

During week of prayer, Philippine churches set aside differences

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Baguio City, Philippines, January 19 (ENInews)--In the midst of a governance crisis that threatens to divide the Philippines, several churches say they are marking the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity by setting aside doctrinal differences, praying and working for change.

"Even amidst new political trouble that threatens to polarize again our country, we Christians can take the lead in getting together in prayer," the Rev. Felipe Ehican of the Lutheran Church of the Philippines told ENInews on 18 January.

The week of prayer usually takes place between 18 and 25 January. Resources such as texts for ecumenical services are sponsored jointly by the Geneva-based World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Roman Catholic Church's Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity.

Ehican was referring to the current Senate impeachment proceedings of Supreme Court Justice Renato Corona, which began 16 January, also the start in the Philippines of the celebration of the week of prayer.

The Rev. Joie Galinato of the United Methodist Church likewise stressed the importance of strengthening the unity of the Christian population to prevent the country's division as a result of the impeachment trial of Corona.

"The impeachment trial is now dividing the country between the pro-Corona and the anti-Corona," Galinato told ENInews. "But we can help a lot in bridging divisions by our coming together in prayer as Christians from various denominations, united in our common desire for righteous and good governance."

Roman Catholic lay leader Dr. Raylita Calimlim also acknowledged and prayed for Bukal, an ecumenical pastoral group. She said Bukal volunteers from Baguio City travelled to southern Philippines to counsel and rehabilitate traumatized

survivors of a deadly storm there last December. "Bukal has been doing a great job in helping bring change," she said.

The week of prayer in this northern Philippine city was organized by the Baguio-Benguet Ecumenical Group, an interdenominational organization, which has been celebrating the Vatican and WCC-led weekly activity since 1999.

As a spin-off of the week of prayer in past years, the ecumenical group has been actively involved in social and political advocacies such as honest, peaceful and clean elections, anti-gambling drives, and good governance. "We seek to sustain these as we continue to pray and work together," said Galinato.