United States have shared in ministry with the people of the Korean Peninsula since 1884. Currently we join in mission with South Korea's Christian community, particularly our partners the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK), the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK), and the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK). With PROK and PCK we collaborate in higher education and youth ministries, theological education, health ministries, and women's and children's ministries. We work with the NCCCK in their Reconciliation and Reunification Department, which maintains a relationship with their partners in North Korea, the Korean Christian Federation (KCF). At NCCCK our PC(USA) mission co-worker also serves as the coordinator for the "Ecumenical Forum for Peace, Reconciliation, and Development Cooperation on the Korean Peninsula (EFK)," a forum hosted by the World Council of Churches (WCC) that facilitates face-to-face meetings between the North Korean KCF and the South Korean NCCCK, as well as various other international church and organizational partners. Other PC(USA) partners include the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., the World Council of Churches (WCC), and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, in ministries of peace education and reconciliation.

Japan occupied and ruled Korea for nearly 36 years, beginning in 1910. At the end of World War II, Allied forces liberated Korea on August 15, 1945. The Korean people rejoiced at regaining freedom. However, their joy was shattered when the U.S. and the USSR divided the country into two, along the 38th parallel, under the pretext of disarming the Japanese forces, without regard for the wishes of the Korean people. Soviet forces occupied the northern portion until 1948, and an American military government controlled the southern portion until 1948, with American forces withdrawn in 1949. This situation of division contributed to war on the Korean Peninsula lasting between June 25, 1950, and July 27, 1953.

The Korean War has never officially ended. The Korean Armistice Agreement, signed on July 27, 1953, stopped the active military fighting on the peninsula. It established a Military Demarcation Line (MDL) near the 38th parallel and a Demilitarized Zone on either side of the MDL. The Armistice Agreement promised negotiations to establish a peace treaty formally ending the war, but Cold War antagonisms prevented agreement, and negotiations were broken off after a few years. The Korean War still officially exists, nearly 70 years after the armistice.

The unended Korean War continues to impact those living on the Korean Peninsula and in diaspora. Millions of Korean families were separated as a result of the war and the armistice agreement that established the MDL. A limited number of Koreans have been able to visit family members across the MDL. Many Koreans have never seen family members who live on the other side of the line; many have died without ever seeing family members. Koreans in both countries live with suspicion, hostility, and recurring incidents of violence as a result of the unresolved state of conflict and extensive militarization of the peninsula.

United States military forces remain in the Republic of Korea (ROK; commonly referred to as South Korea), and the Korean Peninsula remains one of the most militarized places in the world. Military forces from the United States and the Republic of Korea engage in annual exercises that rehearse invasion of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK; commonly referred to as North Korea). Feeling threatened, the DPRK maintains a strong military, upgrades its weaponry, and makes threatening displays in response. The nuclear capabilities of both the United States and the DPRK have escalated tensions on the peninsula.

Despite the difficulties and complexity of the issues between them, [the people of the Korean Peninsula, including the Christian communities, have worked, and continue to work, for peace.](#) People and leaders of the ROK and the DPRK have made efforts to nurture trust and open the possibility of concrete diplomatic negotiation toward establishing a permanent peace with justice. On April 27, 2018, the Supreme Leader of North Korea, Kim Jong-un, and the President of South Korea, Moon Jae-in, signed the Panmunjom Declaration in which the governments of North Korea and South Korea agreed to cooperate on officially ending the Korean War and the Korean conflict with declared objectives of promoting common prosperity and reunification, eliminating military tension and substantially eliminating war risk, establishing a permanent and peaceful Korean Peninsula peace regime utilizing an inviolable agreement, and finalizing the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

The United States opened a new diplomatic relationship with North Korea in 2018. On June 12, 2018, Kim Jong-un and U.S. President Donald Trump signed a [joint statement](#) at the “Singapore Summit,” which said in part that the United States and the DPRK would join their efforts to build a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula.

