



CAYMAN ISLANDS REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL

WEEKLY UPDATE

February 2, 2022.

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 05

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



Called for a Closer Walk

By Rev. Otto Menko

Please read Isaiah 6:1-8 (Isaiah's vision and call) and Luke 5:1-11 (The miraculous catch of fish)

According to the liturgical calendar of the Church, we are halfway through the Season of Epiphany. One of the meanings of the word epiphany is 'manifestation' or 'appearance'. This meaning is clearly expressed through the presentation of the newborn Jesus as the Savior to both Jews (represented by the shepherds) and to the Gentiles (represented by the Magi) in the nativity narrative.

But Epiphany has another meaning, too. Epiphany is also an experience of a sudden and striking realization. We may be familiar with what is known in psychology as an 'Aha!' moment, when we unexpectedly realize or fully comprehend something. However, having an epiphany is more profound and much deeper. Our lectionary readings touch upon this aspect of Epiphany.

Becoming aware of God's presence

In the Old Testament passage, the prophet Isaiah gives us a personal account of what he experienced one day while worshipping in the temple. The day began like any other day, except, on this particular occasion, he was unexpectedly taken hold by a vision. In this vision - for the first time in his life - Isaiah came face to face with God's presence. It was an experience that shook him to the core. He was awe-struck by God's splendor and majesty and the worship offered by the heavenly beings.

Let us jump 750 years into the future to the shores of the Sea of Galilee, also known as Lake Gennesaret. The setting is as ordinary as in Isaiah's case. A young and popular teacher named Jesus was addressing the crowds. Nearby, fishermen were washing their nets. One of them was Simon Peter. To Peter - like to most people - Jesus was no more than a kind, compassionate and wise teacher blessed with special powers. Peter certainly looked up to Him with great respect. But he was completely unaware of Jesus' real identity. He must have felt great pride as this famous teacher and healer chose Peter's fishing boat as a speaking platform. When Jesus asked him to move his boat to deeper water and cast his net out, he did so, albeit reluctantly, and only out of respect. What happened next

deep sleep, who, upon awakening, become aware of their surroundings, their actual, 'real' reality. Isaiah and Peter became aware of the reality and presence of God. They both remind me of Jacob who, after waking up from his dream in which he saw a ladder connecting heaven and earth, thought, "Surely, the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it." (Gen 28:16)

These two accounts point to a fundamental truth of our faith worth considering. We believe that we are always in the presence of God, everywhere and every time, but, for strange reasons, we are unaware of this. What we find here is a dissonance between knowing and experiencing. It is like the difference between knowing what love is and being in love. Knowing and believing that we are always in God's presence is one thing but being conscious of it and experiencing it is another thing altogether.

Naturally, our mind and our thinking are so tied up with the mundane, with the superficial, with what is right in front of us that we become insensitive and oblivious to the fullness of God's reality and presence. It is so easy to forget to look beyond the visible and see that which is not so obvious. We may spend hours, days, or an entire lifetime knowing about but not experiencing the presence of God, and the spiritual realm that is hiding behind what is visible.

In a sense, Isaiah and Peter were privileged to experience something so extraordinary, which in turn led them to a life-altering realization. Some of us may have had experiences in our life that led to similar outcomes. God may choose to shake us up, to wake us up to God's reality and very presence through events, situations, or people, but those instances are atypical, exceptional. This doesn't mean that we must languish, being deprived of living in the awareness of God's presence in our everyday life. We can cultivate a mindset; we can nurture a way of being that allows us to live mindfully in the presence of God. How? By exploring and implementing simple but effective ways that can help us to retune our mind and soul throughout the day. What we may need is a regular, gentle reminder on our phone to say a word of prayer, or a Bible verse, or maybe a song we chose for the day. We might choose to keep a small physical reminder with us. The possibilities are endless. It is up to us to figure out how to go about it and what works best for us.

Becoming a person after God's heart

Such awareness has great transformative power. As we have seen in the case of Isaiah and Peter, waking up to God's reality also woke them up to their own reality. They saw themselves in God's light, through God's eyes and what they saw was not

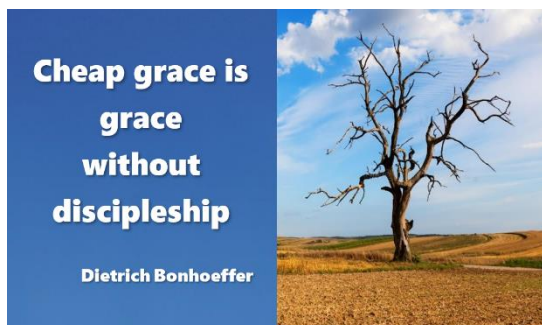
pleasant. Isaiah cried out, “Woe to me!” I am ruined!” Similarly, Peter fell before Jesus, saying, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” A glimpse of God showed Isaiah and Peter the contrast between the holy and the unholy, the divine and the mortal. In the blink of an eye, they experienced the profound reality of God; they were confronted by God’s holiness which in turn made them recognize their own woeful inadequacy and corruptness. This inevitably led them to their admission of sin.

The response to Isaiah and Peter was not that of condemnation but of assurance and a call. Isaiah was told, “...your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.” (v. 7) Upon hearing the voice of the Lord asking, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” the prophet responded by saying, “Here am I. Send me!” To Peter’s confession, Jesus responded with the words, “Don’t be afraid, from now on you will fish for people.” (v. 10).

