Typhoon Haiyan
Amidst the devastation, images of courage and hope...

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES
A Partial Report
December 10, 2013
On November 8, 2013, Typhoon Haiyan hit the central Philippines. It made first landfall in Guian, Eastern Samar at 4:40 in the morning. It is considered the strongest typhoon ever recorded in history with a maximum sustained wind of 235 kph and gustiness of 275 kph (Weather Underground).

On the same day, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) issued a Bulletin Alert. In the storm path were areas in Southern Leyte, Biliran, Northern and Eastern Samar, Northern Cebu, Capiz, Aklan, Antique and Iloilo (PAGASA). The Philippine government ordered local disaster risk reduction and management units to facilitate the evacuation of residents. This was followed by another Bulletin on 10 November describing the situation in Tacloban City, which was the hardest hit.
It turned out to be the deadliest Philippine typhoon on record, killing, as of this writing, at least 5,936 people. The impact, scope and extent of its havoc are unprecedented. The massive destruction of infrastructure, properties and livelihood had cost an estimated PHP 22.5 billion. About 11 million people have been affected and many have been rendered homeless (NDRRMC).

A storm surge of over ten feet wrecked infrastructure, buildings and houses, cut power and communication lines, destroyed farms and farmlands. Hardest hit was Tacloban City, with most parts turned into a total wreck. In the aftermath, debris and dead people littered the streets. Images of death and destruction were everywhere.

There were haunting images of people picking up the pieces of their shattered lives.
Communities were severely affected – with houses damaged and sources of livelihood destroyed.

Eastern Samar (Photos: Noel Suministrado)

Marabut, Western Samar (Photos: Mae Montes)

Madrilejos, Cebu (Posted by Leny Jovita)
There was a general breakdown of communication, economy, governance, law and order...

In the massive destruction, Eastern Visayas was rendered unreachable with all means of communication cut off and all systems inoperable. Immediately, the UCCP declared West Visayas Jurisdiction Office in Cebu City as a base of operation and as a relief center. Bp Reuel Norman Marigza, UCCP General Secretary, appointed staff to visit the areas heavily affected. Ric Jontarciego, Executive Secretary for Programme Ministries, was appointed overall coordinator of relief operations and was sent to Cebu. Mr Jontarciego also visited Maasin City, and Antique and Panay to assess the situation. Rev Jerome Baris of the Justice, Peace and Human Rights Desk was sent to Samar.

The following day, on November 11, Bp Marigza sent out a message to the constituency. He called for unity, compassion and generosity in this time of great tragedy.

![Disaster Bulletin Alert]

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES
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Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
A very special greetings to you, your families and constituents.

First of all, let me enjoin everyone in prayer for the communities affected by the recent disaster brought by Tropical Storm Yolanda. Let us pray that the hands of God touch the hearts of the survivors to solve the wounds of anxiety, frustration and despair; to give them strength and hope that in God no adversity is insurmountable. In prayer, let us discern God’s true calling and act according to God’s will.

I know that you are all knowledgeable of what has happened in Leyte, Samar, Cebu, Bohol, Panay and Northern Mindanao. The unexpected devastation wrought by Yolanda has brought a heavy burden in our hearts as we think of those brothers and sisters of ours who have to endure hunger and anguish amid the chaos. Indeed, these are tragic times for us Filipinos and I dare say for us in the UCCP.

Still I feel that this tragedy must not deter us from our calling as Christians, whose commitment to serve is inspired by the giver of life himself, Jesus Christ.

These are trying days and challenging times as well. Let us not falter nor shirk from that calling to serve, for this means also serving God, the greatest giver of all.

This tragedy no matter how harrowing beckons our Church towards greater unity to serve the marginalized. If once again we find ourselves in the midst of disaster, such disaster that befalls us cannot divide us—no hunger or misery can ever separate us—because we are an inclusive and compassionate community in the bond of God. As a faith community, we locate ourselves with the poor and the powerless and the voiceless.

Lastly, I call on all our brothers and sisters in UCCP to share your precious help, in cash and in kind, to provide for the needs of the survivors of Tropical Storm Yolanda. This is also a time, as there are many times, where your gift of generosity is most needed. And may the Lord return your generosity a hundredfold.

In the service of the Lord’s most precious name,

Bishop Reuel Norman O. Marigza
A UCCP Task Force Yolanda/Haiyan was created. With the breakdown of power and means of communication, everyone who could was encouraged to post photos and information on social media to share publicly especially among concerned members and partners of the UCCP.

UCCP issued the 4th Bulletin Alert.
All power and communication lines were cut off. All roads and bridges in Leyte and Samar islands were inaccessible for four days after the typhoon. When things had somewhat settled, Bishop Dulce Pia-Rose hiked for 20 kilometers over debris and dead bodies that covered the road from Maasin to Tacloban. She found a way to send a message: I was in Tacloban yesterday; just arrived this morning in Maasin City. EVJ office roofing is gone. Bethany Hospital is totally damaged - no more operations, NELBICON Office is totally washed out, UCCP Churches badly damaged, 90% of houses 1km from the shore are washed out...

**Bethany Hospital**

Bethany Hospital, a UCCP hospital in Tacloban City, was in the news, covered by ABS-CBN and other networks. The ground floor of the hospital was submerged in flood waters, the roof ripped off, the medical equipment destroyed and almost all facilities wrecked including the intensive care unit.

Immediately after the surge, the first floor of the hospital served as a makeshift station for the injured. From a 150-bed hospital, Bethany Hospital has totally lost its capacity to serve and do its ministry of healing.

With power and communication lines still cut off, there was no word from Bethany Hospital personnel about the situation. After some time, Dr Zuriel Tiempo, CEO of Bethany Hospital, was able to send a message: At the hospital, people were kept safe. Thanks to God for the saving grace and for the effort of doctors, nurses, orderlies and personnel who efficiently handled the situation. Lives were spared. But because of the extensive damage, our hospital had to stop its operation... Yolanda has swept Bethany to the ground. Only the concrete structure remains. Roof gone, floors flooded. The laboratory, equipment, pharmacy and dietary... are drowned with sea water. The situation may hurt Bethany but never could it cripple its hope and mission.

Meanwhile, right across Bethany Hospital is the Redemptorist Church. Bro Karl Gaspar posted: Bethany Hospital is located in front of our church in Tacloban City. Behind Bethany hospital, barely 300 meters away or just over, is the coastal area of Tacloban City. When the storm surge hit Tacloban, the 10-foot seawater that went inland hit Bethany Hospital, destroying its buildings. Because these buildings blocked the waves, our church, convent and parish hall were spared - which made it possible for us to convert all the buildings saved inside the compound as Evacuation Center.
In his visit to Tacloban on November 14, six days after the typhoon, Rev Leivelou Amora, Programme Coordinator of the EVJ, still saw the remnants of the destruction. Cleaning the debris, dirt and grime was no mean task, with the stench of dead bodies pervading in the air.
Church Offices
The Jurisdiction and Conference offices were totally damaged.

