Christian World Service
ACTION AGAINST POVERTY

Peace Sunday Resources

Witness for Peace

August 6

August 13 for Korean Peninsula

Introduction

"And he said bring them here to me."
Matthew 14:4

Peace Sunday is a time to look beyond ourselves and pray for peace at home, in our communities and in the wider world. Take time to remember people harmed by violence, war and nuclear fallout, but also the peacemakers - the people who struggle to make our world safer for all. These resources feature peacemaking efforts around the Pacific and have a special focus on the call for an end to the war on the Korean peninsula marking the 70th anniversary of the Armstice Agreement. A Global Prayer for peace on the Korean Peninsula will be held on August 13.

Cover image: Kinisimere Liku, Pacific Conference of Churches.
Above: A Japanese women lights a peace lantern at the ecumenical pilgrimage to mark the 70th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. Photo: WCC/Paul Jeffrey

On 6 August 1945 the bomb "Little Boy" was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan. It lead to the deaths of between 100,000-180,000 people and left 63% of buildings destroyed. Three days later on 9 August a larger bomb "Fat Man" was dropped on the city of Nagasaki killing a further 50,000-100,000 people and igniting fires that destroyed 22.7% of its buildings.

In April scientists moved the hands of the Doomsday Clock to 90 seconds before midnight, the closest ever.

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Peacemaking

"Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God," Jesus Matthew 5:9

The world is becoming more dangerous for more people, and the constant reporting of violence can be unsettling. Talk of peacemaking is easily eclipsed by the nightly reports of war and violent attacks in our homes and neighbourhoods. More than ever, we need to refocus on the steps we can take to build peace and wellbeing.

While the risk of violence is always present, the work of peacemaking is often neglected. The task of "weaving the web of peace and reconciliation" as Rev. Hong-Jung Lee states, is at the core of God's economy of life. As Christians, we are called to be peacemakers - to enter the tough places where real people are hurting and confront people and systems that fan the flames of hatred and division.

Take some time to think about how your church or community is engaged in peacemaking and what the next step could be. Perhaps you pray for people affected by the war in Ukraine, support people who need food and shelter, run programmes to share life skills, learn about local history and the effects of colonisation, or campaign for climate justice. This list is only a beginning. Use these resources to explore some of the hurting points in our world..

In 2019 500,000 people formed a human peace chain along the Demilitarised Zone between South and North Korea. Photo: WCC/John C Park

Readings for August 6

Genesis 32: 22-31

The book of Genesis tells stories of people and families who lived as nomads in known as the Fertile Crescent - the area surrounding the Arab Desert in the northwest. People have always moved in search of food and safety. The story of Jacob is one of these migrant stories. After cheating Esau of his birthright and tricking him out of his father's blessing (25,27), Rebekah sent Jacob to the safety of her father's people in Haran.

In Haran Jacob did well but after his last son, Joseph, was born, he decided it was time to return to Canaan. Ever cunning, he negotiated a good share of his father-in-law's animals to take home with his four wives and slaves. When he got close to Canaan, one of his messengers warned that Esau was preparing an attack. In a clever effort to avoid confrontation, Jacob divided the animals into groups to be given to Esau as gifts, flock after flock.

This week's reading recounts how he sent the parties ahead so he could spend the last night alone. As the story goes, he wrestled with the angel and was wounded but did not give up until he received a blessing and the name Israel. His strategy worked and Esau welcomed him to the promised land (33) which became Israel.

Isaiah 55:1-5 (RCL)

This reading reminds us that God's promise is the promise of abundance - where everyone has the water and food that are essential for life.

Psalm 17:1-7,15

A cry for help at a time of danger.

Psalm 145: 8-9, 14-21 (RCL)

God's love and compassion for all.

