

Valley Faith Shows "Paglago" In Filipino American Ministries



Paglago is a Tagalog word that means “growth from the inside out.” And in this California-Nevada Annual Conference – where sixteen United Methodist Churches with a highly significant presence of Filipino Americans reach out to their communities – the word translates into powerful passion for Christmas Institute participants work on art ministry for their MTV Night, December '03, under the theme, “Living @ the Speed of Life.”

Take Sunnyvale Valley Faith UMC, for example. “We’re focusing on small group ministries, discipleship and mission training,” says the Rev. Felicisimo (Fel) Cao, pastor at Valley Faith. “I am a very vocal supporter of *paglago* .”

One aspect of the *Paglago* program extends across this Annual Conference through the yearly Christmas Institute for youth and young adults. Held at Alliance Redwoods in Occidental the week after Christmas, it provides a place for hundreds of young Filipino American United Methodists to worship God, have loads of fun, gather by interest groups and share confidentially as “families,” explore their call to ministry and learn in Bible studies, all in a setting that strengthens their faith and develops their leadership with one another. “We are excited to have the Christmas Institute,” says Rev. Cao. For the December '03 Institute, from Valley Faith alone, “we now have sixteen trainers and eighteen trainees.”

The National Association of Filipino American United Methodists organized and mandated the National *Paglago* Commission in 1999 to develop a comprehensive strategy and plan for Filipino American ministry and church growth throughout our denomination. Rev. Ruth Ocera Cortez, our Shasta District Superintendent, served as chairperson of the 1999-2003 national commission, and commission members included Rev. Arturo Capuli and Rev. Estan Cueto (serving ex-officio) as California-Nevada representatives.

Within this Annual Conference, Filipino American United Methodist churches are fulfilling *paglago* mandates of church growth; cooperative ministries and apportioning of resources; support for children, connected to the Bishops’ Initiative on Children and Poverty; the Christmas Institute and Summer Institute for youth; Chore Group Initiatives for young adults, and the Ministry in Transition program.