



United Church of Christ in the Philippines

National Office, 877 EDSA, Quezon City

Report to the National Council

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Introduction

As we, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, embark on this new Ecclesiastical Year 2016-2017, we look back with gratefulness on the year just passed and present to you a general report of what we have collectively done. Our annual sub-theme for last year was “Toward a Spirituality for a New Creation”.

²¹That the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now.

Romans 8:21-22, NRSV

We hear the groans of creation. We hear the laments of the people. In doing God’s mission to set all of us free from the bondage of this world’s decaying systems, we continue to anchor our many and varied programs and activities on our seven quadrennial thrusts. This Report to the National Council, as in reports past, will be framed on these quadrennial thrusts.

Quadrennial Thrust I

Unity in the understanding of and commitment to the beliefs, values and principles of the Church, manifested in a profound sense of identity as UCCP

Major Church Documents

There is a conscious continuous effort to achieve unity in our understanding of who we are as UCCP in the different judicatories, organizations and institutions of the Church, as manifested by study sessions on our Statement of Faith, on our Vision, Mission, Goals, on the stewardship policies, and on the LGBT statement. Study-seminars have also been conducted on the Magna Carta for Church Workers and the Ministerial Code of Ethics.

After a thorough study, discussion and ratification of the amendments to the UCCP Constitution and By-Laws by the conferences and church institutions, this principal document of our Church has now been proof-read and is being readied for publication in paper and electronic form. The same also goes for the Magna Carta for Church Workers.

OGSM (Objectives, Goals, Strategies and Metrics)

The OGSM framework and process for planning, implementation and assessment of programs continues to take off the ground. Leaders of the Christian Youth Fellowship and the Christian Young Adults Fellowship have been tapped as planning facilitators for OGSM and farmed out to all the conferences nation-wide. The OGSM framework has been further cascaded in the Expanded Jurisdictional Area Cabinet meetings where the conference plans were consolidated. The NCYF have converted their program plans into the OGSM framework, and the NCYAF will soon be having a discussion on the same. The OGSM framework thus far has been well-received. After going through the expected learning curve, those who attended the conference trainings and the Expanded JAC meetings expressed appreciation for its functionality and ease of use. Some of them have even commented, “Why only now?” There is glamor to continue familiarizing our leaders in the OGSM process, so that eventually we can do it in the local church levels, in the judicatories of our organizations as well as in our institutions.

Gender Desk

A Gender Desk is in the works of being established. It has already been included in the plan for this ecclesiastical year. Consultations on how to go about establishing it is in the offing. Gender justice should already be mainstreamed in the life and work of the Church in all its judicatories, organizations and institutions, so that indeed we make manifest a Church that is egalitarian, mutually inclusive, and a community of justice and love.

Ilocos Sur Churches

We are happy to report to you that the Ilocos Sur churches which were influenced by the INOCAG group had “returned” to the fold. At present they are under the pastoral oversight and supervision of the

Bishop assigned to North Luzon, Bp. Elorde Sambat, while in transition to them being integrated in one of the Conferences contiguous to them. Prior to this a series of high level pastoral visits and dialogue were conducted initially with the Rev Maduli and the UCCP Vigan Church, and later with the other churches in the province.

Quadrennial Thrust II

A vibrant congregational life rooted in the Christian faith, strengthened by an evangelistic zeal, deepened by a commitment to serve, and made visible in a warm and caring fellowship with one another

Sunday School

Even as we produce and use Sunday School materials conceptualized as early as November 2014 for this Liturgical Year 2015-2016 with the theme “Spirituality for these Critical Times”, we continue to produce Sunday School materials which will be used for the coming Liturgical Year 2016-2017 themed “Human Degradation and a Spirituality for a New Humanity”. The conceptual framework for Liturgical Year 2015-2016 was popularized in all jurisdictions in November, December and January. For Liturgical Year 2016-2017, the conceptualization process started in December with a second workshop in February. The writing workshop took place in late March to early April this year with writers coming from the MLJ, the WVJ, the EVJ, the SEMJ, and the NLJ.

The church as a community of faith has inherent responsibilities of ensuring that all members grow in faith, individually and in community, and be steeped in who we are as UCCP. We have planned the production of a basic catechetical Sunday School curriculum that will educate all of us on the principles of our Church as articulated in our statement of faith, our Vision, Mission, Goals, our Declaration of Principles, and in our Church’s history. We will be working hard on this project for the rest of this quadrennium even as we continue to produce theme-based materials.

Church Community Organizing

It is important for the UCCP to be organized and to do church community organizing work in order to carry out God’s mission as started by Jesus Christ. It is in this regard that an intentional program for church community organizing has been launched. The concept paper and training manual has been produced and pilot trainings have been conducted in select conferences within the WVJ and the MLJ. National trainings will soon be organized, benefiting from the key assessment points of the pilot trainings.

