

# NSKK NEWSLETTER

日本聖公会管区事務所だより

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## PALESTINE TODAY

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At Jerusalem

A statement of the Japanese Anglican visiting team led by the Bishop of Tokyo

We, the Bishop of Tokyo and accompanying 11 members, have visited the Episcopal diocese of Jerusalem for 10 days from 3rd of February, 2004.

The Council of Justice and Peace under the diocese of Tokyo, which has been working on this visitation program, wanted to make it clear that the primary purpose of this visit should be an attempt to share the mission and ministries of the Churches and Christians who have been strongly seeking the justice and peace in this particular region, where the root causes of major conflicts of the present world seem to lie. Among the people of Tokyo diocese, there are some who have some reservation to send an official visiting team specifically at this moment, when every mass-media report almost every day violent clashes between Israelis and Palestinians. The Japanese government also declares the region as "a dangerous area" where the ordinary tourists should refrain from traveling. Following this official advise, the Japanese Churches which used to send a number of pilgrim groups to the Holy Land seem to have stopped sending any in these years.

Nevertheless, or more precisely speaking, for this very reason, we wanted to visit our brothers and sisters in Christ when they are really in a difficult situation in Palestine/Israel. We have been hoping, therefore, to see as many Palestinian friends as possible and to learn from them. Here are the points we strongly feel to communicate to the peace loving people in the rest of the world, after our 10-day visits.

1. The on-going construction of the wall by the Israeli government is in fact ignoring the internationally agreed border between Israeli territory and the West Bank/Gaza, and it is actually threatening and destroying thousands of lives of Palestinian people.
2. The acts of planting a number of Jewish settlements and building the connecting roads within the West Bank and Gaza are threatening the very existence of the Palestinian communities. This illegal acts are considered to be an intentional confiscation of the

Palestinian land by the Israeli government, which have been continuously carried out in various ways since the time of the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948.

3. While the Palestinians within the state of Israel are recognized as the citizens along with the Jewish population, in reality they are much discriminated in terms of education, employment, medical services, possession of land and property, and other administrative or juridical procedures. Their social status seems much similar to what may be called the “Apartheid” over against the status enjoyed by Jewish citizens.
4. Many Christian Churches in the world, particularly those of the fundamentalistic tendency are not sensitive at all to turn out to become “Christian Zionists” with a sympathetic view on Jewish people and Jewish religion, as a result they become uncritically collaborative with Israeli policies, ignoring the voices of the Palestinian Christians.
5. Under the above-mentioned circumstances, many Christians in Palestine/Israel are driven into the situation, where it is becoming harder and harder for them to see the future possibilities of their own personal life or family life. Hence, the immigration of Christian population out of Palestine/Israel continues to be considerable and unavoidable, which endangers the very existence of the indigenous Churches of Palestine.
6. Majority of Palestinians, including Palestinian Christians, are naturally against any violent and armed resistance (for example the suicide bombing) against Israeli soldiers and citizens. Both ordinary Palestinians and Israeli citizens are no doubt yearning for peace based on justice.
7. In spite of the hopes and aspirations of peoples of both sides, the Israeli government continues to rob the land, to destroy the houses and to barricade the roads within Gaza/the West Bank. These acts of the Israeli government are in fact as inhuman and evil as the act of terrorism.
8. The most urgent plea of the Palestinian Churches and Christians is a recognition by the international community and Churches around the world that they are in the midst of genuine suffering, and that their voices should be heard.
9. Under this desperate situation the Palestinian Churches and Christians are making every effort for the improvement of education, medical services and social welfare for their fellow Palestinians.
10. The diocese of Tokyo should be determined to pursue our efforts in keeping the friendships and fellowship with the Diocese of Jerusalem, understanding the situation of the Palestinian people

Naturally, we have been most blessed by the opportunity to find ourselves in the Biblical Land and in the places where Jesus Christ used to live. It was one of the most precious experiences for us to take a walk around the lake Galilee, and to have been able to join the

Eucharist at the Church in Nazareth as well as at St. George's Cathedral in Jerusalem. It was a wonderful experience for our Christian faith. At the same time we deeply wish to tell and to share the sufferings and hopes of the people who are actually living in those places.

We are most thankful for the people of the diocese of Jerusalem and the people of the Diocese of Tokyo, who have made this trip possible.

