



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)

Selfless Service

By Rev. Rohan Forrester
(Chair of Council, CIRMC)

Please read Mark 8:27-38

Putting the interests of others before ours and going an extra mile to alleviate other people's suffering, is a serious measuring stick of our faith in the God of Justice.

September 11th marks the **175th Anniversary** of the United Church's (formerly the Presbyterian Church) mission in the Cayman Islands. As we celebrate this significant milestone in our church's history, we are called to retrace our steps and renew our calling to selfless service to the people of these islands. The story is recorded as follows:

In 1845 Rev. Hope Waddel, Scottish Presbyterian missionary in Jamaica was on his way to Scotland to present his case for a mission to Africa when he was shipwrecked at East End and later reports on the spiritual destitution of the locals. In the spring of 1846, Rev. William Niven, on his way to Scotland stopped at Cayman and observed the situation firsthand; while in England he learnt from the Secretary of the Wesleyan Missionary Society that they were not interested in future missions in the Cayman Islands. He then sought the help of the Scottish Board who offered their assistance in finding a volunteer to go to Grand Cayman.



Rev. James Elmslie

In July 1846 on his return from England, Rev. William Niven addressed the Presbytery of Jamaica and placed the matter before them for consideration. The Rev. James Elmslie who was serving in Green Island, Hanover, Jamaica volunteered to go with these words, "If no one else will go, I will." So, on September 11, 1846, Rev. James Elmslie at age 50 set foot ashore on Grand Cayman with his family and in the company of Rev. William Niven and the rest is history.

If the goal of the then Presbyterian Church was to offer selfless service to the people of these islands, then Rev. James Elmslie laid the foundation when he answered the call to serve in the

Cayman Islands 175 years ago. After 175 years, we celebrate the church's mission in five districts through the establishment of nine congregations, a school – Cayman Prep and High, Bethesda Counselling Centre, the Beth Shalom Mission House and ministry to children and youth of all ages.

We are reminded throughout scripture that selfless service is a radically counter-cultural approach to serving Christ and others. It is Christ who calls us and invites us, to be selfless, denying self and taking on the very nature of a servant in a world where people give to get, work to get paid and, love to be loved in return. We've also heard the frequently asked question, "What's in it for Me?"

As Jesus' followers, selfless service, should not be just something that we do. Rather, selfless service should reflect who we are. Selfless service is who we're called to be at our very core. So, having an attitude of selflessness in our professional life or vocation should be the current, the next, and the last thing on our minds as followers of Jesus.

The problem is that there are those who want to follow Jesus in their self-promoting, self-centered, and selfish-oriented ways, but Jesus' teaching is diametrically opposed to that approach to service. Jesus said in Mark 8:34-35, "*Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.*"

Here I think it is important to be clear about what Jesus means by taking up the cross. Jesus is not talking about the suffering that is simply part of life. Neither is he telling us to seek out suffering or martyrdom. Jesus himself did not seek it, but he foresaw that it would be the inevitable outcome of his mission. In fact, Jesus' portrait of selfless service is anything but attractive or easy.

Jesus speaks of losing our lives for His sake, and for the sake of the gospel. Therefore, taking up our cross means to be willing to suffer the consequences of following Jesus faithfully, whatever those consequences might be. It means putting Jesus' priorities and purposes ahead of our own comfort or security. It means being willing to lose our lives by spending them for others — using our time, resources, gifts, and energy so that others might experience God's love made known in Jesus Christ.

How can we possibly do this? The truth is that our instinct for self-preservation fights against 'having the interests of others before ours . . . to alleviate other people's suffering'. In this sense, we are no different from the first disciples. They certainly

tried to save their lives. Though Jesus tried to prepare them for what was to come, they all deserted him, especially, Peter who not only ran away, he denied three times that he ever knew the man named Jesus.

In the Gospel of Mark, Mark's Jesus isn't so much about self-promoting a self-centered, and selfish-oriented mission. Instead, Jesus promotes the mission that He was on and not Himself. You see, at the heart of selfless service is self-denial and cross-bearing. Self-denial according to John Calvin, constitutes the sum of the Christian life. Jesus calls us to separate ourselves from what defines us. A person in Jesus' culture was defined by those to whom he belonged — usually household or kin. Here Jesus calls people to embrace new understandings of identity and service.

As Christians, we join a community defined by association with Jesus (who Himself denies conventional understandings of who He must be; see Mark 3:31-35); we enter a new family comprising all of Jesus' followers. Therefore, self-denial is not self-annihilation, but complete redefinition. In other words, we have to die to our own selfish, self-promoting, self-centered, and selfish-oriented ways and then, follow Jesus.

*"He will prepare
the way for us
to accomplish
His work."*

He will prepare the way for us to accomplish His work. So, there is no better example of giving selfless service than through Jesus Christ.

Selfless service does not mean seeking or embracing suffering as if it's redemptive or a mark of virtue. The kind of suffering Jesus acknowledges as a reality in this passage (verse 35) is a particular kind: persecution resulting from following him and self-denial and redefinition come with their risks. Likewise, cross-bearing means much more than patience or obedience. It means death. It means the resignation of one's reputation and life. Crosses imply rejection; those who bore crosses in the Roman imperial world were publicly declaring that their society or their leaders had denied them. Those who follow Jesus, associating with this vividly rejected Christ, take on an identity and a way of living which pose threats to the world's corrosive ideologies.

