

NSKK NEWSLETTER

日本聖公会管区事務所だより

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Tasks of NSKK (Anglican Church in Japan)

The 55th Synod of NSKK was held at St. Barnabas' Church, Ushigome in Tokyo from May 25 to 27, 2004.

During the Synod we discussed several important issues that confront us and we focused mainly on two issues: (1) establishing a system to further the reformation of Provincial Dioceses and (2) how to maintain our pension system for clergy, both men and women.

The purpose of setting up a Committee for the reformation of the Dioceses is to implement more mission activities and a more effective organization to operate more smoothly. Therefore, we propose a plan to reform the diocesan boundaries and personnel among the clergy (personnel placement, pay system and welfare, etc) at the Synod of 2008. Concerning these issues, we have to ask ourselves first what is the aim of our mission work and its extension in each Diocese. We must seriously consider and resolve the issues of the sharp decrease of clergy in Japan, the separation of young people from the church, and the problem of aging in our parish churches.

It is an increasing phenomenon in contemporary Japan that people easily leave their established political parties or organizations and this applies also to religions. Both politics and religion emphasize that people should work for others, but in fact people tend to lean toward self-preservation and are concerned primarily with how to get better and longer lives for themselves.

Our churches exist not only for ourselves. We also have to be aware of those who are in trouble, suffering, and asking for help with a heartrending cry. We need to walk together with them, telling them the way shown us through Christ our Lord, His Love, and the Gospel.

We often say that our church doors should be open to the community and that we should devote ourselves to all of society. However, how can we make this a reality? How can we serve people proclaiming the love of God? Where should we seek our mission work? To accomplish these basic mission tasks, prayer and earnest dedication to others are desirable for us all. Do we shift our responsibility toward our organization or system when our mission tasks are not successful?

We must resolve through hard work issues such as diocesan boundaries, personnel placement (pay system, and welfare-related issues concerning the clergy), and differentials of finances among the different Dioceses. Every Diocese within the NSKK shares these same common issues. Thus, they can be worked out once solutions in the Dioceses are resolved. Concerning the pension problem, which is the same as the national one, a drastic countermeasure is needed to determine whether we can maintain the pension scheme or not ̄ whether we can find a way of maintaining it.

Stepping ahead in a better direction might bring us pain, yet our decision-making should be implemented soon, without fail. I will take a step forward by carefully listening to your voices and hoping for your cooperation.

The Most Rev. James Toru Uno
Primate, NSKK

Report on the 55th Regular General Synod of NSKK

The 55th Regular General Synod of NSKK was held at St. Barnabas' Church, Ushigome in Tokyo for three days from 25th to 27th May 2004. The Synod was attended by 11 bishops (one absent), 22 clergy and 22 lay delegates from 11 dioceses of NSKK, for a total of 55 members. (Chaired by Bishop James Toru Uno, co-chaired by Bishop David Shoji Tani, and Rev. Nobuaki Suzuki as General Secretary).

The following major issues were focused upon in the discussions and deliberations during the Synod:

1. Reform of NSKK Organization. The question was raised as to whether the reform of the organization may cause a certain recession in the activities of each committee. The outcome of the activities should be evaluated before the reform of NSKK organization is materialized.
2. Issues concerning the Retirement Pension Scheme. At the 1999 Bishop's Conference, it was stated that the retirement pension should be maintained for all bishops and priests after their retirement. However, under the very low rate of interest (so called "zero interest"), it is necessary for us to consider how to keep the current pension plan. There still have been a number of issues in the current pension plan which must be radically deliberated for the future NSKK pension plan, such as the redemption of bonds that we have invested (especially bonds that will reach maturity at the end of this year); how to handle the pension trust that we currently have entrusted to some banks and how to make up the shortage of revenue and expenditure of the pension trust.
3. Reform of the NSKK Diocese System: Establishment of a "Committee to study the reconstruction of the current division boundaries of NSKK dioceses" (tentative name) was proposed by the delegates from Chubu Diocese. This topic was first proposed in

the 1970's and has been left unresolved until now. It was agreed that the matter should be reconsidered based on a concrete plan, in which the present situation must be taken into consideration. It was decided that an "Organization which promotes the reconstruction of the NSKK Diocese System" should be established as a practical committee. (This proposal was agreed by 9 Bishops and 31 Clergy/Lay Representatives).

