



# Council of Bishops

The United Methodist Church



Friday, November 9, 2018

The United Methodist Church  
Philippines Central Conference  
College of Bishops

**In Jesus Christ We Are One Church  
(A pastoral letter to United Methodists in the Philippines)**

*"I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all."*

As United Methodist bishops called to serve in the Philippines Central Conference, we value and celebrate the unity of our global connection. Our witness to a broken world thirsty for hope and love is made more evident and powerful when we stand together as a vital part of the Body of Christ, united in the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

We are grateful for the fruits of our unity. Through our connectional relationships, our local churches and conferences are in partnership with our general agencies, and engaged in mission initiatives with United Methodist congregations and conferences in many parts of the world. Together, we have started new congregations and established medical facilities, as well as educational institutions. Many of our church leaders have received scholarships to study in our denomination's prestigious seminaries and universities. When faced with devastating typhoons and natural disasters, our United Methodist Committee on Relief has always come to our rescue. As new mission work is opened in Southeast Asia, Filipino United Methodists have been given the opportunity to learn and lead. With a spirit of gratitude for the missionaries that brought Methodism to our islands, we now send our own missionaries to bring the love of God around the world. All these are the blessings of a church united in the mission of Jesus Christ.

We recognize the sense of uncertainty expressed by many in our flock over the future of The United Methodist Church. Our church is not of one mind regarding matters of human sexuality, and this division has caused pain and harm to many, especially in the United States. As we prepare for the called 2019 General Conference which will decide our way forward through this impasse, we offer words of hope and share these affirmations:

- As your bishops, we remember and continue to uphold our consecration vows to seek and strengthen the unity of the church. The cross and flame is an emblem that welcomes all people and we will strive to keep our fellowship together.
- We believe that the foundation of our unity as a church is Jesus Christ, our Rock and Redeemer. Through Christ we all receive grace as we walk the path toward perfection in love. Our oneness in Christ has broken down all the walls that divide us. Indeed, no one and nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ.
- We affirm our first General Rule as promulgated by John Wesley, the founder of our Methodist movement, to do no harm. Any form of schism jeopardizes our witness to the world and is harmful to many who regard the UMC as their spiritual home.
- We seek a way forward that allows respectful space for contextualized ministry, preserves and strengthens our connectional unity, and promotes vibrant United Methodist presence in as many places as possible.

We implore Filipino United Methodists to continue in holy conversation and prayer leading up to the 2019 General Conference. Let us join together in fulfilling the prayer of Jesus Christ for the Church - that we may be one, so that “the world may believe” (John 17:21).

To God be the glory!

Bishop Pedro Torio, Jr.

Bishop Daniel Arichea

Bishop Ciriaco Francisco

Bishop Solito Toquero

Bishop Rodolfo Juan

Bishop Leo Soriano

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