

(Excerpt from Minutes)

Statement on War Responsibility of Nippon Sei Ko Kai

1. The Nippon Sei Ko Kai, after 50 years since the end of World War II, admits its responsibility and confesses its sin for having supported and allowed, before and during the war, the colonial rule and the war of aggression by the State of Japan.

In 1945, The Nippon Sei Ko Kai was at a historic turning point – the end of Japan's invasion and colonial rule in the Asia-Pacific region. At the special session of the 21st General synod held in the same year, Bishop Paul Shinji Sasaki expressed the church's repentance for what it had done during the war period, and pointed out that the Church had chosen to comply with the government policy and had forgotten its mission. At that moment, the General Synod, as well as the House of Bishops, the Dioceses and Parishes should also have deeply repented for not having fulfilled their prophetic role. They should also have made a sincere apology to their neighbours whom Japan had invaded and ruled, and should have sought a truly reconciled relationship with them.

Since establishment, The Nippon Sei Ko Kai has been making compromises with the idea of a Tenno (God in Heaven) ruled nation and militarism which go against the Gospel, and has not been able to resist strongly against, or refuse those principles. The Nippon Sei Ko Kai was oppressed by the authorities, and some priests and lay people experienced the struggle of faith. But despite these bitter experiences, our Church has not been able to stand beside those who are oppressed and suffering. Despite its more recent internationalism, our Church has not been able to see Japan as an aggressor in the war. In fact, using the 'Special Prayer for the China Incident' and 'Special Prayer for the Greater East Asia War' (WWII), our Church has justified Japan's rule over other ethnic groups and supported the war under the name of Christianity. We have been a closed Church whose main concern is the expansion of the membership and the retention of the institution, this being unable to serve as the salt and for the earth as indicated in the Gospel.

2. The Nippon Sei Ko Kai confesses to God and apologises to the people in Asia and the Pacific that we did not admit our fault immediately after the

end of the war, were unaware of our responsibility for the past 50 years, and have not actively called for reconciliation and compensation until today.

At the 22nd General Synod in 1947, The Nippon Sei Ko Kai officially adopted The Book of Common Prayer issued in 1938. The Book included prayers for the Tenno and 'Kigensetsu', which regarded the Tenno and his officials. During the Holy Communion, a priest prayed for God's blessing for all who had sovereignty especially the Tenno. In this way, even after the war, The Nippon Sei Ko Kai continued to use The Book of Common Prayer, which justified the Tenno system of government as God's will. These are the major issues to be questioned with regard to the war responsibility, but the Church has neglected to change its attitude.

The Diocese of Okinawa has been telling the stories about massacres of Okinawan people and forced collective suicides among them, which occurred during the war as a result of the government policy to regard the people as subordinates of the Tenno. They have also been pointing out the treats of the US Military bases in Okinawa throughout the post-war period. Before its transfer to the Nippon Sei Ko Kai in 1972, the Diocese of Okinawa had asked the Nippon Sei Ko Kai to understand Okinawa's history and its situation. The Nippon Sei Ko Kai must repent that it has neglected to respond to that call until today.

3. The Nippon Sei Ko Kai confesses that, even after the war, it has yet to get rid of discriminatory attitudes. We pray that we will be changed to recognise our mission to do justice as the people of God, and, as the vessels of peace, to listen to the voices of the divisions, pains, cries and sufferings of the world.

As a sign of repentance, we the people of The Nippon Sei Ko Kai will do the following:

- i. to share the confession of our war responsibilities among all of the parishes
- ii. to convey an apology to the Churches in the countries which Japan had invaded
- iii. to start and continue a programme in each Diocese and Parish, to review the historical facts and to deepen our understanding of the Gospel.