



CAYMAN ISLANDS REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL

WEEKLY UPDATE

January 05, 2022

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 01

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



Being Rooted: Called to Remember God's Reassurance

By Rev. Euthman Wray

Please read Isaiah 43: 1-7

A reading of the Deutero-Isaiah text of Isaiah 43, gives one a sense of a nation in urgent need of consolation, assurance, and hope. They have been in a tough place, in a state of ambivalence or even hopelessness. The previous chapter (42) ended with the prophet giving warnings of a condition that wasn't favorable nor appealing. While Israel, God's chosen nation was ... *"His servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight..."* (42: 1), by the end of that chapter, they were described as a people plundered and looted; trapped in pits, or hidden away in prisons (42: 22f); Hope was waning. Encouragement sadly lacking.

The prophet, here in Chapter 43, in seeking to bring that sense of reassurance, first highlights even further their perilous plight, using the images of waters and rivers; fire and flame. Verse 2 reads: *"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze"*. Waters, rivers, fire and flame are harsh depictions of greatest difficulties and dangers which are very imminent and threatening. Later in verses 5 & 6, he also describes God's people as being scattered in the east, west, north and south (43 vs. 5 & 6).

In the midst of, and despite all this description of their present state and condition, God reassured God's people in 3 ways.

1. In verse 1 (chapter 43) God is the One who created, formed, named, saved, gave identity to, and summoned or called them by name! As their Creator, that settles it! They belonged totally to God and as such God, was going to do whatever God had to do in order to save and sustain them even if and while the situations prevail. As their Redeemer, God echoes, (v. 4) *"Since you are precious and honoured in my sight, and because I love you, I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life"*. Wasn't this giving a clear foreshadowing of God's ultimate redemptive plan – the willingness, even to the extent of giving God's only Son as a ransom in restoring and redeeming the lost and scattered people in the world. Paul echoes later, *"For while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8}. Israel was His!!!

2. God, through the prophet, reminds them of God's powerful, perpetual nearness. Frequently punctuated in this text we hear the words, *"I will be with you"* – when you pass through waters, when you pass through rivers, fires, when you're tempted to feel afraid. It was this presence which made all the difference in their sojourn and life: as they experienced the miraculous release from slavery, the providence, sustenance and leadership through the desert, and their going through the waters (even if and when it is the Jordan as it parted before them and closed in on the Egyptians). It was this perpetual presence which fought for them and carried them to the land of promise. God's perpetual presence made all the difference.

3. There is the reassurance that though scattered now, they will one day be gathered again. Here God reminds them that, "things will not always be like this". It is interesting to note that this promise mentions God gathering again their children, sons and daughters (v. 5 & 6), perhaps indicating that the regathering might not be imminent. Yet their comfort is in the ultimate reality of their return. The assurance is in the promise and the reality that God's presence remains with them. The history of God's relating with humanity does show that even while being scattered, wandering, God's people remained connected with God. God held them in their scatteredness and kept them onwards.

The reality of God's church today depicts a church scattered. Yet it remains gathered in the different formats, all connected by the presence of God's Holy Spirit.

In several other ways Israel's situation resonates with us today. What might be the waters, rivers and fires which depict life for you this day - As a nation, a community, a church, a family, as an individual? What depicts your sense of "scatteredness"? That

overwhelming situation? That lost or diminishing dream? That waned and depleted strength and courage to go, to be, to do? The inability to visit, travel, move at will, to hug, as was before? Is your sense of being isolated and quarantined a physical reality? Maybe emotional? Spiritual? How scattered or quarantined have been your wills, desires, decisions and dreams? Your hopes and aspirations? And the masking - of expressions, insight, foresight and vision? What waters, rivers or flooding have you been forced to swim or simply aimlessly float through? What fiery furnace characterizes life for you in this moment?

The God of Israel is Our God, your God, my God!. God not only founded this nation upon the seas, but as the Psalmist reminds: *"We are God's people and the sheep of God's Pastures"* (Psalm 100:4).

We are God's! And Israel's reassurance is our reassurance. God has summoned us by name thereby affirming our identity in God. On Sunday, we will commemorate the Baptism of our Lord Jesus, affirms this focus on water in its positive sense. It was in baptism that God the Creator affirmed Jesus' identity, *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am pleased"* (Matthew 3:17) Our baptism also affirms we belong to God. Our identity is found in God!

Like Israel we are redeemed, ransomed, restored; bought by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. In Isaiah's words, *"I, even I, am God who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more"* (43:25) Precious we are to and in God.

God's perpetual nearness is in the power and presence of God's Holy Spirit remaining with and within us. What a blessed assurance. This nearness reminds us, *"I will never leave you."* *"Whither shall I go from your presence?"* *"What shall separate us from the Love of God in Jesus?"*

Worthy of note is the phrase: *"When you pass through ..."* which suggests that that which you are going through right now is just that!! You are going through. The perspective must not be that you are in it but going through it! It will not last!! This too shall pass.

No matter the extent of the present, perhaps seemingly distracted, destructive, desolate, dislocated, fragmented circumstances. We trust God: who affirms that we are God's children. God holds us together, gathered while scattered and God dwells with and within us. We will be preserved, restored, held together, but miraculously preserved in, through and beyond this reality.



on Radio Cayman 89.9
every Sunday at 7:45 am

January 9, 2022
Rev. Euthman Wray

The Season of Epiphany



According to the Church's Liturgical Calendar, on January 6, 2022, we enter 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.

UCJCI Lay Training Institute



TRAINING FOR LAY LEADERS 2022

Offered in collaboration with The International University of the Caribbean

Get Ready to Serve!



ORIENTATION
JANUARY 29,
2022

REGISTER NOW
through your Regional
Mission Council office

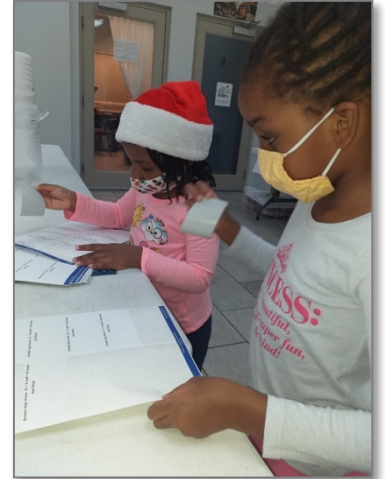
MODULE 1
BEGINS
FEBRUARY
12, 2022

TRAINING
FEATURES

- Weekend and Weekday classes
 - Saturdays 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.
 - Thursdays 6 - 8 p.m.
 - (2nd and 4th Saturdays and Thursday in the immediate week following)
- Combination of Learning in Virtual Classrooms via Zoom and in Learners' own time

For more information :
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Christmas 2021 in the CIRMC





UPCOMING EVENTS

January 08. (Saturday)

Girls' Brigade National Council Meeting – 9:30 am via Zoom

CIRMC 2021 LLT Cohort 1 Celebratory Event – 3:00 pm @ Council Office

January 09. (Sunday) 1st Sunday after the Epiphany

January 12. (Wednesday)

Finance and Property MAT - 6:30 pm via Zoom

January 15. (Saturday)

Women's Fellowship National Council Meeting -10:00 am @ Council Office

Youth Leaders National Executive AGM - 2:00 pm @ Council Office

January 16. (Sunday) 2nd Sunday after the Epiphany

January 17. (Monday)

Bethesda Counselling Centre Board of Directors Meeting – 6:00 pm via Zoom



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