

Lesson 26: What do mean by ecumenicity?

Stewardship Sunday

First Sunday of Advent

November 29, 2020

General Concept: Ecumenicity means promoting better understanding, relationship, and cooperation with various religious denominations and different faith communities.

Biblical References: Ephesians 4:13, 2:22; John 17:21,

Age Level Concepts

- Ecumenicity means promoting better understanding and cooperation towards universal Christian unity among different religious denominations
- We affirm the ecumenical character of our church
- We continue to establish a local and international partnership in mission

Learning Objectives

By the end of the session, the learners are expected to

- Articulate in their own the definition of ecumenicity.
- Identify the churches both here and abroad that UCCP is working with until now.
- Discuss the reasons for establishing ecumenical partnerships in relation to doing mission.
- Commit to actively participate in ecumenical activities and programs of the church in one's community and with partner churches abroad

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably the New Revised Standard Version [NRSV]), song chart/Powerpoint, offering plate or basket, Used Calendar for Sunday's Phrase and Memory, Video Presentation)

Biblical/Historical Background

Ecumenism is a movement promoting unity among Christian churches or denominations. It is also a movement that promotes worldwide unity among religions through greater cooperation and improved understanding towards a goal of harmonious co-existence with all humanity and God's creation experiencing abundant life to all creatures. An ecumenist is a supporter of ecumenism or a person who practices ecumenism. Ecumenicity on the other hand means promoting better understanding and cooperation towards universal Christian unity among different religious denominations.

UCCP is a product of the ecumenicity of protestant churches in the past— Presbyterian, United Brethren, Methodist, Disciples, Congregational, and some indigenous churches. Ontologically, one of its life works and praxis is ecumenicity as evident in the UCCP Declaration of Principles and UCCP Statements and Resolutions (*Resolution Expressing and Adherence to Ecumenical Church, General Assembly 12-17 May 1952; Resolution on Pronouncement of the World Council of Churches Concerning Relation with Other Christian Bodies, General Assembly, 21-27 May 1962; Statement of Christian Unity General Assembly, 31 May - 5 June 1964; Statement on Relation with Roman Catholics and Others, General Assembly, 31 May- 5 June 1964; Seeking*

Unity in Christ-Executive Committee, 8-9 December 1967; A Joint Communique 8-9 December 1967; Policy Statement on Ecumenical Relations Council of Bishops, May 1986; & Toward Policy Statements on UCCP Ecumenical Views of Relationships, General Assembly, 2-24 May 1986).

Throughout the UCCP history, we relate with some churches and denominations and world confessional bodies through the framework and structures of the *National Council of Churches (NCCP)*, *World Council of Churches (WCC)*, *Christian Conference of Asia (CCA)*, *World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC)*, and *World Methodist Council (WMC)*. These relationships are defined in the constitution and by-laws Memorandum of Agreements and Concordat adopted by these churches. The NCCP-member churches with which the UCCP relates are the following: *Philippine Independent Church (PIC)*, *United Methodist Church (UMC)*, *Lutheran Church of the Philippines (LCP)*, *Salvation Army Church (SAC)*, *Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches (CPBC)*, *Philippine Episcopal Church (PEC)*, *Iglesia Evangelica Metodista en las Islas Filipinas (IEMELIF)*, *Iglesia Unida de Cristo (UNIDA)*, *Lingap Pangkabataan Foundation*, and the *Christ-Centered Church (CCC)*. We also relate with non-NCCP Churches and sectoral groups in the manner on development projects and programs, doing ministries like evangelism, prayer rallies and worship, use of pulpit and church facilities, and on church workers participating in any ecumenical movement.

The need of finding understanding among ecumenical partnerships is to work together on certain projects and foremost doing the responsibility together. As the UCCP can start its organic unity through study and finding commonalities, these would probably pursue a deeper unity that might extend to an organic unity of the churches around the world. Let us be reminded that the prayer of Jesus does not limit to make a common understanding of God's mission but to be united in word, in body, and in the spirit that the world may believe that Jesus is truly the Son of the Living God. The ecumenicity can truly make one's faithfulness to Christ into action if we are willing to unite and continue to unite with other churches and non-church based communities who believe God's Reignship is for all.

John 17:21. The prayer of Jesus shows a longing for unity not just for his disciples but for all people who believe and who have a covenant with God. The word "may" implies possibilities-permission for a thing to occur, not its certainty. This means that we have the permission to have it, but it is not certain yet for unity hangs in the balance on the way that we react within the relationship. Ecumenicity promotes initiatives and self-giving effort to achieve unity. It's not just a clique gathering, but a multifaceted people with different faith expressions and beliefs.

Jesus' description of unity compared it to one's unity with the Father. Both are different yet both are one. Ecumenicity recognizes the differences and uniqueness of every community. The word there is respect for others' faith in standing and traditions. We work with mindedness that we are not all the same yet we can be in God's household. It may not be in the same room but we have the same house.

The Scandal of Christianity will always be there when we continue to split and be divided. We will never be effective in our life work if we remain divided and working on our own. Christ's

prayer challenges us to continue to reach out to others and intentionally initiate the work for unity.

Ephesians 4:13. One of the elements of the church's end goal is that the church grows towards the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God. This is the unity of a particular kind, one that is to be attained. The church needs to attain unity of faith and of the knowledge of Jesus for the fulfillment of doing God's mission to the world. For Paul, understanding of who Jesus is will bring maturity to a believer and the whole church. They will not be deceived by the cunning craftiness and sleight of the time, they will stand firm in their faith in Christ.

Ecumenicity starts with one's understanding of one's faith tradition and core beliefs before relating with other ecumenical communities. Without such knowledge and understanding, the labor will doom to fail.

Suggested Lesson Outline

Doing your class through

- a. **ZOOM Application.** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOUwumKCW7M>
- b. **Messenger Room.** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lKEUTnprtK4>
- C. Face to face Sunday School class



Greeting Time

(Post in ZOOM Share a Document- Picture- "Ecumenicity")

Welcome each student as they participate in an online classroom through ZOOM or Messenger Room. After all learners have accessed in, say this statement “ Whoever you are and whatever you are on life's journey, all are welcome here. Our gathering even in an online venue evokes God's presence. Ask the learners to share, “what keeps you belong to a group?”

Songs of Gathering

“I'm Here Because”

I'm here because you're here because I'm here because you're here

I'm here because you're here because I'm here because you're here



We're here because God's here because we're here because God's here
God's here because we're here because God's here because we're here

“I'm Part of You, You're Part of Me”

I'm part of you and you're part of me together in God's family 3x

We're living together in God's household

“Behold What Manner of Love”
Behold what manner of love, Our God has given unto us 2x
That we are now called God’s children of light 2x

Opening Prayer

Learner: God our parent, we come before you as children wanting to learn and live anew by Your word. May your Spirit fill us with wisdom and understanding that we may praxis what we learn. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Getting Ready



Let the class watch a Pope explains ecumenical dialogue as an ecumenical journey. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLjHKbyc_r4). Let them share their thoughts about the Pope’s view on the ecumenical journey.

Learning Time

Discovering the Biblical Truth

Group the class into two and assign each group a passage to read and discuss. Tell the groups to respond to the following questions during their groupings.



Group 1- John 17:21

- What do you think was Jesus’ greatest desire when he prayed to God?
- What kind of a community of believers Jesus envisioned to be formed?
- Why do you think Jesus liken the characteristic of the community of believers he hoped to be achieved to his relationship with his Father?

Group 3- Ephesians 4:13,2:22

- What could have happened inside the church of Ephesus that prompted Paul to write the letter?
- What kind of a relationship or a community does Paul wanted the Christians in Ephesus to foster?
- How could that kind of Christian community Paul promotes to the Christians in Galatia be achieved?

Let each group share their responses to the questions given them. Deepen their understanding of the texts by providing them the biblical background.

Lessons Learned

After the group sharing, raise the following questions for discussion and sharing.

- Based on the texts, what is your understanding of ecumenicity?
- How can you connect the principle of ecumenicity to the passages?
- Is ecumenicity being lived out in your local church? If yes, share your ecumenical programs. If not, what is the reason?
- Why do you think it is important in establishing ecumenical relations?
- In these times of COVID 19 Pandemic and Natural Calamities (Typhoon Rolly and Ulysses) what are the ecumenical expressions that UCCP is involved with other faith communities to extend our help to the victims of this catastrophe?

Lessons Learned



Youth Speak! Group Sharing which includes presenting their Assignment about UCCP Involvement in Ecumenical Works.

After presenting the group's work, gather all learners to form a circle and let them say their commitment to involve in the work of ecumenicity. As one says one's commit, one has to extend one's right hand to the shoulder of the person at one's right side.

Closing Worship



Memory Verse:

"that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us,[a] so that the world may believe that you have sent me." John 17:21

Offertory

Leader: We give because we are called to help others. We give as Christ's give oneself that all of us might live. Let us bring our offerings to God knowing that we are participating in doing God's mission.

