

CONFESSION OF RESPONSIBILITY  
DURING WORLD WAR  
1967  
United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan)

The twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan) was celebrated during the Fourteenth General Assembly of the Kyodan held in October 1966.

The serious concern for us now is "The Kyodan of Tomorrow." Taking this as our theme, we prayed and reflected on the responsibility the Kyodan bears toward the future of Japan and the world.

It was indeed on this very occasion that we freshly realized yet again the mistakes we committed in the name of the Kyodan at the time of our formation and during the following war years. We therefore seek the mercy of our Lord and the forgiveness of our neighbors.

In those years, the government of our country, out of the imperatives of waging war, demanded as a matter of national policy that religious bodies be consolidated and cooperate with the war effort.

From the opening of Christian mission early in the Meiji Era (1868-1912), most Japanese Protestants had long desired to dissolve the various denominations and to establish a single evangelical church in Japan. Therefore, the church leaders of the time, taking advantage of this demand by the government, entered into church union whereby the Kyodan was formed.

When we recognize that the Providence of God, the Lord of History, was at work in the formation and continued existence of the Kyodan despite our weakness and failings, we not only feel a deep sense of profound gratitude, but with fear, we painfully realize our responsibility.

The church, as "the light of the world" and as "the salt of the earth", should not have aligned itself with that war effort. Love of country should, rather, have led Christians to exercise a rightful judgment, based on Christian conscience, toward the course our nation pursued. However, in the name of the Kyodan, we issued a statement at home and abroad in which we approved of and supported that war, and encouraged prayers for victory.

Indeed, even as our country committed sin, so we too, as a church, fell into the same sin. We neglected to perform our mission as a "watchman." Now, with deep pain in our hearts, we confess our sin and ask the Lord for forgiveness. We also seek the forgiveness of the peoples of all nations, particularly in Asia, and of the churches therein and of our brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the world; as well as the forgiveness of the people in our own country.

Over twenty years have passed since that war ended; and we are fearful that our beloved country, set in today's problem-plagued world, is once again headed in a dangerous direction. At such a moment, we seek God's help and guidance so that the Kyodan may not repeat its errors but, rather, may rightly carry out its mission in Japan and in the world. Looking toward tomorrow, we hereby make public this resolution.

SUZUKI Masahisa.  
Moderator

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