

A STATEMENT FROM THE JAPANESE MINISTRY CONVOCATION STEERING COMMITTEE  
FROM A MEETING ON "THE DAY OF REMEMBRANCE"

THE BACKGROUND

On the 19th of February, 1979, the Day of Remembrance for the 37th anniversary of Executive Order 9066 that sent 100,000 people of Japanese ancestry -- citizens and non-citizens alike -- into concentration camps, the Steering Committee of the Japanese Ministry Convocation of Episcopal Asiamerica Ministry was meeting in Los Angeles.

Parishes represented at this meeting reported their reflections on the Japanese American Citizens League resolution that asked the United States Congress to pay reparation to the Evacuees for this act of injustice. After hearing these reports the Steering Committee of the Japanese Ministry Convocation of Episcopal Asiamerica Ministry discussed what was reported. We offer the following comments on the JACL resolution.

THE PEOPLE ADDRESSED BY THIS STATEMENT

The Steering Committee of the Japanese Ministry Convocation of Episcopal Asiamerica Ministry reminds those in the Church of Japanese descent of the fact that we address more than one constituency in the question of reparation.

First, we speak to parishes whose membership is predominantly of Japanese descent, but that we also speak to other parts of the Japanese community -- some of whom are Americans, some not; some of whom are Christians, some not.

Second, we address parishes composed of other ethnic and racial backgrounds, here especially to our fellow Christians of various Asian and Pacific peoples, many of whom find it difficult to understand why we make this demand at this time.

Thirdly, we speak to our fellow Americans, whether they are brother and sister Christians or not, recalling them to our common heritage in the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution, and our tradition of freedom and justice.

THE ANALYSIS

When we specifically address the proposal of JACL for dollar reparation for the act of injustice or incarceration of the Japanese in Concentration Camps in 1942, as Christians we need to keep before us that we are in fact dealing with two quite different questions at one and the same time.

The first is the ethical issue of how to deal with an historic act of injustice, and the distinctively Christian way of making ethical decisions.

The other is the means we use to deal with any act of injustice, for the means we use to rectify an unjust act must fit its ethical goals.

On the first question, we Christians ground our ethical judgments on the way we see the Kingdom of God proleptically present with us in the redeemed and reconciling community of faith, of which the Church is the human expression. Within this community we are helped to acknowledge our common sinfulness, and our common complicity in unjust acts of the society we belong to. We also affirm that our Lord Jesus Christ died for each one



of us, that we therefore are sisters and brothers one of another and are deeply concerned for the welfare of each person as a person, whether that person explicitly claims Jesus as Lord or not.

We then ask the ethical question, Who is my neighbor? Who am I called to treat as my sister or brother? In answering this question, I know whom I am to respond to. As we respond to one another, we also express God's love for His world. We enable each other to become agents of reconciliation.

To deal specifically with the JACL resolution in light of the above analysis, do we not need to raise the question of forgiveness and reconciliation? Even if we do not, do we not ask what we as Christians look for from an act of reparation? When an unjust act has taken place, what do we look for excepting the restoration of equilibrium in our relation one to another, both as individuals and in the common life of our society. So then, can we demand others be fair to us? Probably we can. But can we do so as Christians, since we hope that each person in the situation will discover his or her humanity more fully as the outcome of this issue? What we hope for, then, is that any act of reparation also be redemptive for all persons involved in the situation, that this act of reparation be done willingly and freely, so all persons involved will gain benefits from this act.

#### THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Therefore, we the Steering Committee of the Japanese Ministry Convocation of Episcopal Asiamerica Ministry call on our fellow Christians:

First, to help us identify clearly and concretely what we mean when we consider the JACL resolution on reparations;

Second, to help us reflect on what it means for us to be Christians in these kinds of questions, so we may enable each other to be more reflective and intentional in making ethical decisions.

Third, that we continually remind ourselves that we need to distinguish carefully between ethical goals we aim for, and the means we choose to attain the desired ethical goals.

*This statement, based on the discussions which took place on Feb. 19, 1979 during the meeting of the Steering Committee of the Japanese Convocation of Episcopal Asiamerica Ministry in Los Angeles, was drafted by The Rev. Peter Igarashi.*