



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES

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UCCP Public Statement on its 70th Anniversary and 11th Quadrennial General Assembly Held on May 26, 2018, in Cagayan de Oro City

Our Commitment to Serve the People ("Doing Christ Mission in These Changing Times")

On May 26, 1978, exactly 40 years ago in this City of Cagayan de Oro during the 1st Quadrennial General Assembly, mindful of our pastoral and prophetic task, the UCCP courageously declared its strong condemnation and opposition to the Martial Law of President Ferdinand Marcos as it killed democracy, robbed the people of their rights and freedom, and caused them intolerable suffering. The Church, sustained by the Spirit of Jesus Christ and always guided by the Holy Scriptures, remained steadfast and never waned in its fight for justice, freedom and democracy during those dark years of Marcosian martial rule.

Today, on the same day and in the same city, as UCCP celebrates its 70th Anniversary and 11th Quadrennial General Assembly—a providential occasion indeed—we declare the same strong condemnation and opposition to the Martial Law in Mindanao declared by President Rodrigo Duterte on May 23, 2017, for the same reasons: it kills democracy, robs the people of their rights and freedom, and causes intolerable suffering to the people of Mindanao, particularly the poor masses. A single year of Martial rule here in Mindanao has razed Marawi City to the ground and disrupted the lives of its 400,000 residents, destroyed Lumad communities and killed many of their leaders, and persecuted those who take the side of justice and freedom. A number of our pastors and lay leaders who faithfully took up the prophetic task were among the victims of Martial Law as they were charge with trumped-up cases. It is against the divine will.

The threat that Martial Law will be declared formally in the entire country is imminent. There is already widespread militarization in the countryside in almost all regions, as well as in many civilian governments which have appointed retired military personnel to strategic offices. People are being conditioned through media and other means to embrace harsh economic and politico-civilian policies. Violence being committed by police and military personnel during its operation against terrorism and illegal drugs is presented as a natural and normal occurrence.

We as UCCP, affirming our belief that persons are created in the image of God and in the inviolability of human rights, will continue to resist Martial Law. We commit ourselves to defend human rights and human dignity.

The more dangerous threat to national life is the charter change being undertaken by the Duterte administration. In the guise of shifting from a presidential to a federal form of government, what is being laid out, as contained in the Resolution to Both Houses No. 8 and the PDP-Laban proposal, is more akin to authoritarianism. RBH No. 8 contains provisions that give much power to the executive branch and diminishes those of the legislative and the judiciary branches. Worse, it deprives the people of their inalienable and historic rights to participate in political governance. Charter change, once completed, institutionalizes authoritarianism which is inimical to national democracy and is totally against the people's interest.

We as UCCP, affirming our belief that persons are called to participate in the establishment of a just and compassionate social order, oppose any change in the constitution of the country that will institute a socio-political order that is unjust and violent. We commit ourselves to the formation of a national community in which every citizen can enjoy the benefits of democracy and can participate freely in political governance.

The continuing discrimination against indigenous people, gender injustices done against women and the LGBT population, and the widespread neglect of youth and children double the suffering of these special sectors. President Duterte's vulgar language and demeanor add more insult to these already discriminated people.

We as UCCP, affirming our belief that persons are destined to live in community with God and with all creation, oppose all forms of discrimination that diminish the dignity of every person. We commit ourselves to the creation of welcoming, caring communities.

The massive poverty due to landlessness and lack of access to economic resources, exacerbated by endemic graft and corruption in government bureaucracy and the unabated destruction of the environment in many forms caused by large scale mining, coal-fired thermal power plants, massive land-use conversion, pollutive industrial plants, and unrestrained use of natural resources by big businesses, all resulting from neo-liberal economic policy, are the ultimate threats to life and all of creation. At the start of his reign in power, President Duterte has committed himself to this same economic policy thereby increasing the decimating impact of the policy to humans and to the environment.

We as UCCP, affirming our belief that we are entrusted with God's creation, oppose the neo-liberal economic policy that this administration continues to implement as it kills life and destroys further God's creation. We commit ourselves to transforming communities where every citizen enjoys the fruits of their labor and exercises freely their God-given rights. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of peace based on justice.

Even as we adopt the theme for the quadrennium: “Doing Christ’s Mission in These Changing Times”, faithful to he who called us, he who preached good news to the poor and ministered to them so that they may have abundant life, we put ourselves to task, as individual members and as church, to remain steadfast and courageous in our pastoral and prophetic ministry.

The election of a new General Secretary and seven Jurisdictional Bishops signifies our commitment to lead the church towards the realization of our vision of a transformed church and society. We also commit to further strengthen the faith communities and support financial, property and technology development catering to the needs of the people, especially the poor.

The Spirit of the Lord is with us as we reaffirm today our commitment to serve and be always with the oppressed, the poor, the marginalized and the persecuted people in their struggle in accordance with our vision of the Kingdom of God where love, justice, peace prevail.

Amen.

The UCCP Council of Bishops