Giving of our Offerings

+Offering Response "Doxology"

+Thanksgiving Prayer

Leader: Accept these gifts O God that it may be of use to extend help to others. In Christ's Name, Amen.

+Closing Song

"Until All Are Fed"

by Thomas A. Brown & Bryan F. McFarland

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLwmYIzkb78>)

How long will we sing? How long will we pray?

How long will we write and send?

How long will we bring? How long will we stay?

How long will we make amends?

Chorus

Until all are fed we cry out. Until all on earth have bread
Like the One who loves us each and every one
We serve until all are fed.

II

How long will we talk? How long will we prod?
How long must we fret and hoard?
How long will we walk to tear down this facade?
How long? How long? O Lord? (Chorus)

III

How can we stand by/ and fail to be aghast?
How long 'til we do what's right?
How could we stand by/ and choose a lesser fast?
How long 'til we see the light? (Chorus)

IV

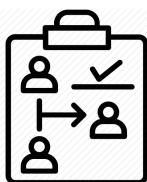
On the green, green grass they gathered long ago
To hear what the Master said.
What they had they shared- some fishes and some loaves
And they served until all were fed.

+Prayer of Dedication

All: May we live out our faith as we join ourselves to other faith communities. May we all be one as You, O Christ Jesus are one with the Father. Amen.

Response: “Those Who Love” Dance of Universal Peace
(Encourage everyone to Sing and Dance)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wGgCU5oZp1c>

Those who love, loving God’s creations these are the sons and daughters of God 2x
In my life time, loving every heart. In my life time peace... peace on earth 2x



Assignment for Next Sunday

Post and share a 5-minute video about your Local Church’s Ecumenical Involvement in Relief Distribution/ Campaign for the victims of the typhoon and COVID 19 Pandemic to one’s media account this week. (FB, IG, and Tiktok)



Youth At Work. Monthly projects that involve the young people of the church.

The month of November: Stewardship Month

1. Ask your pastor to give input on Stewardship. Invite the Deacons, Board of Trustees, and Church Treasurer.
2. Project to enhance the Church Tithe envelopes
3. Have each CYF to have an offering envelop as the adults do
4. In cooperation with the Church Workers, conduct the following; Tree Growing Project, Coastal Cleaning, Garbage Segregation, etc.)
5. Prepare the Advent Candles
- 6.#CYFSSlessoninlife. Post in your Twitter, FB, Instagram account the lessons you've learned from the session.

Lesson 27: How do we express our ecumenicity?

Family Sunday

Human Rights Sunday

Second Sunday of Advent

December 06, 2020

General Concept: We express our ecumenicity through relating, participating, and working together with other Christian churches and faith communities towards the restoration of the whole creation and establishment of God's kingdom

Biblical References: Isaiah 40:1-11 & Mark 1:1-8

Age Level Concepts

- We express our ecumenicity through relating, participating, and working together with other Christian churches and faith communities towards the restoration of the whole creation and establishment of God's kingdom
- Our church actively involves in the ecumenical works with other churches and other faith communities

Learning Objectives

By the end of the session, the learners are expected to

- Describe ways through which the UCCP works with other Christian & faith communities towards the restoration of the whole creation and establishment of God's kingdom.
- Select and assess an ecumenical project or program of UCCP
- Discuss the need for ecumenicity in light of the restoration of the whole creation and establishment of God's kingdom.
- Commit to widen one's involvement in the ecumenical efforts of one's local church, conference, and national bodies.

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably the New Revised Standard Version [NRSV]), song chart/ Powerpoint, offering plate or basket, Used Calendar for Sunday's Phrase and Memory, Video Presentation)

Biblical/ Historical Background

The UCCP ecumenicity is based on our core belief that we are part of the body of Christ and entrusted by Christ to do Christ's ministries of healing, teaching, preaching, and living the salvation brought by Jesus Christ. As an ekklesia, we are an assembly of persons summoned to do God's mission for the restoration of the whole creation and establishment of God's kingdom. Dr. Melanio La Guardia Aoanan in his book Ecumenical and Prophetic Witness of the UCCP described such ministry as "Solidarity in the Lord is Solidarity with the poor." Dr. Mel was able to define Solidarity in three aspects. First is the Sulti-darity where the church needs to proclaim the gospel. Proclamation of the gospel is not just preaching, "receive Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord and you will be saved." It is also naming, unmaking, and engaging those who are in power just what Jesus did to the Pharisees and Sadducees. Secondly, Sulong-darity which means we march with the people. To march is to take the side of the oppressed, to be their voice, and to make a change of the situation. Lastly, the Sauli-darity, which is the ministry of reconciliation. There is the need of restoring a relationship based on Christ's household- no more rich and poor, male or female, slave or free for all are one in the sight of Christ Jesus.

The UCCP believes that we belong to God's oikumene or God's household. Our quest for continuing Christian Unity is expressed in our ecumenical and interfaith dialogue with other faith communities and people with no faith. Being founded itself through the unity of early protestant denominations, we seek unity with other fellow Christian Communities and work in cooperation with other faith and civic communities to have a cooperative action to the needs of the people in one's society. The UCCP is conscious that the uniting part is a long and thorough process. There is a need for patience and more love for one another. Bishop Sobreprena delivered a poem in which I believed the essence of our intention of being united and uniting church. It says, "They drew a circle that shut me out; Heretic, rebel a thing to flout, But love and I have the wit to win. We drew a bigger circle that took them in." As Bishop Sobreprena read it in front of the opposition, he was never tired of bringing unity as his priority in the ministry. I do believe that UCCP needs to uphold the ministry of reconciliation, especially in this broken world. Yes in our prophetic ministry we faced enemies and made more enemies. But this is not the end, rather, the work continues through reconciliation and restoration within the Household of God.

Isaiah 40:1-11. Known as the concluding part of the first Isaiah, the passage begins with a persuasive imperative: Comfort! Comfort! What is amazing at this is that it is not that there are persons in need of comfort; it is that God commands that Jerusalem be comforted. God took the initiative and commanded such comfort. The question was asked, "Is Jerusalem deserving of comfort? Is Jerusalem worthy of another chance?

The context is that Jerusalem is hardly a sympathetic character, the people prospered through wickedness and oppression, lies and injustice, refusing to heed the prophets' calls to repent,

reform, and be reconciled to God. In 587 BCE Jerusalem was conquered and destroyed by the Babylonian Empire and a significant part of the population including its leaders were marched off to Babylon. Their exile happened not because of the strength of Babylon but they were a well-deserved punishment from God. Now the term is completed and her penalty is paid. Though there were voices that the people of Jerusalem are not deserving of comfort according to the norms of retributive justice, God insists- no, God commanded that they be comforted. God is faithful to God's covenant relationship with God's people, God intends that they will have a future together. Compassion nor condemnation should Jerusalem is treated. God released them from debt which brought comfort to Jerusalem and announced to prepare the way of the Lord. Preparing the way is a calling to recognize that there are things that need to be fixed before welcome the Lord.

Mark 1:1-11. In a story, the beginning part is important for its set tone for what is to come and what is to expect. The Gospel of Jesus according to Mark gives us a fresh beginning, unlike other synoptic gospels. Matthew focused on the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, Luke focused on an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, and John focused more on the cosmic beginning of Jesus- and the Word became flesh and dwell among us." Mark focused on what God is up to in Jesus is what God has been about all along which is the good news- euangelizo: God is here, God is victorious, your God reigns amid devastation and despair, of hopelessness and certain destruction.

The good news is not in Jerusalem but in the wilderness where the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to meet Joh the Baptist. Mark reminded us of the de-centering of God's good news which is found on the edge of everything. It goes beyond the boundaries of where we thought God was supposed to be. It is in the outside of Jerusalem city walls, in the margins, on the sidelines. The good news of God brings hope to those who find themselves in the peripheries of our world, but it also belongs there. God's good news of grace announces God's presence on the fringe, God's love that goes beyond the boundaries, and God's promise that there is no place on earth God will not go or be for us.

Solidarity with God is Solidarity with God's people. In the two readings, God made God-self available especially to those who are in the periphery, the marginalized, and the outcast. The Solidarity of God through Jesus Christ challenges us to go beyond our traditional beliefs that God just living inside our church. We need to go out and be and experience God's presence that dwells with the poor and marginalized people.

Suggested Lesson Outline

Doing your class through

- a. **ZOOM Application.** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOUwumKCW7M>
- b. **Messenger Room.** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lKEUTnprtK4>
- C. Face to face Sunday School class

Greeting Time



(Post in ZOOM Share a Document- Picture)

Welcome each student as they participate in an online classroom through ZOOM or Messenger Room. After all learners have accessed in, say this statement “ Whoever you are and whatever you are on life's journey, all are welcome here. Our gathering even in an online venue evokes God's presence.