Celebration Guides

We continue the tradition of producing special Sunday celebration guides. The task of writing these liturgies has been farmed out to our different jurisdictions and church-related organizations. Please be reminded of the special Sundays assigned to your jurisdictional areas and organizations at the early part of this liturgical year so that we have a steady stream of liturgical resources published on our website.

Church Anniversary

There have been reports of joyful and meaningful joint celebrations of our UCCP anniversary in the different judicatories of our church. We wish to continue these simultaneous celebrations every year in order to make manifest more concretely our being one as a church enveloped in a warm and caring fellowship wherever we are.

Quadrennial Thrust III

Faithful and responsible stewardship of the resources of the Church to strengthen its capacity to fulfill its various ministries and to eventually become self-reliant

Financial Stewardship

In order to continue to be faithful and responsible stewards of our resources, we continue the following financial practices: updated financial recording, cash flow monitoring, regular monitoring of the foreign exchange, promoting the 500 Club, promoting the wider mission support. There has been a way-improved upward trend in the Wider Mission Support giving since 2010.

We are slowly but surely moving towards becoming more self-reliant and self-sustaining in providing for our varied ministries.

We are now in a situation where our local sources have overtaken our foreign support; only 15% of our annual budget is now being supported by our international partners, vis-à-vis 23% last year. We should celebrate this, not because we are rich for we still have a long way to go but, because of what we aspired to be as a church that is not simply self-governing and self-propagating but also **self-reliant**.

Stewardship of Property

Here is an update on the Ecumenical Theological Seminary (ETS) transfer. In the past we have reported a compromise action on the GA action for the transfer of the ETS so as to free the Bokawkan property in Baguio for resource generating purposes. A one-hectare lot was supposed to have been bought by the Church through the Shalom Center for the said purpose. Ten million pesos was earmarked for the said purchase of the land and for the initial structures to effectuate the transfer. However, it appears now that the lot in question has some problems in terms of overlapping claims. There was another lot offered but almost triple the price. In the meanwhile, a daughter of a former deaconess and a member of UCCP Baguio, has offered an 880-square meter lot that is more accessible and nearer the city. From initial talks with her, we discovered that she was not technically “selling” the property but was making sure that the Church was serious in acquiring it and would put up a structure immediately. The joint committee of the Church and ETS went to see the place and favorably endorsed the proposed Memorandum of Understanding. [Note: this is one way in which we have encouraged (and could encourage) our members to support the

Church by bequeathing part of their properties to the Church. During my incumbency, we have received several lots and/or buildings: one from a member of NCUC which is now a house church under the Manila North Conference; another is from a member of UCCP San Pedro, which will be for the beneficial use of NESTCON; and now this property in Baguio. I know that in previous administrations, there also had been donations like that of the Garcias. We express the Church's gratitude to them, and ask that the good Lord continue to uphold and bless them.

Indeed, more and more, we find generous givers from among our constituents, faithful to the ministry of God, supportive of the church's task of furthering God's reign here on earth.

Stewardship of Resources

Under the CSRD Ministry of the National United Church Men, we are raising P25,000.00 from each Conference UCM to raise P1 million pesos for the Construction of the Christian Student Center Building inside the Central Mindanao University Campus in Bukidnon. The Student Center will be used by the children of UCCP members studying there. Work on the construction of the Student Center will immediately start when the P1 million have been raised.

Property Development

As early as 2010, the General Secretary has already forwarded the notion that the way out of our recurring deficits as well as returning the monies spent from endowments and trust funds in previous quadrennial (of about Php28 million) was for us to develop our idle properties that have commercial viability. And for the Church to find means by which we could operate and administer the temporal properties of the Church outside of what the Church is the primary tasks of the Church, but parallel to it. The General Secretary noted then that there was a need to look into how we decide when it comes to property development as our decision-making processes as a Church is not geared to a wise, optimal and efficient way.

In the past, we had put up a foundation which is now on a limbo. As pointed out by our National Treasurer, a foundation exists by donation and outright giving. We do not have a channel and a mechanism for entities to invest in. For instance, our institutions or even big churches have investible funds but have no places where they can invest and at the same time help the Church. Or when institutions need money for expansion of facilities, they go to the banks for loans which charge usually a high rate.

We have lessons in the past that we can draw lessons from: our Shalom Center, College of Maasin, UCC to name a few.

We, however, cannot expand further under our present Charter. This was seen by the General Assembly as early as 1990 when they proposed the coming up of stock but non-profit corporation to manage the development of our properties. This was our basis in approving the setting up of several

corporation in the National Council. After 26 years, it is only now that we are implementing this full of foresight GA action.

