



CAYMAN ISLANDS REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL

WEEKLY UPDATE

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

Rooting Our Spiritual Health in God Brings Us Hope

by Mr. Bryan Bothwell

Please read Exodus 20:1-17/Psalm 19

It would seem *unimaginable* that *anyone* could have failed to have been awakened to the longstanding, unambiguously inequitable realities whose groans reached a deafening din during this pandemic.

Over 2.5 million *individual human beings* have *died*, and countless others have desperately, and literally, fought for breath, and otherwise suffered, from the physical, financial and emotional ravages of Covid-19. Therefore, it is shocking to see how easily so many, including some who should have been leading facilitators of the world's response, have refused to allow their eyes to be pried open even by human distress too enormous to be obscured. It is beyond incredulous that persons have still not acknowledged the desolation, barrenness of life, and hopelessness of so many, that has taken root in so much of this world which God created to be *glorious, vibrant, life-giving, flowing with the milk and honey of opportunity, not for 'some', but for everyone*. Clearly, when *we become our own god*, the call we hear is *not to justice and mercy*, because that requires *humbleness*.

Can a Christian really believe that the *freedom* God demanded for God's people meant God was championing *my personal freedom to refuse to wear a face mask*, a breathing filter made to help *protect my neighbour's wellbeing*? Really? And when Christ declared that the truth found by *holding to His teaching will set us free*, wasn't that *free to live as He lived, selflessly*?

If ever there was a time in the lifetimes of most of us living today to see the *truth* of what God sought to *implant anew* into the nature of the people God had *freed* from Pharaoh's oppression, before God would let them enter their new home, it has been during this pandemic. The *benefit of all that it takes* in order to *enjoy the freedom to love your neighbour as yourself* should now be glaringly obvious to us all. For example, surely if a Government has to close down sections of the economy for an extended period in order to protect the health of *all of us*, then isn't it only right that the rest of us *also share* the costs of that protection? So we all help foot the bill for *our*

health, by enabling the Government to use *our* tax dollars to replace the income of those people whose jobs have had to be suspended, and to help them find different employment, etc.

Surely none of us would want to have *our own* source of income *and our* dignity being taken from us by the same act? And isn't that God's point about *loving my neighbour as myself*? In Cayman, we have been blessed during this time by the priority our Government gave to the sanctity of God-given life *and* a number of circumstances we were already blessed to be in. Nevertheless, it was clear *we too had not been providing equally just opportunities for everyone*, a basic component of that precept Jesus termed the second greatest commandment.

This has been even more glaring in other places. Who cannot have been shocked to see those long lines of hungry people forming in the richest country on earth? And *within mere days* of the pandemic being declared there, so quickly dependent on the kindness of strangers? Those types of *structural indifference, infections eating away our social and moral fabric*, so widespread around the world, were *made completely by humans*, weakening our natural resilience long before this virus made its move on us.

But we know that for the Christian, the measure of our faith and the level of our obedience to Christ is never limited to those particular sins that we individually find most obvious. So our greater concern must be, what am *I* failing to see, obey Christ in, and act on, in this time of a pandemic, as well as always?

In that regard, our Synod has led all of us in the United Church to *truly endeavour to embrace* the renewed *rejoicing*, and the *accompanying opportunity*, that life in Christ gloriously promotes, whatever our circumstances. Synod has expressed this as follows: "With a strident *conviction of faith in God* and a *determination to be faithful to God's call* to the church to make disciples, UCJCI declares we are: *Rooted, Resilient: Responding in H.O.P.E.* (Hope, Opportunities, Peace, and Evangelism.)"

As part of that, we have been looking at the necessity of *health*: physical, emotional, and starting now in March, *Spiritual Health*. And for today, we have been invited to reflect on, "**Rooting our Spiritual Health in God brings us hope**".

In this respect, I want to emphasize at the outset two core words, "*in God*". Many people acknowledge what they call, "feeling spiritual" but do not accept the *reality* of *Christ*, of *God*, or the *wholeness of God's precepts*. The invitation for us today is

to find *lasting, life-enhancing hope* by *rooting our spiritual health firmly in God*. In fact, the question that was posed for this Sunday's particular consideration firmly drives home that point: "How faithful are we to *God's commandments*?"

We read in the familiar words of today's main text, Exodus 20: 1 – 17, "*I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery. You must not have any other god but me. You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind ...*" [NLT]

We know the other "must nots", *lying, stealing, murder, misusing God's name, adultery, envy*, and the two stated in the positive, to *keep the Sabbath day holy* and to *honour our parents*. We can never afford to let this Scripture grow dim in our minds, for let us make no mistake about it, in this life we are always *in*, or on the precipice of, *a place of slavery*, one step away from making for ourselves *an idol of some kind*, or, especially in the throes of some kind of success, from *becoming our own god*.

Clearly, the world has struggled for thousands of years, and to be honest, *we all have*, to at least some extent, for Spiritual Health, rooted in God, *by faithfulness to God's commandments*. Those precepts never change, as they ensue from *God's essence of total love and constant righteousness*. And they were *not* given in *isolation* as rules to be obeyed *out of fear of the consequences* of not doing so, as unbelievers still misconstrue them, or as many try to distort them in order to impugn the concept of faith in God. Instead, God sets prisoners and slaves *free* to be the people *we had been made to be*, when created *by and in* that complete love and righteousness. Psalm 19 shows us the *beauty* of God's precepts *and of living in accord with them*:

"7 The *instructions of the Lord* are *perfect, reviving the soul*. The decrees of the Lord are *trustworthy, making wise the simple*.