Asks the learners to share, “How open are you to befriend those coming from other faith communities?”

Songs of Gathering

“*Splendid Light*”



I'm gonna light my (splendid light 2x) I'm gonna light my splendid light
shine I'll bless the earth with my (splendid light2x)
I'm God's child and I'm with divine
Like splendid light Shoooo.. Im gonna let it shine shine shine 2x

FAMILY OF GOD

We come together as one, we're family in the household of God

Praising God to whom we belong,
the Source of ev'ry one's life

Chorus

In the love that we give, in the faith that we live,
Bringing us to a place we called home,
In the care that we show, every joy we bestow,
Joining us in the family of God.

We live together as one, Sisters-brothers in the household of God
Knowing God the head of our home,
We live in community. (Cho.)

We serve together as one We're partners in the household of God
Bringing love, justice and peace
We serve with humility (Cho.)

We hope together as one We are heirs in the household of God
Seeing vision of newness of life
We hope for new reality (Cho.)

Opening Prayer

Learner: God our Parent, teach us today how to be more accepting and loving to our brothers and sisters in other faith communities. May we be as one. In Christ's Name, we pray, Amen.

Getting Ready



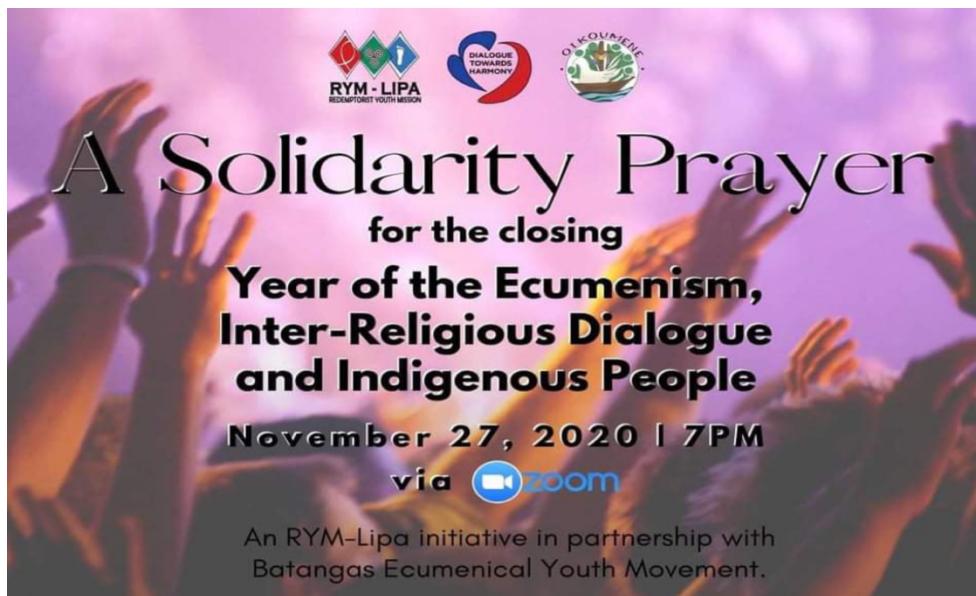
Let the class watch an Interfaith Youth Camp entitled, "2019 WIHW Day 2: 6th Interfaith Youth Peace Camp" facilitated by the Latter Day Saint. Let the learners share their thoughts about this interfaith Youth Camp.
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zr4ZiTulIT4>)

Or

Post pictures of young people involved in ecumenical work in your area.
Example:







Learning Time

Discovering the Biblical Truth

Group the class into two and assign each group a passage to read and discuss.

Group 1- Isaiah 40:1-11

- What is the passage all about?
- What particular phrase/s or passage/s from this text which you can relate to the principle of “ecumenicity”?
- How would this affect your view on relating with other faith communities?

●

Group 2- Mark 1:1-11

- What does this passage tell us readers?



- What particular phrase/s or passage/s which you can relate to the principle of “ecumenicity”?
- How would this affect your view on relating with other faith communities?

Discuss to the class the Solidarity Work of UCCP and the Biblical Background to further deepen their understanding of the text and the concept of relating with other faith communities.

Lessons Learned

Tell the class to identify ecumenical partnership/s in which their local church or their youth organization is actively involved with.

Ecumenical Partnership/s	Gaps/ Challenges met	Unities/ programs undertaken
Example: IFI -Iglesia Filipinas Independiente	Doctrines/traditions	Concordat

Ask the following:

- How were you able to overcome the gaps or challenges met in establishing ecumenical relations with other faith communities?
- What lessons did you learn while establishing relations with other faith communities?

Applying the Lessons Learned

Divide the class into two or three groups. Tell each group to suggest ways how young people of your church can relate with other faith communities and programs or activities which they can meaningfully work on.

Youth Speak!

Group Sharing which includes presenting their assignment last Sunday and their summary of their discussion.



After presenting the group's work, gather all learners to form a circle and start singing the song, “This Little Light of Mine”. Request them to raise their right-hand high. Repeat the song 3x and instruct them to move around the circle while singing the song. Let them face each other and place their right hand to their chest and silently offer their commitment to take part in the ecumenical work of their church.

“This Little Light of Mine”

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine (3x)

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Closing Worship



Memory Verse:

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,’ Mark 1:3 NRSV

Offertory

Leader: We give because we are called to help others. We give as Christ's give oneself that all of us might live. Let us bring our offerings to God knowing that we are participating in doing God's mission.

Giving of our Offerings

+Offering Response “Give Thanks”

Give thanks with a grateful heart, give thanks to the holy one

Give thanks because God's given Jesus Christ, the Son

And now let the weak say, “I am strong.” Let the poor say, “I am rich.”

Because of what the Lord has done for us. Give thanks.

+Thanksgiving Prayer

Leader: We offer to your our gifts of praise, a willing heart to accept your word, and commitment to do your work. In Christ's Name, Amen.

+Closing Song “*We Hail You God's Anointed*” HFJ, 115

We hail you God's anointed the long awaited One

Hail in the time appointed you reign on earth begun!

You come to break oppression to set the captive free
to take away transgression and rule in equity

You shall come down like showers upon the fruitful earth
and joy and hope like flowers spring in your path to birth
Before you on the mountains shall peace the herald go
and righteousness in fountains from hill to valley flow

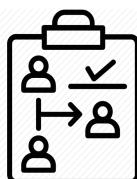
The wise shall bow before you and gold and incense bring
all nations shall adore you and praise all peoples sing;
To you shall prayer unceasing and daily vows be said
your realm is still increasing with you O Christ as head

O'er every for victorious you on your throne shall rest;
from age to age more glorious all blessing and all blessed
The tide of time shall never your covenant remove:
Your name shall stand forever your changeless name of Love.

+Prayer of Dedication

All: You called us O God to serve and not be served, to love and not hate, and to be welcoming despite our diversity. Help us to expand our circle that others may feel welcomed with us. Amen.

Response: "Spirit of Peace: In tune with Love, Love, Love" Dance of Universal Peace
(Encourage everyone to Sing and Dance)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xRcraUReRz4>
Spirit of Peace, to your cause we give our strength
That love may reign and war may cease
Mer mero mer



Assignment for Next Sunday

Make a short film about UCCP's stand about Red-Tagging. Publish it to one's FB, IG, and Tiktok)



Youth At Work. Monthly projects that involve the young people of the church.
The month of December: Advent and Christmas Season
1. Volunteer to help enhance the church building with Christmas decors
2. Virtual Christmas caroling. Send a Caroling Video to a family.
3. Virtual Christmas Game. On-line Bible Quiz with surprise gifts.
4. Fund Raising and Relief Collection for the Victims of Typhoon in Luzon.
5. #CYFSSlessoninlife. Post in your Twitter, FB, Instagram account the lessons you've learned from the session.

Lesson 28: What is the context of UCCP's pastoral and prophetic witness?

Third Sunday of Advent

December 13, 2020

General Concept: The Filipino people continue to struggle for sovereignty and genuine peace.

Biblical References: Isaiah 61:1-4; 8-11 and John 1:6-8,19-28

Age Level Concepts

- The Filipino people continue to struggle for sovereignty and genuine peace.
- Our church is mindful of the people's struggle for sovereignty and genuine peace.
- Our church participates in the attainment of genuine peace.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the session, the learners are expected to

- Describe the context of UCCP's pastoral and prophetic witness.
- Share based on their experience the context of their community where the church is located

- Give analysis as to the causes of the economic, political and socio-cultural problem confronting the people today that challenges the church's pastoral and prophetic mandate.