The office of the East Visayas Jurisdiction (EVJ) ND RESIDENCE OF Bp Dulce Pia-Rose in Tacloban City was also badly damaged. The roof was blown away. It was just providential that, upon the insistence of her husband, Bp Rose was in Maasin City at the time Haiyan made landfall.

Here we see what was left of the Northern Eastern Leyte Biliran Conference office after the typhoon Yolanda.

The office of the Northwestern Leyte Conference was also damaged.
National Heroes Institute
The National Heroes Institute in Kananga, Leyte, also suffered destruction.

Local churches
Many local churches and houses of members were either totally destroyed or partially damaged. Here are some photos sent by members who visited the areas affected. The church building of Lawaan UCCP in Llorente, Samar was totally destroyed with only part of the facade remaining.
The UCCP Church in Maybog, Baybay, Leyte served as a shelter for those whose houses were destroyed. Meanwhile, the UCCP Church in Maasin City served as packing center for relief goods sent to Samar and Leyte.

And now, the formidable and daunting challenge is how to rebuild from the rubble. Will the victims still find light in their darkened lives?
Acts of love

The widespread destruction and devastation immobilized all systems – communications and power lines, economy, governance, law and order. The survivors were immediately confronted with such problems as, among others

- **Hunger** as their own food reserves, stores and economic establishments were severely damaged causing a severe shortage of food. In many cases, the shortage does not only mean food for the near future as crops and livestock have also been permanently damaged and destroyed. This means the shortage could be long-term.
- **Water**. There is acute lack of water to drink and for sanitation, which leads to the widespread outbreak of diseases.
- **Shelter** as many houses were either totally destroyed or partially damaged. Many families have been rendered homeless. Some sought refuge in the homes of relatives in nearby provinces that were not as affected as their own communities. Others built makeshift shelters from out of scrap and salvaged materials.
- **Energy** – electricity and the various means of communication had broken down.
- **Infrastructure**. The destruction of infrastructure - airports, piers, roads and bridges - caused temporary isolation of some communities.
- **Mobility** as, aside from damage to infrastructure, vehicles have been submerged in flood waters.
- **Search and rescue** of missing members of the family, and the burying of the dead.
- **Clearing** of debris and cleaning of grime and filth.

Because of the nature, scope and extent of the impact, the suffering could be long-drawn and would need stages of response.

The UCCP, because of the immobilization in the affected areas, set its base of operation in Cebu City, Which had easy access to most parts of the country. In cooperation with the West Visayas Jurisdiction, the Visayas Community Medical Center and the Cebu Conference, volunteers were mobilized in the procurement and delivery of goods and supplies.

In East Visayas, Bp Dulce Pia-Rose led the East Visayas Jurisdiction Disaster Management Team. The team put up a Center for Relief Assistance for victims of Yolanda at the UCCP Southern Western Leyte Conference in Maasin City, where Rev Jenny Escabal is Conference Minister. Relief centers were also set up in nearby cities – in Ormoc City in Leyte and in Borongan in Eastern Samar.

Here, Ric Jontarciego, UCCP National Disaster Response Coordinator, Dr Mike Udtohan, President of The College of Maasin; Rev Jerome Baris, JPHR National Coordinator and Bishop Dulce Pia Rose, Bishop assigned to East Visayas Jurisdiction, plan the relief distribution in the area. (Photo: Lotis Calva)

With grants from partner churches and institutions abroad, relief goods and supplies were procured – brought in from outside the affected regions. It had taken days after the typhoon before goods could be delivered. When they reached the centers, volunteers – women, men and young people – came and worked till the middle of the night, even without electricity.
Aside from the main base in Cebu City and the center in Maasin City, other relief centers were set up in Ormoc, Leyte and in Borongan, Samar. Relief work was done simultaneously in the different centers.

**Local Churches, Conferences and Jurisdictions**

Many local churches, conferences, institutions and concerned individuals responded immediately. The prayers were accompanied by calls to the respective constituents to help the victims. Others launched aggressive campaigns that went beyond their territories, hence the inter-conference, inter-organization relief operations. The outpouring of love and various expressions of support were just overwhelming. However, with all those who extended support, however, we can only mention some.

THE UCCP SURIGAO CITY CENTRAL CHURCH
REPACKING THE RELIEF GOODS FOR THE VICTIMS OF "TYPHOON YOLANDA"
THIS MORNING NOV.14,2013
TULONG NA...
TABANG NA...
TAYO NA...
MAGKAISA!!
(Posted by Daisy Jamero Amalla)

Ormoc City (Photo: Rev. Nathaniel Anas, posted by Roel Lebios)
In Davao City UCCP, men, women and young people packed relief bags until midnight.

Davao City UCCP (Posted by Rev Ernesto Frias)

In Candelaria, Quezon, the ecumenical spirit was brought into the relief work.

Photos: Gailry Agulan Tadiosa
Rev Juliet Solis of the Manila Central Church of Christ Disciples reported that the repacking of relief goods in the church is still ongoing. This is in partnership with Tulong Kabataan, a group of students in the University Belt, Manila. The church is the Relief and Drop Off Center in the area.

The National City United Church, through Rev Renee Padrelanan, offered its halls as a temporary sanctuary for victims. A concert was also organized to raise funds.

HOPE WE ARE NOT YET LATE...

Dear Pastors and you families and your church members who are typhoon survivors, we really can not say that we understand your situation, after every gory thing all of you have been through... there is no amount of words to say... We can only feel deeply. We can only cry with you. We can only pray and so we thought..... we know, we can do some more.

We are inviting you to come and stay with us for a couple of weeks or more. Stay with us and recollect. This is our means of responding to those who need what we have to offer -- a PLACE and a caring faith FAMILY with the warmth of those who are willing to journey with you while picking up the pieces of your shattered lives.

National City United Church—UCCP, a church with a heart in the heart of the city is offering you this. We are located at Times Street (Pinoy’s Street), West Triangle Homes, Quezon City (very near UCCP National Offices in EDSA). Please consider staying with us. We can only accommodate 30 people, so please consider getting in touch with us immediately.

WE LOVE YOU WITH THE LOVE OF CHRIST

For those of you who are interested, please contact your pastor/co-workers: Rev Renee S. Padrelanan (0927-555-2144) and/or Rev June C. Aragayojo III (0927-784-8146)

Posted by Renee Padrelanan

HIMIG PAGIBIG
A Benefit Concert for Typhoon Victims
November 24, 2013 (Sunday) at 6:00pm
National City United Church
96 Times St West Triangle Quezon City
Love gifts & Donations are welcome
At the Office of the Southwest Leyte Conference in Maasin City, volunteers were busy packing relief goods and supplies. The SWLC Office served as the distribution center for relief goods and supplies in the East Visayas Jurisdiction.

