

Pilgrimage to Okinawa, Japan 6/25/2003

From June 19-22, the Peace Committee of the Nippon Sei Ko Kai sponsored its fourth annual pilgrimage to Okinawa, approximately 400 miles south of Japan's main islands. The pilgrimages commemorate June 23, 1945, the date ending the deadliest battle in recorded human history.

Madeleine Trichel, chair of ECUSA's Standing Commission on Anglican & International Peace with Justice Concerns, and Ethan Flad, member of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship's National Executive Council, attended along with representatives of all NSKK dioceses, and two guests from Korea.

The Rt. Rev. David Tani, the Bishop of Okinawa, and the Most Rev. John Makoto Takeda, the new NSKK Primate, hosted the two ECUSA visitors for a special trip to Okinawa's new Peace Memorial Park, prior to the official Pilgrimage. On dozens of black marble slabs are etched more than 230,000 names of those from every nation that died in Okinawa.

Though this was to be the final Okinawa pilgrimage, several new directions have emerged for the NSKK's Peace Committee.

Racism:

Many ethnic Japanese expressed shock that Okinawans experience racial discrimination. The situation of Korean immigrants was also discussed.

Environment:

The proposed heliport project has helped ecological issues become a central topic.

Youth:

Concerns about children's education on peacemaking were of special note.

Nuclear weapons:

A continuing priority in Japan. ECUSA was asked by the NSKK Peace Committee to continue to assist their efforts to strategize toward education and action. As one stage of the NSKK's peacemaking efforts concludes with the end of pilgrimages, the church continues to move forward in its commitment to peace and justice.