



# UCJCI UPDATE

A WEEKLY NEWSLETTER OF THE UNITED CHURCH IN JAMAICA AND THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

THE UNITED CHURCH  
IN JAMAICA AND THE  
CAYMAN ISLANDS

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OUR VISION: "Touching  
Lives, Nurturing Disciples,  
Seeking Transformation  
through Christ"

SYNODICAL THEME:  
"Renewal and Transfor-  
mation: Discipleship for  
Life"

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## PRAY FOR:



Jamaica and Cayman, which have seen 25 and 4 confirmed cases, respectively, of the **coronavirus**; and against the further spread of the disease.

The local and world economies which are threatened by the spread of the coronavirus.

Volume 6: Issue 11

Wednesday, March 25, 2020

# Being the House Church

**T**he United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, along with other Christian churches in the two islands, has had to face up to the changing medical landscape in being the church, because of the impact of the global **Coronavirus pandemic known as COVID-19**.

The past two weeks have seen churches going virtual and increasingly offering online worship services. However appealing this model of being church may be, I wish to argue that the church has not done sufficient reflections on being church during a time of global and national pandemic.

This paper argues that church leaders have become too comfortable with the settled institutional way of being church, that it has neglected to identify and reflect on other authentic ways. We have neutralized the other ways bequeathed to the followers of Jesus to be the

church, and have settled for the expensive and inflexible institutional maintenance model.

Could it be that COVID-19 is inviting the **United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands** congregations to rediscover and embrace the family-/home-centered model of being

churchment within **Jamaica and Cayman**, should our congregations grasp the opportunity to be the church in the homes of every member's family.

## The Biblical Foundations of House Churches

Paul wrote an epistle to Philemon, in which he stated: "To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker—also to Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier—and to the church that meets in your home: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philemon 1:1-3).

Again in Acts 17:1-9, we are informed that when Paul left the synagogue in Thessalonica, he met converts in the home of Jason.

In the book of Acts, the home of the mother of Mark was the base for assembly of early Christians. Also, in the home of Lydia in Philippi (Acts 16:14-15), the believers met for worship. (Continued on Page 2)



## CELEBRATIONS!



70:

**Rev. Donald Williams**

**March 28**

## UCJCI GOVERNANCE

### GOVERNANCE

The United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands is governed by courts at the congregational (**Congregation Meetings**), regional (**Council Meetings**) and national levels (**Synod**), the highest court being the Synod. It is headed by a **Moderator**, who presides over the Synod, and whose duties include giving pastoral care to the Ministers within the denomination. The **General Secretary** is the administrative head of the church and is assisted by four **Regional Deputy General Secretaries**, who Head the four (4) Regional Missional Councils: **Cayman Islands Regional Mission Council**, **Southern Regional Mission Council**, **North-Eastern Regional Mission Council**, and **Western Regional Mission Council**.



## BEING THE HOUSE CHURCH

(Continued from Page 1)

The early/young church, after the resurrection of Jesus, was a minority faith, and within a context of political persecution that impacted their health and safety, they met in their homes for meetings and fellowship. They did not place priority on purchasing or erecting buildings for the purpose of holding worship. The church, as the gathered community that followed Jesus, met in the homes of the believers. The only building used for church meetings in the early Church was the homes of believers.

They were groups of family congregations that were small enough for a lot of interaction. In the passage from *1 Corinthians 14:26-40*, Paul described the worship experience as that in which the worshippers engaged in full participation to teach, prophesy and speak and interpret the tongues, as well as to share with each other. Each of the house churches had an Elder or Elders to give leadership.

### The Response of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands

The response of the **United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands** to this coronavirus pandemic should not be defined only by closing the physical and public church building, because of the health and safety risk. This sends a negative signal to the public that the church can only function through the gathering in buildings open to the public. This is inconsistent with our Reformed theological heritage. ***The church is not a building! Rather, the church is the people of God.*** Within traditional Jamaican and Caymanian cultures, we grew up having family prayers at early morning and before bedtime. The church was first located in the homes of believers, not in a public building within the community. The church is still the church when it is scattered. ***Indeed, it is the scattered church that grows numerically!***

Therefore, ministers should strategize with their Board of Elders how best to organize the church to function as “**House Churches**” in different homes where no more than 10 persons will meet for weekly worship. During this period of lockdown, the **United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands Synod**, through its ministers, lay pastors and lay leaders should prepare weekly home liturgies, not lasting more than 30 minutes, that give emphasis to prayers, hymns/choruses, the lectionary readings and reflections. These services can be led by one of the family members. During the weekly worship, an offering for the work of the UCJCI ministry and mission should be collected and presented to the office during the week. Singing and prayers from homes in the community will be a powerful witness that the church is present and active.