Lowland Cavite South Manila (LCSMC) under the leadership of CM Emergencio Padillo and in coordination with the East Visayas Jurisdiction, is sending a team of doctors and carpenters to conduct medical mission in far-flung areas rarely reached by volunteers as well as to help rebuild the East Visayas Jurisdictional Office. This will be from December 9 - 15, 2013. Many church lay leaders and individual members also initiated relief work especially in unreached areas. The event was featured in an issue of Bulletin Alert.
Negros District Conference through CM Danny dela Rama and North Negros Conference through CM Hope Rambuyon mobilized the local churches and gathered relief goods and supplies. These were sent to Leyte along with other goods from Silliman University and Negros Oriental.

The Northwest Mindanao Jurisdiction, through Bp Melzar Labuntog, collected donations for the victims, but decided to take these to the areas affected in January, to ensure that there is continuity in the distribution of relief goods. This is coordinated with the different conferences and the institutions in the area.

In Southeast Mindanao Jurisdiction, under the leadership of Bp Modesto Villasanta, all the conferences were mobilized and worked together for a consolidated relief work. Photos show the first wave of the relief action of BIDLISIW UCCP Team for survivors in Eastern Visayas. This was made possible with the generosity of local church members and institutions of the six conferences of UCCP SEMjur with Bp Modesto Villasanta, CM Juanita Paniamogan, CM Jesse Pagalan, CM Leah Benemerito, CM Socrates Idul, CM Rogelio Lofranco, CM Richard Estestes, Ms Susan Claro, and Michael Salem. So many volunteers came to provide support.

Ms Susan Claro posted photos of the relief work in UCCP Haran in Davao City through the Southeast Mindanao Jurisdiction (SEMJUR), SMDC, Bidlisiw, and BALSA Mindanao. Donations were received and repacked for the first batch of the relief mission in Leyte. She also mentioned initiatives for the training of volunteers to do psychosocial intervention among victims.
At the National Office, donations came from nearby local churches, individuals and organizations for the victims. Women, men and young people helped pack and repack relief goods.

Photos: Lowell Tac-an
There is cooperation with other churches, organizations and groups, like NCCP and ACT Alliance, PCPR, DAMBANA... Tons of relief goods were loaded in trucks to the devastated areas on a caravan organized by the National Council of Churches in the Philippines.
Meanwhile, reports came in on the relief work in Antique. This was immediately disseminated through another issue of the Bulletin Alert.

**United Church of Christ in the Philippines**

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**Disaster Bulletin Alert**

**UCCP Relief Operations Reaches Antique**

Relief goods given to 1,900 families in 48 areas of 4 hard-hit towns

CULASI, Antique - “We have come a long way to here in UCCP Culasi because we were informed we will receive relief goods distributed by the church,” said Morita Anos, a resident of Flores, a farming village 17 kilometers from Culasi town proper and is located on the foot of Mount Maclana, the tallest range in the island of Panay.

“We have been eating only palawan for days to stave off our hunger,” Anos said. “Storm Yolanda destroyed all our crops that were due to be harvested this month of November. Palawan is a root crop common in the area used as substitute staple when rice become scarce.

“Our houses were also destroyed, our small belongings scattered all over and it seems we have to start from scratch to get on with our lives,” Anos said, but with nary a trace of despair in her eyes. Despite of the situation the positive outlook of many, even of those affected, is a kind of reassurance that will enable them to tide over this tragic experience, she added.

Though not receiving as much media attention as that of Tacloban, the town of Culasi, along with other eight neighboring towns in the province of Antique, were as badly battered and devastated by tropical storm Yolanda (International name: Haiyan). The other towns include Laua-an, Bugasong, Barbasa, Tibiao, Babate, Pandan, Libertad and Caluya.

“We sent quick reaction teams in the aftermath of superstorm Yolanda to survey its impact on different areas and we are overwhelmed by the devastation based on the data and footages provided to us,” said Rev. Rommel Marcelino, conference minister of the UCCP Western Visayas Conference. “We have gathered an initial of 3,000 families affected by the disaster, 24 UCCP local churches destroyed, and with only one church member who died of heart attack during the storm impact. More data will be coming in as our QRIs continue to do survey especially in the isolated interior villages.”

“So far we have distributed relief goods to 1,900 families from 48 villages in our designated relief centers in the towns of Laua-an, Tibiao, Barbasa and Culasi,” Rev. Marcelino said. “This is just the initial wave of our relief distribution as there are more service areas that we have to reach”.

UCCP so far has distributed a combined 5,700 relief goods in various major areas including Tacloban, Ormoc, Borongan, Bohol and Antique.

Contents of the UCCP relief package include 5 kgs of rice, 1/2 kg sugar, 1/4 kg salt, 2 packs biscuits, 4 canned sardines, 4 noodle packs, 25 g powdered milk, 25 g coffee and 2 liters of bottled water. Each relief package costs PHP500 (equivalent to USD12) intended for 2 days for a family of six.

For inquiries, you may contact:
Ric Jantangalega
Coordinator, UCCP Community Ministries Program
Phone: (02) 932862955 Email: ricjantangalega@gmail.com

For cash donations, please deposit to the following UCCP accounts:
* BPI LS Savings Acct. 80648191707, Acct. Name: UCCP
* BPI PHP Acct. 200630401112, Acct. Name: UCCP, Taft Avenue Branch, Malate, Manila
The Christian Youth Fellowship through its President, Karlo Suarez, called on CYF members to offer sacrifice for the victims of Typhoon Haiyan. Indeed, young people rendered all forms of services in all the relief operations of local churches, conferences and jurisdictions all over the country.
Church institutions were generous in providing support.

Brokenshire College through Dr Leopoldo Naïve, President, organized a campaign for everyone to donate water, food and sanitation kits. Ms Joanna Campo, Director of its community extension programme coordinated with the Red Cross and was able to negotiate immediate transport of relief goods and supplies. Ms Campo herself went to Tacloban a few days after the typhoon to help assess needs.

The College of Maasin, through the leadership of Dr Mike Udtohan, provided various forms of support through the East Visayas Jurisdiction and the South West Leyte Conference - from planning, organizing, coordinating, providing shelter for volunteers and visiting staff and space for meetings... aside from providing concrete material support. The base for operation for East Visayas is in Maasin, since the EVJ office in Tacloban was destroyed.

Dansalan College, through the President Dr Fedelinda Tawagon, collected cash donations from the students. The collected amount was given to the ABS-CBN office in Iligan City.

Jimenez Bethel Institute, through the Principal Ms Leilaneeh Sabacahan, is sending Php 5,000 to the National Heroes Institute.

