



CAYMAN ISLANDS REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL

WEEKLY UPDATE

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A Gentle Giant of the Faith

*By Rev. Norbert Stephens
General Secretary, UCJCI*



On this 27th day of June 2020, we sadly acknowledge the passing of A Gentle Giant of the Faith, the Rev. Ashley Alexander Smith.

Rev. Ashley Smith served the UCJCI, the wider church and the people of the Caribbean in various capacities since his ordination to the Christian Ministry in the antecedent Presbyterian Church in Jamaica sixty-five years ago. For forty-one of the sixty-five years he served as congregational pastor, in

rural, inner-city, suburban and regional congregations /charges, namely, Lowe River, Retirement, St. John's, Hope, St. Paul's (Lockett Avenue) and the Presbyterian Church in Grenada. He served as Chair of numerous Synodical committees and as Moderator of Synod for two periods, 1969-1972 and 1979-1980.

His ecumenical commitment made him one of the early advocates for the formation of the Jamaica Council of Churches (JCC) and the Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC). He served as President of the JCC between 1969 and 1972, during which time the Anglican Church in Jamaica rejoined the Council and the Roman Catholic Church became a member. He was a member of the Committee which prepared the Caribbean Churches for the inauguration of the CCC, in 1973. He served for many years as a member of the Executive Committee of the CCC. His ecumenical reach was also global in nature including work with PCUSA, Presbyterian Church in Ireland, United Church of Canada and WCRC/CANAAC.

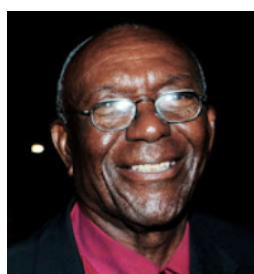
In the period September 1981 to July 1990 he served as lecturer, Deputy President and President consecutively of UTCWI. He taught courses in the areas of Religion and Society, Theology and Religion. He redesigned the course entitled "Church and Development" and designed courses in Contemporary Trends in Theology and Introduction to the Study of Religion. It was during his term as President that the University of the West

Indies approved the programme of studies leading to the Award of Graduate Degrees in Theology. It was also under his stewardship that arrangements were concluded for the collaboration of UTCWI and Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, U.S.A. for a Doctor of Ministry degree for persons involved in pastoral leadership across the Caribbean region.

Rev. Smith's role in promoting theological education and his prolific writing on theology and development has set him apart as a pioneering theologian from the Reformed tradition who have contributed greatly to the development of Caribbean Theology.

For his exceptional service to theology and education Rev. Ashley Smith was conferred by the State with the Order of Jamaica in October 2013.

Rev. Ashley Smith was a person with firm convictions about the role of the Church in the creation and sustenance of a society that is truly human and reflective of the principle of the Kingdom of God. He unapologetically tackled issues, trends and debates concerning race, identity and destiny within Jamaica and the wider Caribbean. He was a major public figure in the 1970s and served as Religious advisor to the late and former Prime Minister Michael Manley during the heightened era of East/West tensions over Cuba.



Rev. Smith never lost faith in the ability of the people of Jamaica and indeed the Caribbean to overcome obstacles to their development. He was convinced that the most formidable challenge to national development is in the area of family life. With this conviction he missed no opportunity to mentor children, young people and parents, helping

them to become productive and responsible citizens equipped with the capacity to function with optimum effectiveness in an increasingly complex world.

A Gentle Giant of the Faith has transitioned this life and has left behind a rich and enduring legacy. He has fought the good fight, finished the race and kept the faith, now there is in store for him, the crown of righteousness.

We hold in our prayers his life partner Winifred, their children, Faith, Grace, Bertrand and the extended family.

May His soul rest in peace and light perpetual shine upon him.