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably the New Revised Standard Version [NRSV]), song chart/ Powerpoint, offering plate or basket, Used Calendar for Sunday's Phrase and Memory, Video Presentation)

Biblical Background

"UCCP cannot ignore socio-economic, cultural, and political issues. We need to face it in the light of the Gospel and the faith as part of the Body of Christ." -the late Sen. Jovito Salonga

The United Church of Christ in the Philippines exists to proclaim, share, and live out the salvation given by Christ. The book of Dr. Melanio La Guardia Aonan entitled, "Ecumenical and Prophetic: Witness of the UCCP" described a prophet as the one who communicates God's message for now and to summon people to respond today. UCCP's involvement in society is one's calling to be a prophet. Being prophetic is tied up with the transformation of society. Throughout her-story, UCCP made strong and profound statements that adhered to the social concerns which include economic development, population problem, Modern Technology, Improvement of Agriculture, Industrialization, Urbanization, unemployment, labor-management, ROTC, etc. We courageously denounced the Interventionist Policy and strongly made a statement against Martial Law which other churches still silent at that time about the massive abuses happening that time. Such courage and bravery, UCCP lived out one's prophetic calling and called out for the transformation of society. A transformed society is catered when human beings are respected for we are all created in the image of God; when we give importance to life rather than wealth for life is a gift and full thrust and reliance on God is better than an alliance with powerful nations.

On November 11, 1987, UCCP was labeled as one of the 25 caused oriented organization which tagged as communist infiltrated red fronts. Bishop Erme R. Camba stood bravely responding, "We have 2,000 local churches and 500,000 members church nationwide. We are the church whose mission is Christ's holistic mission." (p74) We need to understand that being prophetic does not only announce the Good News of God to God's people but it also entails denouncing and resisting the powers that enslave and dehumanize God's people.

Until now UCCP has been experiencing still, red-tagging but this will not hinder nor stop us from doing God's mission. This is our essence and our very purpose of our existence as a church.

Isaiah 61:1-4;8-11. Isaiah 56-66 is considered to be from the post-exilic period where the Persian king Cyrus had defeated the Babylonians and decreed after 539 BCE that the exiles should return to their homeland and rebuild their city and their temple.

The passage was quoted by Jesus in Luke 4:18-20, a commission from God and assurance that God's anointed will experience God's presence. Receiving such a divine mandate is to reverse their circumstances and effect a transformation in their identity and activity. The anointed is to deliver good news to the oppressed, to wrap for healing the broken hearts, to declare liberty for

the captives, and an opening so the imprisoned may find release. The commission to proclaim liberty is a language from the instruction for observing the Jubilee Year where property and people held as payment for debt were returned to the families to which they originally belonged (Le.25:10). This was used that liberty proclaimed is intended to be made permanent in new social and economic relationships within the community. It is like a “Reset” where opportunity is given to the poor and those been heavily burdened with debts. It tries to break the system where the rich becomes richer and the poor become poorer.

God instructs the anointed to pay attention to those who mourn in Zion, a command that uplifts the dignity of God’s people caused by humiliation and frustration over the failure to rebuild the city and the temple to match its former glory and the failure to reconcile the economic disparities and the religious and political factions within the city. Transformation occurs when all people will love God by loving justice and hate robbery and wrongdoing.

John 1:6-8,19-28. The Gospel of Jesus according to John describes Jesus as the Word who was with God and the Word was God. Jesus is God; Jesus is the Word. John also added, that Jesus is the light that was promised to come into a darkened world and he is the light that is needed to shine away from the darkness of humanity. This is the good news to the oppressed, binding up brokenhearted, proclaiming liberty to the captives, and releasing those imprisoned to freedom.

Like John, we are called to be witnesses to Jesus the Messiah who has come in the flesh, the one who is here with us, and the one who will come again in the reign as Lord of all. We are called to declare, “Look! The Lord is coming, let us prepare the way!”

Suggested Lesson Outline

Doing your class through

- a. **ZOOM Application.** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOUwumKCW7M>
- b. **Messenger Room.** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lKEUTnprtK4>
- C. Face to face Sunday School class



Greeting Time

(Post in ZOOM Share a Document- Picture of People Rallying for Genuine and Lasting Peace)

Welcome each student as they participate in an online classroom through ZOOM or Messenger Room. After all learners have accessed in, say this statement “ Whoever you are and whatever you are on life's journey, all are welcome here. Our gathering even in an online venue evokes God’s

presence.

Asks the learners to share, “What is God calling you to do these days?”

Songs of Gathering

“Splendid Light”

I'm gonna light my (splendid light 2x)
I'm gonna light my splendid light shine
I'll bless the earth with my (splendid light2x)

I'm God's child and I'm with divine
Like splendid light Shoooo...
I'm gonna let it shine shine 2x

“Whose Side Are You Leaning On?”

Whose side are you leaning on?
I'm leaning on the Lord's side (2x)
I lean, I lean, I lean, I lean
Leaning on the Lord's side (2x)

Opening Prayer

Learner: Our Parent God, You are so wonderful and we worship you. You are the source of a river of love and grace that transforms the world. We offer you our young hearts, minds, and bodies. Help us to grow in the goodness of your kingdom. May we shine out in times of darkness; stand safely upon the truth and not be shaken; see your vision for the world and follow you. Come use our energy to care for the lost. Come take our creativity to meet with the brokenhearted, Come use our youthfulness to bring joy and peace, and hope to those who need it most. In Christ's Name, we pray. Amen.

Getting Ready



Let the class watch “Assignment Asia: How the Philippines' poor struggle under the lockdown” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VmSy1Zok-c8>). Ask the learners, “What scene you can relate to in this short film?”

Learning Time

Discovering the Biblical Truth. Group the class into two and assign each group a passage to read and discuss.

Group 1- Isaiah 61:1-4;8-1?

- How would you describe the life condition of the people in this text?
- What important message was being proclaimed to the people?
- How would the prophecy affect the life of the people in terms of its view of the world and the future?
- Why do you think God tell this message to the people through the prophets?

Group 2- John 1:6-8; 19-28

- How would you describe the life condition of the people?
- What important message was being proclaimed to the people?
- How would the message affect the life of the people?
- What was the intention for proclaiming the message?

Lessons Learned

Divide the class into four (4) groups. Instruct each group to fill in the table based on what they have heard, observed, and experienced.

ECONOMIC	POLITICAL	SOCIO-CULTURAL

1. What is the context of the community where your church is located?
2. What do you think are the causes of these problems confronting your community?
3. How do you think should the church respond to the challenges confronting the community?

Applying the Lessons Learned

Youth Speak!



Group Sharing which includes presenting their Assignment last Sunday about Red-Tagging and their summary of their discussion.

After presenting the group's work, gather all learners to form a circle and start singing the song, "He came singing Love". Request them to be in silence and offer prayers concerning the life-condition and struggle of the people.

Closing Worship

Memory Verse:

"The spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; 2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; 3 to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. Isaiah 61:1-3 NRSV



Offertory

Leader: The day of rejoicing is coming, the prophet Isaiah says, and we await it together; our gifts today in this season of waiting and hope to help us to strengthen

one another and to offer hope to the world as we look forward to that great day of everlasting joy. Let us gather...

Giving of our Offerings

+Offering Response “Create in Me a Clean Heart” New Century Hymnal,784

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit in me
Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me
Restore in me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with your free Spirit.

+Thanksgiving Prayer

Leader: O Parent God, Give us such an awareness of your mercies,that our hearts may be thankful, and that we may show forth your praise,not only with our lips but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

+Closing Song “*Pagsamba at Pakikibaka*” By Gary Granada

*Ang pagsamba at ang pakikibaka Pagpupuri at ang pakikipagkapwa
Ang pagsamo at pakikisalamuha Sa pangalan niya*

Chorus

*Alang-alang sa kanyang kadakilaan Ang katarungan at kapayapaan
Alang-alang sa kanyang kaluwalhatian Ang kalayaan ng sambayanan*

*Pagsasapamuhan ng ating pananalig Bunga ng pinakadakila niyang pag-ibig
Ang gawa ng pananampalataya Sa pangalan niya (Chorus)*

*Si Kristo'y sapat at ganap na kaligtasan Ng ating kaluluwa at lupang katawan
Kung mahal natin ang Dios Ang dukha't nagdarahop
Ang api at hikahos Sa pangalan ni Hesus
Kalingahin na*

+Prayer of Dedication

All: Empower us O God of Justice and Peace, to be your Moses and Deborah to free your people from their bondage. May your Spirit dwell in us as we do your mission today. Amen.

Response: “Spirit of Peace: In tune with Love, Love, Love” Dance of Universal Peace

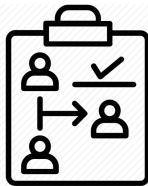
(Encourage everyone to Sing and Dance)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xRcraUReRz4>

Spirit of Peace, to your cause we give our strength

That love may reign and war may cease

Mer mero mer



Assignment for Next Sunday

Make a Dance interpretation of the song “Bathala” depicting the struggles of our indigenous people. Post it to your FB, IG, and Tiktok account



Youth At Work. Monthly projects that involve the young people of the church.