4. "Prayer for eliminating discrimination against people who have suffered from Hansen's Disease": Establishment of "a day to enlighten the discrimination against people with Hansen's Disease (patients and their relatives), and to understand Hansen's Disease more deeply" was agreed (proposed by the lay delegates from Kyushu Diocese). It was decided that every 6th Sunday after Epiphany will be a "Day to Enlighten the Discriminatory Issues on Hansen's Disease", and all the churches of NSKK should offer a prayer for this purpose. The presenter (Kyushu Diocese) will be entrusted to work out the proper wording and finalize the prayer for the Day.

5. Other Resolutions: The following resolutions were approved:

"Resolution to keep praying for the activities of NSKK Ikuno Center, and to continue contributing donations for its activities and to maintain the current system in which NSKK participates in the administration of Ikuno Center"; "Resolution to protest the official visit to Yasukuni Shrine for worship by Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi, and to address a petition to the Japanese Government"; "Resolution to oppose the anticipated amendment of Article 9 of the National Constitution"; and "Resolution to appeal for an immediate withdrawal of the Self-Defense Forces of Japan from Iraq".

6. Matter concerning the Sayama Case:

On the first evening of the Synod, a workshop was organized "to study several issues concerning the violation of human rights". During the seminar, Mr. Kazuo Ishikawa, aged 65 years old, made a touching speech. Mr. Ishikawa has been fighting against his false charge in the Sayama Case. He expressed his life as "32 of the 65th" of his life in prison, and told the audience how he was finally able to submit a Letter of Appeal. In order to clear the false charge and to claim his innocence he learnt how to write and read Japanese characters from a kind-hearted warden. (Mr. Ishikawa was illiterate when he was first arrested). He has been facing several hardships and difficulties with a strong belief that he is not guilty in the Sayama Case. His touching story greatly moved the audience. On the 2nd day of General Synod a resolution was approved "that a Letter of Appeal should be submitted to the Supreme Court and to the Public Prosecutor's Office concerning the Sayama Case".

7. Election of Primate and members of the Executive Committee:

The Most Rev. Toru Uno (Bishop of Osaka Diocese) was elected as Primate of NSKK; The Rt. Rev. Peter Jintaro Ueda (Bishop of Tokyo Diocese), The Rt. Rev. Nathaniel Makoto Uematsu (Bishop of Hokkaido Diocese), Rev. Koichi Uraji (Kyoto Diocese), Rev. Masakatsu Seki (Tokyo Diocese), Rev. Isamu Koshiishi (Kita-Kanto Diocese), Mr. Masuo Yamada (Tokyo Diocese), Mr. Kei Ikezumi (Chubu Diocese) and Mr. Noboru Kuraishi (Yokohama Diocese) were appointed as members of the Executive

Committee.

Editor-in-Chief
Hajime Suzuki

The Syllabus of the Items of Resolutions adopted at the 55th General Assembly of Nippon Sei Ko Kai held in May 2004

Resolution 26 : On the subject of making a protest against Prime Minister Koizumi worshipping at Yasukuni Shrine and on the sending documents of our request.

Yasukuni Shrine was founded during the period when Japan started to walk its way as a modern state. Japan fought wars against China, Russia and finally dashed into World War II. The soldiers who were killed in action during those wars and the leaders who led World War II and were sentenced to death as war criminals have been enshrined together in Yasukuni Shrine as the “Guardian Deity (Gokoku no Kami)”. Yasukuni Shrine has become a symbol of the moral support of Japanese militarism.

After World War II, Japan became a democratic state and established a new Constitution in which the principle of the separation of religion and state was declared. However some conservative politicians have a strong nostalgia for the old form of government that existed before the war and have been promoting the movement of the nationalization of Yasukuni Shrine even after they became members of the Cabinet, and have continued to worship at Yasukuni Shrine.

Prime Minister Koizumi has repeatedly continued to worship at Yasukuni Shrine since he was inaugurated as Prime Minister. These deeds are in breach of the principle of the separation of religion and state declared in the Constitution. In the Fukuoka District Court, the act of worshipping at Yasukuni Shrine by Prime Minister Koizumi was judged as a transgression against the Constitution. Mr. Koizumi’s repeated going to worship at Yasukuni Shrine has been severely criticised by South Korea, where Japan had once established a colony, and China where Japanese Armed Forces victimized a significant number of people during World War II. Critical and political tension with neighboring North-East Asian countries continues as a consequence.