The summit meetings between Kim Jong-un and President Trump in Singapore (2018) and in Hanoi (2019), along with a personal meeting between the two leaders later in 2019, offered hope that diplomatic negotiations could soon resolve the differences between the United States and the DPRK and finally conclude the Korean War with a treaty of peace.

Sadly, after the Hanoi efforts for peace fell apart, no progress has been made, and that hope has not been realized. In 2021 the Biden administration conducted a review of the U.S. policy toward the DPRK (North Korea) and a re-evaluation of the impact of sanctions against North Korea and other nations. Although the administration says it is open for negotiations, there has been no change in the punitive practices of the American government toward North Korea.

When the South Korean foreign minister stated in December 2021 that South Korea and the U.S. have already reached a de facto agreement on the draft of a declaration to formally end the Korean War, a state department spokesperson declined to comment, saying only that the U.S. was committed to diplomacy. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan also declined to discuss whether the U.S. supported declaring a formal end to the 1950–53 war as a way to bring North Korea back to the dialogue table. Sullivan has stated that while South Korea and the U.S. are aligned in the belief that diplomacy is the way to effectively make progress, the two allies have different perspectives on the nature, timing, and sequence of the steps needed to determine when an end of war declaration could or should be made.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has historically advocated for peace and reconciliation in the Korean Peninsula. [The 219th General Assembly \(2010\)](#) approved a resolution strongly supporting “the replacement of the present armistice agreement with a just and lasting peace treaty between North and South Korea, brokered by the United Nations, and endorsed by the United States and other powers with interests in the region”.

Representatives of the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) met in Louisville, KY, on April 17–19, 2013, and issued a joint statement reaffirming their commitment to partnership in efforts to build peace in the Korean Peninsula: “We affirm our commitment to walk in humility, with open minds, prepared to change our ways fulfilling the ministry of reconciliation as we follow the Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God (Matthew 5:9).”

[The 222nd General Assembly \(2016\)](#) acted to “request the U.S. government and the United Nations to secure a safe environment for the two Koreas to engage in dialogue and to develop a Korea-led process on healing, reconciliation, and peaceful reunification” . Under the direction of the Stated Clerk, a peace delegation of Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) leaders visited the Republic of Korea

(South Korea) in response to this action and another action from that same assembly that addressed the killing of Korean civilians by United States troops on July 26–29, 1950, near the village of No Gun Ri.

In response to the “Statement on Peace and Reunification of Korea” adopted by the World Council of Churches (WCC) at its 10th General Assembly (2013) in Busan, Republic of Korea, the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK) launched a global campaign for the signing of a peace treaty. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the National Council of the Christian Churches in the USA, and other U.S. faith communities promoted this campaign. The campaign delivered 13,000 signatures of U.S. citizens to President Obama on the 63rd anniversary of the armistice agreement.

More recently, after careful deliberation and discernment, the NCCCK has moved to fold its efforts into the broader Korea Peace Appeal campaign. The campaign seeks to “end the Korean War and establish a peace agreement; create a Korean Peninsula and a world free from nuclear weapons and nuclear threat; resolve the conflict with dialogue and cooperation instead of sanctions and pressure; and break from the vicious cycle of the arms race and invest in human security and environmental sustainability.”

The campaign aims to influence world leaders to end the Korean War and establish peace on the Korean Peninsula by collecting 100 million signatures from 2020 (the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War) to 2023 (the 70th anniversary of the armistice agreement). Collected signatures will be forwarded to the United Nations and to the governments of the countries involved in the Korean War, including Republic of Korea (South Korea), the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea), the United States, and the People’s Republic of China.

This overture emphasizes the use of “peace agreement” versus “peace treaty.” [There are advantages to seeking a peace agreement](#) rather than a treaty at this time because a peace agreement is an international legal instrument that solemnly, bindingly, and permanently ends a state of war.