Ashley Smith – A Gentle Giant

*Excerpt from 'Ashley Smith – A Gentle Giant'
by Rev. Devon Dick (Source: The Gleaner, Oct. 31, 2013)*

“Smith was hailed as a revolutionary Presbyterian minister. During the time he was being trained for the full-time pastoral ministry, the churches in the Corporate Area and the main towns were all pastored by Scottish missionaries. It was believed that persons like him were not competent to pastor those urban churches. Furthermore, his colleagues were fearful that the inflow of funds from overseas would dry up if the missionaries were to stop coming to Jamaica. Additionally, local pastors were not expected to study to the level of getting theological degrees. Smith smashed the glass ceiling and became pastor of St John's United located in Hannah Town, and later St Paul's United on Lockett Avenue, Kingston - churches once reserved for Scottish missionaries. Also, he headed the United Theological College of the West Indies (UTCWI); moderated his denomination and got degrees from highly respected universities. He was also religious adviser to former Prime Minister Michael Manley.

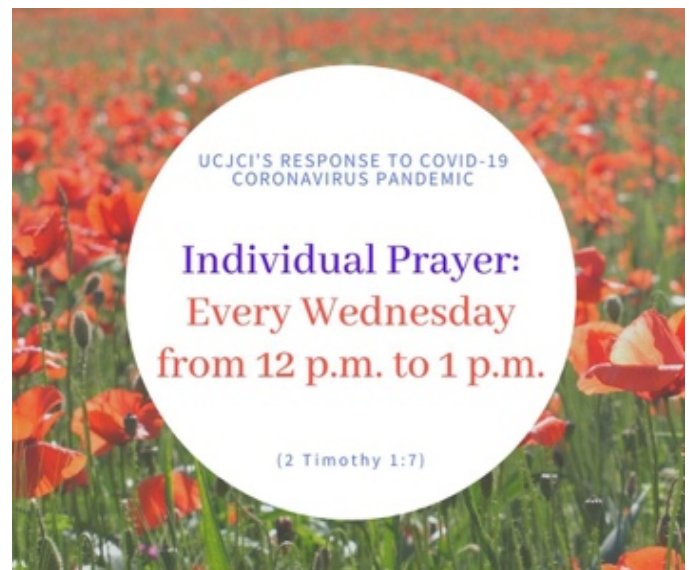
Smith became one of the leading theologians of this era and his seminal works include Real Roots and Potted Plants and Emerging from Innocence, which addressed the issue of theological emancipation. He was always seeking after truth, which, in the understanding of his friend, Dr Burchell Taylor, pastor of Bethel Baptist Church, was critical, analytical and practical.

Smith had some practical gems. On the night of the function, he related how his eight-year-old grandson claimed that persons from the lower classes say 'wata' while persons from the upper classes say 'water'. Smith was also one who insisted that we should not say 'the poor' but 'persons who are poor.' He believed that we ought to affirm the humanity of persons rather than defining them based on their financial status, sexual orientation or creed. Therefore, it would not be 'gay', but rather persons who are in a homosexual relationship or persons who practise homosexuality. A person is more than what he says or does sexually. Everybody is somebody, first and foremost.”

“An implication of the inherent worth of everyone is his belief in equality of all. Smith instilled in his students that their writings could stand up against the best in the world. At UTCWI, he taught Church and Development and was the only lecturer who encouraged us to publish our essays...Smith believed that our sermons ought to be worthy of publication... (and)... was always encouraging others to do further studies, including working towards a PhD.”

**THE CHURCH IS THE CHURCH
ONLY
WHEN IT EXISTS FOR
OTHERS...
NOT DOMINATING, BUT
HELPING AND SERVING.
IT MUST TELL ...
WHAT IT MEANS TO LIVE FOR
CHRIST,
TO EXISTS FOR OTHERS.**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer



UCJCI'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19
CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

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

(2 Timothy 1:7)



on Radio Cayman 89.9
every Sunday at 7:45 am

July 5. Rev. Alice Blair

July 05. (Sunday) 5th Sunday after Pentecost

All local United Church congregations are open- Please contact the offices for details.

Worship Services will still be available via video links.

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