Northern Christian College, through President Dr Caesar Agnir immediately mobilized the NCC community to show love and compassion to the victims. The collected donations were sent to Philippine Daily Inquirer and ABS-CBN.

Pilgrim Christian College, through President Pio Baconga, collected relief goods and supplies from students and the Pilgrim community and distributed these to the different areas affected. PCC is also participating in the relief operation of Northwest Mindanao Jurisdiction in January.

Saint Tonis College in Tabuk, Kalinga through the President, Mrs Presentacion Bartolo, collected donations. Mrs Bartolo recounted how the elementary and high schools students decided to buy noodles instead of their snacks during recess time, after which the school was able to collect 1,726 packs of noodles. The parents also sent clothes and other food items. Most touching was when students brought their piggy banks for the victims. The goods were brought to Villamor Airbase for the victims who had evacuated from Samar and Leyte. Aside from collected clothing and goods for the victims, Saint Tonis College donated Php 20,000 for the National Heroes Institute.

Southern Christian College, through the President, Dr Edwin Balaki, coordinated with the Southeast Mindanao Jurisdiction and provided a forward truck to ferry relief goods to Leyte. Volunteers from the Cotabato Annual Conference went with the cargo, riding in the van of the SCC Chaplain who accompanied them, and who was commissioned to talk to Bp Dulce Pia-Rose to identify a partially damaged church or school for SCC to help rehabilitate. The SCC cancelled its yearly Christmas celebration to use the budget for the victims. Earlier, SCC had assisted the Bohol Conference Inc., through CM Valiente, with Php 58,000.00 for the earthquake victims.

Tabuk Institute, through the Principal Ms Mae Pomay-o, also gathered donations which were then sent through the North Luzon Jurisdiction.
Union Christian College in San Fernando City, La Union pitched in. President Dr Myrna Carreon mentioned that UCC, because of its strategic location in La Union, became a drop off point for donations intended for the ravaged areas. Dr Carreon said the collected donations will be shipped to Maasin where the UCCP has established a relief distribution point.

United Institute, through Mrs Elena Olaguera, Director, also organized a campaign in the school. Students helped sort out relief goods, packed them and loaded them in a vehicle that would take them to the victims. In photo are students loading boxes of relief goods.

Silliman University, through President Dr Ben Malayang III, immediately sent a search and rescue team to Tacloban to help with the recovery of the victims. Then, on November 11, Silliman endorsed the first batch of relief goods and supplies to the Philippine Navy which took charge of shipment for distribution to the typhoon victims in Leyte and Samar. Silliman also brought a generator for Bethany Hospital and augmented the workforce by sending a 20-man engineering team to repair the roof of the hospital and rewired some areas in the buildings. For mobility, two vehicles and two motorcycles were also sent. Silliman sent another three truckloads of relief goods to East Visayas including equipment for producing potable water.

Silliman plans to build a model classroom in National Heroes Institute – one that will withstand any typhoon in the future. Silliman is also sending a psycho-social intervention team. Silliman has sent cleaning tools for NHI. The SU elementary students and teachers are sending school supplies, books charts and toys to National Heroes Institute. SUFA, SUSA, SUCC – the associations of Silliman University faculty, staff, and community cooperative - decided to do away with their traditional Christmas parties and give the budgets to the victims instead.

Meanwhile, Silliman University Medical Center, under the leadership of Mr Roberto Montebon, sent boxes of medicines to Bethany Hospital and in cooperation with other concerned individuals conducted medical mission and relief work in Tacloban.

Silliman University, UCCP and the East Visayas Jurisdiction have joined efforts to conduct training workshops on trauma healing with Dr Al Fuertes of George Mason University and his peace network, Dr Myra Viveares-Waddington, Ms Rebecca Capulong, Ms Michelle Balbuena, and Ms Rina Hill. Through the efforts of many other individuals attached to these institutions, more equipment and supplies were sent to victims – jetmatic pumps, chainsaw, boots, gloves, masks, mats, blankets, mosquito nets...

Brokenshire integrated Health Ministries, Inc (BIHMI), immediately committed Php 500,000 for the rehabilitation of Bethany Hospital, hals of which has been sent already. Aside from this, BIHMI also collected relief items and sent these through ABS-CBN in Davao City.

The Visayas Community Medical Center donated a microscope to Bethany Hospital. VCMC served as hosts to many UCCP church leaders and members on their way to the affected areas, as Cebu City was established as base for UCCP relief operation. VCMC sent relief goods and provided transport for their delivery to the victims.
Acts of solidarity

TV networks gave warnings on the possible impact of the coming typhoon, predicted to be among the strongest in history. Hence, even before Haiyan made landfall, partners from all parts of the world already made phone calls and sent messages of concern.
Letters and messages of solidarity came from all over, expressing grave concern and committing to help with financial support in the relief operations as well as in the rehabilitation and reconstruction work.

The Presbyterian Church of the Republic of Korea offered a prayer as well.

The Presbyterian Church of Taiwan also sent a message of support.
International partners launched massive campaigns for the typhoon victims.

The United Evangelical Mission in Germany called on member churches and congregations for support to victims. The churches responded immediately. Aside from this, the annual international bazaar, originally intended to serve a project for handicapped children and youth in Cameroon, was held to help with the “catastrophic situation in the Philippines. Aside from funds for relief and rehabilitation, UEM committed to help in the rebuilding of Bethany Hospital. Already generators were bought and sent to the relief centers in Leyte and Samar.

The United Church of Canada issued a general appeal and was able to raise almost a million Canadian Dollars for the victims. The amount shall be sent to ACT Alliance, NCCP and UCCP. UCC is a member of ACT Alliance, which is a coalition of more than 140 churches and affiliated organizations working together in 140 countries for humanitarian aid, development and advocacy, at the same time maintaining the highest international codes and standards. Most of UCCP partners are members of ACT Alliance.

Aside from this, organizations, individuals and groups, with Filipino residents there, lobbied in the Canadian Parliament to increase the aid for the disaster in the Philippines. The Canadian government eventually increased the assistance from $15 M to $20 M.
Meanwhile, Dr Xiaoling Zhu, Area Executive for East Asia and the Pacific of the Common Global Ministries Board of Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ, even while on sabbatical in China, organized a teleconference with the UCCP and partners in US and Canada. There was sharing on the situation, the difficulties encountered in the gathering of information, and the need to provide a consolidated response. The partners committed to help. Bp Marigza offered a prayer of thanksgiving in spite of the tragedy and the overwhelming task ahead.

Prayer of Gratitude in Times Like These…

Most gracious and merciful God,
amidst the din of howling winds
above the noise of rampaging waves
atop the earthquakes and the shaking of the earth
we hear your voice: “Be still and know that I am God.”