The month of December: Advent and Christmas Season

1. Volunteer to help enhance the Church with Christmas decors
2. Virtual Christmas Caroling. Send a Caroling Video to a family.
3. Virtual Christmas Game. Online Bible Quiz with surprise gifts.
4. Fund Raising and Relief Collection for the Victims of Typhoon in Luzon.
5. #CYFSSlessoninlife. Post in your Twitter, FB, Instagram account the lessons you've learned from the session.

Lesson 29: What is the context of the indigenous faith communities?

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 20, 2020

General Concept: The indigenous faith communities continue to struggle for self-determination and defense of their ancestral lands.

Biblical References: 2 Samuel 7:1-11,16 & Luke 1:26-28

Age Level Concepts

- The indigenous faith communities continue to struggle for self-determination and defense of their ancestral lands.
- Our church is mindful of the indigenous people's struggle for self-determination and defense of their ancestral land and culture.
- We pray and work in solidarity with indigenous people.

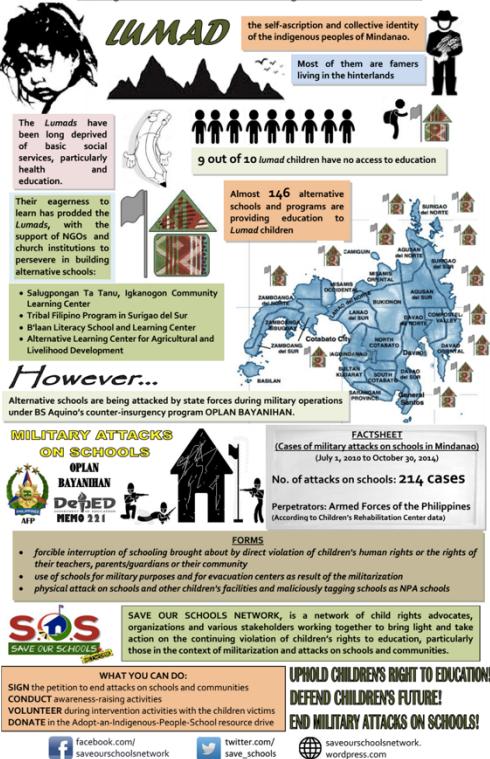
Learning Objectives

By the end of the session, the learners are expected to

- Describe the context of the indigenous faith communities.
- Enumerate and assess the UCCP's participation toward the struggle for the indigenous faith communities for self-determination and defense for their ancestral lands.

- 
- Define ways how your church can participate in the indigenous faith communities' struggles.
 - Create venues to encourage young people to participate in the indigenous

Military Attacks on Lumad Community Schools in Mindanao



people's struggle for self-determination and genuine peace.

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably the New Revised Standard Version [NRSV]), song chart/ Powerpoint, offering plate or basket, Used Calendar for Sunday's Phrase and Memory, Video Presentation)

Background Lumad

Indigenous peoples roughly constitute 10-15 percent of the total population of the Philippines and are present in 65 of the country's 78 provinces. The majority of indigenous peoples (61 percent) are found in Mindanao, 33 percent are found in Luzon, and 6 percent are in the Visayas. Lumad is a generic term used by others to refer to the indigenous peoples of Mindanao, who make up the largest number of indigenous peoples in the country. The Lumad are composed of

numerous indigenous peoples scattered throughout the Mindanao island. There are 18 major Lumad groups namely: Subanen, B'laan, T'boli, Mandaya, Mansaka, Tiruray, Higaonon, Manobo, Bagobo, Bukidnon, Tagkaolo, Ubo, Banwaon, Kalagan, Dibabawon, Talaandig, Mamanwa and Manguangan. They live in the mountainous areas of Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Bukidnon, Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Surigao, Zamboanga, Misamis Oriental, Misamis Occidental, Cagayan de Oro, North Cotabato, South Cotabato, and Sarangani Province. To simplify, the Lumad may be clustered as follows: the Manobo cluster, the Blaan-T'boli-Tiduray cluster, the Mandaya-Mansaka cluster, the Subanen who live largely in the hinterlands and coastal areas of the Zamboanga Peninsula; the Higaonon or "mountain dwellers" in the plateaus of Bukidnon; and the Mamanwa in Surigao del Norte.

Indigenous peoples are still among the poor and marginalized sectors in Philippine society. Until today, they experience neglect and discrimination in terms of providing basic social services especially on education, health, agricultural support, and national budget allocation for the Lumads. So much more in this time of Pandemic where the "New Norms" of on-line classes and communication seemingly far from their reach. Before they experienced seasonal chronic food shortages because of losing their ancestral land over the so-called development projects and extractive industries including mining, dams, logging or extractive industries, and agriculture modernization. (Carino, Jacqueline K., *Country Technical Note on the Indigenous People's Issues Republic of the Philippines*: [https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/40224860/philippines_ctn.pdf/ae0faa4a-2b65-4026-8d42-219db776c50d#:~:text=Indigenous%20peoples%20roughly%20constitute%20in%20Visayas%20\(NCIP%202009\).](https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/40224860/philippines_ctn.pdf/ae0faa4a-2b65-4026-8d42-219db776c50d#:~:text=Indigenous%20peoples%20roughly%20constitute%20in%20Visayas%20(NCIP%202009).)

Needful to say that the Lumad community had withstood with dignity and pride of their culture even from the long historical state oppression, manipulation, land-grabbing, dislocation of their homes, false promises of claiming their ancestral land, and being the battleground of the hinterland war of the government military against the CPP-NPA. Our Lumads in Mindanao survived even in the Medieval Extended Christianity which Spain introduced, a type of Christianity that almost annihilated the indigenous religion and culture around the world. They survived and continue to struggle. The struggle continues for they have been in the constant subject of militarization, red-tagging, and inhumane treatment from the government.

The UCCP has been in solidarity with indigenous people since its beginning. Our life work has been for the least, the lost and the last especially to our Indigenous Filipino people.

2 Samuel 7:1-11,16. As king David rested in his palace, he was able to ponder how he is living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent. He asked prophet Nathan for his opinion and Nathan just said, whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the Lord is with you. But that night, the Lord appeared to Nathan and talked about David's plan of providing Yahweh a house. Sure enough, Yahweh is not interested in a house to live in, Yahweh is present wherever the people go. Yahweh blessed king David by making his name great like the names of the greatest person on earth. Yahweh will provide a place for God's people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not disturb them and will be with them. (2 Samuel 2 Bible Commentary, christianity.com, <https://www.christianity.com/bible/commentary.php?com=mhc&b=10&c=7>) Yahweh's intention for one's people is to live peacefully in God's given land and Yahweh's promised to protect them from wicked people. The Indigenous Filipino Community has been stripped off from their ancestral land due to mining and logging companies. Living peacefully seems to be a dream for militarization has been forcing them to give up their land, giving up their lives for the Land is life and life is land.

Luke 1:26-38. Only Luke connected the lives of John and Jesus in such a way that Elizabeth and Mary are relatives. Elizabeth gives birth to John in her old age as promised by God and Mary gives birth to Jesus in her youth. There was a six months gap. Both experienced Angel Gabriel's visitation as for Elizabeth, it was her husband Zachariah a priest in the temple. The interpretive key to the first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke is present in the message of the angel: "For nothing will be impossible with God" (v.37) and responded by Mary, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your work." The story of Mary and Elizabeth is the story of the marginalized people who are used by God for the fulfillment of God's plan of Salvation. People would see it impossible especially those who are in power, they assumed that the power that they gained from this world would automatically give them the right to be God's instrument. Sad to say that instead of being God's instrument, they wanted more and wanted to be god in the process. The struggle for self-determination of our indigenous people is hindered by the people in power who always want more. These people are collaborators of the International mining and logging companies, they are the politicians who made laws to protect their interests, and they are the businesspeople who sale the ancestral land. Like Mary and Elizabeth, a woman of young age

and old age, let us offer ourselves to the cause of our Filipino indigenous struggles. Let us commit to a life work of solidarity with God's people who are still struggling and fighting for their ancestral land. Though we might fight giants, with God on our side, all things are possible.

Suggested Lesson Outline

Doing your class through

a. ZOOM Application

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUUwumKCW7M>

b. Messenger Room.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lKEUTnprtK4>

C. Face to face Sunday School class

Greeting Time

(Post in ZOOM Share a Document- Picture- "Lumad Community Airing their Sentiments")



Welcome each student as they participate in an online classroom through ZOOM or Messenger Room. After all learners access in, say this statement “ Whoever you are and whatever you are on life's journey, all are welcome here. Our gathering even in an online venue evokes God's presence.

Ask the learners to share, “Do you know the struggle of our Filipino Indigenous communities?”

Songs of Gathering “”He Came Singing Love”

He came singing love and he lived singing love;

He died singing love. He arose in silence.

For the love to go on we must make it our song;

 You and I be the singers.

 Faith..... hope..... peace.