Following Jesus, with his self-denial and cross-bearing approach to mission, should become our lived experience wherever we work, worship and witness. It was Walter Brueggemann who reminded us that God "loves us more than we love ourselves" and, in generosity, frees us "of the anxieties and needs and hunger of... a mistaken, inadequate sense of self." In the end, "the central event in the drama of salvation is an act of humble service." Yes, "the self who is denied is the self who is received from God and given back to God in obedience and praise" (*excerpts from Walter Brueggemann: A Way Other Than Our Own: Devotions for Lent*).

Women's Fellowship Report



The Annual General Meeting of the Cayman Islands Women's Fellowship was held on Saturday, September 4, 2021, at the Council Office. Mrs Jacynthia Anderson of the Savannah United Church Branch was unanimously elected as the new President.

Words of appreciation were offered to Mrs Carol Ann Ebanks of the John Gray Memorial Church for her service as President from 2018- 2021. Appreciation was also expressed to former Members of the 2018 to 2021 Executive Committee, Mrs. Ora Hollebon (Asst. Secretary), Mrs Darlene Glidden (Service) and Mrs Francine Gardener (Recreation).

Executive Committee Members 2021–2023 :

President: Mrs Jacynthia Anderson (Savannah UC), Vice President: Mrs Tesha Thomas (Gun Bay UC), Secretary: Mrs Jennifer Dilbert (John Gray Memorial UC), Asst Secretary: Ms Winsome Radcliffe (Savannah UC) Treasurer Mrs Ernestine Powell (Savannah UC), Service: Mrs Isabel Bodden, Mrs Aileen Powell (Webster Memorial UC), Programme and Literature: Mrs Katherine Jackson (John Gray Memorial UC), Recreation: Ms Maxine Bravo (Savannah UC), Immediate Past President: Mrs Carol Ann Ebanks (John Gray Memorial UC)



Thursdays in Black

In response to the 'Thursdays in Black' World Council of Churches campaign which has been adopted in the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, the Council Fellowship has purchased black polo shirts which the members will wear on Thursdays and other occasions to signal their support for victims of gender violence and to lend their voice in the cry for gender-based violence to cease.

The Women's Fellowship will also partner with the Lion's Club of Tropical Gardens which has selected raising awareness of

challenges of gender-based violence in the Cayman Islands as their platform for 2021-2022, under the leadership of their President Ms Maxine Bravo.

2021 Women's Fellowship Gathering

The Gathering will be held at the Savannah United Church on Saturday, October 16, 2021, from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm. The focus will be on raising awareness on the issues surrounding gender-based violence in the Cayman Islands.

Annual Service of Thanksgiving

The Annual Service of Thanksgiving will be held at the William Pouchie Memorial Church on Sunday, November 28, 2021, at 6:00 pm. The new Executive Committee will be installed during the Service.

Programmes

The following programmes will continue to receive support from the Women's Fellowship:

Young Families Programme – John Gray Memorial Church

Francis Bodden Home – Savannah United

The Pines Senior Citizens Home – All Branches

Boyz to Men Mentoring Programme at the John Gray High School – Women's Fellowship Council

John Gray Memorial UC Afterschool Program Reopens

By Ms Kristin Jackson

Following a long break due to Covid-19, on Monday, September 6, 2021, the John Gray Memorial United Church (West Bay) resumed its much in demand After School Program.



Rev. Louis Sully leads the children in devotion and singing

On opening day, we had 23 children, but by now, we are up to 32 and quickly running out of space as we cap at 40 students. We currently have two staff and four volunteers assisting in

this ministry, and naturally, we are looking for as many volunteers as we can get!



Sturdy little schoolbags, all in a row.



An amazing 'Homework Tank' - with REAL-LIVE fish!



Snack-time is everyone's favorite!

The JGMC ASP runs from 2:30 – 6:00 pm daily and offers children an enriched, safe, Christian environment where they not only come to learn about Christian values but also to complete their homework and have a bit of fun! We have multiple outdoor activities planned such as a community garden and a simulated campsite (complete with a real tent). We are looking forward to an exciting school year!



CONGRATULATIONS!

REV. RAYMOND G. COKE,
C.D., J.P.

SIXTY YEARS OF ORDINATION!



And you will be called a priest of the Lord, and you will be named a Minister of our God. (Isaiah 61:1)



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.

UPCOMING EVENTS

September 12. (Sunday) 16th Sunday of Pentecost
Back to Church Sunday

September 18. (Saturday)

Girls' Brigade Monthly Meeting & AGM – 9:00am –
Council office
YLNE/Sports Committee Meeting – 2:00pm – Council
Office

September 19. (Sunday) 17th Sunday of Pentecost

September 20. (Monday)

Council Executive Meeting – 5:30pm – via Zoom

September 25. (Saturday)

Council Meeting – 9:00am – William Pouchie Memorial

PRAY ♦ PRAY ♦ PRAY

UCJCI responds to the
COVID-19
pandemic and other local,
regional and global
challenges as a community
of faith

Let us Pray Together

Every Wednesday

12 noon—1:00 pm

- Rev. Garwell Bacchas and family with the passing of his brother, Mike and sister-in-law, Marcia.
- The climbing number of COVID 19 infections in Jamaica.
- Patients, families and workers in the health sector in Jamaica
- Members of staff with relatives affected by COVID 19.
- The people of Haiti and Afghanistan
- Rev. Dr. Norman Francis in hospital

“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18



Cayman Islands Regional Mission Council
Sundays at 7:45am on Radio Cayman

on Radio Cayman 89.9
every Sunday at 7:45 am

September 12, 2021
Rev. Rohan Forrester

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