Nippon Sei Ko Kai has in the past yielded to militarism and took part in the war during World War II. Reflecting on those awful incidents, we make a formal protest against the continuation of the Prime Minister’s worshipping at Yasukuni Shrine and we request him to observe the principle of the separation of religion and state established in the Constitution and request him to endeavor to walk the path of peace and not the way to militarism.

Resolution 27 : On the subject of making protest against the amendment on Article 9 of the Constitution.

Recently, there has been a renewed tendency of nationalism prevailing inside Japan, stating that as an economic power, Japan should make great contributions to the world internationally and militaristically. These opinions, of militaristic contributions to the world, Mr. Koizumi’s continued worship at Yasukuni Shrine, and the dispatching of the Self-Defense Forces to Iraq are deeply interconnected. These are part of the policy to

change Japan into a nation able to fight against any country, as was the case before World War II. Recently Mr. Koizumi began to ask the people to amend the Constitution, especially the amendment of Article 9 of the Constitution.

Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan declares the abandonment of war and repudiates any armament and right of warfare. Nippon Sei Ko Kai opposes the amendment of Article 9 of the Constitution. We oppose because Article 9 is completely in agreement with the message that was issued at the Lambeth Conference in 1930 saying that “ war, as a measure to solve international disputes is completely incompatible with the teachings and good example given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ.”

At the General Assembly in 1996, the Nippon Sei Ko Kai decided “the declaration by Nippon Sei Ko Kai on the responsibility of taking part in World War II, and we confessed before God our sins that we took part in the War and that we had not paid sufficient attention to the voices of the victims who lost their lives in the War.”

At the Assembly, we were greatly concerned that public opinion concerning the amendment of Article 9 of the Constitution was increasing and we issued the statement to each church member of Nippon Sei Ko Kai to oppose the amendment of Article 9.

Resolution 28 : On the subject of the request of prompt withdrawal of Self-Defense Forces from Iraq.

Japan was defeated in World War II and established a new Constitution and became a country of pacifism. Article 9 of the Constitution proclaims “Japan abandons war and threat by force or use of force as a measure to solve international disputes forever”.

In March last year, the United States of America and the United Kingdom attacked Iraq with supposedly plausible reasons that Iraq maintained a large quantity of weapons of mass destruction and that it was supporting terrorism and occupied other countries. The Japanese government sent the Self-Defense Forces in order to play a part in the USA’s and UK’s occupation policies in Iraq.

Nippon Sei Ko Kai has already issued a declaration to oppose the attacking of Iraq by the UK and American armed forces and also we oppose the detachment of the Self-Defense Forces to Iraq. Nippon Sei Ko Kai requests the Government of Japan to withdraw the Self-Defense Forces from Iraq and urges the UK and America to complete their unjust military occupation and to carry out policies to restore the true sovereignty by Iraqi people not by the nominal Iraqis who are greatly influenced by the UK and USA governments.

Resolution 29 : On the subject of sending a request for the Sayama Case to the Supreme Court and to the Super Public Prosecutor’s Office.

The Sayama Case occurred in Sayama City, Saitama prefecture in 1963. A kidnapper murdered a high school girl and the matter was taken to court. The police had already decided that the culprit was a “buraku-min” and they narrowed the target to the neighboring “buraku” without serious investigation. Mr. Kazuo Ishikawa is one of buraku-min and the police arrested him on another charge, trumping up evidence and forcing him to confess his crime as the kidnapper of the high-school girl. At the first trial, the judgment completed with discriminatory words that the “buraku was a hotbed of crime”, and Mr. Ishikawa was sentenced to the death penalty. But after repeated trials his sentence was reduced to imprisonment for an indefinite period.

During the investigation by police, Mr. Ishikawa admitted his crime as he misunderstood that one of his relatives had committed the crime and wanted to protect him. But after he knew that this relative was innocent, he started to insist upon his own innocence. With his own endeavors and with his friends and supporters who believed in his innocence, new evidence and testimonies came to light. His innocence is readily accepted.

As a consequence Mr. Ishikawa and his supporters repeatedly tried to petition for a retrial by the Court based on the new evidence and testimonies but the Court has repeatedly rejected their appeal without investigating their new evidence and testimonies. It is also a fact that the Tokyo Public Prosecutor's Office has not released any evidence concerning the Sayama Case to counsel.

We Nippon Sei Ko Kai petition for the retrial of the Sayama Case and request all evidence and testimony concerning this Case to be released.