Matthew 14:13-21

When Jesus heard that Herod's men had killed John the Baptist, he knew trouble lay ahead. John had spent his life speaking out against the injustice of daily life in the crowded region of Galilee. As a popular figure, Jesus knew that he could be next in line but he was also grieving the loss of John, a relative and friend. He needed time to think but when he saw the people needed him, he had compassion (v. 14b) and spent the day healing the sick. When evening came, he responded and encouraged the sharing of food for the 5,000 plus people who had gathered.

This miracle story is the only one told in all four gospels. Let's be clear, Jesus did not want anyone to go hungry. The sharing of food is central to our faith but so is compassion. How would this story sound to people who had fled their homes and had no food?

Romans 9:1-5

In this passage, Paul affirmed the place of the Israelites in God's family and their many faith connections (v. 4-5), but is troubled that they have not accepted Christ. Paul's love is so deep for the people that he said he was willing to give up his life if it would enable them to believe.

Prayers and Music

Prayers

Prayer for Peace on Hiroshima Day
We remember the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the many people who lost their lives, health and homes.
R: Loving God, help us find the way to peace.

We remember people who have been harmed by nuclear testing, war and conflict; the many people who have lost loved ones and fled their homes in fear for their lives.
R: Loving God, help us find the way to peace.

We remember the earth, poisoned and exploited because of greed and the desire for power.
R: Loving God, help us find the way to peace.

Show us ways to share life and make peace.
In your Name, we pray. Amen.

A Prayer for Peacemakers
God, the source of all that is life.
We give thanks for today, for the planet that is our home, for your Word that speaks of your love for all people.
We pray for the peacemakers, for people who live in places where it is dangerous to be; for people who care deeply about the injustices of poverty and violence; for people who foster understanding between people.
We pray for our world - that peacemakers will replace those who make war; the people who long for healing and hope make peace with justice their way of life; people will care for creation and share its resources fairly.
In a world where people long for peace but struggle to think of their neighbour and of you, we pray for peace in the name of Christ.

Music

- Make me a Channel of your Peace
- Christ is our Peace by Shirley Murray Alleluia Aotearoa 16 https://www.hopepublishing.com/find-hymns-hw/hw2854.aspx?FeedbackProgram=PR_
- God Weeps by Shirley Erena Murray https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/god-weeps-a-hymn-for-times-of-war-and-suffering
- I've got Peace like a River by CJ and Friends: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6085sLXCMs
- Mā te Mārie a te Atua - With One Voice 679 - Sung by Stan Walker https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3oweuXcqCVg
- My Peace by Taizé https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cY22uNjlXj8
- O God, the things that Make for Peace by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette: http://media.umcom.org/gbod/sibfiles/Gillette-OGod,theThingsThatMakeforPeace,MARYTON.pdf
- O love that wilt not let me go - George Matheson

Thanks to

Joohong Kim
NZ DPRK Society
Pacific Conference of Churches
Richard Lawrence
World Council of Churches

For Children

Share Lunch

The sharing of the loaves and fishes is one of the most familiar from the time of Jesus. In Matthew's telling, there is no mention of a boy so it is a perfect opportunity to 'be' the story by sharing.

Find bread that works best - perhaps pita bread - and choose the fish: maybe fish fingers, fish-shaped biscuits (if there are cooking facilities) or chocolate fish.

Read or tell the story from Matthew and talk a little about how sharing food is a sign of peace. Invite the group to make and share the food with each other or the church. End with a prayer for peace.

Darina (not her real name) and her family have returned to their apartment in Kharkiv in Ukraine. Our partner the Lutheran World Fellowship is helping with repairs. Photo: LWF/Anatoliy Nazarenko

Make a Drama

Ahead of time think of some times when children might have experienced conflict - maybe refusing to clean up or go somewhere. Write each scenario on a piece of paper - enough for at least one scenario each for groups of 4 or 5.

Introduce this all-age peacemaking activity. Divide participants into small groups and ask the youngest person to select one of the pieces of paper. Give the group five minutes to discuss the scenario and assign roles. Invite them to act out the scenario as a conflict situation but warn them that they need to freeze when you blow a whistle. After the whistle, invite them to resolve the conflict peacefully. Conclude by reading Matthew 5:9 together.