Why are we bent on developing our properties? For us in the leadership, this is a matter of Stewardship. It is not a matter of getting rich for the sake of getting rich. It means being able to support our Christian Education, Evangelism and Church Development programs that are hardly funded by partners. It means that we can support our ministerial formation programs and the students that are enrolled therein. It means that we can attend to the long neglected church workers many of whom are receiving “none thousand” pesos until now. It means being able to help provide even just a small retirement assistance to our retired church workers, help in their hospitalization, give a small aid to those they leave behind. It means we can be, not rich, truly self-reliant. All these, without having to resort in dipping our fingers to the endowment and trust funds as has been done in the past as then we could hardly support even our national and jurisdictional operations. This is nothing than wise and true stewardship.

We cannot afford to leave a legacy of debts to the future generations, like the ones we inherited, especially when we have the means and the gifts by which we could respond and help as well as support even just the basic ministries of the Church. We owe it to the future, we owe it to ourselves, we owe it to our God. We cannot forever be like the servant with one talent, who did nothing but hid his treasure. According to the parable, that hidden treasure will be taken away from him.

Quadrennial Thrust IV

Comprehensive human resource development that will ensure capable, responsible and effective leadership for present and future generations

Continuing Theological Education

The Church, through the Office of the Clergy and Lay Ministry (OCLM), have conducted the following activities: seminars on church administration and management; conference-level UCWO (the United Church Workers Organization) planning using a standard framework; consultation with Field Education Directors of ministry formation centers (MFCs) in order to establish lines of coordination in the supervision of the field education program for ministerial students; working with the Theological Education Board to unify the MFCs on the curricular offerings of the Ministerial Formation Program; drafting a Human Resource Development Program vis-à-vis developing career paths of church workers.

Canonical Review

Materials for the canonical review and examination are being standardized. It is hoped that by November 2017, the canonical review will already be conducted under the supervision of the National Office through the OCLM. It is also hoped that before the quadrennium ends, the first Nationwide Ordination Examination will be undertaken, around January or February of 2018.

Church Workers Database

The OCLM is also creating a database baseline data for our Church Workers. Attempts to do this in the past have failed for one reason or the other, but we hope that this time it will be done. This is basic information we need so we can better prepare for a comprehensive Human Resource Development Program and should provide us the basic actuarials like how many would be retiring in a given period, how many do we need to recruit for the ministry, what ministry areas do we need to prepare for (e.g., Hospital or Military Chaplains, Campus Ministers, Seminary Faculty, etc).

New Conference Ministers

There are around 20 new CMs elected to office during the last Annual Sessions. We therefore deemed it fit to conduct an orientation for them so as to familiarize them with their roles and more importantly to bring them up-to-date with the processes we have taken in this quadrennium especially on the new OGSM framework. This is another “first-of-its-kind” and was greatly appreciated by the new CMs.

Ministerial Formation

Four ministerial students, 2 from the North Luzon Jurisdiction and 2 from the Middle Luzon Jurisdiction are now enrolled at the Ecumenical Theological Seminary and being supported through the annual CEN NUCM assistance of P100,000.00 per year at P25,000.00 per student. This is an example of how our CROs are willing partners in our work of human resource development.

Quadrennial Thrust V

Committed and dedicated prophetic witness of the Church as a collective response to the need to bring wholeness of life for all of God's creation

Human Rights

As persons created in the image of God, human beings are vested with inherent rights and dignity that must be respected and defended at all cost. It is therefore the role of the Church to see to it that this is done. For the past ecclesiastical year, concrete manifestations of this task include:

- ☐ The production and distribution of the UCCP Human Rights Week Celebration Guide 2015
- ☐ Orientation on ‘The Role of the Church in Advancing JPHR Advocacy’ or ‘Why the Church is Engaged in Advancing JPHR Advocacy’
- ☐ Direct services to families of victims of human rights violations
- ☐ Assessment, monitoring, and debriefing processes among the surviving studying children of UCCP pastors and lay persons who were victims of extra-judicial killings (EJK) and other forms of human rights violations

- ☐ Extending financial support to UCCP pastors with trumped-up charges for legal processes-related expenses
- ☐ Paying a pastoral visit to the Haran fire victims
- ☐ Pursuing the UCCP legal suit versus Gloria M. Arroyo
- ☐ Ecumenical and multi-sectoral alliances
- ☐ Strengthening linkages and networking on JPHR advocacy
- ☐ Involving in campaigns and mobilizations
 - The Campaign to Save the Life of Mary Jane Veloso
 - The MANILAKBAYAN Stop Lumad Killings 2015
 - The campaign for national sovereignty and territorial integrity on the West Philippine Sea crisis
 - Landless farmers' struggle for genuine land reform at Hacienda Luisita
 - The campaign for the resumption of the Peace Talks between the government of the Philippines (GPH) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP)

Update on the Haran Issue

Shortly before the assumption into office of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, a prosecutor revived a clearly trumped-up case on some personalities involved in the care and protection of the *Lumad* community that evacuated in our Haran Mission Center. These personalities include some UCCP pastors and members accused for alleged kidnapping, serious illegal detention, and human trafficking.

