



CAYMAN ISLANDS REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL

WEEKLY UPDATE

January 06, 2021

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 1

UCJCI 42nd SYNOD THEME 2021 – **Rooted, Resilient: Responding in HOPE** (Health, Opportunity, Peace, Evangelism)

Walking by Brooks of Water

By Rev. Dr. Yvette Noble-Bloomfield
RDGS - CIRMC

Please read Jeremiah 31:7-14

There is little need to rehearse the traumatic events of 2020 as we have all lived through the pandemic, and we have been able to read everything through the lens of COVID-19. This statement is not meant to in any way underestimate the debilitating effect of the pandemic on the world or to downplay the tremendous human suffering that the whole world has experienced. We have indeed suffered a great loss- loss of lives, loss of income and economy, loss of relationships, loss of routine and paths of comfort, loss of self-importance as the disease has been no respecter of person. Yes, the world has waned under the effects of COVID-19.

As we enter this new year, the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands will focus on the theme – **Rooted and Resilient – Responding in HOPE**. HOPE is to be used as an acronym – **Health, Opportunities, Peace, Evangelism** – these will become the markers of optimism and confidence for the United Church.

In this first quarter of the year, our attention is drawn to the health needs that exist around us. With the advent of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines on the shores of the Cayman Islands, many are viewing this as a marker of hope as this may lead to the re-opening of the ports of entry and the return to economic viability.

We can, despite everything we have experienced due to the pandemic, ground ourselves in Jeremiah chapters 30-33. These four chapters form the 'Book of Consolation'. They amplify **Jeremiah 29:11** which states,

'For I know the plans I have for you' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'.

In chapters 30-33, God spoke to the people in exile in profound ways which restored their faith and provided them with a renewed sense of hope. God became for them the restorer and in fact a new day dawned for the people.

This hope encompassed not only the vision of the exiles returning to Israel and Judah, but a gathering and returning of those in the wider diaspora. Jeremiah received the vision in a dream (Jeremiah 31:26) and he was instructed by God to write in the book so that the people would have a record of God's promise to them.

The promise included the unification of the nation – the Northern Kingdom taken into captivity by the Assyrians and the Southern Kingdom, taken into captivity by the Babylonians, will return to the land as a united people. There were also other **images** used in the prophetic writing to announce God's promise:

1. The broken yoke – chapter 30:4-11
2. The healed wound -chapter 30:12-17
3. The calm after the storm-chapter 30:18-24
4. A united people- chapter 31:1-30-

A nation is more than the land and the cities - it is people living, working and worshipping together under God.

Critical to our reflection are the words in **Jeremiah 31:9**

"I will let them walk by brooks of water".



Brooks of water suggest that there is life and movement. This is not a pool of stagnant water - it is a lively body which gurgles, twists and turns and meets every need that is dependent on it. That it is a 'brook' also suggest that there is a source – sometimes hidden from view that supplies this water. It comes from the rain and it is hewed from the rocks. This is an indication that there is a resource being found where it would normally be impossible or difficult to find. The path by the brooks of water – is a difficult to find path, yet when once found, it brings joy.

The people in the text were scattered and dispossessed, but God led and accompanied them. God was moved with compassion towards God's people. The text provides them with a motif of comfort against the backdrop of chaos and uncertainty.

The people needed to be re-assured of God's everlasting presence and love for them. God re-gathered Israel – the blind,

the lame, those with child and those in labor and a great company returned to the land.

The route by the refreshing brooks of water is a known concept in the Old Testament/ Hebrew Text.

“For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills.” Deut 8:7

“From thence they journeyed unto Gudgodah; and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land of brooks of water.” (Deut 10:7)

“And he is as a tree planted by brooks of water, which giveth its fruit in its season, and whose leaf fadeth not; and all that he does prospers.” Psalm 1:3

“The king's heart in the hand of Jehovah is as brooks of water: he turns it whithersoever he will.” (Prov 21:1)

“And a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the storm; as brooks of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land.” (Isa 32:2)

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE LED BY THE BROOKS OF WATER?

God will walk with us in 2021 and we will live and not die.

“Those who go through the desolate valley will find it a place of springs, for the early rains have covered it with pools of water.” (Ps 84:6)

This new year is an opportunity for a new beginning – to lay aside the sins that so easily beset us and to turn to the one who is able to refresh our bodies and our souls. This is a kairos time to reset our spiritual life and to become more in tune with our God.

A critical implication is that of cleansing and refreshment - being made clean and being filled by the waters from the brook. This echoes of Psalm 23: 2-3

“He leadeth me by the still waters, He restoreth my soul, He leadeth me by the paths of righteousness for His name's sake”.

So many of us are coming out of 2020 with the deep need to be cleansed and refreshed by the stream of living water. Our souls have been parched and tired. Some have suffered tremendous personal loss others have shared the collective grieving of the whole world.

What has made you parched, dry and perhaps unclean? Loneliness, grief, lack of occupation, deep regrets about choices made earlier in life, lack of luster, lukewarmness in our souls, lack of true love for self and others, our deceitfulness, our deep dark secrets? What makes you feel unsure and uncertain about your faith? What do you need to be cleansed from and what refreshment do you need at the dawn of this new year?

Perhaps we have been refreshed by sources that have not been for our good. We have perhaps dug our **own cisterns** and still have not found the satisfaction we yearn for.