Assurance and call always come together. When we receive forgiveness, we also receive the invitation to look beyond ourselves, our limitations, our weaknesses, shortcomings, or circumstances and accept God’s invitation for a closer, spirit-filled existence. Our response to God’s call is as important as accepting God’s forgiveness.

Saying ‘yes’ to God’s call means a lifetime commitment to discipleship and service, a daily submission and realignment of ourselves to God’s will and purposes. Saying ‘yes’ means that we allow God to continuously shape, mold, and transform our life. This way we can slowly and gradually become a person after God’s heart, whose life, words, and actions glorify God, through whom God can reach out to others. Finally, saying ‘yes’ also means accepting the price we must pay for our transformation and obedience, a price paid not in one big lump sum but along the way, in many ways and in installments. True and authentic discipleship is costly. The life of Isaiah and Peter was filled with unpleasant assignments, internal and external conflicts, heartaches, troubles, and suffering (according to tradition, Isaiah was sawed in half and Peter was crucified upside down). Yet, this is still incomparable to the price Jesus Christ paid for our salvation on the Cross of Golgotha. Salvation is free, but discipleship has its own costs.

We might never have such profound experiences as Isaiah or Simon Peter, yet we can nurture and develop a spirit within us, aware of God’s constant presence. This, in turn, will set the stage for our lifelong transformation to become more and more ‘Christ-like’, not for our own sake and edification but for those who – just like us – need to become aware of God’s presence and need to become people after God’s heart.



**Women’s Fellowship Sunday
in the CIRMC**



Members of the East End United Church Women’s Fellowship with Rev. Rohan Forrester, Minister of the East End – Gun Bay Charge on January 23, 2022, on Women’s Fellowship Sunday.

UPCOMING EVENTS

February 06. (Sunday) 5th Sunday after Epiphany
Lay Training Graduation Celebration – 2:00 pm on UCJCI YouTube channel

February 12. (Saturday)
Training for Lay Leaders Module 1 begins (Topic 1-2) – 9:00 am - 2:00pm - via zoom (see more details below)

February 17. (Thursday)
Training for Lay Leaders Module 1 (Topic 3)– 6:00pm – 8:00 pm (see more details below)

February 13. (Sunday) 6th Sunday after Epiphany

UCJCI Lay Training Institute
TRAINING FOR LAY LEADERS 2022

Offered in collaboration with The International University of the Caribbean

Module 1 - 2022

Training Day 1 – Sat. Feb. 1., 2022 – 9:00am
- Spiritual gifts and the discernment of God’s call
- The role of lay leader in congregational life

Training Day 2 – Thu. Feb. 17, 2022 – 6:00 pm
- The spirituality of the leader

For more information, please contact cirmc.info@gmail.com

ATTENTION!

The topics of the **UCJCI Training for Lay Leaders Certificate Course 2022 Module 1** can be audited on request. Please contact the Council Office for further information.

Telephone: 947-1963 or Email:
cirmc.info@gmail.com or rdgs@ciucjci.com



The Moderator
of The United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands
and
the President
of The International University of the Caribbean



cordially invite you to

THE UNITED CHURCH LAY TRAINING INSTITUTE

LAY LEADERS CERTIFICATE COURSE GRADUATION CELEBRATION

Sunday February 6, 2022
2:00 p.m.

The event will be livestreamed via UCJCI YouTube channel

In-person gathering at Hope United Church
will be accommodated for specially invited guests only



Fellowship Breakfast



February 26, 2022

at 8 AM

Morritt's Resort

Queen's Highway, East End

Theme: An Ordered Life

Guest Speaker

Rev. Dr. Yvette Noble- Bloomfield

Deputy General Secretary
The United Church in Jamaica and the
Cayman Islands

Cayman Islands Regional Mission Council

Cost : \$25.00

All are invited



Cayman Council Women's Fellowship



on Radio Cayman 89.9
every Sunday at 7:45 am

February 06, 2022
Rev. Otto Menko



CAYMAN ISLANDS
REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL



Ash Wednesday Virtual Gathering

March 2, 2022, 9:00 am

Rooted, Resilient: Responding in HOPE

In the Spirit of Transition

Guest Speaker:
Rev. Norbert Stephens

Tune in to Elmslie Church YouTube channel



BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP

HAVE YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW LOST A LOVED ONE TO SUICIDE?

The APF's Bereavement Support Group provides free, private, and confidential grief support, in a safe place for adults to heal from their loss and to be equipped with the tools for moving forward.

JOIN THE APF'S BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP
24 FEB - 31 MAR | BETHESDA COUNSELLING CENTRE

Location: Bethesda Counselling Centre, Unit 4, 68 Mary St, George Town

Time: 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM

Frequency: Every Thursday for 6 weeks


Dates Active: Thursday, 24 February - Thursday, 31 March

Contact: edu@alexpantonfoundation.ky



About the Facilitator:

April Lewis is a licensed Mental Health Counsellor with over 20 years of experience in therapy and counselling. Ms Lewis holds a Master of Arts degree in Christian Counselling and a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice. She has worked with the Cayman Islands Government as a Counsellor, for the Employee Assistance Program as Director, and installed one of the first online therapy programmes in the Cayman Islands.


**Cayman
Keswick**
2022
'All One In Christ'

All meeting Sunday evenings: 6:00—7:30 p.m.

Feb 6 @ Cayman Islands Baptist Church

Published by the Cayman Islands Regional Mission Council of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands

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