



Mr. Jim Winkler
President and General Secretary
National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCCUSA)

October 22, 2018

Dear leaders of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA,

We greet you in the name of Jesus Christ.

A historical momentum, beginning with the Pyeongchang Olympics and culminating in the Panmunjom Declaration and Singapore Summit, has planted the seeds for the era of “irreversible peace.” On September 19, 2018, for the first time in our history, South Korean President Moon Jae In gave an unfiltered, but very moving speech of peace and prosperity in front of 150,000 North Korean citizens. With such spirit of reconciliation and prosperity, North and South Korea, together with the US and the UN, are involved in discussions to achieve the political and military agreements such as denuclearization and the end-of-war declaration. At the same time, the joint North-South military committee has begun de-mining the demilitarized zone between the two countries; and both governments have been discussing the joint rail project.

As our new administration takes bold steps to dismantle a culture of cold war that has built up for over 70 years, we believe that Koreans should take the lead in finding the resolution to the conflict engulfing our land. However, we begin to feel that recent reactions from the US government have impinged upon our sovereignty, as we see our attempts blocked. Furthermore, it is frustrating that we see both major political parties in the USA manipulating the Korean issue merely to gain the upper hand in the coming elections, which then stifles the progress the two Koreas might have made.

It is in this context that we appeal to our partners in the U.S. Church to use your peace-building power to pursue your representatives in the US government to remove the obstacles to our government's efforts at reconciliation and trust building.

At the end of August, the governments of North and South Korea sought to move forward with the joint rail project that had been agreed upon at the April Inter-Korean Summit, but when they tried to hold a necessary inspection of the rail line linking North and South Korea, the US military, under the name of the UN Command blocked the inspection from proceeding. At first they tried to cite a deadline for submission of prior notifications and later they changed the reason stating that the train that would conduct the inspections would violate sanctions on sectoral goods. Our frustration renewed when our South Korean ambassador to the UN, Cho Tae-Yul, stated in a hearing that UN sanctions will likely not allow South and North Korea to carry out the joint rail project.

In addition to the railway project, our South Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kang Kyung-Wha, mentioned that the administration is considering an easing of its May 24th sanctions that were tied to the sinking of the Cheonan Ship in 2010. In response, US President Donald Trump declared that, “[South Korea] won't do that without our approval. They do nothing without our approval.” This kind of comment suggests that authority for actions of the Korean government actually lies with the US.

Recent reports from aid organizations and the National Committee on North Korea based in Washington D.C. are now declaring that actions by the US State Department are now blocking



humanitarian aid to North Korea. Earlier the US State Department claimed that it only sought sanctions that made allowances for humanitarian aid only to continue. However, several Christian aid groups have recently been completely denied entry into North Korea, now effectively blocking the last active humanitarian aid activities in North Korea.

Most recently behind the scenes, the US has voiced opposition to the implementation of the no-fly zone over the DMZ that was part of the joint military agreement signed by North and South Korea at the Pyongyang Summit in September, which hints again that the US may block actions taken by South and North Korea to implement corresponding trust-building measures.

At this critical juncture of our history we clearly manifest that the US leaders should not treat the Korean Peninsula as if it is a colony of the US cold war regime and do respect inter-Korean sovereignty.

We ask you to advocate on our behalf to representatives and appointed officers in your government to honor our sovereignty and to allow us to take the lead on efforts for building trust, ending the war, and seeking reconciliation on our Korean peninsula. As our partners in Christ, you have testified to the work that God has been doing in bringing justice and ending military dictatorship in South Korea in the past, so we ask you now to raise your voices and help us to remove the obstacles that hinder our movement toward reconciliation and removing the shadow of war and destruction from our homeland.

In Ecumenical Solidarity,

Rev. Lee Hong Jung
General Secretary

Rev. Ra Haek Jib
Chairperson, Reconciliation & Reunification Committee