Yes, even in times when we are prone not to be still,
at moments when we are sorely tempted to resort to flight,
we hear you and we pause to listen and to reflect, to stand still
and recognize that indeed you are the God who is with us,
that it is not in the wind or waves nor in the earth’s tremors that you speak
and that even when we walk through the shadow of the valley of death,
that we are not alone,
that even when we are put in the crucible of a fiery furnace,
that you are there to save.

In times like these, you speak to reassure us
through that still small voice
through the concrete acts of solidarity of partners and friends
through those who lovingly stretched out their helping hand
to those ravaged by the storm
to those who are desolate and in despair
to those who are left with a threadbare of hope.

In times like these you assure us that we are not alone;
that we have sisters and brothers who are moved to walk the lonesome valley with us.
We thank you, for in times like these, your love and care is made more manifest and incarnate,
made alive in concrete deeds of loving kindness and compassion.

To you we return all glory and praise. In Jesus name. Amen.

Prayer by Bishop Reuel Norman O. Marigza
General Secretary, United Church of Christ in the Philippines
On November 22, at 11 o’clock pm, Bp Marigza held another teleconference with partners in the United States and Canada. These partners had been contacting the UCCP, alarmed by warnings of a coming typhoon considered to be the strongest ever in history.

From the Philippines were: Bp Marigza representing the UCCP; Fr. Rex Reyes, General Secretary, NCCP; and Ciony Ayo-Eduarte, Head of Mission for Philippines, United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR).

From North America: Susan Sanders, Phyllis and Anthony (United Church of Christ/Disciples), Ben Chan (American Baptist Church), Mienda Uriarte and Laura Strickland (PCUSA), Peter Ng (Episcopal Church), Franklin Ishida (Evangelical Lutheran Church), Patti Talbot (United Church of Canada), and Liberato Bautista (United Methodist Church).

Bp Marigza, who had just arrived from Tacloban, shared that efforts continue to try to clear debris – but it was “just too much”. Electricity was not yet restored even in Maasin, four hours away. He visited the Leyte area between Tacloban and the town Maasin, where UCCP has set up a base while maintaining Cebu City as base of operation from where relief goods and supplies will be transported to affected areas. He spoke about the extensive nature of the destruction, saying that emergency relief work may continue for another two months before UCCP can move to the rehabilitation and reconstruction phase. However, he stressed the urgency of combining initial rehabilitation with relief supplies. “Homes are devastated. We are sharing food and water supplies, sufficient for 2-3 days but families also need shelter – some kind of roof over their heads.”

Fr Rex Reyes and Ms Ciony Ayo-Eduarte also shared on the work being done by NCCP and of UMCOR. Fr Rex reported that the ACT Alliance response is well underway; with an ACT Alliance office set up in the NCCP offices. Minnie Calub, NCCP Program Secretary is now working full-time as project director for emergency response. The NCCP website is being updated daily. Relief work is continuing. Ms Eduarte clarified that UMCOR is not part of ACT Alliance. UMCOR continues its relief operation and is exploring possibilities for psycho-social support.

It was agreed that another conference call be made on December 17-18 during the Asia Pacific Forum meeting in Toronto.

Fr Reyes offered a prayer after the conference call.

As evening falls in the Philippines
Our minds and thoughts are with brothers and sisters in south and central Philippines:
   The many who are cold, ill, homeless.
   May your mercy be with them.

May your presence continue with us all,
   A sense of your grace, wonder and greatness remain ...
In Christ’s name we pray.
Amen.
Then, on Monday, November 25, Bp Marigza had a meeting with UEM Deputy Secretary for Asia, Rev Rannieh Mercado. They were joined by the National Treasurer Karl Chan and the Executive Staff: Rev Lowell Tac-an, Organizational Ministries; Ric Jontarciego, Programme Ministries; and Edna Orteza, Institutional Ministries. Also in the meeting was Rev Jerome Baris who just came back from his visits to areas affected in Samar.

While meeting, Rev Mercado was in communication with Dr Sonia Parera-Hummel, Asia Secretary of the United Evangelical Mission, to give an update on developments in the UCCP relief operation. Dr Hummel has been in constant communication with UCCP since the typhoon hit the Philippines and was among the first to respond to the Bulletin Alert issued.

Thereafter, on the next day, November 27, Rev Mercado embarked on a 10-day road trip to the affected areas. He was commissioned by UEM to visit the areas, do an assessment, monitor the relief operations, gather stories, give regular updates for local churches in Germany, and help plan the rehabilitation programme of UCCP.

The UEM-UCCP Disaster Response and Monitoring Team

The UEM-UCCP Disaster Response and Monitoring Team visited several areas in the typhoon stricken region. In the team were Rev Jerome Baris, Mae Montes and Ed Quiamco of the National Secretariat.

In northern Cebu - Tabogon, Medellin and San Remegio - the Monitoring Team was accompanied by colleagues in West Visayas Jurisdictional office and Cebu Conference of the UCCP – Bp Jaime Moriles, Rev Mike Camba, CEO of the Visayas Community Medical Center, and Ms Rose Camba of WVJ.

In northwestern Samar, Rev Mercado documented the extent of the destruction and devastation. Churches were not spared. The damage of church buildings consisted, generally, of blown up roofing.
Many UCCP members were rendered homeless. Here, in photos taken by Rev Mercado, we see the wreckage of their homes and what were left of them.

Thousands of families lost their sources of livelihood.
Bishop Dulce Pia-Rose, also a Council member of UEM, led the relief operation in different areas in Eastern Samar. UEM North-South Volunteer to the Philippines, Jonas Robin Becker, and Matthew Fehse of Global Ministries in the US joined the relief operation.

Rev. Jenny (in white) is the current Pastor of UCCP in Hernani, which was the most badly hit town in Eastern Samar. Many church members and their houses were totally destroyed or partly damaged. The Church itself, which is 200 meters away from the shoreline, got flooded up to 1.5 meters. The roof was partly blown away. The Church hymnals and copies of Bible got wet and damaged. (Posted by Rannieh Mercado)

This is inside the UCCP-Balongkayan Church in Samar Island District Conference in Eastern Samar. The Church is located 200 meters away from the shoreline. The ocean surge triggered by Typhoon Yolanda has flooded the church up to over a meter. The hymnals, Bibles and generator set got damaged. Due to tornado-like wind, the Child Development Center operated by the church had totally collapsed. (Posted by Rannieh Mercado)
The recipients were grateful to receive a substantial amount of rice and other food items.

As in any other relief centers, there were many volunteers, wanting to take part in this act of love and solidarity with the victims.
In Tacloban, the team visited Bethany Hospital and saw the extent of the damage there.

A hospital bed was secured from looters.
UEM donated five generators and 10 solar lamps, very much needed in the typhoon stricken areas where power has not been restored and where electricity fluctuates very often even in normal times.

UEM committed to help in the rebuilding and reconstruction of Bethany Hospital.