A Pacific Witness

Speaking Truth, Calling for Action

Earlier this year Iemaima Vaai from Samoa ***addressed****(June 25) the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches:*

"...I acknowledge the land on which we gather, a part of the sacred creation. I pay my respects to the people whose identity is intertwined with land and sea and give our love and share peace with elders, mothers, fathers and children – past, present and future.

I stand on behalf of my Pacific mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers – members of the Body of Christ of the largest region in the WCC – the Blue Pacific Continent of Oceania.

We represent not just human members of God's household but our sister and brother creatures, as guardians of the largest and deepest of the world's four oceans, covering more than a third of the Earth's surface....

We raise the cries of our sisters and brothers as they continue to struggle for restitution from nuclear testing and climate injustice which has scarred generations, physically, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. We have shed tears with our daughters and sons, sharing their deep hurt over the past, their current struggle for justice and their hopes for a future that brings healing, wholeness and life in abundance. We ask for stronger engagement and accompaniment in our common work for climate justice and hope....

Pacific Churches reaffirm that climate finance for adaptation, mitigation, loss and damage, and relocation by polluting countries is akin to receiving "30 pieces of silver" for the betrayal of Pacific Islanders who seek, first and foremost, a rapid phase-out of fossil fuels.

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And so we call the WCC and member churches to commit to and campaign for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty for a rapid, coordinated, transparent and equitable transition away from fossil fuels, including, in particular, access to renewable energy and low carbon solutions.

As we continue to struggle for a nuclear-free and independent Pacific, we **note** the increasing militarisation and emerging "Cold War" in our region through the Indo-Pacific strategies of China and the United States and her allies. We view this militarisation, the use of aid as a weapon of this "cold war" as yet another form of colonisation in the global south. We urge the WCC to not lose sight of these geopolitical conflicts in our region. We call on WCC's support to ensure that those states responsible for nuclear testing in the Pacific to take responsibility for their legacy of destruction and commit to equitable reparations.

We renew our **call** for the immediate cessation of plans for dumping of irradiated wastewater from the Fukishima Nuclear Powerplant into our Pacific Ocean, which threaten the biodiversity and future of our Blue Pacific. We seek WCC's support for this call.

Noting recent information that highlights the cross-boundary implications of Deep Sea Mining, we reaffirm our calls for a global ban on both exploratory and commercial Deep-Sea Mining. This continuing extractive focus on our region is shifting from the fenua, our mother land to the moana, our mother ocean. We continue to affirm and encourage stronger work to ensuring that principles of economic development resonate with those whole of life traditional practices and experiences accumulated over thousands of years, for the wellbeing of all....

The Pacific is a large ocean region, and we see the smallness of our region as a strength not a weakness. Amidst the vulnerability our islands experience to climate change, geopolitical and neo-colonialism, we affirm our resilience as a gift of God, rooted in our indigenous wisdom and celebrated as spirituality of abundance and hospitality.

The Pacific has much to offer in a time ecological crisis and metanoia. We encourage you to receive what we offer as a mission from the margins of the map.

Fa'afetai tele lava. Thank you.

A Prayer for Peace

Loving God, you hold and heal the hurts of human conflict; you hold the tears of those who suffer in war, and you inspire people everywhere to act for justice and for peace. We worship you alone, for you alone are merciful and everlasting.

We pray with and for our sisters and brothers in faith in Korea. We pray for people who gather to worship you in North Korea, in villages or in urban apartments. We pray for those who meet in the churches. We pray for the people of churches in South Korea, in large congregations or in small groups. Bless them all, O God, with a vision of your realm on earth as it is in heaven, a realm marked by love, by humility and by hope.

We pray for those who witness to the ways of Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus Christ, in China, in the United States, in Japan and in Russia. May we, with them, refuse to worship idols of power and prestige. May we, with them, seek truth and light amid propaganda and partiality.