Your Bishops came up with a statement on this and sent it to the Office of the President and the Department of Justice. We are grateful for the fast action of the concerned government offices. The cases have been dropped (for the second time).

Disaster Response Management

- ☐ Conducted educational and advocacy campaigns on critical issues on large scale mining, global warming and climate change, disaster risk reduction and Indigenous Peoples' concern
- ☐ Monitored and evaluated the implementation of the rebuilding of churches in earthquake-shaken areas in the province of Bohol
- ☐ Conducted a post-construction evaluation of UEM-supported projects
- ☐ Conducted quick monitoring and evaluation of the PDA (PC-USA)
- ☐ Conducted an ocular inspection and monitoring of the proposed shelter project in Carigara, Leyte

New Opportunities for Prophetic Witness

Last July 31, we held at the UCCP Cosmopolitan Church a well-attended National Service of Thanksgiving and Testimonial Dinner for Government Officials from our ranks and those associated with us. In attendance, among others, were former President Fidel V. Ramos, former Senator Leticia Ramos-Shahani, former Senator Orly Mercado, National Scientist Angel Alcala, journalist Domini Torrevillas.

Among the honorees present were Secretary of Foreign Affairs Perfecto Yasay, Jr., Secretary of Department of Education, Leonor "Liling" Magtolis Briones, Immigration Commissioner Oscar Morente, Atty. Harry Roque of the House of Representatives, Presidential Spokesperson Ernie Abella, as well as Gen. Lina Sarmiento (Ret.) and Dr. Erlinda Senturias of the Human Rights Claims Board. Gen. Sarmiento holds the distinction of being one of the first woman two-star general of the Philippine National Police.

Senator Cynthia Villar was recognized in the morning service as she had an earlier set appointment in the afternoon. The prayer-plaque given to the honorees were also being delivered for those who did not make it like DPWH Secretary Mark Villar and Congresswoman Sol Aragon.

Our General Secretary, Bishop Reuel Norman O. Marigza, gave a rousing challenge to the honorees and the rest of the congregation through his sermon. As we continue in our prophetic witness, we must bear in mind that "there is never now and ever will be a separation between God and the State," the General Secretary exhorted, as he quoted and slightly modified one of the statements in the President's SONA.

We are grateful to the UCC Cosmopolitan Church for co-hosting with us this event and for providing the venue. While we were planning for this event, we learned later that the UCCP Cosmopolitan Church leaders were also contemplating on doing the same for the members of said local church, and when it was suggested that they include all other national appointed and elected officials, the Rev. Callum Tabada called us to inquire if we were interested to co-host the event. This was a happy convergence and meeting of minds and intentions.

We hope to make this a regular feature after every election as we hope to consecrate even more of our UCCP members to more opportunities for doing ministry and prophetic witness. We thank our staff for a well-prepared and meaningful liturgy.

Peace Process

We are grateful that the peace talks have been given a new push in the Duterte administration. This is one the talking points we raised in our visit to Malacanang Palace last August 15. We also raised the issue of the Lumads and our concern for the spate of killings and other human rights violations.

As you very well know, our Church has been one of the entities pushing for the resumption of peace talks. We are part of the Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform through the NCCP and the Ecumenical Bishops Forum.

Part of the confidence building measure and as a sign of the seriousness of the Duterte administration is to release some of the political prisoners on recognizance (ROR) so they can take part in the negotiations. They are supposed to be protected under the JASIG but were nevertheless arrested and

often charged with criminal and not political cases. We have been asked to be one of the guarantors to one consultant. To also show our seriousness for and commitment to a long and just peace, we are taking this challenge and responsibility.

Quadrennial Thrust VI

Strengthened cooperation and coordination with and among church institutions and organizations as companions in the faith journey and as partners-in-mission

The journey with the church institutions the past year was fruitful and productive yet leaving more opportunities for a more strengthened relationship between these Institutions and the Church.

Schools

The dialogue with school stakeholders continued in the past EY to forge a better understanding and thus a better appreciation of the fact that schools are there as an arm of the Church in carrying out her three-pronged ministry of preaching, teaching and healing. While the first reason for being of schools is the implementation of the state-mandated curriculum, the second reason for being of Church schools is to ensure that they mold and shape their students by unequivocally teaching them the truth about God's will for humans. This should be the brand that these schools are known for. Efforts are now being undertaken to develop a parallel curriculum to the State-mandated one that will reflect this UCCP brand of education for adoption and implementation by all Church schools.

Hospitals

New exciting developments are happening in the area of UCCP's health care ministry.

The former Bethany Hospital in Tacloban that was severely damaged by super-typhoon Yolanda is now being revived. The year that past saw the hospital renamed to UCCP Integrated Health Ministries or UIHM. It is on its way back to its task of providing health care to the people of Tacloban and nearby towns and provinces with the establishment of several diagnostic clinics staffed by that city's renowned medical practitioners.