With our prayer that peace and justice may come soon in this part of the world.

(signed)

Bishop of Tokyo and 11 accompanying members

### **Appeal to Korean Christian Church concerning the Unification Church in Japan**

In the fall of last year a coalition was formed between Roman Catholic Church, the United Church of Christ in Japan, Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Japan Baptist Convention, The Korean Christian Church in Japan, and the Nippon Sei Ko Kai to address the issues of Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (hereafter referred to as the Unification Church) which is causing a problem due to 'Spiritual Sales' and seductive recruitment in Japan.

As a first step we, the "Christian Coalition against the Unification Church", have prepared a small booklet entitled "This is the true picture" to save freshmen college students from seductive recruit by the Unification Church. The booklets have been sent to churches and schools.

As you may know funds generated by Spiritual Sales and other means are funneled to the Headquarters of the Unification Church in Korea. According to their teaching Japan is a very guilty country and it is justifiable to raise funds in Japan and send them to Korea where Moon Sun Myung was born as self proclaimed Messiah. It is fair to say that Japan is a victim as far as the Unification Church issue is concerned.

From January 27 through 30 we, the members of Christian Coalition, visited Korea to appeal to Christian Churches in Korea and inform them of the activities of the Unification Church and the negative consequence of their presence in Japan.

The Christian Church in Korea is continuously growing and membership of the Protestant Church is said to be 12 million people. We visited one of the representative churches, the Presbyterian Church of Korean to discuss this issue with their counterpart organization and they introduced us a minister who had recently left the Unification Church.

At this meeting we informed them that the amount of damage in Japan caused through Spiritual Sales is claimed by lawyers to be ¥2.5 billion. Those who attended the meeting were very surprised and they indicated their willingness to work together to address this issue.

We also visited with General Secretary of Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) which is another influential protestant church. He strongly suggested that since Japanese churches are working together interdenominationally the Korean side should

address this issue through an ecumenical organization such as NCC (National Council of Churches).

This was my first trip to Korea to talk about the issue of the Unification Church. Other members who had visited Korea before to address this issue were very impressed with the positive attitude of the Korean side. The number of Protestant Christians in Korea is said to be 12 million and membership of the Unification Church is said to be 20,000. Because of these statistics Christians in Korea think that the issue of the Unification Church is a minor problem and it is just an issue of heresy. Besides the Unification Church does not conduct illegal acts in Korea such as Spiritual Sales. The growth of Christianity in Korea is phenomenal and under these circumstances it is unavoidable that there is some confusion. It is claimed that there are more than 10 self-proclaimed messiahs and that Moon Sun Myung is but one of them.

After visiting the Protestant Churches we made a visit on the Roman Catholic Church and met with the General Secretary of Catholic Bishop's Conference of Korea. They have published books criticizing the activities of the Unification Church and some members of this study group met with us. We explained the level of damage in Japan and they showed a high level of interest wanting to know more about it.

We also visited ACK (Anglican Church in Korea) but it was regrettable that the General Secretary of Provincial Office was not available to meet with us.

The Unification Church in Korea seems to be in process of changing their name and image. When we visited one of their gatherings in Seoul the sign was not "Unification Church" but was "Family Federation for Unification and World Peace". The building was named as "Family Gathering" It is said that they will get into politics by forming a political party such as "Family Party".

In this building there were a number of books written in Japanese. There may be 6,000 Japanese women living in Korea who are married to Koreans through mass marriage. There may be 20,000 members of Unification Church in Korea, and about one third of that total are Japanese women.

I was emotional and confused to know that most of these Japanese women have discontinued ties with their families and have been maintaining ties among themselves. If we could work together with our Korean counterparts we could make tremendous progress in saving them and assist them in rebuilding and re-establishing their family ties.

### **New Bishops were installed in two Dioceses of Nippon Sei Ko Kai.**

On 27th March 2004, Confirmation and Installation of Rev. John Sakae Matsubara as a Bishop of North Kanto Diocese took place at St. ¶ Paul's Chapel of Rikkyo Academy in Niiza City.

On 24th April 2004, Confirmation and Installation of Rev. Andrew Yutaka Nakamura as a Bishop of Kobe Diocese took place at St. Michael's Cathedral of Kobe Diocese.

We would like to share with you these graceful and joyful events of the two dioceses.