

Message from the House of Bishops: On the 80th Anniversary of the End of the War

“Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

(Mark 9:50)

⟨Introduction⟩

We pray that the joy of the Lord’s resurrection and His peace be with all who are part of the Nippon Sei Ko Kai (NSKK, the Anglican Church in Japan).

This year, 2025, marks 80 years since the end of the Asia-Pacific War. Although the war ended with Japan’s defeat, around 20 million people across the Asia-Pacific region, as well as many within Japan, lost their lives. Even 80 years later, the wounds caused by the war have not fully healed. In particular, we remember with repentance and sorrow that reconciliation and peace with the nations Japan invaded has yet to be fully realized.

On this 80th anniversary, we pray for those who lost their lives in the war, and for those still suffering its aftermath. We also want to reaffirm the role of the NSKK in striving for global peace.

⟨NSKK’s Responsibility for the War⟩

We must recall the 1995 NSKK Mission Consultative Forum, held under the theme: *“Mission of the NSKK – Responsibility for History and a Vision for the 21st Century.”* There, the NSKK acknowledged its responsibility for the war and, with reflection, committed to walking in mission alongside those historically subjected to domination, war, and ongoing discrimination in Japan – such as Koreans residing in Japan, other Asians, the people of Okinawa, the Ainu, the Buraku communities, people with disabilities, and women.

In 1996, the 49th NSKK General Synod adopted a declaration on war responsibility. It pledged to share responsibility across all churches, express repentance to churches in countries Japan had invaded, and promote efforts in each diocese and church to deepen understanding of historical facts and the Gospel.

Since then, we’ve worked to build cooperative relationships with other Anglican churches in Asia, especially in Korea and the Philippines, and engaged in peace and human rights issues in Okinawa. Peace and reconciliation across East Asia, including the peaceful reunification of North and South Korea and peace in Okinawa, remain core mission concerns for the NSKK.

⟨The 2023 NSKK Mission Consultative Forum⟩

Held November 10–13, 2023, in Kiyosato, Yamanashi, this gathering brought together 132 participants – bishop, diocesan representatives, and members of NSKK committees – under the theme: *“Sanctity of Life – Becoming neighbours.”* It followed the 2012 consultative forum, fulfilling a ten-year promise to reflect on pastoral and missionary growth. A final message was released on February 2, 2024, titled *“Getting back to basics - serving creation, becoming a neighbour,”* encouraging participants to:

1. Listen to God’s voice
2. Listen to the voices of the people

3. Listen to the voice of the world

It called on dioceses, churches, clergy, and laity to live this out in practical, attentive ways.

〈The Path Forward for the NSKK〉

Three years have passed since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022. It has also been over 18 months since the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack and Israel's retaliatory bombing of Gaza began. These unresolved wars have claimed over 60,000 and 50,000 lives respectively. Myanmar's February 2021 military coup halted democratic progress in that country, and relief efforts there following its recent earthquake have stalled.

Meanwhile, Japan is intensifying its military buildup under the U.S. nuclear umbrella – consolidating U.S. bases in Okinawa, forcibly advancing Henoko base construction, promoting fears about Taiwan, and expanding new bases on the Nansei Islands – all while contemplating changes to Article 9 of the Constitution, which renounces war. These moves threaten peace and stability in Okinawa, Korea, and China.

Amidst this, the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations (Nihon Hidankyo) won the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize. As the only country ever to suffer nuclear bombings, Japan must aim for a world free of nuclear weapons. The NSKK maintains that “nuclear weapons and life cannot coexist,” and continues to call for a world without nuclear power.

Thus, on this 80th anniversary of the war's end, we renew our commitment to learn from history and Christ's Gospel, to uphold life, dismantle walls of division, and become instruments of peace.

〈As Signs of Peace and Instruments of Reconciliation〉

Before His crucifixion, Christ prayed: *“That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you”* (John 17:21). After the resurrection, He said: *“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you,”* and He gave the disciples the Holy Spirit, commissioning them for reconciliation (John 20:21 onward).

Though a small community in Japanese society, we are one in Christ. As a community that cherishes and blesses life, through worship and service, we can become a “sign of peace” in our regions.

On this 80th anniversary, we recall our unity in Christ as a sign of peace. We commit to faithfully practicing the work outlined in the NSKK's War Responsibility Declaration and the 2023 Missionary Conference Appeal, and to proclaiming the reconciliation and peace shown through Christ's death and resurrection.

Easter 2025

House of Bishops, Nippon Sei Ko Kai

Remembering 80 years since the end of World War II

Almighty God, source of truth and peace,

As we mark eighty years since the end of the Asia-Pacific War,
we remember all those who sacrificed their lives in the war,
and entrust them into Your deep compassion.

We pray that Your healing and comfort, as well as Your peace,
may flow abundantly upon all who still suffer pain and hardship.

May we not turn away from the lessons of history,
but instead open our eyes and raise our voices against all wars and violence that threaten peace on
earth and strip away the lives and dignity of every person created in Your image.

Grant us the wisdom and courage needed to become instruments of Your peace.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, who together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is one God reigning
over all creation forever.

Amen.

(Easter Day 2025, House of Bishops, NSKK)