Loving God, you are beyond idols of our own making. Where human situations seem set in place forever, where greed and grievances seem to be permanent, you bring about signs of new hope and shoots of new life. Help us to see the signs and to be resolute in hope. We pray that peace and reconciliation will break open the hard surface of life and will flourish in many places.

Bless the people of Korea, in both the North and the South. Our hearts go out to those who are struggling in poverty, to those who are unprotected and exploited, to those who have lost loved ones in recent heavy rain and flooding.

Holy Spirit of new life, we pray that these nations with one language and one history will once again be one. As we pray for them, we pray also for ourselves and for all the earth. We pray to you in many languages and from many places, forming one hymn of praise encircling the earth. God, hear our prayers and let our cries come unto you.

We pray in the name and in the way of Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus Christ, our companion on the journey, the one who was and is and is to come. Amen.

Written by Richard Lawrence

For Peace on the Korean Peninsula

Rev. Dr Joohong Kim
Crossway Community Church
Otautahi Christchurch

The current division of the Korean Peninsula dates back to World War II. The United States and the Soviet Union, which participated in the war as United Nations forces, established a military demarcation line called “The 38th Parallel” while occupying South and North Korea, respectively. This demarcation line was officially sealed on August 26, 1945, right after Japan's declaration of surrender, resulting in the division of the two Koreas.

At the end of the war many Koreans wanted to establish a single government on the Korean peninsula. However, the two powers were ideologically separated and used their political influence to bring two regimes into being. In 1948, the Soviet-backed Kim Il-sung regime established the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the north. The Republic of Korea was established with support from the United States in the south and Syngman Rhee as president.

Interestingly, more than 50% of the cabinet of the first North Korean government had fought against Japan during Japanese colonial rule. On the other side, Syngman Rhee's regime in South Korea was made up of predominantly pro-Japanese figures who had served Japan during the Japanese colonial period, suppressing and persecuting Independence activists/fighters.

Two years later, the Korean War broke out. The war lasted three years before the signing of an Armistice Agreement on July 27, 1953. The Armistice established a ceasefire but not a formal end to the war. The parties to the Armistice Agreement were Mark Clark, commander-in-chief of the UN Forces, Kim Il-sung, commander-in-chief of the Korean People's Army, and Peng Dehuai, commander of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army. The South was not a party to the Armistice Agreement.

The Korean Peninsula is an area where tensions are always present and war can resume at any time. In this conflict, the Korean people are bearing the double economic burden of the arms buildup in both North and South Korea. South Korea, which can sustain itself

economically, has no major problems, but in the case of North Korea, the burden has been serious.

Despite severe economic difficulties, North Korea is not giving up the development of nuclear missiles. This seems to be the last bastion it relies on to get global attention. North Korea's key message to the world is if it does not have nuclear weapons, it will not only lose the arms race with South Korea, but also may end up in the same situation as Gaddafi in Libya or Saddam Hussein in Iraq with its leader removed by force by the USA.

In the meantime, the United States has received a sizeable economic benefit from selling advanced weapons to South Korea, helping it become the world's tenth-largest military power. The North Korean regime, being aware of South Korea's military power and fearful of an American attack, decided it had no choice but to arm itself with nuclear weapons. In this respect, the US-led demand for North Korea to “renounce its nuclear armament” is seen as a political message. Many South Koreans are suspicious of USA actions and understand that the USA knows North Korea would never renounce nuclear weapons.

Currently, South Korea ranks 10th in the world in terms of economic trade and 10th in military power. Furthermore, interest in its cultural production or 'K-Culture' is growing rapidly. Internationally, there is a greater expectation that South Korea can facilitate the establishment of peace on the Korean Peninsula. However, there are some historically-embedded stumbling blocks.

