



CAYMAN ISLANDS REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL

WEEKLY UPDATE

August 25, 2021

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 34

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

Finding peace in anxious times

By Mrs. Raquel Forrester

For many families, these last few days before the reopening of school is a time to restructure and tighten home rules and to reintroduce the necessary routines. It is also a time to shop for school supplies and uniforms. Some of us seem to be at peace amidst the hustle and bustle of back-to-school preparations. We have things under control!

But have we stopped to think about those parents who struggle to find their children's school supplies and uniforms? What about those children who are anxious about going into new classes and meeting new teachers? What about those children who are anxious because they find it difficult to engage in school activities and make new friends? What about those children who have low self-esteem and those who struggle with their schoolwork? What about those parents and teachers who are beginning to dread the early morning traffic? Then, there are those students who are anxiously awaiting the reopening of school because school for them is the only escape they have from the challenges they experience at home. There are so many pressures and anxieties as the school year begins.

It is human nature to feel afraid. It is natural to become anxious. It is normal for events in our day-to-day lives to derail or disturb our state of wellbeing. The reality is that problems and changes are part of our natural existence, and every single human being will encounter challenges at some point in their life. In John 16 verse 33b, Jesus said "In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." Jesus is asserting that there will always be trouble, there will always be issues that cause us to be unsettled, anxious, or even rob us of our peace. But His presence, His peace will help us to overcome.

In John chapter 14:27 Jesus says to His disciples "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." This promise by Jesus is a welcoming breath of fresh air. It brings a sense of calm to a troubled situation. The peace that Jesus speaks of in John 14:27 is the Greek word Eirene (i-ray-nay) which means security, safety, prosperity. This peace comes when we have a relationship with Him; this peace comes from reading His word and spending quality time with Him; this is the kind of peace we should seek in difficult times; this peace

is long-lasting and life-giving. Jesus also said that He does not give His peace in the way that the world gives peace.

The peace that the world offers has no stability. For example, for almost twenty years there seemed to have been some semblance of peace in Afghanistan and now there is chaos. Recently we thought that with the creation of the vaccine the world would see the back of COVID-19, but now there are new variants that are even more transmissible.

Here in the Cayman Islands, we have enjoyed a COVID-free environment for over one year, but the move toward reopening comes with some degree of anxiety and fear of the new transmissions. So, the peace that the world gives is short-lived, but the peace that comes from Christ gives stability, relieves anxiety, and emboldens the fearful.

The presence of Christ in our lives teaches us that irrespective of the competing events around us, we can have peace. As we learn to trust Christ more and more, as we experience God's faithfulness, we find this peace in Christ, and we become people of peace. Therefore, when we have experienced the peace of Christ, we become peacemakers, and when we become peacemakers, we are able to share Christ's peace with others in word and deed.

As peacemakers, we will find it easy to heed to the command in James chapter 1 verse 19-20, that states, "19 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20 because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires."

Amidst challenges, there is a propensity toward unrighteous anger and speech which certainly does not glorify God. James instructs us to "be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry" (James 1:19). This is a recipe for peace-making and peaceful living. Only Christ can give us this peace. We cannot fabricate it. We cannot conjure it. We must rely on the Holy Spirit's transforming work in our lives to bear this fruit.

So, as we return to school as administrators, educators, students, custodians, parents, caregivers, let us ask God to fill our hearts with His peace. Let us ask God to completely envelop us in His peace. Let us pray that we will find comfort in his goodness and peace today. May we mirror our Lord who is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and rich in love. (Psalm 145:8)

"Blessed are the peacemakers" – Matthew 5:9

“COVID & Beyond”



By Phil Tanis

Posted on August 10, 2021 (wcrch.ch)

The third “circle” of the World Communion of Reformed Churches’ (WCRC) “COVID & Beyond” discernment process concluded with an online meeting on Wednesday, 4 August.

“We are gathering all that we have heard over the last two months, placing it before this group, and attempting to discern forward particularly in terms of what we as a Communion and as member churches can do together,” said Philip Vinod Peacock, WCRC executive secretary for justice and witness.

Themed around “witnessing” and held during the period of Pentecost, this circle included presentations from and about NIFEA (New International Financial and Economic Architecture), human sexuality, youth, AIPRAL (Latin America), CANAAC (Caribbean and North America), and NEAAC (Northeast Asia).

Springing from the story of Pentecost in the Book of Acts, Allan Boesak drew parallels with the Roman Empire of that time and today’s world, calling on the Communion to be inspired through the Holy Spirit.

“The church may not be ‘expert,’ but we know that without the love of God which calls for solidarity, compassionate justice, and respect for the rights and humanity of others, our world will perish. We know that without the radical politics of Jesus our politics is no more than calculated casuistry that leads the world from disaster to disaster,” Boesak said.

