



# 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:

\*The family of **Rev. Mil-  
lard Edwards**, who  
has passed on.

\***Rev. Kimberley  
Hines**, whose aunt-in-  
law, **Mrs. Avis Lynch**,  
has passed on.

\***Rev. Dr. Maitland  
Evans**, who is recov-  
ering from surgery.

\***Miss Lesley Hare**,  
who is not well.

## "I WILL BLESS THE LORD AT ALL TIMES"

In the midst of the pandemic, we are even more so called to bear witness to Christ and His redeeming love for all of humanity.

**Psalm 34:1-10,22** is known as the *Benedicam Dominum* – I will always bless the Lord

We offer prayers for persons confirmed positive and express condolence for the with the families of the persons who have died as a result of COVID-19 worldwide.

The inability to breathe, the suffering and pain, the acute shortage of bed spaces, test kits, the struggles of not being with family in the final moments of life, the limitations on burial rites and rituals accompanied by the restrictions and lockdowns, the economic and social costs, the challenges to mental health, educa-

tion, technology, travel, the closure of places of worship and the stagnation of progress in some areas of society inter-alia have attended almost every country in the world during these ten months of 2020.



The Church has been challenged to be a credible witness and a bearer of hope, healing, and grace. The Church has not been untouched and has experienced setbacks and many of the traditional ways of doing and being church have changed significantly.

I wish to invite you into a space and time which helps us to call to mind the goodness of God in the midst of the challenges of our lives.

The Psalmist David wrote

this Psalm known as the *Benedicam Dominum* on a specific occasion, but it has become a generally used Psalm of Thanksgiving to God. David wrote it as a reminder to himself and as instructions to all people everywhere to give thanks to God continuously.

'I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall ever be in my mouth.'

**What does it mean to 'bless the Lord at all times? Hebrew yabrech – means praise**

The Hebrew word translated 'bless' or 'praise' means literally 'to kneel', the implication being that of to kneel in worship.

We are familiar with God's blessings upon us, but what does it mean for us to bless the Lord?

The phrases 'bless the Lord' and 'bless God' are

## “I WILL BLESS THE LORD...”

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found primarily in the Old Testament.

The Psalms, especially, are filled with the psalmists' blessings upon God.

### **A companion Psalm is Psalm 103**

Verses 1-4: 'Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, *bless* His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good *things*, So *that* your youth is renewed like the eagle's.'

1. We bless God when we offer to God our praise and blessings because God deserves them.
2. We bless God when we worship God in Spirit and in truth. (John 4: 24)
3. We bless God when we acknowledge all that God has done for us and we attribute the glory to God alone. ( *Soli Deo gloria* )
4. We bless God when our lives become living testimonies of what God has done for us and our lives become an example of sincerity for others to follow. Our integrity and honesty must be foremost in all that we say and do as Christians.

5. We bless God when we tell someone about God's awesome works and ways. Leading someone to Christ is essential to our calling as Christians and each one of us has the responsibility to bear witness to the transformative power of salvation.

6. In the midst of the throes of this pandemic – can we still bless and we should!

God has promised to bless us even though we are underserving. Unlike God's blessings upon us, which are wholly undeserved and by God's

mercy and grace, our blessing God is done out of an understanding that God is the true praiseworthy Creator and our heavenly Father.

May I invite you to see God through the veil of pain and concerns and to join with the Psalmist in affirming:

**1 I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall ever be in my mouth.**

**2 I will glory in the Lord; let the humble hear and rejoice.**

*(Contributed by Rev. Dr. Yvette Noble Bloomfield, RDGS, Cayman Region)*

## UCJCI MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

The United Church Men's Fellowship (UCMF) commemorated its 2020 National Men's Fellowship Sunday on Sunday, October 11, 2020.

Men's Fellowship Sunday is celebrated annually on the second Sunday of October. Notwithstanding the present restrictions on worship services, many United Church congregations across the three regions in Jamaica were led in worship by members of their respective Men's Fellowships.

The contributions of the men varied across congregations. Some services were led and sermons preached by men's fellowship members. Messages for the day were brought by the Moderator, Rt. Rev. Gordon Cowans and the President-General, Mr. Carlton F. Rodney, Sr.

This year's theme for Men's Fellowship Sunday was "Remain Faithful, Despite the Challenges – God is Able" was chosen as a way to exhort Men's Fellowships across the United Church to continue to execute their missional objectives despite prevailing challenges.



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

## LEADERSHIP CORNER

# The Church Leader's Brain in the COVID Crisis: 5 Tips

Church leaders today are scrambling to find creative, innovative, and workable strategies, plans, and ideas to minister in our Covid crisis. I appreciate the plethora of blogs, podcasts, video-casts, and seminars offered to help us respond well. However, there is a fundamental process that precedes 100% of all ideas.

And what is that process? Thinking.

Thinking precedes **leadership**, outreach, preaching, and pretty much everything. And *clear* thinking precedes good leadership...and all the rest.