Recently, grounds were broken for the construction of a multi-level building to house the new UIHM. This belies misinformation passed around that we have sold the land and have no plans on re-opening our ministry of healing. This we are able to do through the help of partners who join with us in our effort at reviving UCCP's health care ministry in that part of Eastern Visayas. UIHM is currently headed by Miguel Udtohan, Ph.D.

The Visayas Community Medical Center in Cebu City, on the other hand, had a change of guards, so to speak. Ms. Susan Claro is now the Administrator/Chief Executive Officer of the hospital. The

good news is that slowly but surely the hospital is getting back its financial sustainability despite its numerous financial challenges. This is made possible by the sound financial management instituted by its new leadership.

New faces including the chair of the UCCP General Assembly had been brought into the life and ministry of the VCMC as members of its Board of Trustees. A new program has just been added to its long list of services, the counselling program for those with HIV.

The Brokenshire Integrated Health Ministries, Inc. in Davao City could not be outperformed. The hospital under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. Ruben dela Cruz continues to soar high in almost all facets of its operation. BIHMI continues to grow not only physically but even in the numerous services it is offering to its patients making it one of the hospitals of choice to so many people in and outside of Davao City.

Seminaries

The UCCP-recognized ministerial formation centers continue to play its role as such. But seminary stakeholders including the church leadership are not sitting on its laurels. Efforts are always undertaken to address multifarious concerns that have to do with how ministerial formation could be improved to address current requirements especially of local churches. Discussions are on-going on how the seminaries could effectively complement church efforts at equipping seminary students for them to become true to their being the primary theologian, teacher, shepherd, among others, once they are called by local churches. More will be reported by the Theological Education Board on this matter.

Church-related Organizations

Our church-related organizations have been hard at work at aligning their various expressions of ministry to the Church's over-arching principles. The National Christian Youth Fellowship in their Mid-term Assessment and Planning this year have pushed for more stringent efforts of carrying the issues and concerns of the basic masses. The Christian Education and Nurture Committee of the NCYF have started conceptualizing a Bible Study guide for young people in order to strengthen their engagement in studying Scriptures and living by it. The Bible Study guide focuses on helping the young people respond as co-creators with God in renewing humanity and all of creation.

The NCYAF continue to pledge support for all the programs of the Church. They have devised a scheme where the 6 organized Jurisdictional CYAF can contribute to the 500 Club. The reorganization of the CYAF in the MLJA and its organization in the SLJA is still a work in progress. The appeal still holds for the assistance of the good Bishops assigned to these Jurisdictions in order that the young adults in these areas will finally be organized.

The National Christian Women's Association have revisited and drafted a new VMG (vision, mission, goals) and have drafted proposed amendments to the NCWA Constitution and By-Laws. Also, the National CWA ID system is now being implemented. The ID bears the signatures of the NCWA President

and the UCCP General Secretary. A concept paper has been prepared in order for the members to fully understand its objectives and purpose, and to lay out the corresponding privileges and benefits of the cardholders.

The National United Church Men has also started on a campaign for an NUCM ID system which doubles as a fundraiser. With a one-time membership fee of P100, the member is entitled to an ID which bears the signatures of the NUCM President and the UCCP General Secretary. Another major fund raising activity of the NUCM is the Celebration of the Fellowship of the Biggest Coin held every second Sunday of March. Many big churches have yet to participate in this celebration thus efforts are underway to popularize it in the conferences.

All our church-related organizations hold celebrations on their respective special Sundays in the months of September and October. They produce special celebration guides for this purpose. We eagerly await what they will produce for the forthcoming months so that we can upload these on our website.

The Early Childhood Educators' Assembly of the Visayas continue annually. They have been meeting non-stop for 13 years now for mutual edification and training as they continue in the education ministry of our Church. Other early childhood educators' assemblies in the various judicatories of our Church are enjoined to continue organizing their ranks in order that we all may indeed be partners-in-mission in our common faith journey.

Quadrennial Thrust VII

Stronger and meaningful interfaith, ecumenical, and international relations

As we strive to deepen our Church's collective response to the issues of society and the world, we need to continue to work hand in hand with our local and international ecumenical partners within the church and among the basic sectors.

Regional Ecumenical Council

We continue with our involvement in the work of regional ecumenical councils in the different areas where we are located. Manifestations of this partnership are seen in the jurisdictional, conference and local church levels of the UCCP. An example of this is our involvement in the ROMINEC (Romblon-Mindoro Ecumenical Council) through the SLJ where the bishop assigned to the SLJ gave the keynote address during its last general assembly, the jurisdictional coordinator gave a BTR, and the Mindoro conferences attended.

NCCP

Our leaders, both clergy and lay, attended the 24th General Convention of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines which had for its theme "Launching out into the Deep for Peace and Justice".