The team visited Antique. Rev Rannieh Mercado described the province in a recent post:

**UCCP is considered a predominant Protestant Church in Antique Province particularly in the triple towns of CULTIBAR (Culasi-Tibiao-Barbaza), which list a membership of over 10,000 baptized persons, including children. Both the church buildings (over 20) and houses (no less than 100) got destroyed or damaged by the monster typhoon Yolanda. The congregations have warmly welcomed and profusely thanked Bishop Reuel Marigza and UEM through Rannieh Mercado (RM) for the solidarity visit as personally guided by the Western Visayas Conference Minister Rev. Rommel Marcelino. They admit that it is their first-time to see in person a UCCP General Secretary. This gesture is acknowledged and appreciated by the CULTIBAR UCCP members and church workers as the UCCP national leadership and its partners’ deep compassion and concern for the constituencies in the grassroots.**

In UCCP San Jose, UEM donated a chainsaw, which was very much needed in the rebuilding phase. This will be used to cut coconut lumber and other trees that were felled by the typhoon. In a ceremony, the chainsaw was turned over to the Western Visayas Conference through the Conference Minister Rev Rommel Marcelino.
Bp Reuel Marigza joined the team in Antique. It was the first time the church members there saw and met a General Secretary so the welcome was overwhelming.
Acts of faith

Fellowshipping under the open starry night

In La Paz, the welcome was most moving. The members waited for the team as they visited several other churches. The team arrived at night. In the darkness, people welcomed them with warm smiles. Bp Marigza described it as “fellowshipping under the open starry night...”

The Welcoming Committee at UCCP La Paz. It was so touching that they waited for us as we visited several other damaged and destroyed local churches. (Bp Reuel Marigza)

The entire roof and trusses were blown away by the typhoon (Bp Marigza)

The roof may be blown off... but our members’ devotion to God remain firmly anchored on solid ground!

We will dream with you UCCP La Paz and help you reach it!
We thank you for inspiring us with your faith and dreams!
Bp Reuel Norman O. Marigza
Homeless, roofless, but not hopeless

Following are accounts of the ordeal that Typhoon Haiyan brought to many people and families. Despite the horror of walking through dead bodies and the many faces of tragedy that surrounded them, we hear echoes of hope and great thanksgiving for God’s grace and mercy and for the experience of new life. These are stories of deep faith in the wonder of God’s love and trust in the providence of God.

Dear family and friends- especially those who were asking how we are after the typhoon Yolanda: It is good to tell you all that I am alive! Praise the LORD! My family and I are safe. We survived the wrath of the super-typhoon.

I was in my hometown in Kananga, Leyte when the super-typhoon ravaged the whole province of Leyte, especially Tacloban City. And I just got back her in Cebu from Leyte only yesterday. We have no electricity there until now. Communications lines were cut off, and cellphone signals are very poor. There was no signal at all the first 2 weeks after the typhoon. Thus, this very late report/feedback to all your queries. This is my first time to have access to internet.

First Sunday after the typhoon, only a few of us were able to gather together for worship. We spent time sharing our testimonies- how God saved us and protected us. Although we were happy we survived, we were also anxious at the same time of the safety of our loved-ones, friends and relatives who were in Tacloban City. For more than a week after the typhoon, we were anxious because we have not seen one of my nephews, Neil Patrick Surigao, who was in Tacloban at the time of the typhoon. We later learned that he was rescued by a Fire Brigade truck from Maasin which was part of the rescue team from Southern Leyte. He was brought to Maasin City where most of our relatives are. It was only after ten days that we got to see him when he was able to come home to Kananga. It was a happy reunion. We were also happy to learn that Patrick was instrumental in rescuing around ten persons including a child and some elderly. (Dobert Moriles)

To our relatives abroad who are still wondering how we are: Some of our close relatives (Mana Cita Villanueva and her children with their respective families) who are residents in Tacloban City are also safe. Although they lost most of their belongings/properties, they are thankful that they survived. And we were very happy to see them 4 days after the typhoon when they passed by Kananga on their way to Maasin City to get medical attention. All hospitals are closed in Tacloban City, and medicines are not available especially anti tetanus vaccines.

95 % of the houses, school buildings, etc. in our community are damaged. Food is still scarce, although we are happy that some grocery stores have started to open this week. But prices of our basic food needs like rice have increased. Prices of fuel also like gasoline had sky-rocketed from 50 to 150 a liter. It was only this week that things started to go back to normal, although our situation is still very far from normal.

Everyone is still busy salvaging what they can save from what was left by Yolanda. I chose to save some old photo albums. Most houses are still roofless (those that were not totally wiped out), so sleep is not as restful as it should be especially when it starts to rain during the night. We all hope we could find enough resources to at least put back the roof on our houses. Prices of G.I sheets and other building materials have also soared, so it’s hard for us to rebuild.
I would have wanted to stay in Leyte still despite the discomfort and the hardship of living in what looks like a very desolate place. But I need to be back in Cebu to help my husband in the relief efforts the church is doing to help the typhoon-ravaged towns in the northern part of Cebu. Two weeks ago they were also conducting medical mission, relief distribution and stress-debriefing in Bohol province, which was not only ravaged by the typhoon, but was only starting to recover from the destruction caused by a strong earthquake less than a month earlier.

There is still so much to be done. We are happy some goods from our churches in Davao City and Bradford UCCP in Cebu have reached our town. We also appreciate the goods distributed by Operation Sunshine, from a mission partner church in the US. But there are still so many people who are still unreached and have no access to relief goods especially those in the barrios. Most relief goods from the government and charitable institutions go straight to Tacloban City and Ormoc City. But all municipalities in between these two cities were also badly affected and need help and are not yet getting any.

Thanks for all your prayers. We appreciate so much your concern. Those who want to help, still can. Just channel your donations thru the church. It will surely reach the hands of the neediest. God bless us all! (Dobert Moriles)

When I got back to Cebu from my Leyte ordeal, I somehow felt envious to see people having a normal life- texting, facebooking, malling, eating at fast-foods and restaurants... laughing, reading newspaper, watching TV...

The place I left looks like a ghost-town totally ravaged by typhoon Yolanda. Most houses and buildings are either totally destroyed or left roofless. But a big streamer I saw hanged along the street in Ormoc City gave me a warm feeling. It says: "Homeless, roofless, but not hopeless."

Despite the very hard situation we are living in until now in the whole province of Leyte, we are thankful. Without electricity, we are able to see and enjoy the beauty and wonder of God's creation: the beautiful skies filled with countless stars and the bright moon that never failed to shine and gave us light for more than a week after the typhoon. We have enjoyed dinners by candle-light every night under the canopy of a bright sky. We have enjoyed playing card games and scrabble with family and relatives and neighbors before retiring to bed. We shared beautiful stories and jokes with each other which we have not been doing for the longest time - having our ears and eyes fixed on the television screens and iPads and iPhones and laptops before the typhoon.