“Lord I Want to be a Christian” Children Praise God, 137

Lord, I want to be more loving in my heart, in my heart

Lord, I want to be more loving in my heart.

In my heart, in my heart,

Lord, I want to be more loving in my heart.

Lord, I want to be forgiving in my heart, in my heart,

Lord, I want to be forgiving in my heart.

In my heart, in my heart,

Lord, I want to be forgiving in my heart.

Lord, I want to be like Jesus in my heart, in my heart,

Lord, I want to be like Jesus in my heart.
In my heart, in my heart,
Lord, I want to be like Jesus in my heart.

Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart, in my heart,
Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart.
In my heart, in my heart,
Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart.

Opening Prayer

Learner: Come sow your wisdom O God into our minds. May we discover wisdom as we read the Bible, discuss deeper issues of life, and encounter hardships or difficulties.

Come weave your love into our dreams. May we find vision in our interests, opportunities for our talents, and aspirations for our abilities. May this new generation of your men and women know you. Amen. (Read more: https://www.living-prayers.com/children/prayer_for_youth.html#ixzz6fLlqPoq5)

Getting Ready



Let the class watch Lumads - Indigenous Peoples of Mindanao, Philippines - are Rising for Revolution!

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwQpFmcR2eY>) Let the learners share their thoughts about this short film.

Learning Time



Discovering the Biblical Truth. Group the class into two and assign each group a passage to read and discuss.

Group 1- 2 Samuel 7:1-11,16

- What does the text try to convey?
- How would you describe the situation of the people based on the text?
- What was God's intention for the people?
- How would you compare God's plan from that of David?

Group 2- Luke 1:26-28

- What does the writer try to tell the readers?
- How would you describe the life of the characters in the account?
- How was God's salvific intention being manifested?
- What kind of people are being used to express God's intention?

Discuss to the class the context of the Filipino Indigenous People and the Biblical Background before letting them group themselves.

Lessons Learned

Assign each group a UCCP Document that talks about the struggle of the indigenous people and the church's response on the issue. Let them discuss the documents and reflect on the UCCP's stance in solidarity with the indigenous communities.

- What is your reaction to the church's statement regarding the issues that involve the plight of the indigenous communities?
- How do you think should we treat the indigenous people?
- Suggest ways how young people of your church can be in solidarity with our indigenous faith communities?

Applying the Lessons Learned

Youth Speak!



Group Sharing which includes presenting their assignment last Sunday and their summary of their discussion.

After presenting the group's work, gather all learners to form a circle and start singing the song, "Ginawaak Manema" HFJ #42. Request them to sing along and dance around. Instruct them to move around the circle while singing the song.

Let them face each other and place their right hand to their chest and silently offer their commitment to being in solidarity with our Filipino Indigenous communities.

Closing Worship



Memory Verse:

"For nothing will be impossible with God." Luke 1:37 NRSV

Offertory

Leader: Luke tells us the story today of Mary's submission to God's will. Let us willingly bring the offerings of our lives, talents, and money before our God. May we joyfully give so that others may feel God's love and grace.

Giving of our Offerings

+Offering Response "This Is the Joyful Heart" NCH # 786

This is the joyful feast of the people of God

Men and women, youth and children, come from the east and the west
From the north and the south and gather about Christ's presence.

+Thanksgiving Prayer

Leader: Almighty and most merciful God, from You, comes every good and perfect gift. We give you praise and thanks for all your mercies. Your goodness has created us, your bounty has sustained us, your discipline has chastened us, your patience has borne with us, your love has redeemed us. Give us the heart to love and serve you, and enable us to

show our thankfulness for all your goodness and mercy by giving up ourselves to your service, and cheerfully submitting all things to your blessed will; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

+Closing Song

“Mindanaw”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHISb8EFMH8>

+Prayer of Dedication

All: You called us O God to serve and not be served, to love and not hate, and to be welcoming despite our diversity. Help us to expand our circle that others may be welcome to journey with us. Amen.

Response: “Spirit of Peace: In tune with Love, Love, Love” Dance of Universal Peace

(Encourage everyone to Sing and Dance)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xRcraUReRz4>

Spirit of Peace, to your cause we give our strength

That love may reign and war may cease

Mer mero mer

Assignment for Next Sunday



Take a picture that captures the life situations and struggles of the people in your community. Post it to one's FB, IG, and make a Tiktok)



Youth At Work. Monthly projects that involve the young people of the church.

The month of December: Advent and Christmas Season

1. Volunteer to help enhance the Church with Christmas decors
2. Virtual Christmas Caroling. Send a Caroling video to a family.
3. Virtual Christmas Game. Online Bible Quiz with surprise gifts.
4. Fund Raising and Relief Collection for the Victims of Typhoon in Luzon.
- 5.#CYFSSlessoninlife. Post in your Twitter, FB, Instagram account the lessons you've learned from the session.

Appendices

DEFEND UCCP-HARAN, DEFEND THE POOR AND THE OPPRESSED

UCCP | Posted on January 29, 2020

January 28, 2020

The United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) is deeply offended and gravely concerned by the recent forced entry of the para-military group, Alamara, in the compound of UCCP-Haran which we believe arose from the resolution of the Regional Peace and Order Council of Region 11 seeking the immediate closure of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) Haran

Center on F. Selga St., Madapo, Davao City. We find such resolution undoubtedly offensive against the Church and against those that advocate peace, justice and human rights – a clear violation of the principle of separation of church and state.

UCCP-Haran is not a mere evacuation center. The Regional Peace and Order Council is probably not well-informed that HARAN stands for “Home and Altar for Renewal, Action and Nurture”, a mission house inspired by the UCCP action in 1990 to “declare our churches and church facilities as sanctuaries and zones of peace”. The Regional Council has no right whatsoever to demand the closure of a church’s mission, much more to blame a church for faithfully doing its Christian mission of defending the poor and the oppressed. The Scriptures so clearly instruct us in : Psalm 82:3-4, “Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

The forced intrusion of Alamara group in the compound of UCCP-Haran could not have happened without the prodding of those who initiated the resolution. It was unlawful and yet no one among the illegal intruders has been apprehended by the police up until this moment. We deplore such inaction and fumbling on the part of the police.

Equally deplorable is the apparent black propaganda being hurled against UCCP-Haran as in the report aired by PTV News Mindanao. We are dismayed that the media is now being used to sow false and fake news. We unfalteringly disprove all such allegations of DILG officials in the region, Region 11 Police Director and others that lumad evacuees in UCCP-Haran are being used “to get donations from foreign groups” and that “they are being detained in UCCP-Haran”. Such are entirely unfounded statements which should have been verified first for purposes of fair and balance reporting. The fact that not even one lumad accepted the offer of Governor Edwin Jubahib already refutes the false claims of the PNP regional director that the lumads are being detained in Haran. As a legitimate private Filipino institution, it is well within our fundamental rights to protect our compound from any possible harm from dubious intruders like the Alamara.

Consistent with the declaration of Prophet Isaiah, our church has committed to be a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in their distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the scorching heat...(Isaiah 25: 4).

We resolutely believe that the Church cannot go wrong in serving and defending the poor and the destitute. Hence, we remain steadfast in our resolve to advocate justice for the weak until they are delivered from the hands of their oppressors and tormentors. Our continuing efforts to defend and be in solidarity with the lumads and other marginalized sectors is grounded on our firm commitment to bring the good news of God to the masses. No amount of intimidations or pressures from whoever can force our church to abandon our sacred calling and duty to do Christ’s mission in season or out of season.

We call on the PTV News Mindanao to refrain from airing unverified news especially those that defame our integrity and reputation as a church.

The following are our calls for immediate action:

That the Regional Peace and Order Council of Region 11 urgently withdraw its arbitrary resolution and we also demand for a public apology for besmirching the integrity of our beloved UCCP;

That the Davao City Council, through the Committee on Human Rights and Committee on Indigenous Peoples, conduct an investigation on the intrusion and damage to property;

That the PNP be held accountable for condoning the intrusion and for their inaction;

That all Alamara leaders who were involved in the attacks be apprehended for their unlawful forced entry in UCCP-Haran and for damaging church properties;

That Alamara be disbanded.

We implore our constituents throughout the nation to carry on with our mission of serving and defending the poor and the oppressed even as we also beseech your prayers and solidarity with our fellow servants and co-workers in UCCP-Haran and the whole Southeast Mindanao Jurisdictional Area. Let us all be assured of God's constant presence and guidance as we carry on with our shared mission. "Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy." (Proverbs 31:8-9 ESV)

REAFFIRMING OUR COMMITMENT TO SERVE THE DOWNTRODDEN

AND THE LEAST PRIVILEGED

UCCP | Posted on October 4, 2020

(A Pastoral Statement of the UCCP Council of Bishops on Haran's Case)

'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me' (Matthew 25: 40 NKJV) is a constant reminder that keeps the United Church of Christ in the Philippines dynamic and actively engaged in the ministry for the least privileged and disadvantaged sectors of our society.

