



22 September 2024

CCA General Secretary's Message for the NCC Korea Centennial Celebration

Esteemed ecumenical colleagues and friends in Korea,

On the occasion of the Centenary celebrations of the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCK), I extend greetings and congratulations on behalf of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), and its member constituencies across Asia - from Iran in West Asia to Japan in East Asia, and from Nepal in the north to New Zealand in the south.

The year 2024 marks yet another milestone in the history of the Korean churches as they celebrate the 100th anniversary of the NCC Korea. This year, the people on the Korean peninsula are reflecting on various events that have held special significance in Korea's modern history. The people of Korea have faced complex challenges in manifold ways. In the history of the Korean churches and their ecumenical journey, as well as in the history of the entire Korean people, there have been dark moments—moments of anxiety amidst uncertainties and fears—but there have also been times of hope, God's assurances of promise and joy. As we reflect on the centenary celebrations, we thank God Almighty for the blessings bestowed upon the Korean churches and their national ecumenical coordinating fellowship, the NCCK. Over the past one hundred years, the NCCK and its member churches have been faithful in their prophetic witness and missional engagements. Even when opportunities to create momentum towards dialogue, cooperation, and improved relations were lost, the NCCK and its member churches remained deeply committed to inter-Korean peace and the reunification of the divided Korean people.

When the Korean War began on 25 June 1950, leading to adversarial competition that ultimately undermined peace on the peninsula, the NCCK embarked on a mission to promote peace with justice, reconciliation, and reunification of the divided Koreas. The day after the Korean War broke out, on 26th June 1950, the NCCK leadership alerted the international Christian community through a telegraphic message that “large invading forces are pressing all around us”. The then General Secretary of the NCCK sought the help of the ecumenical family to use their influence to stop the war. As we celebrate the centenary of the NCCK, we also remember all those who have toiled and gone before, faithfully acting in Christ's presence. Let this cloud of witnesses, whose lives and faith serve as exemplary commitment models, inspire future generations.

Over the years, the NCCK has reiterated its call to overcome the impasse and end the cyclical escalations of tensions and the accompanying risks of conflict in the region. The NCCK has remained a beacon of hope, affirming confidence in God's all-encompassing care, illuminating minds, and igniting hearts with the steadfast love of Jesus Christ who “is peace, who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of separation” (Ephesians 2:14).

The NCCK has never ceased its efforts for national reconciliation and the reunification of the divided Koreas. Although the journey has been painful, this difficult ordeal has never extinguished the Korean churches' aspiration for peace, reconciliation, and reunification. The Christian Conference of Asia has been privileged to be part of the ecumenical accompaniment with the NCCK and the Korean churches ever since CCA was founded in 1957. The NCCK's role and rich heritage of speaking and acting on behalf of the Korean churches and standing with the people and churches in their struggle for democratisation, human rights, and peace with justice have been highly valued by the CCA and its member churches and councils in Asia. NCCK's tireless efforts to mobilise and sensitise ecumenical and ecclesial bodies around the world to be involved in global advocacy on Korean unification has been widely recognised and respected over the decades.

May this special moment of the centenary celebrations continue to strengthen the NCCK in its prophetic mission and witness, and further contribute to restoring a deeper sense of togetherness among the Korean churches. May this blessed occasion of thanksgiving and commemoration of NCCK's centenary nurture hope and trust among Korean churches and strengthen the fellowship in a sense of fraternity and bond of Christian love. Let divine grace continue to kindle hope for peace with justice that has been given to all of us and help everyone gain new strength and certitude by looking to the future with an enduring spirit, a trusting fortitude, and a prophetic vision.

Yours along the journey,

Dr Mathews George Chunakara
General Secretary, CCA