

**No. 0116**

(Sense-of-the-Assembly)

**ON BRINGING JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION TO COMFORT WOMEN**

ADOPTED by the General Assembly

**Background Information**

"Comfort Women" is a euphemism for 200,000 or so mostly Asian women whom Japan had dragooned or lured into sexual enslavement for the gratification of its soldiers during World War II. At the time of their abduction, most of these women were teenagers of varying nationalities--Chinese, Okinawan, Filipina, Indonesian, Korean. The women were sent to the frontlines of the Japanese imperial army, locked up in shacks, and forced to have sex with ten to thirty men a day. In the course of their enslavement, multitudes of the women were murdered, their bodies dumped like trash. When the war was over, many of them could not return home for shame or lack of means, and were forced to live out their lives in foreign lands. Even those who did return lived lives that were permanently disfigured by the exploitation.

For decades, the women feared to talk about their sexual enslavement. Meanwhile, the Japanese government flatly denied any wrongdoing on its or its army's part in the recruitment and running of the Comfort Corps, insisting that the women were prostitutes paid for their services. Finally, unable any longer to forbear the Japanese government's dissembling, in the early 1990s, former Comfort Women from South Korea and elsewhere began to speak out, giving testimonies of their horrid experiences. Then in 1992, no longer able to dispute the mounting evidence, the Japanese government finally acknowledged its army's involvement in the Comfort Corps.

Even so, to this day, the Japanese government has refused to address the issue justly. It has refused to offer official apology and just recompense to the surviving victims. The Japanese government has stonewalled despite the fact that in 1996 United Nations Human Rights Commission found it guilty of sexually enslaving young women during World War II. It continues to stonewall even though in December 2000 the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery found it guilty of war crimes for the sexual enslavement.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery was held in Tokyo, January 8-12. The tribunal was a mock trial held to bring to the world's attention the injustice suffered by the Comfort Women and Japanese government's gross dereliction in redressing the matter. Women's groups from eight countries collaborated to set up the trial, which was participated in by more than 450 attendees, including victims, lawyers, judges and scholars, from around the world. The four judges, headed by the former president of the U.N.'s Yugoslavia war crimes tribunal, Gabrielle McDonald, found the late Emperor Hirohito guilty for his army's policy of forcing foreign women to work as sex slaves during World War II. They also found that the victims have a right to claim compensation from Japan.

WHEREAS, the Gospel enjoins Christians to work for justice and reconciliation; and

WHEREAS, it is in keeping with this injunction for Christians to stand in solidarity with the women who were victimized by Japan's military enslavement known as Comfort Corps ; and

WHEREAS, these women have for a decade requested the Japanese government to restore their violated honor and dignity by offering them a formal apology and other just recompense; and

WHEREAS, the Japanese government has consistently stonewalled such requests; and  
WHEREAS, so long as the Japanese government continues to stonewall, it and its people can never truly reconcile with the victimized women and their nations; and

WHEREAS, if Christians are in solidarity with these women and are faithful in their role as reconcilers, they must support the women's struggles to restore their honor and dignity;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Kansas City, Missouri, July 13-17, 2001, call upon the United States government to convey to the Japanese government the message that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has utmost concern for the Comfort Women issue and urges the Japanese government to:

1. offer official apology to the surviving victims;
2. provide appropriate financial recompense to the surviving victims;
3. erect memorials to honor the women who perished as Comfort Women ;
4. ensure that the plight of the Comfort Women is taught in Japanese textbooks; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly make the above request directly to the Japanese government; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly direct the Division of Overseas Ministries to collaborate with our global ministries partners in the United Church of Christ and other denominations in Japan and elsewhere to make representation to the Japanese government on behalf of the Comfort Women ; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly call on regions and congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to pray and study the issue, and recommend that they call upon the Japanese government, via its embassy in Washington, DC, to bring justice and reconciliation to the victimized women.