First, the USA’s international diplomacy is centered on its own interests - specifically, the hawks of Congress. They seem to pursue only their own priorities without any interest in working for peace on the Korean Peninsula. A clear example was the North Korea-USA Summit held in Hanoi, Vietnam in February 2019. Kim Jong-un (the Supreme Leader of North Korea), who made a 66-hour train through China and rushed to Hanoi, sincerely wanted an end to the war armistice. However, the talks ended without fruit, which, South Korean political commentators suspect, was because of the influence of American John Bolton, an adviser to the National Security Council, who intervened at the end of the talks. An opportunity of signing an End of War Agreement, which would be a major stepping stone on the way to peace on the Korean Peninsula, disappeared.

Second, Japan's persistent political and diplomatic obstruction to North and South Koreans’ efforts for reunification. It is thought that, when the two Koreas are unified and peace is established, they will become a military threat to Japan. There have been

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various indications in the international diplomatic arena that revealed Japan's disturbing moves against peace on the Korean Peninsula. Many Koreans remember that the Korean War gave Japan a golden opportunity for its economic development. Many South Korean intellectuals recognise that not only Japan but also USA does not want the reunification of the two Koreas. Many South Korean intellectuals remember the Taft-Katsura Agreement, secretly agreed between USA and Japan on 29 July 1905 after the Russo-Japanese War, which eventually allowed Japan to rule over Korea and USA over the Philippines.

Third, the immature political consciousness of the South Korean people. There is a remnant of colonial mentality and flunkeyism in the Republic of Korea. A significant number of South Koreans are under the masterminding influence of Korean mass media which are closely connected to conglomerates and political forces that encourage a colonial mentality and flunkeyism among the population to maximise their political gain. Although such irrationality is expected to be resolved in the long run, it currently works to cover the eyes and ears of the South Korean people. To give a few examples of evidence:

1. A significant number of people, at least 30% of the total population, support a hardline policy on North Korea including armed demonstrations and maneuvers.
2. They do not want any cooperative economic project between the two Koreas.
3. They prefer armaments to overpower North Korea.
4. They are favourable to the purchase of US-made weapons.
5. They uncritically accept the claims of the United States that criticise North Korea's Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) development. North Korea does not need ICBMs to attack South Korea, actually.

In this context, I suggest the following prayers:

For the two Koreas:

1. To abandon hostile attitudes toward each other.
2. To develop and sustain a cooperative relationship.
3. To open borders for exchanges in sports, culture and the arts.
4. To resume and expand inter-Korean economic projects.
5. Not to rely on neighbouring powers such as USA, China, Japan and Russia.
6. For the Armistice Agreement to be replaced with a peace treaty and a Declaration of the End of the War.
7. For neighbouring powers—USA, China, Japan, Russia—not to disturb peace talks between the two Koreas.

Joohong K. 18 July 2023

The Korean War - an Aotearoa New Zealand Perspective

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In the United Nations Memorial Cemetery in Busan, South Korea, a visitor can find the graves of 36 New Zealanders who died in the Korean War, and a memorial stone for the one New Zealander who died in the war but whose body could not be recovered for burial – Robert Marchioni.

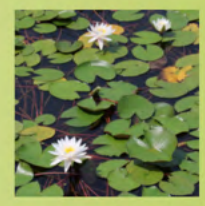
The 36 graves are among the 2,320 in the cemetery, for service personnel from 16 different countries who died in the Korean conflict. In total, around 2.5 million people lost their lives in the tragic, protracted war.

To trace the origins of the war, one needs at least to explore and understand the history of Korea from 1910 when Korea was annexed by Japan, to 1945, when the occupation ended with Japan's surrender at the end of the second World War. The historian also needs to trace the negotiations between the major powers, especially the Soviet Union and USA, at the end of WWII and the division of the Korean peninsula at the 38th parallel.

Further, attention needs to be given to the ideological differences between the leaders of the newly formed Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) – Kim Il-sung, and the Republic of Korea (South Korea) – Syngman Rhee. The north and south became sovereign states in 1948, though each leader claimed to be representative of all Korean people and each sought the unification of the country.