A new set of officers was elected at this convention. The present General Secretary, Rev. Rex RB Reyes Jr., was elected for his third term. Our Church has been lauded by him to be a forerunner in the work of ecumenism and in doing God's mission.

Our sister-church in the NCCP, the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, just this month marked her 114th Proclamation Anniversary. Our General Secretary was able to join them in their Thanksgiving Service and brought the message of solidarity and felicitations of our Church. The IFI is a product of the Philippine Revolution of 1896 and is borne of the aspirations to have a national Catholic Church independent from Rome. We have, as a Church, entered into a Covenant of Partnership with the IFI. In November, the North Bicol Conference together with IFI churches in the region celebrated the anniversary of the UCCP-IFI Concordat through an ecumenical mass and a forum on environmental justice. The constituents of both churches were challenged to be vigilant and united in the opposition of large-scale mining. A resolution was signed to reflect this at the end of the activity.

The UCCP-IUE (Iglesia Unida Ekyumenical) Covenant Partnership was also celebrated with a creative liturgy by local churches in the province of Cavite and the rest of the SLJ. It is hoped that this celebration will be done annually from now on. Church workers of the IUE can preach in our local churches and our workers can likewise do the same in IUE churches.

Multi-Sectoral Partnerships

Our Church through all its judicatories engage in ecumenical, intersectoral and interfaith networking on pertinent national and international social issues. Our bishops, both incumbent and emeriti are actively engaged in the Ecumenical Bishops Forum. We are active in the Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform, a gathering of church leaders that push for a continuing substantive peace dialog. We are conscious of cascading these calls down to the lower judicatories of our Church. During the last election season, we engaged in electoral education campaigns in order for our constituents to be critical in their choice of leaders and to be vigilant participants of this process. We also engage in fact-finding missions when the search for truth becomes urgent in the quest for justice.

The Solidarity Action Group for Indigenous Peoples and Peasants (SAGIPP) was relaunched in August, the UCCP being the lead convenor and prime mover of this Action Group. Our General Secretary was the keynote speaker at this event. SAGIPP has allowed for the broadened involvement of our church leaders and members, especially in the NDDC, SMDC, CAC and SCSDC, in extending help to our Lumad sisters and brothers. We continue to provide sanctuary for some 500 displaced Lumad at the Haran Mission House, and we support them through several conferences in Mindanao and through our international partners. During the Lumad Manilakbayan in November, a national campaign to stop Lumad killings, the UCCP (from the funding grant of UEM) contributed PhP100,000 for food and medical supplies needed by the Lumad contingent while camping in Metro Manila.

Ecumenical Learning

The Philippines, specifically through our Church and our local ecumenical partners, is a favorite venue for ecumenical learning and integration of our international partners. Because of this, we

must have an Inventory of Placements that will be clearly established within the next two years to facilitate our program for internship, integration and ecumenical learning. So far, Church Institutions, particularly certain schools, seminaries and hospitals in the Visayas and Mindanao, and Community Ministries' projects/programs run by some local churches (like Tondo on children and Cubao on trafficked women and children) have been suitable placements especially for interns, volunteers and mission co-workers from international partners. Post-Haiyan and Post-Earthquake Rehabilitation Projects and Programs in East Visayas and Bohol are explored as potential placements for incoming interns and future Persons-in-Mission (PIM) with interest particularly on community development and climate change issues.

For this past year, we have hosted the internship of two UEM North-South volunteers from Germany. Miss Jenaba Samura was placed at the National Heroes' Institute in Leyte and Miss Flora Von Mikulicz in the VCMC and WVJ. They underwent the mandatory UCCP orientation, as well as short community exposures in the Smokey Mountain of Tondo and the Sinag-Kababaihan program in Cubao before they were fielded to their placement sites.

We have facilitated the exposure visits of the United Church of Christ-USA partners: the 11-person delegation led by Dr. Xiaoling Zhu to the UCCP Community Ministry in Tondo among the marginalized children and families living sub-human conditions under the bridge and along the hazardous riverbank, and of Ms. Linda Lawrence, the Manager of the Child Sponsorship Program of UCC-USA's Global Ministries, in Tondo's Katuparan Day Care Center and the rest of the community and in Cubao's Sinag-Kababaihan program.

We have facilitated the PC-USA visit to basic education schools in Tondo and Muntinlupa. Our PC-USA guests were given an orientation on the UCCP basic education program and services.

We have facilitated the project visit of the German delegation from UEM, the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), and the Bread for the World in the UCCP Integrated Health Ministries in Tacloban and the NHI in Kananga, Leyte. The delegation was impressed with the result of the funding from UEM in rehabilitating Bethany Hospital into UIHM and the NHI in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda.