“For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” (Jeremiah 2:13)

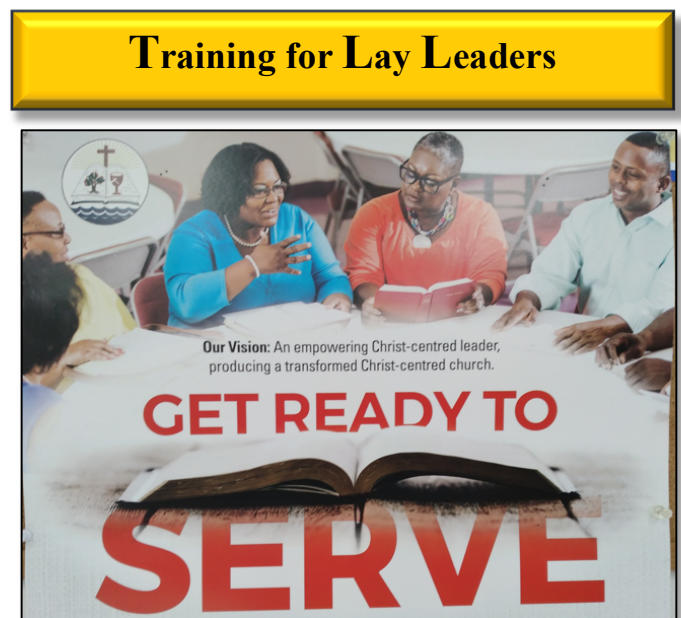
Have you been drinking from your own cistern during 2020 – if so I invite you in 2021 to drink from the divine flowing brooks of living water. We yearn to say, **“Fill my cup Lord, I lift it up Lord, come and quench this thirsting of my soul.”**

Let us remember,

“For He has satisfied the thirsty soul, And the hungry soul He has filled with what is good.” (Psalm 107:9)

“I will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint.” (Jeremiah 31:25)

In this new year, as we are led by God along the brooks of water let us open our souls to be refreshed by God.



On Saturday, January 16, 2021 the lay training programme resumes in our Regional Mission Council. This programme is designed to provide training for specific groups of lay leaders as well as for those who seek to deepen their faith and would like to become better equipped for service.

The programme will be offered in three consecutive modules (three six-month periods) targeting the following groups:

- Module 1. for Elders and interested persons
- Module 1, 2. for specialized lay leaders
- Module 1, 2, 3. for Lay Pastors

The modules are designed to progress sequentially, building on the previous one, and serving as a prerequisite for the next. The modules are compulsory for Elders, specialized leaders and Lay Pastors who have not received previous training.

Over the first six-month period, the following courses will be offered:

1. The spirituality of the leader
2. Spiritual gifts and the discernment of God's call
The role of the lay leader in congregational life
3. The leader as evangelist, disciple-maker and mentor
4. Transformational leadership
5. Communication skills
6. Strategic planning for church growth
7. Components of effective caregiving
8. Team building and conflict management
9. Leading small groups
10. Introduction to the Bible
Planning and leading Bible studies
11. Worship planning and leading
12. Church administration
13. History, ethos, doctrines and polity of the UCJCI
Understanding the sacraments

Application forms are available in each congregation (Minister or church office) for those required to participate or interested in the programme which is also free of costs for the participants.

The Season of Epiphany



According to the Church's Liturgical Calendar, on January 6, 2021, we have entered into the Season of Epiphany. Epiphany is a special day as well as a season between Christmas and Lent.

The word 'epiphany' means manifestation, revelation and it refers to the fact that Jesus is the Son of God, God's self-revelation to the world in human form. It also means a sudden, profound understanding or realization of something.

In Western Christianity Epiphany commemorates the visits of the Magi (Three Kings) who followed the star of Bethlehem across the desert to meet Jesus. This indicates Jesus' physical manifestation to the Gentiles.

For Eastern Christianity Epiphany is associated with the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River, and is seen as his manifestation to the world as the Son of God.

Like the Magi, may we, too, be open to be surprised as we continue on our journey. Like those at the river Jordan, may we have an 'eye' to see Jesus in the common and ordinary.

May we also be rooted and resilient as we respond in HOPE to the many challenges we face in our personal lives and collectively as a Church.

UPCOMING EVENTS

January 09. (Saturday)

Girls' Brigade Council Meeting -9:30 am - (Council Office)

January 10. (Sunday) 1st Sunday after Epiphany

January 13. (Wednesday)

Finance and Property MAT 6:30 PM via Zoom

January 16. (Saturday)

Women's Fellowship Council meeting -10:00 am (Council Office)

Youth Leaders National Executive AGM - 10:00 am at PYC
Training for Lay Leaders (Unit 1) - 2-4pm at PYC



on Radio Cayman 89.9
every Sunday at 7:45 am

January 10, 2021

Rev. Dr. Yvette Noble-Bloomfield and
Rev. Rohan Forrester

New Year's Prayer

As we begin a new year, let us give thanks for all we hold dear: our health, our family and our friends. Let us release our grudges, our anger and our pains, for these are nothing but binding chains. Let us live each day in the most loving ways, the God-conscious way. Let us serve all who are in need, regardless of race, color or creed. Let us lead the world from darkness to light, from falsehood to truth and from wrong to right. Let us remember that we are all one, embracing all, discriminating against none. May your year be filled with peace, abundance and love. May God's blessings shower upon you and bestow upon each of you a bright, healthy and peaceful new year. *(Rev. Marcy Sheremetta)*



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