- A peace agreement cancels any “wartime rights” to the use of force.
- A peace agreement would not legally imply recognition of North Korea as a nuclear weapons state.
- A peace agreement can create conditions for more effective engagement on denuclearization by curbing security risks fueling Pyongyang’s pursuit of nuclear weapons.
- A peace agreement is the best chance to realize a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula, providing security arrangements ensuring that peace remains lasting and stable.
- A peace agreement opens the way for a reduced U.S. military presence and improves the national security of all sides.
- A peace agreement opens the way for addressing humanitarian needs.
- A peace agreement is the clearest available expression of the involved parties’ sincerity.
- A peace agreement can be embraced and executed by the executive branch of our government in a timely way, whereas a treaty requires the more lengthy process of congressional ratification.
- A peace agreement can be pursued while the U.S. congress continues to address the bills relating to Korea peace currently before it.

A peace agreement is needed that does justice to all parties to this historic conflict, which continues to generate hatred, violence, poverty, hunger, and human suffering. Officially ending the war would help ensure the security of the Korean Peninsula and the stability of the region.

Presbyterians have long prayed for peace on the Korean Peninsula. Advocating for a peace agreement, guided by our partners in Korea, PC(USA) members will help bring the answer to those prayers for peace there and around the world.

## Other Comments

### Comment—From the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK)

Greetings in the name of Christ.

The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea expresses its appreciation to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for its continued solidarity with the people of Korea over many years. Just as "when one member suffers, all suffer together, and when one member is honored, all rejoice together," the partnership between our two churches has enriched us both. We are especially grateful for your support in recent years as expressed in motions at its General Assembly advocating for the establishment of a just and lasting peace on the Korean peninsula. The "Korea Peace Agreement Overture" of the Presbytery of Cayuga Syracuse is a clear sign of trusted partnership and accompaniment.

For more than 70 years Korea has been divided into two hostile camps. The armistice signed in 1953 put an end to the fighting but it did not put an end to the hostilities, and the situation on the Korean Peninsula continues to be unresolved. What is needed to move forward is an end-of-war declaration. The Panmunjom Declaration of April 27, 2018 offered a stepping stone for change, but since the failure of the Hanoi summit in 2019, there has been no further progress towards a peace agreement. It is just at this time that efforts to move things forward would be most helpful.

The Korea Peace Appeal **offers a way forward by giving everyone in the world an opportunity to voice their support for peace on the Korean peninsula.** The PROK, accompanied by its partners in the National Council of Churches in Korea, invites its international and domestic partners to participate in the campaign. We feel graced to receive this kind of compassionate accompaniment, which we believe will lead us all to peace.

We look forward to continuing to work together with each other for the restoration of God's creation and a world free from the threat of war.

Sincerely,

**Rev. Dr. Chang Ju KIM**

General Secretary, The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea

### Advice and Counsel—From the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP)

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy advises that the 225th General Assembly (2022) **approve** this item. It includes the General Assembly's endorsement and Presbyterian Church (USA) participation in the Korea Peace Appeal, the current global peace effort of our partners in Korea, the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCK) and the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK). Previous actions of the General Assembly supported a Peace Treaty Campaign of the NCCK, which the Korea Peace Appeal now replaces. This overture matches the request of our partners for a peace "agreement" rather than "treaty" to end the Korean War.

The PCUSA has a long history of involvement on the Korean Peninsula and, since the 1953 armistice bringing a cessation of conflict to the Korean War, a tradition of advocating for peace. This overture renews that concern, continues our partnership and efforts for peace on the Korean Peninsula and addresses a highly militarized context in which the United States plays a significant

role. The overture also accompanies and demonstrates support for faithful partners who, after almost 70 years without a peace agreement, are calling for an end to the Korean War.