Mission Co-Workers

We have sent a youth volunteer from Baguio, Ms. Kris Aquino, to serve for one year in Sumatra, Indonesia, under the UEM South-South Volunteer Program, and a mission co-worker, Mrs. Raquel Lipata, to serve for six months in Jawa, Indonesia, as English Teacher under the UEM Short-Term Service Program.

Rev. Chung Hae Dong has ended his stint as PROK Mission Co-worker. In recognition of his service, we hosted a farewell celebration attended by all the incumbent bishops and the whole National Secretariat. The gesture was appreciated by Rev. Chung and a stronger partnership of the PROK and the UCCP was mutually affirmed. We hope that the PROK will continue to assign co-workers to the UCCP National Office to help facilitate and intensify PROK-UCCP relations.

International Solidarity Work

UCCP was represented by Mr. Nelson John Salvador to the International People's Tribunal held in Washington, DC, USA. He testified before the tribunal on the brutal torture and murder by the Philippine Army of his wife, the late Engr. Fidela "Delle" Salvador. His trip was part of a "Campaign Tour for Peace and Human Rights" particularly among the partner-churches in the USA and Canada.

The UCCP General Secretary was a guest at the General Synod of the United Church of Christ in Canada (UCC-Canada) where he was asked to preach in one of the morning services giving emphasis on our partnership in addressing the extra-judicial killings and human rights abuses in the Philippines. He was likewise invited by the German Ecumenical Network on the Philippines to a Human Rights Conference in Berlin, Germany. Our General Secretary also attended the International Ecumenical Peace Forum in South Korea, hosted by the National Council of Churches in Korea.

Bishop Joel E. Tendero, the Bishop of the Church assigned to the SLJA went on a trip to Sweden in November to tell all about the work of the UCCP. He was able to visit 6 churches, the Stockholm Theological Seminary, the Uniting Church of Sweden office, the Church of Sweden office, and the National Council of Churches office where he was able to talk with the General Secretary. The visit was able to create an impact and could be a start of a partnership.

Bishop Melzar D. Labuntog of the Northwest Mindanao Jurisdictional Area and Bishop Hamuel G. Tequis of the Southeast Mindanao Jurisdictional Area participated in a Jewish, Christian and Muslim Conference in Germany. They were able to share of their Tri-People experiences in Mindanao, and have gained new lessons from their encounter with the Jewish and Muslim participants. The conference was very meaningful for the two Bishops—it helped enriched their faith understanding in relation with other living faiths.

International Partnerships

Through our National Christian Women's Association, we celebrate with other Christian women worldwide the Fellowship of the Least Coin Sunday and the World Day of Prayer. The NCWA continue to be an active member and mover of the Asian Church Women Conference (ACWC) where disadvantaged women around the world are the center of our unified support action.

We continue doing mission with our international partners like the United Church of Canada (UC Canada), the United Evangelical Mission (UEM), the Global Ministries of the Disciples of Christ, the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK), the Presbyterian Church-USA. Our partnership with them is a testament that doing God's mission knows no bounds. Walking hand in hand with them enables them and us, all partners, to spread the Good News of God's Shalom here and abroad.

International partnerships continue to be fostered through the different levels of judicatories of our Church like the jurisdictional areas, the conferences and the local churches. The following is an example of this.

- The IP Community Ministries Program in NLJ has been supported by the South Australia Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) for 3 years now.
- A partnership between the MLJ and the Presbytery and Synod of South Australia of the UCA has been formalized. The partnership is geared towards supporting programs for the indigenous people, workers and farmers in Central Luzon.
- The SLJ Mission Partnership with the Victoria-Tasmania Synod of the UCA has been reviewed and renewed.
- The Upland Cavite Conference Partnership in Mission with PCK Seoul North Presbytery has been created. This partnership is manifested through equitable participation in God's mission, responsible cooperation in feasible and concrete projects like the Scholarship Program for Ministerial Students, Evangelism and Church Development, the Migrant Ministry, and the Youth and Pastoral Exchange Program.
- The construction of the EVJ office and Diaconic Center was supported by PCK.
- The SEMJ has forged a new partnership with the Evangelical Christian Church in Tanah Papua. Representatives of the Papuan church visited us in June of last year and representatives of SEMJ headed by the Bishop visited Papua this June while in the process of studying the draft covenant partnership agreement. There is a strong commitment on both Churches to enhance their respective program ministries.
- Representatives of the UCC-USA in Minnesota had an exposure visit to SEMJ which provided deep intercultural learning and interfaith encounter for all involved. This visit resulted in a reactivated partnership. An exchange program is being explored for the coming years.
- Representatives of the SEMJ made a partnership visit to the PROK Jeon Nam Presbytery. This visit has revived the partnership relation and has provided meaningful ecumenical encounters especially among the youth who were able to attend the Presbytery Assembly. They were able to showcase UCCP hymns during the worship services, and were exposed to different PROK congregations.
- The Bishop of the NWMJ visited the Central Pacific Conference of UCC-USA as part of our commitment to strengthen partnership. He was able to bring our concerns and plans for our continued partnership. We are looking forward for them to visit us this year.
- Bishop Elorde Sambat accompanied the CM of NWLC and a church worker (Rev Noel Pagdilao and Rev Marjorie Belmonte, respectively) in reviving a partnership with Pennsylvania Conference of UCC-USA

