

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES

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THE NATIONAL COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

REBUILDING AND RESTORING WITH HOPE

A Pastoral Statement on Continuing Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples and in Celebration of the Reformation Month

*(Approved by the National Council on its 27th Session on 20 October 2022
at the YMCA, Baguio City)*

“The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers.” (Leviticus 25:23)

We greet you all in the love and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ! The National Council and the Council of Bishops with their continuing and new members serving for this quadrennium, EY 2022-2026 are grateful to God for the opportunity to serve the Church through legislative and executive functions for the realization of God’s mission in the changing and challenging situations in the Philippine and global contexts.

Within the ambit of our quadrennial theme, **“Rebuilding and Restoring with Hope: *Heralding the Full Life*,”** we unveiled its implications to various aspects of Church’s life, particularly as it relates to the actual work being done to rebuild church buildings damaged by earthquake and typhoons in the disaster affected Conferences. We have witnessed the sustained commitment of our constituencies by sharing their financial, material and spiritual resources to the end of reinvigorating and resuming the worship life and the variegated ministries of the Church.

Giving emphasis on Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples and Protestant Reformation, we are cognizant of the significance and impact of our social relationships with the indigenous peoples, whose struggle for respect of their unique cultural systems and the restoration to their ancestral lands have been the major concerns of the Church. We have not wimped out in our support for their freedom and peace. More so our very own Reformed heritage diffuses insinuations of insensitivity of the national leadership on the plight of the Local Churches and Conferences. The categorization as *Teflon Council* either as National Council or Council of Bishops is non-existent. Every member or leader is

susceptible the pains and sufferings of the marginalized sectors and thus put on the yoke of servanthood in their ministry and mission.

With this statement, we attest to the consistency of our faith imperatives ascribed to our Statement of Faith and the Declaration of Principles in the Constitution and By-Laws and the very teachings of Jesus Christ, our Savior. There is a continuous Biblico-theological and ethical affirmation that cannot be stifled or repressed. Regardless of who are those at the helm of political and economic power in the country and the world, the Church should not be subsumed by powers and principalities. The present situation in the country under the present dispensation after 100 days of Marcos, Jr. and Sarah Duterte leadership has been marred by high inflation rate, impacting the quality of life of vulnerable sectors of society comprising not less than 80 percent of the 110 million population. High cost of food and commodities which consequently result to adverse income deficiency, hunger and further deprivation.

Since our 11th General Assembly in May of this year, we continue to confront a number of challenges as a Church. In the last General Assembly, we reiterated our commitment to pursue our ministry for the disadvantaged sector, the poor, marginalized and oppressed. We have renewed our call to stop impunity, stop red-tagging of our church workers and members and let justice roll down like waters.

Our beloved church continues to carry out the biblical mandate of serving the least of our people and we are consciously cognizant of the apostle Paul's charge: *"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."* (Romans 12: 2) Conspicuously, the pattern of this world is sinfulness, killings, corruption, injustice, oppression, deception, mockery and a host of other human wickedness. To all these things, our Church cannot conform.

Hence, we steadfastly commit to the ministry of promoting equality, righteousness and peace. Yet in our steadfast desire not to conform to the sinful pattern of this world, our Church is at times badly and wrongly labeled as adherents of godless ideology or activists.

We reiterate what we have already declared in our previous statement, that the accusation "that UCCP is infiltrated by communists and led by communist-leaning pastors and bishops" is obviously a rehash of an old rhetoric thrown against the Church. It is a malicious and deceptive accusation meant only to defame the whole church and pollute the minds of our members and the Filipino people.

Finally, let us be reminded of the words of the Apostle Paul to the Galatians: *"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please*

his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.” (Galatians 6: 7-8).

**THE NATIONAL COUNCIL
THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS**
20 October 2022



Mr. Jessie Garcia
Chairperson
General Assembly



Bishop Melzar D. Labuntog
General Secretary



Bishop Joseph G. Agpaoa
North Luzon Jurisdictional Area



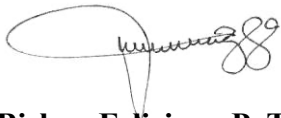
Bishop Francisco Aviso, Jr.
Middle Luzon Jurisdictional Area



Bishop Victor Paller
South Luzon Jurisdictional Area



Bishop Jerby Salor
East Visayas Jurisdictional Area



Bishop Feliciano P. Tenchavez
West Visayas Jurisdictional Area



Bishop Ligaya F. San Francisco
West Mindanao Jurisdictional Area



Bishop Daniel Palicte
Southeast Mindanao Jurisdictional Area

Bishops Emeritus

Bishop Emergencio D. Padillo
Middle Luzon Jurisdictional Area

Bishop Jerome C. Baris
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Bishop Arturo R. Asi
South Luzon Jurisdiction

Bishop Modesto Villasanta
Southeast Mindanao Jurisdiction

Bishop Jessie S. Suarez
Middle Luzon Jurisdiction

Bishop Eliezer Pascua
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Bishop Erme R. Camba
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Bishop Constante Claro
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Bishop Marino Inong
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Bishop Reuel Norman O. Marigza
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Bishop Jezer Bertoldo
West Visayas Jurisdiction

Bishop Rizalino Taganas
East Visayas Jurisdiction

Bishop Jaime Moriles
East Visayas Jurisdiction

Bishop Joel E. Tendero
South Luzon Jurisdictional Area

Bishop Hamuel G. Tequis
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