“Disease, political power, peace, human rights and climate change, and economic instability are major forces driving the development of the region,” said Yueh-Wen Lu, former WCRC vice-president from Asia and a member of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. “We lament those who died because of COVID-19, and we mourn those who passed away because of natural disasters caused by the dramatic weather. We honour those who were sentenced to jail simply because they wanted to defend both the freedom of speech and the democratic politics they used to have. We remember those who are struggling for their daily lives because of the economic recession.”

“So much harm, so much ‘terrible distress’ has been done to peoples and the beautiful world of North America and the Caribbean—in the name of Jesus—that we are hard pressed to think that any sort of response from churches could be seen as trustworthy,” said Angela Martins, convenor of the CANAAC Steering Committee.

In North America critical issues presented were systemic racism and the historic and continuing abuses of Indigenous people, while in the Caribbean environmental justice and caring for creation were raised as urgent issues to address.

“COVID-19 is testing whether we are willing to make sacrifices in choosing how we live in order that others may live,” said Norbert Stephens of the United Church of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands.

Dario Barolin, AIPRAL executive secretary, listed seven critical areas where a vital church is needed: international interference, impoverishment and the concentration of wealth, climate crisis, migration, state-sponsored violence, gender violence, and continuous catastrophes—which lamentably are every day events—including in the environment and politics across the region.

“Our urgent call is not to feel that we have lost, that we are the victims—it is to articulate a new, regional ecumenics to seek following the love of Jesus Christ,” said Barolin.

“Young people have been affected by the pandemic in the sense that they have learned to live and grow up in the midst of this crisis. Many young people have also learnt to live with loss during this pandemic, loss of loved ones, loss of affection, loss of a sense of touch and loss of stability both on the economic and emotional front,” summarized a presentation by the WCRC Youth Network.

“To be reformed is to be restless” is what strongly resonated among the youth. But there was a mourning that the church, stuck in its traditions and practices, was reluctant to change with the changing context; that the church was good at reaching out in charity but was unable to address questions of structural and systemic change. This was felt particularly in the context of climate change and ecological crisis.

“We need to reclaim religion as inclusive and disallow using violence against anyone. Is it possible to reconcile the gender-diversity gulf in our Communion?” asked Beth Symes, addressing human sexuality.

Asir Ebenezer, general secretary of the National Council of Churches of India, suggested that the Communion and its members could follow the guidance of “four L’s” when discussing human sexuality: Listening, Learning, Loving action, and Leaning on God’s grace for guidance and being slow to condemn.

“Perhaps like no other crisis before it, the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the fragility of human life, the preciousness of health, and the essentiality of care,” said Athena Peralta, the World Council of Churches program executive for the economy of life. “This crisis presents an incredible opportunity for deep reflection and transformation.

“Overall, NIFEA calls for fresh systems of global governance and policies rooted in justice, care, and sustainability and creating an environment where such initiatives can take root and flourish,” said Peralta.

Boesak urged the Communion to, “Ask the Pentecost question: ‘What must we do?’ This is the answer. Stand where God stands; fight for justice, fight for the poor, the excluded, the defenseless. Let that spirit of wildness and boldness loose upon the world. ‘This Jesus who has been taken up from you in

heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven' (Acts 1:11). The same place where that violent wind comes from; the same place where the wildness was born; the same place from where the boldness has been loosed, not to settle on the head of only one, but all of you; to burn in your hearts and on your tongue so you can set the world on fire for the justice of the coming reign of God. So on the lips of the angels, all the many, many, words spoken on that great day, come to mean just seven: "Trust the Spirit: Be wild! Be bold!"

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) is the largest association of Reformed churches in the world. It has 233 member denominations in 110 countries, together claiming 100 million people. The United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands is a member of the WCRC.



In Other News



Youth Minister of the GT Charge Mr. Roy McGregor leading the 'Children's Time' last Sunday at the South Sound UC.



Youth Worker Ms. Itza West with a card box 'Goliath' made by the children during the East End-Gun Bay Charge VBS.

HAITI APPEAL

Please continue to remember in your prayers our Caribbean neighbors, the people of Haiti. The recent assassination of the nation's president followed by a destructive earthquake causing hundreds of fatalities and widespread damage and the passing of TS Grace have left the country reeling and in dire need.

The UCJCI is in the process of offering financial support to the relief efforts in Haiti through established contacts there. Please, make a contribution towards the relief efforts this coming Sunday, August 29, 2021. Local congregations will remit the special donations to the Cayman Regional Office. Thank you!

UPCOMING EVENTS

August 29. (Sunday) 14th Sunday of Pentecost

The United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands
Cayman Islands Regional Mission Council

175th Anniversary

HOPE IS HERE!

Back to Church
Sept. 12, 2021 Sunday

PLEASE REMEMBER

to prayerfully and actively participate
in this ministry.



on Radio Cayman 89.9
every Sunday at 7:45 am

August 29, 2021
Mrs. Raquel Forrester

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@cicucjci.com or cirmcinfo@gmail.com
Website: unitedchurch.org.ky