



Grace Across Culture: A Celebration of Faith and Heritage

On Monday, October 13, 2025, the First Church Women welcomed the J1 Filipino Teachers of Volusia and Orange County in a delightful evening with a power point presentation, delicious Filipino foods, customs, costumes, and entertainment as they presented a program called, ***Grace Across Culture: A Celebration of Faith and Heritage.***

J1 Volusia County Teachers

Lissa Marie Eyana (River Spring Middle - 8th grade math)
 Angeline Canida (Manatee Cove Elementary - ESE 3rd-5th grade)
 Khristabel Bentino (River Springs Middle School - 7 grade math)
 Mary Anne Garcia (Freedom Elementary - 1st, 2nd and 3rd)

J1 Orange County Teachers

Rebecca Barroga (Renaissance Charter School - Chickasaw)
 Mary Grace N. Dingo (Shingle Creek Elementary - ESE 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grade)
 Lorelie P. Piedad (Ivey Lane Elementary - Multigrade ESE)
 April E. Espanola (Lakemont Elementary - Multigrade ESE)
 Emmanuel Colete (Renaissance Charter School - Science)
 Dodie Rabanso (Renaissance Charter School - Science)

A special thank you to Rose Adams and Norma Tupaz for their love, guidance, support, friendship, and faith to arrange a wonderful evening event with all the J1 Filipino teachers. Thank you to all the volunteers that helped with decorations, food preparations, and clean up. We express great gratitude to all the J1 teachers from Volusia and Orange Counties for sharing their culture, heritage, faith, food and music with their students, our church and community. Thank you to all the First Church Women and guests that attended the Grace Across Culture: A Celebration of Faith and Heritage Program. It was truly a spectacular event that filled our hearts with joy.

Prayer: Rose Adams opened the program with an opening prayer.

Lissa Eyana was the emcee for the evening. She introduced the teachers with a great sense of love, pride, and a big beautiful smile.

Statement of Purpose: Angeline Canido, thanked everyone for coming to the event and expressed gratefulness for all the help and support the teachers received from First Church Deland and our women circle for helping them in setting up their apartments as they transitioned into our schools and community 2 years ago. She shared that the J1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program. They are teaching in Orange and Volusia Counties and sharing their Filipino culture with their students and communities. This program represents their country to the world and to strengthen a community connection while teaching about cultural differences and celebrating unity and diversity.

Presentation of Participants: Khristabel Benito introduced all the wonderful teachers that participated in the event. They were a delightful group of educators that showed great pride to sharing their culture, heritage, food, and songs.

Learning Tagalog Words: Mary Anne Gracia shared 3 Filipino words with us. She said there are over 170 different dialects in the Philippines, but only 2 main languages: Filipino and English, as a second language.

Kumusta (greeting): how are you; hello; hi; how is

Mabuhay (expression): Welcome!; Literally: “Live long!”

Salamat (expession): thank you; thanks



Where is the Philippines?: Rebecca Barroga shared facts about the Philippines. Their country is located in Southeast Asia. It is made up of 7,621 islands. The country is divided into 3 key geographical areas. Luzon is the large island to the north where the capital city, Manila, is located. The middle group of islands is called Visayas. Mindanao is the large island to the south.

Filipino Culture, Heritage and Values: Lissa Eyana shared a beautiful video presentation of the Pearl of the Orient Seas: Philippines. The video showed the tropical islands, beaches, mountains, people, foods, architecture.

Filipinos have strong family ties and values. They put the importance of family before anything else. They work very hard to provide and care for their family. The youth must show respect to elders, as well as to other older family members, with polite language and with appropriate respectful titles. Some very basic and common words to show respect are **po** and **opo**. They both mean “yes” in a respectful way, but are used differently in sentences. **Mano** or **pagmamano** is a gesture used in the Filipino culture that is performed as a sign of respect for elders and as a way to accept blessing from the elderly. The gesture is similar to kissing hands, the greeter bows to the hand of the older person and places his forehead on the hand of the older person.

Filipinos are also known for their hospitality, especially towards tourists and the homeless wanderers. Their hospitality is appreciated for many reasons, including: provides social connections and social harmony by encouraging cooperation, respect, and empathy among individuals and groups.

The Filipinos are warm and friendly people that has made the Philippines the top tourist destination in Asia. The hospitality industry drives the economy and provides jobs. Filipino people show kindness, respect, and generosity that creates a positive and inclusive environment for everyone.

Christianity is the dominant faith in the Philippines. It is probably the result of the Spanish Catholic rule in their country for over 300 years. Religion still plays a central role in the lives of most Filipino Americans. They believe that prayer be used to surpass problems, such as; sickness, and in healing.

Pakikisama or known as getting along with others is one of the basic skill or Filipino traits that creates unity that is often seen in schools and the work place. **Mapapasalamat** is how to show gratitude naturally with a positive attitude and a smile, even in a depressing situation. They always say, “**Salamat Diyos**” (Thank God). They also remember to return the favor to people that do good deeds for them.

The Christmas season in the Philippines starts in early September and ends in mid February. What a joyous time to celebrate!

Filipino Food

Presented by Emmanuel Colete



Rice - a Filipino staple that is served with every meal.

Chopseyu - popular stir-fried dish with a variety of vegetables, chicken, pork, or shrimp and is typically seasoned with a light sauce. This dish is a staple of the Filipino cuisine, adapted from Chinese influences.

Adobo - slow-cooked meat dish, typically chicken or pork, cooked in a savory and tangy sauce. It is commonly served with white rice.

Pancit (Bam-i) - stir-fried noodle dish, also known as, pancit bisaya, that combines two types of noodles. It is a savory and hearty dish typically made with a variety of meats like, pork, chicken and Chinese sausage, along with vegetables like cabbage and carrots.

Lumpia - fried spring rolls are found in Filipino and Indonesian cuisines. The rolls traditionally have a thin pastry skin and are often stuffed with a savory mixture of ground pork and vegetables.



Puto - Filipino steamed rice cake traditionally made from slightly fermented rice dough.

Sapin - Sapin— a popular Filipino layered sticky rice cake made from glutinous rice, coconut milk, and sugar, steamed in layers. The layers are made of different colored and flavored batters, which are often ube (purple yams), langka (jackfruit), and white or vanilla, and is typically topped with latin (toasted coconut curds).

Cassava Cake - a dense, sweet Filipino dessert made from grated cassava, coconut milk, condensed milk, and eggs topped with a thick caramelized layer of coconut milk, condensed milk, and sometimes cheese or macapuno (sweet coconut strings).



Closing Remarks and Prayers: Teresita Norma Tupaz thanked Pastor Mark, Mae, Rose and Lewie for leading the group of teachers, and First Church DeLand for all the love, support, and continuous help. She asked for prayers for the Philippines, since they are experiencing earthquakes and after shocks.

Filipino Songs: Dodie Rabanso entertained us before and during dinner with singing several songs. He is very talented singer with an amazing voice. What an amazing gift!

Notes submitted by Mary Anne Arico

GRACE ACROSS CULTURE:



**A CELEBRATION OF FAITH
AND HERITAGE**

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First Church Women
Monday, October 13, 2025

Attendees and Guest

Mary Anne Arico
Hollie Hastings
Rose Adams
Melody Monk
Norma Tupaz
Denise Miller
Dawn McCabe
Jessica Smotherman
Pam Barlow
Monica Chen-Ryan
Elise Ryan
Amely Ryan
Karen o'Reilly
Linda Wilson
Sandy Patterson
Shirley Burtnett
LisaHightower
Teeter Mauldin
Denise Glilman
Shelly Webster
Libby Goens
Kathy Hunter