Home/House Churches are not new in our modern era. The growth of the church in Communist China has happened primarily through Home/House Churches. In other contexts where there are civil wars that prevent public gathering of the church members, the church went back to the homes of the members.

Let the **United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands** return to the homes of her members during this period of coronavirus pandemic.

- Contributed by: Rev. Dr. Roderick Hewitt, President of the International University of the Caribbean



Send comments and news about your congregation to: [ucjiupdate@gmail.com](mailto:ucjiupdate@gmail.com)

## LEADERSHIP CORNER

### Don't Pretend You're Perfect

**O**ne of the worst things leaders can do is to expend energy trying to make others think they're perfect.

Since nobody is perfect—not you, not your peers, not your boss—we need to quit pretending. People who are real, who are genuine concerning their weaknesses as well as their strengths, draw others to them. They engender trust. They are approachable. And they are a breath of fresh air in an environment where others are scrambling to reach the top by trying to look good.

Here's how I recommend you approach "getting real" to become a more effective leader:

**ADMIT YOUR FAULTS**—The people who work alongside you know your weaknesses, faults, and blind spots. If you doubt that—and you have great courage—just ask them! When you get real and admit your shortcomings, what you're doing is making yourself approachable and trustworthy. And when you make mistakes, admit them and quickly ask for forgiveness. Nothing does a better job of clearing the decks relationally.

**ASK FOR ADVICE**—It has been said that advice is what we ask for when we already know the answer but wish we didn't. Isn't that often the case? Some people won't ask for advice when they don't have an answer because they are afraid it will make them look bad; they only ask for advice if they can't make up their minds. How much more quickly would people get things done if they asked for help when they needed it

instead of trying to fake it until they make it?

**WORRY LESS ABOUT WHAT OTHERS THINK**—People who consider the opinions of others too much often perform too little. They get caught up in pleasing others.

If you want to gain credibility with your peers, you will have to be yourself. If you're genuine, will everyone like you? No. But pretending to be something you're not won't make everyone like you either. It will actually make you less likeable.

**BE OPEN TO LEARNING FROM OTHERS**—Have you ever met someone who felt compelled to play the expert all the time? Such people aren't much fun to be around after a while, because the only input they seem open to is their own. And as the saying goes, people won't go along with you unless they can get along with you.

If you really desire others to see you as an approachable person, go a step beyond just willingness to admit your weaknesses. Be willing to learn from them. Each person has the potential to teach us something. This is the Learning Principle (John C. Maxwell). If you embrace that idea, you will discover two things. First, you will learn a lot, because every time you meet someone, it is a learning opportunity. Second, people will warm up to you.

**PUT AWAY PRIDE AND PRETENSE**—Too often we think that if we can impress others, we will

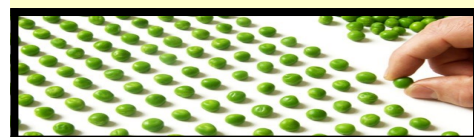
gain influence with them. We want to become others' heroes—to be larger than life. That creates a problem because we're real live human beings. People can see us for who we really are. If we make it our goal to impress them, we puff up our pride and end up being pretentious—and that turns people off.

If you want to influence others, don't try to impress them. Pride is nothing more than a form of selfishness, and pretense is only a way to keep people at arm's length so that they can't see who we really are. Instead of impressing others, let them impress you.

It's really a matter of attitude. The people with charisma, those who attract others to themselves, are individuals who focus on others, not themselves. They ask questions of others. They listen. They don't try to be the centre of attention. And they never try to pretend they're perfect.

Robert Hillyer said, "*Perfectionism is a dangerous state of mind in an imperfect world. The best way is to forget doubts and set about the task at hand. If you are doing your best, you will not have time to worry about failure.*" That's good advice. If you always do your best, your peers will respect you. And if they respect you, they will listen to you and give you a chance. And that's where leadership starts.

Source: "*The 360 Degree Leader*" by John C. Maxwell





## COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS FEATURE

UCJCI'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19  
CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

**Individual Prayer:**  
Every Wednesday  
from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.

(2 Timothy 1:7)

### COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS ADVISORY

#### OLDER MEMBERS AND INDIVIDUALS WITH CHRONIC ILLNESSES

- Keep in touch with them so that they do not feel isolated.
- These persons are the most vulnerable to the virus.
- Ensure that they have adequate resources such as food, medicine and other essential items.



### POINTS FOR PRAYER THIS WEEK:

- \* Those who are infected with the disease.
- \* Our healthcare workers who are on the frontlines.
- \* Our elderly persons.
- \* The needy and those who have lost, or will lose, their jobs.



UCJCI'S RESPONSE TO  
COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS

Please sing  
**"Amazing Grace"**  
on Wednesday,  
March 25, 2020 at  
12:30 p.m.