Other Matters

New Members of Staff

Rev. Rannieh B. Mercado has taken up the challenge of being the new Executive Secretary for Administration after Bishop Arturo Asi went back to the Batangas Associate Conference to serve in a local church. As such, he will be the alter-ego of the General Secretary in carrying out the day-to-day functioning of the National Office as well as the *primus inter pares* among the Executive Secretaries (Program, Institutional and Organizational). Aside from this new post, he continues to head the Program Ministries unit. The Rev. Mercado brings to this new appointment his wealth of experience and expertise, having served as National Coordinator and staff in previous Administrations and as Head of

the UEM Medan Office, which had oversight of the Asian continent. We are grateful for his graciousness in accepting this new challenge even as we thank Bishop Asi for services rendered and wish him well in the new chapter of his ministry.

Ms. Melinda Grace B. Aoanan is the new National Coordinator for Christian Education and Nurture. She started in her post in October 2015 after serving for three years as Mission Co-Worker of the United Evangelical Mission assigned in Nias, North Sumatra, Indonesia. She also served as Coordinator of the Center for Women, Youth and Children at Union Theological Seminary, and as Program Secretary of the Ecumenical Education and Nurture Program of the NCCP.

Rev. Sarly Rahman Templado is the new Executive Secretary for Organizational Ministries who just started this July. He served in several capacities at the Southeast Mindanao Jurisdictional Area prior to this deployment.

New Legal Counsel

Our Corporate Treasurer has recommended Atty. Edre Olalia as our new Legal Counsel. Our former Legal Counsel has disengaged his services with us as he was taken by the Speaker of the House to serve an important post.

Conclusion

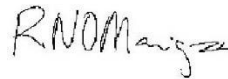
On our second year of the 11th quadrennium, we have continued to live up to the demands of our Quadrennial Thrusts.

- ☐ There is a conscious continuous effort to achieve unity in our understanding of who we are as UCCP (QT 1).
- ☐ We have been faithful to our inherent responsibilities as a church of ensuring that all members grow in faith, individually and in community, enveloped in a warm and caring fellowship wherever we are (QT 2).
- ☐ We continue to be faithful and responsible stewards of our resources, slowly but surely moving towards becoming more self-reliant and self-sustaining in providing for our varied ministries (QT 3).
- ☐ We continue to push and work for a comprehensive human resource development program to capacitate us to forge on in God's ministry (QT 4).

- ☐ We continue to accomplish our role of seeing to it that human rights and that of the whole creation are respected and defended at all cost (QT 5).
- ☐ There are more opportunities for a more strengthened relationship between the church institutions and the Church, even as church-related organizations have been hard at work at aligning their various expressions of ministry to the Church's over-arching principles (QT 6).
- ☐ We continue to work hand in hand with our local and international ecumenical partners within the church and among the basic sectors to respond to the issues of society and the world (QT 7).

As we continue doing God's mission, it is our prayer and engagement that our efforts will help hasten the time of our obtaining "the freedom of the glory of the children of God." As we set our eyes on the tasks ahead, we laud the leadership of you, our dear constituents in the judicatories, organizations and institutions. As we forge ahead, we will be guided by this Ecclesiastical Year's theme, "Spirituality for a New Humanity"—a spirituality that is transformative, liberating, and brings into fruition a new humanity basking in the glory as children of God.

God bless the UCCP and God bless all the more God's dearly beloved whom she serves.



BISHOP REUEL NORMAN O. MARIGZA
General Secretary



BISHOP ELORDE M. SAMBAT
North Luzon Jurisdictional Area



BISHOP JAIME R. MORILES
East Visayas Jurisdictional Area



BISHOP JOEL E. TENDERO
South Luzon Jurisdictional Area



BISHOP MELZAR D. LABUNTOG
Northwest Mindanao Jurisdictional Area



BISHOP ERMEGENCIO D. PADILLO
Middle Luzon Jurisdictional Area



BISHOP HAMUEL G. TEQUIS
Southeast Mindanao Jurisdictional Area



BISHOP JEZER E. BERTOLDO
West Visayas Jurisdictional Area

CRO HEADS

Ms. EUNICE B. JUMALON

Christian Youth Fellowship

Ms. MAYROSE LILAGAN-QUEZON, Ph.D.

National Christian Young Adults Fellowship

Engr. VIRGILIO L. ANCHETA

National United Church Men

Ms. HELEN GRACE S. PARIS

National Christian Women's Association

REV. FERNANDO SARIA

United Church Workers Organization