

Christmas Greetings from the JBC Board of Directors to the churches and missions of the Japan Baptist Convention

The Lord Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." (John 8:12). He also said to His disciples, "You are the light of the world." (Matthew 5:14).

At this time of 2023 Advent season, we assume that you are lighting each candle on the Advent wreath every week. In this way, we are looking forward to the spreading of the light (of love, peace, hope) which shines brightly in the darkness of this world.

In this particular Advent season, every time we hear the names of "Judea" and "Jerusalem" mentioned in the words of the prophets and of the Gospels in our Sunday Worship Services and in our daily lives, we do earnestly pray for an earliest possible end to the situation in the region, which is the conflict between Israel and Hamas. Even by knowing the incident from afar, we can feel how gut-wrenching the whole situation is, threatening millions of lives of the people in the area.

We are also strongly concerned that the conflict might spread throughout the rest of the world, causing even greater division and irreversible strife. The situations in Myanmar and Ukraine are becoming increasingly serious. In Japan, the military buildup and preparations to set up environments for contingencies are progressing. The recent J-Alert and the on-going plans for military use of airports and ports could be the reminiscent of "the night before war."

In the midst of "the earth" as such, we would like to send "Prayer for Peace" from the JBC board of directors, asking you to join in our prayer for peace and anti-war appeal.

December, 2023 at the Advent

Japan Baptist Convention Board of Directors

Prayer for Peace

Lord God, the time has come for us to prepare for the Nativity of Your Son Jesus.

The heavenly messengers, announcing the birth of your Son, praised you, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward whomsoever you will. "

We now earnestly pray that there will be "peace on earth."

The earth is full of strife and wars. And the most suffering in the land of strife are those who are in the weak position. The strong and the powerful are protected, while the weak and the vulnerable are deprived and hurt. The human dignity is taken away, and their lives are threatened.

Jesus, the Son of God and the Lord of Peace, lived his life as a "suffering servant. He was beaten for our iniquities and bore our sufferings on himself. But no one thought it was for our own iniquities. We all thought we had nothing to do with the suffering and the hurting. So please help us to realize that it was because of our sin, our own iniquities.

Lead us to make the right choice now, not for the sake of our own greed and convenience, but only of seeking your will.

Lord, judge the strife of the nations and rebuke many peoples.

Help us to beat our swords back into plowshares, and to beat our spears back into sickles, according to your commandment, "Thou shalt not kill."

And help the leaders of the nations not to raise their swords against other nations.

Help them to be self-determined not to learn to fight and not to teach to fight.

Please free the weak and the vulnerable from strife, leading them to celebrate their lives together in the land. May the love of Jesus fill them, heal them and give them peace.

Lord, make us instruments of your peace to be realized on this earth.