



The United Church of Canada General Council

GC44 GS21 Renunciation of Claims to Former Mission Property in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

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1. What is the issue?

The 43rd General Council affirmed in 2018 that God is calling The United Church of Canada to join with partners to seek peace, justice and reunification on the Korean peninsula. One such partner is The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK). The PROK, seeking to shift the dominant narrative in Korean society from one of hostility and conflict to peacemaking and reconciliation, adopted at its General Assembly in 2021 a *“Declaration Regarding the Renunciation of Claims to Property Left in the North for the Sake of Reconciliation between South and North Korea.”* Given that prior to the Korean War the United Church owned mission properties in what is now the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), the PROK has invited the United Church to act in response to this declaration.

2. Why is this issue important?

Since the late 19th Century, The United Church of Canada has been committed to God's mission of peace and justice in the Korean peninsula. We are in long-term partnership with the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea. The Korean peninsula is the most militarized zone on the earth, with impacts that stretch into every aspect of life in Korea, and has implications for the well-being and stability of the world. GC43 urged the church to address the suffering of the Korean people, which continues since the Korean War has not ended, some seven decades after it was begun. This issue is important to us as disciples of Jesus, because, as the gospel of John reminds us, Christ taught us that in him the troubles of the world are overcome, and peace reigns (John 16.33).

3. How does this proposal help us to live into our church's commitments on equity?

This request comes to The United Church of Canada from a global partner, The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK). Responding to this request is a way of living out the United Church commitment to radical accompaniment, decolonizing partner relationships and deepening mutual engagement in God's mission.

4. How might the General Council respond to the issue?

The General Secretary recommends

That General Council 44, at its annual meeting in October 2023, respond to the request from The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) by:

- a. approving the attached statement in support of the PROK's declaration regarding former properties in North Korea;**
- b. renouncing any claims to property in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) consistent with the church's 1960s action; and**

- c. **framing this action as an expression of The United Church of Canada's ongoing commitment to decolonization and reconciliation.**

Recommended United Church of Canada Statement in Support of the PROK's Declaration

A Declaration Regarding the Renunciation of Claims to Former United Church of Canada Mission Property in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea"

The United Church of Canada expresses its support for and solidarity with The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) in its peace-making efforts in Korea and joins in partnership with the PROK to urge "the people of South and North Korea to overcome the division of hatred and confrontation and move toward reconciliation and reunification."

The United Church of Canada knows from its own commitment of working towards right relations with indigenous peoples in Canada that the work of reconciliation is not an easy or straightforward process. It requires patience, listening, and trust-building, and an acknowledgement of our own complicity in structures of oppression. As difficult as this work may be, it is the ministry to which God has called us as Christians. Paul reminds the Corinthian church in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19, just as God, through Christ, "was reconciling the world to Godself," so too we, as Christ-followers, have been invited to participate in this "ministry of reconciliation" in our own time, joining with others in participating with God in mending and healing of creation.

Some 50 years ago, The United Church of Canada's understanding of mutuality in mission led in South Korea to the handing over of all mission properties to the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea. The United Church of Canada now formally renounces all intention of retaining claims of ownership of property in what is now North Korea and joins with partners in the ministry of reconciliation in Korea.

The United Church of Canada undertakes this action in the faith that this symbolic gesture expresses solidarity with the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea and supports its efforts to shift the narrative in Korea from hostility and conflict to peacemaking and reconciliation. We unite with Korean partners and all who seek justice and peace in the Korean Peninsula:

“in turning toward the path of reconciliation and cooperation,
so that Koreans of both South and North Korea
can rejoice and laugh together in new and creative ways.”

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