By 1949, this situation had degenerated into a civil war with both sides crossing over the 38th parallel regularly in tit-for-tat incursions. This became internationalised when forces of the north, the KPA (Korean People's Army), with Soviet Union approval, invaded the south in June, 1950. This precipitated a quick response from the USA and from the United Nations Security Council.

The relative roles of the USA and UN need further area for exploration. The UN forces under US command, with General Douglas McArthur as Commander-in-chief of UN Command, prevented the capture of Busan in the south, and drove the North Korean



forces back to the 38th parallel. In October 1950 China joined the war when UN forces drove north, crossing the dividing line and moved towards the Yalu River - the border with China.

A war of attrition continued until the fighting ended on 27 July, 1953, when the Korean Armistice Agreement was signed. The country was in ruins. The agreement created the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), separating North and South Korea, and allowed for the return of prisoners. No peace treaty has ever been signed, so the two Koreas are technically still at war, albeit frozen in an uneasy truce.

New Zealand's role

New Zealand's role in the conflict may seem minor in the whole scheme of things yet the number of deaths in proportion to the size of our population meant that New Zealand's involvement was considerable.

The Prime Minister of New Zealand was Rt. Hon Sidney Holland when the war broke out. He responded quickly to the United Nations' call for member nations to contribute forces, sending two frigates – HMNZS Tutira and HMNZS Pukaki - from Devonport Naval Base on 3 July 1950, to Japan first, and then to Korean waters.

On 27 July 1950 a call went out for volunteers to serve in Korea. It was decided that 'Kayforce' would be centred on an artillery unit. The main body of Kayforce, 1056 personnel, departed on the S.S. Ormonde on 10 December 1950. They arrived in Korea on New Year's Eve, and were in action before the end of January 1951.

During the last two years of the war, negotiators thrashed out a peace settlement, which was eventually signed on 27 July 1953, leaving the country divided along much the same lines as in 1948. A decreasing number of New Zealand troops remained in Korea until 1957.

Often called 'the forgotten war', the legacy of the war continues. Sadly, there are not many New Zealand veterans of the war still alive and well. They tell stories of the cold, the terror of war, and of the confusion and suffering of ordinary Korean people.

No peace agreement has been signed and the major powers, especially China and USA, confront each other grimly in and around the Korean peninsula.

Some older Korean people in New Zealand today have memories of the war and its effects on their families; many can speak of families divided for decades without

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communication; a younger generation is nervous about the division and the tension at the border, the 38th parallel but many are more intent on getting on with their own lives than on dwelling on the political situation.

While the two Koreas confront each other determinedly, there is a place for seeking dialogue at different levels of society. Many New Zealanders have lived and worked in South Korea. A number have travelled to North Korea, seeking to bring about dialogue and understanding. We New Zealanders can support our Korean sisters and brothers in their ongoing search for the reunification of their country.

Richard Lawrence, July, 2023

Global Prayer for Peace on August 13

"Let those who confess God as the Prince of Peace sprout the seeds of hope with all their strength, their will, and their sincerity." from this year's prayer.

The National Council of Churches in Korea, the World Council of Churches and Christian World Service invite you to pray for peace and reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula on August 13, the Sunday after Liberation Day or Peace Sunday. Liberation Day is observed in North and South Korea on August 15 and marks Korean independence and the end of Japanese oppression in 1945. Prayers are available in English and Korean, and include a prayer to stop the release of contaminated nuclear waste into the Pacific.

The WCC Central Committee made a statement ahead of the 70th anniversary of the Korean War Armistice Agreement. At a conference to mark the anniversary Peter Prove, director of the WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs wrote, "A formal declaration of the end of the Korean War could be a powerful circuit-breaker and catalyst for peace."

Take Action

Using this information, write to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon Nanaia Mahuta - n.mahuta@ministers.govt.nz - asking the government to take new steps to end this long-standing war.