And another beautiful thing that happened after the typhoon is that people seem to remember coming to church again. The church has started to overflow with worshippers after the typhoon.

Those are just some of the few things we thank God for, despite the painful experience brought to us by typhoon Yolanda. Still, we declare: "God is good all the time!" (Dobert Moriles)

The gift of RESILIENCE... We can still laugh despite our difficulty, and amidst these calamities we are facing now.
At home in Leyte, I am always amazed every time a friend, a neighbor or even stranger pass by and we would ask each other, "How are you? How's your house?" And we would say to each other, "Our house is totally damaged.", or "We no longer have roofs to cover our heads."...and saying it with a SMILE. Isn't that amazing?

I can even say, people there are more thankful after the storm than before. We have realized that life, and family, and friends, are more important than properties and material things. We are all happy and thankful just because we survived!

My three-year-old grandniece, Precious, reported to her Mom Cathy (who was away from home during the typhoon, serving as a doctor in a nearby province) when she saw her 2 days after typhoon Yolanda, "Mommy, our beautiful house is destroyed!" And her Mom Cathy hugging them answered, "Never mind sweetheart, as long as you are all alive! That is more important to me than our beautiful house."

I am sure there are more victims of the storm that have the same feeling like that of Cathy. Indeed, life is more important than houses, and things. Therefore we can still say with a smile, "We are homeless, roofless, but NEVER hopeless!"

With the second lease in life that God granted us, we can still rise up, pick up the broken pieces and rebuild what has been destroyed. More power to all YOLANDA SURVIVORS! God bless us all! (Dobert Moriles)

Eldest cousin, Ate Betty, died in the aftermath of typhoon Yolanda. We grieve the loss of Ate Betty. Her seat (3rd row/pew right section facing the altar) in Kananga UCCP will now be empty on Sundays. She'll be terribly missed. Typhoon Yolanda’s wrath that wrought havoc was seemingly for all beyond description. Dobert and I in Kananga hid under the dining table if only to escape its rage that sent flying trusses to our kitchen and the other set short by 1 1/2 meter from where we were located.

Humans are vulnerable and weak; nature is strong, though Blaise Pascal would argue against this. In fact, to him, it is the other way around. It is nature that is weak because she’s not aware of her strength and human, though weak, is strong precisely because of such awareness of its own weakness. This awareness has taught humans to lean on the everlasting source of ultimate strength from where we draw our confidence and assurance. Psalm 46 declares, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High."

This is the source of our strength. (Bp Jaime Moriles)

It was a Friday morning, the 8th of November 2013 when the monstrous super Typhoon Haiyan hit deadly hard the city of Tacloban and the surrounding coastal villages in Leyte. The ocean surge it triggered was tsunami-like and its strongest wind, like a tornado. The people of Leyte and Samar -- known as fighters and courageous “WARAYS” who have been tested with countless typhoons in decades -- have found Typhoon Haiyan truly unprecedented and unimaginable in its fury.
One of the institutions and structures destroyed and operationally crippled is the UCCP-owned Bethany Hospital, widely known and appreciated for its good medical services in the entire Eastern Visayas. Within the hospital’s premises is a “mission house” being utilized as the East Visayas Jurisdictional Area office. She stays in that house when she is in Tacloban. Her family is residing in Maasin, Leyte.

In the afternoon before the typhoon came, Bishop Dulce’s husband had insisted that she should go home to Maasin. Tacloban is three hours drive from Maasin, which was not badly affected by the typhoon. If she did not heed her partner’s advice, Bishop Dulce could have been drowned by the two-meters high ocean surge that inundated Bethany Hospital, her own office and quarters. She could have been killed or injured by the voluminous floating debris that swept through the city.

All power and communication lines were cut off. All roads and bridges in Leyte and Samar islands got inaccessible and impassable for four days after the typhoon. Wanting to find out the situation in Tacloban, two days after the typhoon, Bishop Dulce had to hike for 20 kilometers over debris and dead bodies that covered the road towards Tacloban from Maasin.

The thought of her own fate as a “survivor” and the enormity of the relief and rehabilitation tasks being expected of her as the key UCCP church leader in East Visayas -- the most depressed and devastated region -- appears too heavy a load that Bishop Dulce has to surmount with strength and determination. But thanks for the assurance of support and solidarity from UEM and other partners that Bishop Dulce is enabled daily to carry the relief work and the needed rehabilitation particularly of the UCCP churches, its institutions and constituencies in East Visayas.

Bishop Dulce wishes to convey her sincerest thanks and appreciation to UEM for the prayers, encouraging messages, quickest fund support and for sending its personnel to assist directly in the relief and rehabilitation work. (As told by Rannieh Mercado)

Typhoon Yolanda’s Fury
November 8, 2013
By Jaime R. Moriles

I was in Kananga, one of the municipalities of Leyte, located west of Tacloban City when typhoon Yolanda’s unsuspecting fury wrecked the island. Kananga is my wife’s hometown, 23 kilometers away north of Ormoc City. Ormoc City is the city where I grew up, one of typhoon Yolanda’s paths that left havoc to lives and properties before heading toward north of Cebu.

I woke up past 6am of November 8, 2013 in my room at my wife’s ancestral home. In the house are my sister-in-law Sally, her son Paolo, a household help, and my wife Dobert. We were 5 in the house on that fateful day. As I moved about inside my room, I already felt that the rain outside was getting heavy and the wind howling with several minutes interval. I thought that was yet the best time to do my not so regular physical exercise inside the room where I do stationary jogging. I did my physical exercise, though, while the storm was making its headway. But at 7:08am I had to stop what I was doing because the wind was already blowing strong, this time with no interval, consistently howling fiercely. I went out of the room to check other members of the family and I caught Paolo and Boy (name of household help) in the dining area fixing the stove after they transferred it from the dirty kitchen adjacent to the house. The stove was important because we have yet to boil water and do some preparation for breakfast. The stove was set up, the kettle was in place, we sat together at the dining table waiting for the water to boil when a loud bang was heard close to us. I stood up and walked past them and moved toward
the direction of the sound and there I saw a huge chunk of roof with trusses that flew coming from our neighbor
and slumped directly to the dirty kitchen without warning, exactly the site of the cooking stove that was earlier
transferred. That incident could have been fatal. The kitchen was the busiest place in the house that time.

We agreed on something which I cannot recall who proposed that we move our round dining table to the sala after
I intimated that we need to use it for cover before something more terrible would strike. We did it with haste and
when the dining table was repositioned I immediately ordered everyone to crouch and crawl under it and take
cover. For Filipinos who are used to typhoons each year, typhoon Yolanda at the beginning was just another
typhoon to me that will soon go away. But when I ordered members of the family to secure themselves under the
table, the element of fear, I would like to admit, slowly began to creep deep inside. There were few seconds, at the
beginning, that I was embarrassed to crawl and a little longer to others, I would like to guess, when they followed
suit.

