



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Advent and Christmas Greetings



Dear UCCP members, leaders and ecumenical friends,

It seemed like Christmas is an experience of generosity through gift giving, of love as seen in family reunions and homecomings, of peace on earth and goodwill to all people through the state's "End Local Communist Armed Conflict" and localized peace process. These are superficialities and pretenses of the present socio-political and economic situation in Philippine society.

The metropolitan cities and regions in the country may display luxurious and elaborate Christmas decorations and enticement of delicious Christmas Eve dinner or 'noche buena' but not desiring the quality of it in the entire lifetime of every family. There is so much to be desired in living out the true meaning of the coming of Jesus Christ into places where we live.

The UCCP National Secretariat greets our local congregations, churches, conferences, jurisdictional areas a meaningful Advent season. We encourage you through your Advent liturgical celebrations such as the Simbang Gabi-Evening Watch or the Simbang Umaga-Dawn Watch, to reflect on and pray for those in the dangerous situations in our country and the world.

We especially pray for those who suffer due to the impact of Martial Law in Mindanao and the 'All Nation Approach' of the present regime that has threatened many lives. Military solutions to oppression and poverty have killed thousands, sown discord and destruction of what were once conflict-free communities both in the rural and urban areas. These celebrations should also provide the spiritual reinvigoration of our churches for them to overcome their fear and to assert their basic freedoms and human rights given by the Creator God.

Quadrennial Theme: **"Doing Christ's Mission in these Changing Times"**

Member: National Council of Churches in the Philippines • Christian Conference of Asia • World Council of Churches • World Alliance of Reformed Churches
• World Methodist Council • Christian Peace Conference • United Evangelical Mission (UEM)

We greet you a happy and hope-fulfilling Christmas, anticipating God's collaboration with our mission for a transformed society as articulated by prophet Isaiah:

"The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you." Isaiah 35: 1-4 (NRSV).



BISHOP MELZAR D. LABUNTOG
General Secretary

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