

"UU Partnership Churches in the Philippines"

Talk given by Fellowship Member Bert Brun June 17, 2007

The Fairhope Unitarian Fellowship is a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), which governs loosely the structure and activities of over 1000 churches in North America. Currently, Fairhope Unitarian Fellowship has before it an option as to whether or not it wishes to enter into a partnership relationship with a Unitarian Universalist Church in the Philippine Islands.

The parent Unitarian Universalist Church of the Philippines there is headquartered in Dumaguete, Negros Island, and is also affiliated with the Unitarian Universalist Association. It serves as the organizational headquarters for 14 village churches on Negros Island (two new small congregations have just been started also in Manila). These churches' parishioners are mostly poor and landless, obliged to work for very low wages in vast sugarcane lands owned by major international companies.

In the last three years, thanks to a highly successful 2004 model project coordinated by the village of Nagbinlod, local authorities and the UUA's Partnership Church Council, running water has been brought to Nagbinlod for the first time, after many years of trudging over a mile to a crude well for water. Now other villages are organizing to gain their own water supply. Many other projects are either already operating or soon will be underway to improve the quality of life of villagers and reduce dependence on big outside interests. These aspirations depend on the labor of villagers themselves to bring them to reality, helped by funding from the other partners mentioned.

Currently, two UUCP churches are partnered with North American UU churches with three more in the offing. (Nagbinlod is presently "unchurched")