

A Brief Background on The Wednesday Forum

As a socially active entity, The United Church of Christ in the Philippines always seeks to spread its ministry to a diverse society. Its members come from all walks of life, letting themselves be heard, practicing and upholding freedom of speech. The declaration of Martial Law in 1972 has curtailed the mission of the church to be a socially involved entity. It has begun to stifle the voices of the people, especially those who were against martial law.

In the midst of a growing fear of Martial Law, a weekly meeting of minds has ensued. The UCCP Cosmopolitan Church opened its doors for people to have a place to voice out their thoughts and opinions. Individuals not only from the Protestant church attended but also other religious leaders, the academe, both pro government and opposition politicians. The meetings were done weekly at the social hall of the church.

The Rev. Cirilo Rigos of Cosmopolitan Church was one of those who helped create the Wednesday Forum and gathered everyone and hosted the meetings, delivering sermons that criticized the martial law of its oppressive nature. At the advancement of the dictatorship and at the push of conservative members of the church, Rev. Rigos thought it best to step down and cancel the Wednesday Forum in Cosmopolitan Church in 1977. This also prompted the move of the Wednesday Forum to the UCCP Ellinwood Church where he served for 11 years.

Another contributor to the Wednesday Forum's creation was former senator Jovito R. Salonga. It was through his efforts in promoting the search for the truth that sets us free that politicians from the martial law government and the opposition were able to exchange ideas and share them to the populace. It was a breath of fresh air during a time of great tension in the country.

Post Martial law

After the EDSA People Power Revolution, the Wednesday Forum became the National Forum and eventually closed its doors. It was temporarily revived and renamed by the Cosmopolitan church in 2013 as the Cosmo Forum.

During his sermon on March 14, 2016, at the Thanksgiving Service for the life of former Senate President Jovito R. Salonga, UCCP General Secretary, Bishop Reuel Marigza suggested the revival of the Wednesday Forum. The wheels started turning and Bishop Emergencio Padillo (MLJ), was assigned as head of the conveners and they agreed to revert back to the original name of the forum from National Forum to Wednesday Forum, to still be held at the Cosmopolitan Church in Taft Avenue, Manila.

Schedule for 2016 and the first half of 2017

The Wednesday Forum is scheduled every month on Wednesdays from 1 – 4 PM at the Rigos Hall of the UCCP Cosmopolitan Church.

The first session after its re launching was held on October 23, 2016 with the topic "The Peace Process of the GPH and the NDFP and its Impact on the Indigenous Peoples. The invited speakers were Secretary for the Peace Process Jesus Dureza and Makabayan President Satur Ocampo. Mr. Benny Tiamzon, a new member of the NDFP was sent by its new peace Panel chairperson Mr. Fidel Agcaoli.



Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Secretary Jesus Dureza and Bayan Muna Representative Satur Ocampo at the re – launching of the Wednesday Forum.



The speakers entertain questions from the audience.

On November 23, 2016, the topic was "Crime, Drugs and Human Dignity: The Government's War on Drugs and the Church's Response." The speakers were Police Senior Superintendent Joel Napoleon M. Coronel, Manila Police District Director and Police Senior Superintendent Marion Navarro Rariza, Jr. PNP Deputy Director on Community Relations. The reactor was Mr. Jigs Clamor from Karapatan Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights. A theological reflection was given by Dr. Levi V. Oracion and was expounded by Rev. Mariano C. Apilado. The human rights community was also invited.



PSSupt. Mario N. Rariza, Jr. PNP Deputy Director on Community Relations, Rev. Emergencio Padillo, PSSupt. Joel Napoleon M. Coronel MPD Director, UCCP Gen. Sec. Reuel Marigza and Rev. Alvaro Senturias

The last session for this year was held on December 7, 2016 featuring Commission on Human Rights Chairman Chito Gascon, together with UCCP theologian, professor and Dean of Silliman University's Divinity School, the Rev. Dr. Everett Mendoza. The topic was "Revisiting Human Rights Today from Two Perspectives: From the Commission on Human Rights and from a Church Pastor/Theologian." Ms. Rose Trajano, Secretary General of the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates was invited as reactor.



The Reactors; Ms. Rose Trajano, Chairman Chito Gascon and Rev. Dr. Everett Mendoza



In 2017, speakers have already been invited for the first 6 months. They are Department of Foreign Affairs Secretary Atty. Perfecto Yasay, a member of UCCP Cosmopolitan Church; Agriculture Secretary Manny Pinol; Former Congressman Prof. Dr. Walden Bello; Education Secretary Liling Briones; Labor Secretary Atty. Bebot Bello; and President Rodrigo Duterte on the country's foreign policy to mark the Philippine Independence Day celebration.