



THE CHANCE OF A LIFETIME

Attending the Asia West Pacific Section's Gathering in April 2011 will be the chance of a lifetime to visit the Philippines in the company of Friends from a wide spectrum of Friendly traditions.

In addition to the Section Business Meetings there will be a programme including two international speakers – Paul Anderson from George Fox University in USA and Janet Scott, from Britain Yearly Meeting – and presentations on FWCC's Global Change Committee which is looking at ways to project Quakerly views into the international debate on global change.

Friends from around the world responded to John Ocol's plea for help when the main Friends Church in Manila was inundated by 15 feet of water. The Friends in Manila are hosting the Gathering, and I'm sure will be anxious to show the work they are doing to reduce the impact of future typhoons. Their young people are recycling rubbish usually dumped in the drains, blocking them, by sorting and selling it to pay for their involvement in the Gathering. At the same time they are learning different ways to tackle a very real problem in their city.

Bonifacio Quirog, an unprogrammed Friend who attended Australia Yearly Meeting in Adelaide last January, has used some of the money donated by Friends to set up a multifaith young people's group including both Muslims and Christians, which is cleaning up the beaches near Bohol, south of Manila. He has said that he would welcome visits by Friends after the Gathering. Bohol is about an hour's flight south of Manila, costing approximately USD55 for the round trip, and reasonable accommodation can be arranged in a hotel there. We will be able to see for ourselves how the donations are being used not only for cleaning up their environment, but also to build trust between the two faith groups.

Friends will meet Cristina Montiel, an attender at the unprogrammed Friends Meeting in Manila who arranged training courses at the Ateneo University for psychologists and social workers to assist them in counselling flood victims.

Halfway through the Gathering there will be a choice of three guided excursions – Tagatay to see Lake Taal, created when a massive volcano erupted. If time permits we may continue to Pagsanjan area. There are waterfalls and bamboo rafting through the canyons. If anyone saw the movie *Apocalypse Now*, the last section was filmed there.

The second trip is to 'old' Manila where a 'must see' is Fort Santiago, within Intramuros, which is the old walled city. In Fort Santiago is a museum dedicated to Dr Jose Rizal. On the 30th December 1896, Rizal was executed,

after a mockery of a trial for the underground revolution against the Spanish. Rizal is celebrated as the National hero each 30th Dec with a public holiday at which the President attends the Rizal memorial. There are 400 year old churches/cathedrals and other fascinating architecture.



The third trip is to the famous shopping areas of Manila- in the Marikina area and the 3 or 4 mile long street market at Bacalaren. Then there is China Town, with gold and jewellers stores as well as cloth by the mile. Transport will be using the rapid transit trains.



The venue is a safe Christian Retreat Centre set in gardens on a hill outside Manila. You can book air-conditioned bedrooms (for an additional fee). Full board (including the excursions) will cost AUD400 for the entire time. This is payable either before you arrive in Australian dollars (see below) or after arrival, in Philippine Pesos which are available from ATMs at the airport (approx 40 Philippines pesos to the Australian dollar).

-view over Manila from Centre

There will be provision for both unprogrammed and programmed Meetings for Worship, local speakers, home groups and interest groups, time in the evenings for singing and the opportunity to interact with participants from other countries and form new friendships.

Because we hope that a number of Friends from countries such as India, Indonesia, Nepal, Myanmar (Burma), as well as the Philippines will participate, we are asking Friends from other countries to pay a little extra to cover their costs. In addition we would appreciate it if you could add AUD10 to each payment, to cover bank charges.

If you register before December 31st, the registration fee will be AUD400. After that date there will be an extra charge of AUD50. So the total cost, if you register before December 31st will be AUD810, and after that date, AUD860.

TO REGISTER

Please download the Registration Form from the AWPS website www.fwccawps.org, and under 'Next AWPS Section Gathering' click on 'REGISTRATION FORM 2011', fill it out, and send it to Valerie@fwccawps.org. Then send your registration fee (with or without your accommodation fee) by bank transfer in Australian dollars, to Westpac Bank at 433, Portrush Rd, Glenside SA 5064, SWIFT Code WPACAU 2S, BSB 035 041, FWCCA WPS account number 182250, adding an extra bank charge of AUD10 for each transfer. Please make sure to include your name in the transfer information.



Manila by night