From that time on we shared that little space we had under the dining table for almost 3 hours. My neck was in
pain after an hour of ducking and I was hungry and I didn’t feel good. I remember that before that mad scramble
to look for a safer place, we were about to eat our breakfast. I also remember that an unopened loaf of bread was
on the table so while the storm was still raging (in fact, I heard another very loud thud outside the house about 1
and ½ meters away from where we were hiding), I stretched my right arm while under the table to feel around
above me where the loaf of bread can be found on the table. I fumbled on the loaf of bread after groping it using
only my right hand, grabbed it down and ate them all while still ducking under the table. I started to feel good
again. But the wind that blew fiercely was so strong that I felt like I was inside a plane over high altitude. The
pressure was so strong that my ears started to hurt until one block of glass window in the sala busted that sent
shards of glasses in front of us. No one was hurt though.

We cannot do anything but to stay put under the table. We had to stretch our legs, sat down the floor to ease our
position, head face up and endure the annoying cobwebs under the table for more than 2 hours before I enjoined
everyone to look for another place because I noticed that water was all over the place and it started to rise. This
was aggravated when the roof of the house was blown away.

All of us transferred to our room, where fortunately, we discovered the roof there partly was not blown off and
there were areas that were dry. The reason being, we discovered after the typhoon, there was this large roof from
our neighbor complete with trusses that was blown over and fell on top of our room’s roof that provided
additional weight that kept the latter from being blown away. The loud thud that I mentioned earlier was another
set of trusses with roof that fell 3 feet away from that room. All of us stayed in that partly ravaged room, a little bit
safer so we thought, but helpless, partly wet, anxious, blank and cold, until the storm left.

After the storm subsided, we learned right away of the demise of our neighbor, a school principal, together with
his grandchild found embracing each other, dead, after the wall of their house collapsed. My eldest cousin, Ate
Betty, died. While spared from the wrath of the typhoon after her house was devastated, she eventually
succumbed to a heart attack.

Two days after the typhoon, when the road going to Ormoc City, west of Tacloban City was cleared and became
passable, I made sure that I can check right away my ancestral home, the home where I grew up. The night before,
I was musing over the fact that our house in Ormoc City may not somehow be as devastated as the rest of the
houses that I saw in Kananga because over the years my experience tells me that I had been to so many typhoons
in my life when I was growing up and during those times, the family will just stay warm inside the house and I can
very well recall that at one time while the storm was raging I was just sleeping. That was the thought I had before
reaching our house in November 11, 2013. What I saw in the morning of November 11 was a totally different
house. It was a total wreck and I can’t believe what I saw. I was wrong. I almost did not like to go inside, but very
quickly I went in and scoured some few things- soaking wet books, old pictures, wet computer and TV set, toys,
broken figurines, after which I left. Our ancestral home in Ormoc City at the moment is temporarily deserted.
I was bewildered after seeing all these things. I scheduled a trip to Cebu on November 13 to hear updates from my jurisdiction and happily discovered that the city of Cebu was spared from the devastation. Of course, its northern part, Bohol and Panay were not spared. As soon as I arrived, I noticed that electricity was up and running, cable TV was working, water was amazingly flowing, internet connection was open and people were texting and walking as if nothing happened...

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**UCCP COUNTER-DISASTER PLAN**

The UCCP has come up with what it calls a Counter Disaster Plan Re Yolanda 2013. It is UCCP’s disaster response and management framework, linked with ongoing initiatives that revolve around the theme Rebuilding Lives, Restoring Creation.

Some of the elements of the framework are presented here.

**OBJECTIVES**

Generally, to

- serve disaster-affected members of the church as well as the vulnerable sectors in communities where local churches are located; provide immediate relief services to those affected by Typhoon Haiyan;
- add to the overall improvement of the general well-being as well as to the enhancement of the quality of life of victims;
- hasten the delivery of services towards the recovery and rehabilitation of identified families and communities; provide
  - psycho-social interventions to victims and their families
  - livelihood and income opportunities such as seedlings, animals, livestock...
  - structures such as the rebuilding of churches, houses...
- establish an alternative disaster management framework that intends to strengthen the victims’ capacities to address the adverse effects of disasters;
- mobilize churches and set in place a church-based disaster management programme;
- generate support of the national constituency and international partners in the implementation of the disaster management programme;
- initiate activities that will help mitigate climate change; and
- raise institutional and organizational capability to respond to disasters.

**PHASES**

The programme is divided into four (4) phases:
PHASE ONE: EMERGENCY RESPONSE
This involves processes that will provide immediate relief to victims. Activities include:
  o assessment of needs
  o drawing up a budget
  o initial survey/establishing preliminary data base
  o procurement of food, goods and supplies
  o widespread relief operations
  o distribution of immediate relief to victims
  o provision of temporary shelters
  o establishment of a system of coordination of response to victims
  o provision of emergency medical services
  o assistance in providing temporary shelter for victims, e.g, church halls that lend sanctuary to evacuees...

PHASE TWO: RECOVERY/REHABILITATION
This includes processes by which the affected communities, damaged livelihood and infrastructures are restored to their normal level or their actual condition prior to the occurrence of the disaster or calamity. Activities include:
  o clearing/cleaning of debris
  o procurement/distribution of basic household supplies – utensils, cooking facilities, health and sanitation items
  o providing health/medical services
  o psycho-social interventions - trauma healing, pastoral counseling
  o provision of livelihood opportunities
  o setting in place health and sanitation facilities
  o installation of water and renewable energy sources
  o infrastructure development/building of houses

PHASE THREE: MITIGATION
This includes measures or activities aimed to minimize the impact of a hazard on a community in terms of casualties and damages. Activities include:
  o tree planting activities
  o alternative livelihood sources
  o setting up of seed banks and nurseries
  o construction of dikes
  o installation of potable water systems and renewable energy sources...

PHASE FOUR: PREPARATION
This involves pre-disaster actions and measures to avert or minimize loss of lives and properties, such as, but not limited to,
  o community survey
  o community organizing
  o education and, training
  o evacuation planning
  o stockpiling
  o hazard mapping
  o advocacy
Because of the scope and extent of the damage caused by Typhoon Haiyan, some of the activities may overlap. But it is a cycle of activities that are mutually reinforcing.

At the moment, UCCP is strengthening its capability to deal with the situation. But, we are grateful for the initiatives undertaken by many local churches, conferences, individuals and groups - themselves undergoing financial difficulties, but continue to care and extend various forms of support.
We thank our partners for their continuing accompaniment, indeed through periods of high and low. This time, in the aftermath of the tragedy that could have crippled us, you have given us hope and the means to serve those who suffered painfully in this another disaster.

May God’s abundant grace and mercy be upon us all!