

## MORAVIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

HOME AND OVERSEAS

FEBRUARY 2017

### Women's World Day of Prayer Service on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2017 (written by the Christian women of the Philippines)

Theme: 'Am I Being Unfair to You?'

Our MWA theme for this year is 'Come journey with me', so it fits in well for me to say 'Come journey with me to the Philippines' this month in anticipation of next month's service.

#### **Setting the scene:** (Please look at your map.)

The Philippines is an archipelago of over an amazing 7000 islands with about 1000 of these populated, although less than half of these are larger than one square mile. In fact, eleven islands make up 95% of the total land mass, with the three main islands or divisions being Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao which are represented as stars on the Philippines flag. Being so close to the equator and located on the Pacific Ring of Fire makes them prone to earthquakes and typhoons with the most notable one, Yolanda (Haiyan) in 2013, claiming thousands of lives. The climate is tropical; oppressive humidity and plenty of rain, with a wet and dry season each year which have been affected by climate change during the last decade resulting in an increase of monsoons, devastating storms and even drought.

The Philippines has among the highest rates of discovery in the world when it comes to wildlife, with 16 new species of mammals discovered in the last ten years. Over 100 species of mammal are unique to the Philippines, but many are under threat from hunting, logging and development, with illegal poaching and over-hunting wreaking havoc on conservation efforts.

#### **Just a little history:**

From the time about 67,000 years ago when the first humans are believed to have arrived, the population of the Philippines has grown and developed through centuries of colonisation by the Spaniards (briefly interrupted by the British in the 18<sup>th</sup> century) and occupation by the Americans when they established a military government in 1898. The country gained Commonwealth status in 1935 with planned independence from the USA in 1946. However, this was interrupted by Japanese occupation during the Second World War before the Treaty of Manilla finally established the Philippine Republic as an independent nation. Following the peaceful People Power Revolution of 1986 when President Marcos was ousted from power, there was a return to democracy for the country.

Today, after years of political and economic instability, the Philippines is one of Asia's fastest growing economies. However, major problems remain, like the wide income and growth disparities between the country's different regions and socio-economic classes, the corruption and weak infrastructure.

#### **Women in the Philippines:**

The Philippines is among the largest migrant countries of the world, with the majority of Filipino migrants going to the Gulf countries and 90% of the domestic workers being women. Whilst there are laws to protect migrant workers they remain vulnerable to exploitation, violence and discrimination.

Filipino women are brave and resourceful. They take on the role of breadwinner as they go abroad as service crew, domestic helpers and carers or skilled nursing professionals. Wherever they are, Filipino women are known for their gentle, smiling and friendly caring nature and many of our hospitals and care homes benefit from so many who are employed here in our country. Sadly, their gentle, caring nature has too often been seen as docile subservience and then exploited. During the colonisation and occupation years many were forced into subordination through prostitution and

sexual abuse and this still continues today. Poverty aggravates their vulnerability to violence and exploitation, with women and girls who are sexually or physically abused or trafficked often unable to find help or escape from it. According to the statistics, one woman in five aged between 15 and 49 years has experienced physical violence.

The National Council of Churches in the Philippines has provided education and training for women leaders to eliminate violence against women. The Baptist, Methodist and United Church Women's Organisations took on a continuous campaign against violence towards women and children.

'Am I being unfair to you?' is the theme for the 2017 service. How does the situation in the Philippines speak to you about justice and fairness in the world? When we hear those in our own country complain about unfairness and poverty, do we also appreciate the laws we have to protect us and the comparative stability of our social care, even knowing how flawed it may be? Consider the many places in our world where these things are still unknown and pray for the women and young girls who remain so vulnerable to so much that we thankfully have had no experience of ourselves.

Wendy Hopcroft (WWDP)

'It's not fair' cries the child  
Who can't have his way.  
'It's not fair' cries the world-  
Its cry every day.

'It's not fair' we all say  
When things don't go right.  
'It's not fair for the oppressed  
Who then stand up and fight.

'It's not fair if we miss out  
On luxury treats.'  
'It's not fair' cry the hungry  
With nothing to eat.

'It's not fair there's no pay rise;  
I'm just missing out.'  
'It's not fair' plead the unemployed,  
We're going without.

'It's not fair. Our home's small  
And we aimed to go higher.'  
'It's not fair' plead the homeless,  
'Just a roof to keep us drier.'

'It's not fair' calls the criminal,  
'I have been caught.'  
It's not fair for the victims  
When havoc's been wrought.

It wasn't fair for Jesus to die on the cross.  
It wasn't fair for God to suffer such loss.  
But through His redemption  
He saved us from death.  
And he hears our 'Not fair's  
With His last dying breath.  
He's there for the downtrodden,  
hungry, oppressed.  
His justice and mercy  
Will see them all blessed.

*Helen Mason*