8 The *commandments of the Lord* are *right, bringing joy to the heart*. The *commands of the Lord* are *clear, giving insight for living*.

9 *Reverence for the Lord* is *pure, lasting forever*. The laws of the Lord are *true; each one is fair*.

10 They are more desirable than gold, even the finest gold. They are sweeter than honey, even honey dripping from the comb.

11 *They are a warning to your servant, a great reward for those who obey them.*"

Christ confronted that persistent distortion around the precepts of God straight on, with His message that He came into the world not to destroy any of these but *so* they would be *fulfilled in Him*, so *we* could be *saved*. St. Paul spent a lot of time on this too, how *life in Christ*, total surrender to Christ as *Lord* of our *daily* lives, is the *only way* for us to live obedient to God, and thus restored to spiritual health.

I have found particularly helpful the simple account of a prisoner out on probation, who had been unable to get a job because of his record. He had come to feel he had no alternative but to go back to robbery, in order to subsist. One night he went into a church. Displayed there, were those Ten Commandments that had often been *quoted* to him. He went livid. 'Why are You always *ordering* me what I *must not do*, "Thou shalt not "do

this, "Thou shalt not" do that', he cried out to God, and anyone else listening. Then, it dawned on him, *God was not ordering him*, God was *reassuring* him, *you shall not do such things, because you do not have to.*" God is reassuring all of us of the same thing, that 'you were made for better living than that. And in my love, I have already made provision for you; trust in Christ to strengthen and guide you to never feel tempted by, or abandoned to resorting to, such things again.'

May our response to that love of God always help enable our neighbours to experience the fullness of that reassurance *along with us, truly free* from whatever would enslave us, *rescued, rooted, and resilient* in our home in Christ.



The 12th Annual Girls' Brigade National Council Tea Party Fundraising Event took place on Saturday, February 27th at Mr. Handel and Audrey Whittaker's residence in Frank Sound depicting the theme "Sparkle & Shine".



The well over 100 persons in attendance included Chairperson Ms. Debra McLaughlin, Dep. Chair Mrs. Wendy Stenning, and Rev. Dr. Yvette Noble-Bloomfield (RDGS). Youth Ministers Ms. Camile Watt and Mr. Roy McGregor acted as Masters of Ceremonies.

The event was a great success. The programme included special items presented by each company (songs, dance, poems) and such activities as arts and crafts, face painting, and games. For special treat a chocolate fountain (for all ages!) made the event even sweeter, and for refreshments, tea and sandwiches were served.

This year's Tea Party was also an opportunity to pay tribute to past Patron Mrs. Olive Miller who passed away in May 2020.

Special thanks are in order to the gracious hosts and all those who planned, facilitated and contributed to this memorable event.

Savannah United Church Highlights



Ten (10) persons were baptized by immersion at the Spotts Beach on Sunday, February 28. Pictured here with Rev. Wray are the 5 adults and 5 children who made a public declaration to follow the Lord.

SUC Annual Lenten Prayer Breakfast was held on Saturday, February 20. Pastor Cassius Feare was the Guest Speaker. Over 90 persons attended from various churches within our community, for a time of reflection, fellowship and prayer.



The training session was facilitated by Ms. Brenda Dawkins on Saturday, February 27. Twenty (20) persons from various United Churches and community organizations took part in this training session which was held at the SUC Hall.



on Radio Cayman 89.9
every Sunday at 7:45 am

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Mr. Bryan Bothwell

Published by the Cayman Islands Regional Mission Council of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands
292 Prospect Point Road
P.O. Box 1700 Grand Cayman KY1-1109 CAYMAN ISLANDS
Tel: 1 345 947 1963 Email: rdgs@ciucjci.com or cirmcinfo@gmail.com
Website: unitedchurch.org.ky

2021 World Day of Prayer Vanuatu

Press Release Build on a Strong Foundation



Women of the Republic of Vanuatu (located in the South Pacific Ocean) have prepared this year's service. The black and white sandy beaches, coral reefs with colored fishes, lovely birds, fruits and nuts in the forest, all make the islands a pristine environment but they are vulnerable to frequent tropical storms, earthquakes, cyclones, tsunamis and active volcanoes. Women, men and children of all ages are called to 'Build on a strong foundation' and live in unity, love and peace in the context of ethnic and cultural diversity like Vanuatu and so many other places around the world.

World Day of Prayer is an international, inter-church organization which enables us to hear the thoughts of women from all parts of the world; their hopes, concerns and prayers. The preparation for the day is vast. An international committee is based in New York and there are national committees in each participating country. Regional conferences meet to consider the service and then local groups make their plans. Finally, at a church near you on Friday 5 March 2021 people will gather to celebrate the service prepared by the women of Vanuatu.

The Day of Prayer is celebrated in over 170 countries. It begins in Samoa, and prayer in native languages travels throughout the world – through Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe and the Americas before finishing in American Samoa some 39 hours later.

For further information and resources, together with details of services in your area see the WDP website: wwdp.org.uk
(source: wwdp.org.uk)

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 7. (Sunday) 3rd Sunday of Lent

March 9. (Tuesday)
Bethesda Counseling Centre Board Meeting –

March 13. (Saturday)
Lay Leaders Certificate Course Day 3/13 – via Zoom

March 14. (Sunday) 4th Sunday of Lent
Girls' Brigade Service - GB week begins

March 15. (Monday)
CIRMC Council Executive Meeting – via Zoom