### **Comment—From the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCK)**

*The National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCK) includes two denominations with which the PC(USA) is in correspondence—the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) and the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK).*

Greetings, friends in Christ. We at the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCK) have heard of the submission of an overture to your General Assembly for officially endorsing our Korea Peace Appeal. We welcome this possibility as we have been in consultation with staff of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. discussing ways for the agency to support our Korea Peace Appeal, and adding the endorsement of the General Assembly would be an important step in expanding support among Christians in the USA. As we are an ecumenical council in Korea made up of nine mainline denominations including the PC(USA)'s two Presbyterian denominational partners in the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) and the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) we recognize the significance of General Assembly endorsements. We know your General Assembly has supported our campaign for a Korean peace treaty in the past. So we **value your endorsement of this new chapter in the movement for peace on the Korean Peninsula** as well.

You may know that the Korean War that had broken out in June of 1950 has not yet ended with any kind of peace agreement, but it has only been paused with the armistice that was signed in 1953. Therefore, we, in Korea, live in a continual state of war. So our militaries each prepare to defend and destroy each other risking the possibility of the catastrophe of open war breaking out again at any moment, threatening the lives of millions of Koreans throughout our peninsula. In this state, also countless resources are directed away from the welfare of our people, diverted toward weapons and tools of destruction, so that progression on social issues is hampered in both South Korea and North Korea. For the sake of our most vulnerable siblings, we must end the war and create an environment conducive to reconciliation.

The NCCK has been leading an international campaign to end the Korean War since 2013. This Korea Peace Appeal is now a part of our movement because we realized our ecumenical voice alone is not enough to turn back policies of pressure and hostility from the major powers influencing the Korean Peninsula, and to put the people of Korea back in the driver's seat of the Korean Peace Process. The Korea Peace Appeal represents a coalition of around 400 different organizations including not only ecumenical Christian bodies, but also civil society organizations without particular religious affiliation, representing a profoundly wide range of perspectives throughout society hoping for an end to the Korean War. In conversation with this diverse coalition, we agreed that it would be better to push for a peace agreement rather than the peace treaty we had been calling for up to now. We recognized that based on the political situation in the US, it is less realistic to hope for US congress to ratify a peace treaty with North Korea, whereas a peace agreement will represent a policy enforcing the end of the hostile policy toward Korea that is currently perpetuating an environment of war. Ending the Korean War is a necessary step in advancing the Korean Peace Process which includes denuclearization of the entire Korean Peninsula and establishment of a diplomatic relationship between the USA and North Korea.

We also are pushing for this move toward dialogue, mutual trust-building, and peace agreement because we have seen that 70 years of pressure, sanctions, and threats have utterly failed to

achieve peace on the Korean Peninsula. Instead they have solidified hostility, deepened our division, and further entrenched our people into competing ideologies. Whereas, whenever parties have engaged in authentic dialogue and engaged in trust-building projects across the divide of the conflict then peace moves closer and hope for reconciliation blooms. Therefore, when we joined the Korea Peace Appeal we promised that we would gather 1 million signatures of Christians around the world to help reach the overall goal of 100 million signatures set by the Korea Peace Appeal. Your General Assembly endorsement will provide a major help toward reaching our goal in addition to support from staff in your denominational offices.

We also welcome the proposal that the PC(USA) consider ways in which the US has hindered the peace process or influenced division on the Korean Peninsula. The NCCK similarly has been making efforts to better understand how our actions, as the Korean Church, have in the past hindered the peace process and inflamed the division. We are heartened to the PC(USA) also consider the US government and church's influence to the same effect.

Sincerely,

**Rev. Dr. Lee Hong-Jung**

General Secretary, National Council of Churches in Korea

#### **Comment—From the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA)**

At the [223rd GA \(2018\)](#), the PC(USA) added a “Season of Prayer and Reflection on the Korean Peninsula” (June 25 – August 15) and “Day of Prayer for the Peaceful Reunification of the Korean Peninsula” (August 14) to the Presbyterian planning calendar. Additionally, **the PCUSA is coordinating with partners, including the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCK) to sign on to the Korea Peace Appeal campaign and encourage Presbyterians to do so as well.** The campaign aims to end the Korean War and achieve peace on the Korean Peninsula by collecting 100 million signatures between 2020, the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War, to 2023, the 70th anniversary of the armistice agreement.