The recent filing of a criminal case by certain Ata-Manobo individuals against a number of our members, local church leaders and church workers including fellow bishops is a sad reflection of high-handedness and hostile attitude of the powers that be towards the Church. Said filing of case is apparently stirred by the military and Atty. Marlon Bosantog, head of the legal affairs office of National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP).

We take this case as part of a grand design to shame and smear the integrity not only of those accused individuals but of the whole United Church of Christ in the Philippines for its staunch advocacies for the protection of Lumads' rights and indigenous people and for our active engagement in peace and justice ministries.

Over the past year or so, the UCCP and some of our members and leaders had been among those red tagged by the military. In fact, one of our former Conference Ministers in the Bicol Region had been arrested and detained on the basis of a trumped-up charge filed by the military. In plain

sight, therefore, the case filed by Ata-Manobo in Davao City Prosecutor's Office is just another act of harassment and intimidation.

We recall that in a dialogue with no less than the newly proclaimed president then, held in Malacanang in 2016, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, assured us that he will do his best to bring the Lumads back to their own homes. UCCP did not invite nor encourage the Lumads to come to UCCP-Haran. The Lumads actually came to Haran seeking for refuge as a result of militarization in their places. As a church, the UCCP cannot but accommodate them in gesture of support and solidarity.

In 2016, then Davao City Vice-Mayor Paolo Duterte personally came to Haran and offered the Lumads free vehicles that would bring them back to their homes, but the Lumads refused the offer. The same was done in 2020 by Gov. Edwin Jubahib of Davao Del Norte but also to no avail. Clearly, the UCCP did not prevent the Lumads from going back to their homes neither did we oblige any of them to remain in Haran. It was solely their decision to remain under the refuge of Haran.

As a Church of Jesus Christ, we remain true to our commitment as declared in February 1990: "the United Church of Christ in the Philippines through its Council of Bishops and the Executive Committee in session on February 21-23, 1990 declares as sanctuaries and

zones of peace all its church buildings, parsonages and lands, hospitals and schools, and other church-owned institutions and their premises. As sanctuaries, these places and premises are open to all people, regardless of color and creed, sex and status, and of political and religious affiliation, at all times, in all circumstances of need. We welcome those needing sanctuary to use these places for protection, study, reflection, retreat, prayers and meditation, or simply for rest and quiet."

Let it be made very clear that the UCCP is ready to face the accusers in court to prove the innocence and guiltlessness of our members and church workers who are among the respondents. All the allegations in the case are unfounded and tall tales that are too incredible to be true.

As leaders of the Church, we abhor such act of falsehood even as we also call on the accusers and those behind their action to stop besmirching our church, our members and church workers. As the Prophet Isaiah puts it, in Isaiah 5:18: "Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, and wickedness as with cart rope..."

We also call on all UCCP faithful to join us in sober prayers and support for our fellow UCCP members who are drawn into this quagmire of trickery and sham. Let us continue to be ONE in living out our shared calling as God's ambassadors of peace, justice and love! "With Christ on our side, even the gates of hell will not prevail over us!" (Matthew 16: 18).+

THE UCCP COUNCIL OF BISHOPS
September 28, 2020

Bishop Melzar D. Labuntog
General Secretary

Bishop Joseph G. Agpaoa
North Luzon Jurisdictional Area

Bishop Emergencio D. Padillo
Middle Luzon Jurisdictional Area

Bishop Joel E. Tendero
South Luzon Jurisdictional Area

Bishop Jerome C. Baris
East Visayas Jurisdictional Area

Bishop Feliciana P. Tenchavez
West Visayas Jurisdictional Area

Bishop Ligaya F. San Francisco
Northwest Mindanao Jurisdictional Area

Bishop Hamuel G. Tequis
Southeast Mindanao Jurisdictional Area

**STATEMENT OF CONCERN ON AN ORGANIC ACT
FOR THE CORDILLERA AUTONOMOUS REGION**

Council of Bishops
24 November 1989

On December 27, 1989, Republic Act. 6766 entitled An Organic Act for the Cordillera Autonomous Region shall be subjected to a plebiscite in the provinces of Benguet, Mountain Province, Ifugao, Abra and Kalinga-Apayao, and the chartered City of Baguio. Affected are the Cordillera people who are of diverse religious, cultural, and social milieu.

Diverse in socio-cultural identity, they shall go to the polls, hopefully one in the aspiration for self-determination and in the expression of the freedom of choice to chart their own destiny as Filipinos. History reveals that for years the Cordillera people have been subjected to humiliation and discrimination. They have been regarded as subordinate citizens not worthy of respect, nor deserving of a decent and progressive livelihood. They have been marginalized as a minority people and even forced to accept their marginality while their land and cultures have been exploited and displayed to entertain the world.

Today, these indigenous people of the Cordillera continue to suffer as victims of brutal attacks because of militarization and political repression that have worsened the already miserable life that they have had to endure.

This situation is further aggravated by the implementation of the Total War Policy which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians. As a Church bound to Jesus Christ and called to minister in the context of the Philippines, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines affirms the aspirations of Moro and Tribal Filipinos as they seek the preservation of their land, their culture and their integrity as people.

Moreover, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines believes that the people in the proposed autonomous region have the right to self-determination and to determine their future through peaceful, democratic processes.

Furthermore, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines is concerned about the level of understanding among our people as to the contents and intentions of the Republic Act No. 6766. As of this date, we know that copies of the said Bill are not yet in the hands of those affected. The United Church of Christ in the Philippines, therefore, would like to participate in the on going educational campaign through consultations, symposia, fora and seminars, throughout the Philippines. We hope to bring into

dialogue men, women and youth leaders of the Cordillera peoples on the following:

1. To view Republic Act. 6766 as a possibility to bring the Cordillera people together to build the proposed autonomous region where trust and confidence can be fostered and a community of peace, prosperity, justice and unity may prevail.
2. To unlearn prejudices and change attitudes as we move towards a wider inter-faith fellowship.
3. To arrive at a common decision for Republic Act No. 6766, or plan alternatives which shall be more conducive and responsive to the common aspiration of the Cordillera people in the proposed autonomous region. This concern shall be shared with the constituents of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, the member churches of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, the Office of the President and Congress and organizations such as Kalipunan ng mga Katutubong Mamamayan ng Pilipinas and Cordillera People's Alliance.

THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

Bishop Juan A. Marigza
Northern Luzon Jurisdiction
Bishop Gabriel A. Garol
Southern Luzon Jurisdiction
Bishop Patrocinio A. Apura
Visayas Jurisdiction
Bishop Lorenzo C. Genotiva
Mindanao Jurisdiction
Bishop Erme R. Camba
General Secretary

Lesson 30: How do we understand our pastoral witness?

First Sunday after Christmas

December 27, 2020

General Concept: Pastoral witness means being one with the people in their struggles and aspirations in whatever situations they are in.

Biblical References: Isaiah 61:10-62:3 and Luke 2:22-40

Age Level Concepts

- *Pastoral witness means being one with the people in their struggles and aspirations in whatever situations they are in.*
- Our church is a sanctuary for displaced people.
- We pray, involve, and commit to the living out of the pastoral witness of our church.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the session, the learners are expected to

- Define and elaborate in their own words the meaning of “pastoral witness”
- Explain the importance of pastoral witness as part of the life work of the church.
- Design ways how can the young people able to participate in the pastoral witness ministry of the church.

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably the New Revised Standard Version [NRSV]), song chart/Powerpoint, offering plate or basket, Used Calendar for Sunday's Phrase and Memory, Pictures Collage)

Background

The UCCP Northwest Mindanao Jurisdiction Area conducted a web-seminar on Anti- Terrorism Law of 2020 for the Church Workers. During the seminar, we became anxious and stressed due to the provisions of the law's ambiguity in defining a terrorist or an act of terrorism especially in Section 12 of RA 11479. It boiled down to the fact that our Church's mission for the least, the lost, and the last could be classified as an act of terrorism. A question was raised by our speaker, Atty. Beverly Musni asking us, "Would you still help the poor and the oppressed?" We had a quiet moment. In stillness, we realized that our work is never been easy. But graciously Atty. Musni answered her question saying it with conviction, "For me, I will never be threatened from being labeled as a terrorist. I will continue to stand for the poor for it's my duty and my life's calling even if it will cost me my life." Hearing her revitalized our passion for doing God's mission amid blatant state harassment, bullying, and extra-judicial killings to the church members and workers, and allies of the people's struggles.

