

Though the mountains be shaken  
and the hills be removed,  
yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken  
nor my covenant of peace be removed,"  
says the Lord, who has compassion on you.  
(Isaiah 54:10, NIV)

### **Celebrating the 160th Anniversary of the Mission of the Nippon Sei Ko Kai**

(NSKK, the Anglican Communion in Japan)

We pray for the Peace of the Lord to be with all members of the NSKK.

In 2009, the NSKK observed the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of mission by celebrating with an anniversary worship service in which many of you participated. We gave thanks for the great blessings bestowed, and we committed ourselves anew to mission. Ten years have passed since then, and this year marks the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the mission of The Nippon Sei Ko Kai.

Looking back on the past 10 years, the Great East Japan Earthquake, Tsunami, and TEPCO Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident cost many people their lives and forced many more to evacuate; even now, in the 9<sup>th</sup> year after the disaster, the situation is difficult. Subsequently, natural disasters have struck, one after another, including the Kumamoto earthquake, torrential rains in northern Kyushu and in western Japan, and the Hokkaido Iburi Eastern Earthquake. In response to the Great East Japan Earthquake, a disaster victims' support operation, the "Let's Walk Together Project" began with the prayers and cooperation of people throughout the country and worldwide. Through this, we were given many new insights. Moreover, the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident and the radioactive contamination of the surrounding area was an incident which calls our lifestyle itself into question. Furthermore, it has become an event which leaves a large liability to the future.

On the basis of this experience, the 2012 Mission Conference of NSKK was convened with the theme of 'The Dignity of Life - Toward a Mission-Oriented Community', and the "Statement on Decade of Mission and Pastoral Care of NSKK: 2012-2022" was issued. Even though we face various issues such as the aging of our members, declining numbers, shortage of clergy, and financial constraints, we decided that laity and clergy would proactively dedicate themselves to "careful and sincere mission and pastoral care." Then, at the 59<sup>th</sup> General Synod of NSKK, held in 2012, the "NSKK Declaration on the Prevention of Harassment" was

passed, after which persons in charge of harassment prevention and countermeasures were appointed, to work together with representatives of each diocese, to hold study sessions, etc. It is an important issue for the church to be a community where everyone who gathers respects the dignity of life. The next year, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Worldwide Anglican Peace Conference was convened in Okinawa, listening to the voices of the people of Okinawa and those working for the reunification of the Korean Peninsula, and appealing for the solidarity of the worldwide Anglican Communion in the work for justice and permanent peace.

In 2014, The 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Convention of Mission Collaboration between the Anglican Communion in Japan and the Anglican Church of Korea was convened on Cheju Island, and it was confirmed that, for the sake of peace in East Asia, both Anglican Churches (Korea and Japan) would continue in collaborative mission. Youth exchanges and women's exchanges are ongoing, and we are grateful that among the priests of the Anglican Church of Korea who work as mission collaborators within the NSKK, there are those who, having completed their term, transfer their canonical residence and work in their respective diocese.

At the 62<sup>nd</sup> (general) Synod held in 2016, the "Statement of Apology to all Hansen's Disease Survivors and Family Members" was adopted, an apology to all those who were robbed of their human dignity by our tacit consent and support of the nation's isolation policy, and we pledged to engage in educational activities to eliminate ongoing prejudice and discrimination, and further to extend pastoral care to aging church members in sanatoriums, and to place importance on interaction. In addition, at this General Assembly, the establishment of a Prayer Book revision committee was approved, and work to compile and publish a prayer book suitable for the coming era is ongoing, so that enhancement of future worship is expected.

At the 64<sup>th</sup> (general) Synod in 2018, "Guidelines for the Ordination of Female Priests," which affirm the principle "We recognize that the holy orders of those who have received ordination according to the NSKK Prayer Book retain validity" were passed. Even though in last December (which marked 20 years since the first ordination in the NSKK of a female priest occurred), a service of thanksgiving was celebrated for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ordination of a female priest, more and more collaboration going beyond gender differences is anticipated.

Youth activities such as the National Youth Conference, the Japan-Korea Youth Seminar, and U26 continue, providing enriching encounters and new awareness surpassing dioceses and provinces.

At the same time, clergy and laity numbers have declined further in the last 10 years. Decline in the number of clergy is particularly serious, an issue affecting the future of each diocese. Based on this current situation, the House of Bishops, looking toward the mission conference of the NSKK scheduled for 2022, has begun to consider the re-examination of the structure of the mission of NSKK, including the issue of nurturing a person responsible for Theological Education.

With respect to the current structure of 11 dioceses, which until now, while frequently discussed, has been maintained, in the most positive sense, we believe that, in order to reorder our mission structure, the promotion of discussion about merging/realigning is an issue with which the House of Bishops has been charged.

Aging in Japanese society is progressing, economic disparity is becoming more pronounced, nationalistic tendencies are intensifying, violation of minority human rights has become more serious. There is also marked movement to make the US military base in Okinawa permanent and to accelerate the re-militarization of Japan, such as the revision of Article 9 of the Constitution, which renounced war. And in a world that experiences constant pain and division, we would like to reaffirm the calling which we are to fulfill.

The Pastoral Letter of the House of Bishops on the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the NSKK states, “Just as worship is called ‘the work of the people’ (leitourgia), the church is above all the community of the people of God. We are called to be instruments carrying the Good News and the love of Christ to the world. As such, wherever we might be, we are gathered together in worship, nourished by the Word and the Eucharist, and sent out into society. The work of the laity is therefore equally as important as that of the clergy. The church does not exist only for its own sake, but is also called to seek the presence and action of God in the world, particularly among the least in society, and to serve the world. This work is carried out not only within the NSKK, but also in dialogue and mission collaboration with churches in other traditions.”

Further, in the 2012 Mission Conference of NSKK, The Dignity of Life - Toward a Mission-Oriented Community, Statement on Decade of Mission and Pastoral Care of NSKK: 2012-2022, it is stated:

“We humbly reflect on our own past in order for NSKK to take steps toward a newborn community of faith, in the hope and faith in God. We pray together with a deeper appreciation of the Word and Worship to express the salvation and joy brought about by

Christ and to invite many people to the grace of God given through the sacrament. Our church gives its heart particularly to those people who want cure and liberation, treasures the life of everybody, and hopes to participate in the Lord's salvation together with its parishes and all creatures."

We wish to renew our desire to fulfill the calling entrusted to us by the Lord of reconciliation and peace. After they received the Holy Spirit, the apostles who had feared the Jews and locked themselves in the house were sent out to the world, and they began to boldly speak the gospel. Let us, who belong to the NSKK, be filled with the same Holy Spirit who was poured into the apostles, and let us trust in the God of love and mercy, and let us in our particular locations set out to fulfill the mission entrusted to us by the Lord.

Pentecost, June 9, 2019  
Nippon Sei Ko Kai House of Bishops