In fact, the word *mind* (which is where thinking happens) appears over 160 times in Scripture. It was one of the Apostle Paul's favorite words and he admonishes us to 'think' in certain ways ([Phil. 4.8](#)).

So in this age that requires great ideas and great leadership, how can we foster good thinking?

Here are five suggestions to help keep your mind clear, focused, and working at its best, given the circumstances.

**1. Recognize that brain fog is normal.** Realize that as things change hour to hour, we will sometimes feel that we are in a brain fog, finding it difficult to focus and concentrate. This is normal because the covid crisis uncertainties incite our fight-flight centers (the limbic system) that in turn dampen the ability for our brain's CEO (the pre-frontal cortex) to think most effectively. This is normal. You are not losing your mind. When this happens, don't get frustrated at yourself because when you do, you engage your fight-flight center all the more and clear thinking gets further diminished.

**2. Build in regular breaks.** Take a few minutes break every hour or so. When we use our brain, it uses energy. But over time, that energy gets depleted and we can't focus as well and our willpower gets depleted. It's called ego depletion. That is, mental energy and willpower is a limited resource. Taking breaks can refresh your brain. I use an app called [Time Out](#) (I have no ties to this company) on my computer. I set it so that every hour it slowly dims my screen for three minutes. During those three minutes I do a short mindfulness exercise by closing my eyes and taking slow deep breaths. This is proven to refresh your brain.

**3. Label your feelings.** This Covid crisis is stirring up many unpleasant feelings like worry, **anxiety**, anger, and fear in church leaders (Is our church going to survive?). The Christian world often implies that good leaders should not have these feelings. As a result, we stuff or ignore them. However, neuroscience has discovered that when we suppress negative emotions, ironically, it makes those emotions even stronger (called the ironic process theory). So, label your difficult emotions during this time. Be honest with God how you are feeling. In doing so, you will take the power out of them.

**4. Mind your mind.** Everywhere we turn we are reminded about the horrors of **Covid-19**. However, without intentional conscious awareness, these terrible thoughts can become a regular part of our subconscious (and conscious) thinking. It's called rumination, a mental process when we repeat and mull over negative thoughts in our mind (think of a scene on a dvd repeating over and over and over). To *mind your mind* means to periodically conduct a thought check. Ask yourself, "What am I thinking about at

this very moment?" In other words, think about your thinking (it's called metacognition). If you find you are caught up in negative thinking, change your mental channel. Referring again to what the Apostle Paul wrote about in Philippeans 4.8, he says we must think about certain things that honor God. Unless we think about our thinking, we won't know if we need to change the mental channel.

**5. Create certainty.** The brain loves certainty. It predicts what it thinks will happen next. If circumstances indicate a fair certainty of what happens next, it likes it and remains relatively calm. But with uncertainty, the fight-flight centers kick in and compromise clear thinking. How can you create certainty in a very uncertain church world? I suggest two ways. First, each morning write out your priorities, set some goals, and schedule when you plan to work on them. Creating and following a schedule will help your brain calm down because you are creating certainty. Second, read and meditate on the great stories of biblical heroes who had great faith. They lived in uncertain times, not knowing the future. But they trusted in the One who was consistently and perfectly certain, God. As a result, they experienced the benefits of certainty.

A few google searches will reveal many great ideas on how to do church in the Covid crisis. But remember, good thinking always precedes great ideas and great leadership, which we need in these uncertain times. Practice these five brain tips to maximize your thinking as you lead, preach, and serve in these challenging times.

Source: Charles Stone  
(Church Leaders)





# 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)

UCJCI'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19  
CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

### POINTS FOR PRAYER

- \* A stop to the spread of the disease.
- \* Healing for those who are infected with the disease.
- \* Strength, comfort and peace for the loved ones of persons who have died from the disease.
- \* Encouragement for the children who are confused and fearful during this time.
- \* That persons will draw closer to God, and families draw closer to each other, during this time.
- \* That all persons will take this matter seriously, and responsibly take the necessary precautions.
- \* Support for our healthcare systems and workers who are on the frontlines.
- \* Safety of all elderly persons, those with comorbidities and our tourism workers.
- \* Provision for the needy, those in quarantine and those who have lost, or will lose, their jobs.
- \* Our local and world economies.



## UCJCI FAMILY AD CORNER

UCJCI LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES WEBINAR

### PRODUCING SERVICES FOR LIVESTREAMING



**PRESENTER  
MARLENE THOMAS**

Tips for planning and coordinating the different elements of worship services which will be streamed live

**SATURDAY NOVEMBER 7, 2020  
10 AM -12 NOON**

**REGISTER IN ADVANCE FOR THIS WEBINAR:**

[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_YZ02AIP6Skm1fx6LX\\_WbFw](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_YZ02AIP6Skm1fx6LX_WbFw)



## RESTARTING SOON!

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**Training for Lay Leaders**  
through the United Church in  
Jamaica and the Cayman Islands  
Lay Training Institute

*An empowering Christ-centred leader, producing a transformed Christ-centred church.*