



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Pastoral Statement on the May 13, 2019 Philippine Midterm Elections

*“Wisdom will save you from the way of evil,
from those who speak perversely, who forsake the paths of uprightness
to walk in the ways of darkness, who rejoice in doing evil
and delight in the perverseness of evil; those whose paths are crooked,
and who are devious in their ways.”—Proverbs 2: 12-15 (NRSV)*

The Philippine Midterm Elections is coming close. Every election period promises hope for better times or a sinister of what is worse to come. It either comes as an opportunity for change or a chance for fraudsters to shove their way in to the corridors of power and influence. The choice is in our hands, which brings us back to the words of God in Deuteronomy 30: 19 *“I have set before you, life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live.”*

As shepherds of the UCCP flock, it is incumbent upon us to guide our members and constituents as to how the right of suffrage can be exercised as we also enlighten those in the larger community of the importance of choosing political leaders who will give direction and contribute to the shaping of our socio-political and economic life, make and enact laws that will change our society for the better. As members of the Council of Bishops, we prompt our members and the Filipino electorate that in these challenging and changing times in the Philippine society, the midterm elections on May 13, 2019 will be held against a social backdrop where:

- The great number of the Filipinos still wallow in dismal poverty, made even worst by newly imposed unjust tax laws; continuing corruption in the government, worsening and continuing devastation of the environment; and the tyrannical political leadership.
- Basic human rights are trampled upon in the name of the violent war on drugs and undeserved persecution of peace and justice advocates.
- The Indigenous Peoples (IPs), the Lumads, the Muslim communities are terrorized and subjected to harassment and militarization.
- The prospects for peace are faintly perceived as a result of the collapse of peace talks.

- Church leaders and workers, such as priests, pastors and bishops are harassed while others are executed or extra-judicially killed for raising their voices against tyranny, calling for end of Martial Law in Mindanao. Human rights advocates, peasant and labor leaders and indigenous people suffer the same fate.

As citizens, we exercise our right of suffrage, choose political leaders whom we trust will deliver their campaign pledges and that they are the best persons that will represent the interest of the people and communities. They are expected as well to provide direction towards a society where social justice is not just a goal, but a daily practice and peace is experienced in the economic, political and socio-cultural life of the Filipino people.

We choose leaders who will not just represent the people in terms of number in Congress and Senate, but will craft and legislate laws that will shield and secure the wellbeing of the less-privileged people -their concerns, issues, dreams and hopes for a sustainable economic life are met and favorably responded to.

We choose leaders who respect the rights of religious communities to worship God and freely expressed their religious beliefs and faith convictions. As faith communities, we believe in the sacredness and goodness of biblical Covenant with God that provides the ethical guide for a nation to be accountable to God and the nation. That accountability makes possible the emergence of a society that respects people's quest for justice and a life of peace with God and their neighbors.

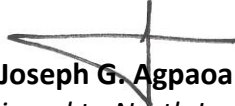
We choose leaders who, together with the people will consciously live lives worthy of their calling as leaders, so that they have the credibility to face and account to their own people and to God. Credibility of leaders are seen in how truthful they are in their promises and in realizing the kind of economic, political and socio-cultural development of the people and the entire nation.

As shepherds of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) we hope and pray that this Midterm Elections on May 13, 2019 will be peaceful and all contending parties and the government will make possible a credible and peaceful elections.

***For detailed guidelines on how to vote or exercise your right of suffrage, please refer to NCCP and UCCP Electoral Guidelines. (copies are available in the conferences and the national offices.)*

**On behalf of the UCCP National Council,
UCCP COUNCIL OF BISHOPS**


Bishop Melzar D. Labunog
General Secretary



Bishop Joseph G. Agpaoa
*Bishop Assigned to North Luzon
Jurisdictional Area*



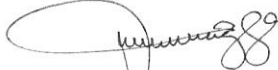
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