David Bosch's definition of God's Mission (Mission Dei) as a movement from God to the world and that the Church is God's instrument for that mission. The existence of the church is because there is a mission, not the other way around. (Bosh: Transforming Mission.p390) As UCCP, we will never stop living our ecclesiastical being as doers of Christ's Mission even it calls for martyrdom. We continue to struggle amid state repression and even COVID 19 pandemic, we

continue to do Christ's mission for the very reason why our church continues to exist. This is our pastoral witness to the community where our churches are located. We are one with the people, we are one in their struggle and aspiration towards a life of dignity, meaningful and abundant, and a life that does not exclude but embraces all.

Evident of our continuing solidarity with the poor, are the statements expressing our intention to be one with God's people in their struggles and aspiration;

- a. *A Statement of Social Concerns, General Assembly, 19-24 May 1960*
- b. *A Statement of Concern on the Worsening State of Our Natural Resources and Its Effect on the Lives of the Filipino People First Youth Congress, Ellinwood Christian Youth Fellowship, 27-30 December 1989*
- c. *Statement of Social Concern, General Assembly, 24-28 May 1990*
- d. *Statement on Martial Law and Expression of Concern Related Issues, General Assembly, 20 May 1974.*

Isaiah 61:10-62:3. A true prophet is one who stands in the gap between God and God's people. One has to deliver the message of God without filter or sugar-coated decors. The message is clear and direct to God's people, this could be a message of doom and destruction, a condemnation, a message of hope, and a message of transformation. This passage is part of the Third Isaiah that brings a message of hope to the people of God. A message that God is decreeing a new age of freedom and restoration (61:1-3) and refusing to leave God in silence until Zion's vindication is manifest on earth as it is in heaven. In this passage, the prophet thought about his calling and how it relates to the restoration of Zion found in Isaiah 60-62. The prophet is anointed by the Spirit and his vocation is delineated in a series of infinitive clauses that indicate the nature of God's mission. These are; to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and to provide for those who mourn in Zion to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. As a prophetic Church of Jesus Christ, we are called to stand in the gap between God and God's people. Like God is biased to the poor, so our stand as a church should be always for the least, lost, and last. (Michael J. Chan. Working Preacher, 2020 Luther Seminary,

<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/first-sunday-of-christmas-2/commentary-on-isaiah-6110-11-621-3-3>

Luke 2:22-40. The passage entails Jesus' childhood. Though it is not enough to describe Jesus' childhood, it also makes sense that the gospels are not biographies but kerygmatic narratives that seek to proclaim the gospel and to undergird and strengthen faith in Jesus Christ. Luke established a theological point on Jesus' childhood; Jesus was born a Jew among Jews. He came under the law of Moses and faithful in honoring his father and mother (2:51). His ultimate thought is obedience to his heavenly Father. Luke continues to introduce Simeon and Anna as devout Jews who are awaiting the fulfillment of God's promises of consolation and redemption for Israel. These sections of Luke's story are drenched with the language of Deutero-Isaiah (cf. Isaiah 40:1; 42:6; 49:6, 13; 52:9, 10). Simeon and Anna thus become spokesman and spokeswoman for the salvation and redemption that is to come through Jesus. Simeon gets a glimpse of the salvation

that one-day the whole world ("all flesh") will see (cf. Luke 3:6, Luke's addition to Mark): forgiveness of sins and deliverance from eternal death (Acts 13:38-39, 46-47). That is the ultimate meaning of Christmas, the incarnation of the Son of God. (Stephen Hultgren, Working Preacher, December 28, 2014, (<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/first-sunday-of-christmas-2/commentary-on-luke-222-40-3>)



Suggested Lesson Outline

Doing your class through

a. ZOOM Application.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUUwumKCW7M>

b. Messenger Room.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lKEUTnprtK4>

Greeting Time

(Post in ZOOM Share a Document- Picture- "Helping the Typhoon Victims")

Welcome each student as they participate in an online classroom through ZOOM or Messenger Room. After all learners have accessed in, say this statement " Whoever you are and whatever you are on life's journey, all are welcome here. Our gathering even in an online venue evokes God's presence."

Ask the learners to share their unforgettable Christmas experiences.

Songs of Gathering "Chuwi-chuwi Um Pahpah"

Chuwi 4x Umpapa ayyayayayaya 2x

lalalalalalalalalalalalalalalala 2x

"Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ because the love of God is shared abroad by the power of the Holy Ghost (which was given 2x) (unto us 3x)



Together in God's Household (Words: Gbb tune: His Banner Over Me is Love)

I'm part of you and you're part of me together in God's family 3x

We're living together in God's household

Opening Prayer

Learner: You are my friend - help me to meet new people. You are my encourager - come build my confidence and vision. You are my teacher - help me to learn and gain wisdom. You are my comforter - hold me when I'm lonely or afraid. You are my counselor - I share my excitement and worries with you. You are my protector - I lay my life into your safe hands. Thank you for your presence with me now. Amen. (Read more: https://www.livingprayers.com/children/prayer_for_youth.html#ixzz6fLlzseGz)



Getting Ready

Allow the learners to look at the following pictures. Let them react to each picture.
(Suicide, Child Prostitution, Street Children, Red-tagging, & Youth with special needs)



Photo credit: UNICEF Philippines

Learning Time

Discovering the Biblical Truth.



Group the class into two and assign each group a passage to read and discuss.

Group 1- Isaiah 61:1-10-62:3-4

Group 2- Luke 2:22-40

Provide the groups pieces of bond paper cut length-wise. Instruct the learners to write on the pieces of bond paper :

- In what ways would God's salvific intention be manifested?
- Who are those people being used to reveal God's intention?

Examples:

Clothe me with garments of salvation

Comfort all who mourn

Covered me with robe..

Love justice

Tell the groups to post their answers on the board and let them explain their answers.

Discuss to the class the Lesson's Background to further their understanding.

Lessons Learned

After which, tell the groups to identify programs or activities of their local church that correspond to how God's intention are manifested.

Comfort all who mourn

Counseling, visitation,

Love justice

Covered me with robe..

Based on the group work and sharing, ask the learners the following:

- What areas of the ministry of the church that our pastoral witness are best expressed?
- How would you define pastoral witness in your own words?
- In what programs and/or activities of the church that express its pastoral witness do young people actively involved in?

Applying the Lessons Learned

Youth Speak! Suggest ways how young people can be involved in the pastoral witness of one's local church?



Group Sharing which includes presenting their Assignment last Sunday and their summary of their discussion.

Group Activity: Mob Dance with the song "Bugsay"

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rv7BPue7JRc>)

Closing Worship



Memory Verse:

" for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and glory to your people Israel." Luke 2:30-32

Offertory

Leader: The prophet Isaiah remembers so many things God has done for the people out of the abundance of God's steadfast love. God continues to bless the world with abundance, and we share our gifts today out of that abundance in the hope that this church will be a blessing to the world. Let us give our love offering to God.

Giving of our Offerings

+Offering Response

"We Give You But Your Own" NCH # 785

We give you but your own, whatever gift may be
All that we gave us yours alone, we give it gratefully

+Thanksgiving Prayer

Leader: Almighty and forgiving God, we give you most humble thanks for all your goodness and loving kindness to us and to all whom you have made. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

+Closing Song “*We Hail You God's Anointed*” Hymnal of Faith Journey, 115

We hail you God's anointed the long awaited One
Hail in the time appointed you reign on earth begun!
You come to break oppression to set the captive free
to take away transgression and rule in equity

You shall come down like showers upon the fruitful earth
and joy and hope like flowers spring in your path to birth
Before you on the mountains shall peace the herald go
and righteousness in fountains from hill to valley flow

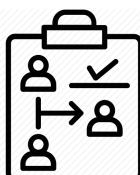
The wise shall bow before you and gold and incense bring
all nations shall adore you and praise all peoples sing;
To you shall prayer unceasing and daily vows be said
your realm is still increasing with you O Christ as head

O'er every for victorious you on your throne shall rest;
from age to age more glorious all blessing and all blessed
The tide of time shall never your covenant remove:
Your name shall stand forever your changeless name of Love.

+Prayer of Dedication

All: You called us O God to serve and not be served, to love and not hate, and to be welcoming despite our diversity. Help us to expand our circle that others may be welcome to join us. Amen.

Response: "Spirit of Peace: In tune with Love, Love, Love" Dance of Universal Peace
(Encourage everyone to Sing and Dance)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xRcraUReRz4>
Spirit of Peace, to your cause we give our strength
That love may reign and war may cease
Mer mero mer



Assignment for Next Sunday

Make a short film about UCCP's stand about Red-Tagging. Publish it to one's FB, IG, and Tiktok)



Youth At Work. Monthly projects that involve the young people of the church.

The month of December: Advent and Christmas Season

1. Volunteer to help enhance the Church with Christmas decors
2. Virtual Christmas Caroling. Send a Caroling video to a family.
3. Virtual Christmas Game. Online Bible Quiz with surprise gifts.
4. Fund Raising and Relief Collection for the Victims of Typhoon in Luzon.
5. #CYFSSlessoninlife. Post in your Twitter, FB, Instagram account the lessons you've learned from the session.