



# The United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands

## Weekly Update

November 2, 2022.

### *Lessons from Habakkuk*

Rev. Norbert Stephens – General Secretary  
(UCJCI)

#### Please read Habakkuk 1:1-4

At some time or the other all of us have engaged in sightseeing. Some of us in faraway places others of us within these shores. Indeed, some of us are seasoned tourists who have seen and experienced many, some or a few of the great sights and wonders of this world. Often for every visit we tend to ask two pertinent questions, “why?” and “how long?”

You see there are basically two ways to engage in sightseeing, the first is as a tourist, the second is with a mission in mind.

When you are a tourist, your sightseeing has intent without long-term investment. Your interest is to be informed and or inspired but the sight is merely one on your bucket list and while you might ask the questions of why and how long, once done, you are moving on to another sight. Intent without long-term investment.

When you sightsee with a missional focus in mind you have intent with long-term investment. This is not merely a place or issue on your bucket list; indeed, it is the bucket on your list. You are no longer a tourist, you become vested. For the location or issue requires both your ongoing presence and participation. Intent with long-term investment.

Truth be told, you cannot truly engage in mission without sightseeing. One enables the other... it's the act of sightseeing, which generates the mission, which in turn seeks to address the why and how long questions.

The prophet Habakkuk, like Martin Luther, engaged in sightseeing and the same generated for both the why and how long questions.

**Chapter 1:1-11** is basically a prayer, which asks two questions, how and why? Habakkuk's concerns in these verses reflect a crisis on three fronts. There is a social crisis, a theological crisis and an external crisis. Injustice defines the crises. How long shall I cry for help, and you do not hear, why do you make me see wrongdoing and look at trouble? It is a cry for intervention which seems long in coming.

#### **Social Crisis**

Verses 2-4 outlines an underlying concern best described as institutional failure.

There were three areas of this institutional failure: When Habakkuk visited the significant institutions of his day, he encountered,

- **Political Failure** 1:4, rooted in the abuse of power, in the administration of King Jehoiakim.,

- **Social Failure** -The exploitation of the poor and the less privileged by the rich and powerful was a fundamental feature of his tour. The terms “violence” and “destruction/plunder” in 1:2-3. The social institution had failed thus producing moral and ethical failure.

- **Judicial Failure** - Judah's judicial system was characterized by “strife” and “contention” brought on by irresponsible litigation or the failure to administer justice properly. The victims of such abusive policies are identified as society's poor and marginalized. Such abuses of power are ultimately to blame, according to Habakkuk, for a society in which justice is absent and the law is ineffectual.

The institutional structures and systems created to provide and care for the people had failed! The structures and systems created to protect and defend the people had failed! The structures and systems created to affirm, inspire and guide the people had failed! Can we not say the same about our own crises? One writer states that, there is no greater distress than when power ordained for the service of justice makes injustice legal.

Habakkuk's description of institutional failure, (politics, social institutions, and judiciary) offers another truth. Significantly the failure was not experienced by the architects of the systems and institutions but rather the people they were meant to serve! And the result was injustice at all levels. So, he cried to God, as we are now crying, how long?

#### **Theological Crisis**

This raised for the prophet a theological crisis, thus he asked the why questions, why Lord? Why do you make me see wrongdoing, look at trouble, expose me to destruction and violence?

Habakkuk argued that the institutional failure has gone unnoticed and unpunished by God. Habakkuk therefore accuses God of sleeping on the job, in fact he clearly states that God is indifferent (2); inactive (3-4). Later he accuses God of being inconsistent (12-17).

What does it mean then to listen to Habakkuk at a time like this, both as a nation and as a missional church within this global context?

We know this book deals with the crisis of injustice, we are

more than familiar with injustice, but we also know something else. We know that the greatest threat to hope is the loss of confidence in our sources of hope. Low morale is the killer blow to hope in any society. Institutional failure, expressed in political, social, economic, judicial or religious failure produces a loss of confidence and generates a low morale. When we lose confidence in the systems which should provide and care for us, protect and serve us, inspire and guide us, we lose hope! And the tell-tale sign is ambivalence: tourists with intent without long-term investment – those who are along for the ride, those who refuse to exercise their duty during an election, social concern, volunteerism...

When we, in the church, lose our confidence in the divine and by extension the gospel, we have nothing of substance and hope to offer to those who, in the midst of challenges, cry out how long or why and we live not in hope, but in delusion or we live with wishful thinking as our bed partner and our dreams for the future are like the lines in the famous song - Mona Lisa, many dreams have come to your doorsteps, they just lie there and they die there...

#### **Missional Lessons**

The grounding for hope lies in divine faith and divine faith produces confidence and confidence produces positive

and hopeful possibilities for the present as well as for the future.

What then are the missional lessons for us? I offer us three for consider based on Habakkuk's role in this passage.

1. In the midst of his sightseeing, the prophet searched for a **VIABLE FAITH**. A faith, which would give him and his people both the confidence and the courage to face the systemic injustice with which they were confronted.

2. In the midst of his sightseeing, Habakkuk offered a **VOCAL FAITH**. He was not reticent to declare publicly his concerns and convictions. He was more than prepared to name the evil of his day and to lament the same. Evil not only thrives when good people do nothing, evil also thrives when God's people say nothing!

3. In the midst of his sightseeing, Habakkuk demonstrated a **VISIBLE FAITH**. He not only named the injustices of his day, he proceeded to do something about it. He sought God as the source of his theological grounding and without hesitation pursued his vocation as a prophet.

## **UCJCI Church School News November 2022**

**To: RDGS', Ministers, Pastors & Children's Ministry Leaders**

**From: Children's Ministry Commission**

I greet you in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour. **November is Church School Month** which will be observed under the theme: **Reconnect, Reignite and Ready!** Since, the start of 2022, we have been trying to get our children to come back to Church School. To date a number of our children are still absent from Church School. This is very disconcerting and we have to impress on the parents the important role that the church plays in the lives of their children, as a number of our children are allowed to stay home on a Sunday, roam the streets and use their electronic devices. We need to claim back our children for God, as some have come to a premature death by violence, fire, motor vehicle accidents, drowning, trafficking, etc. Therefore, during Church School Month let us go out and bring back our children, so we can reconnect and reignite their talents, gifts and leadership potential in our church's ministries and get them ready to share the love of Jesus with others.

### **Church School Month Activities**

**Theme: Reconnect, Reignite and Ready!**

#### **Messages**

There will messages from the **Moderator -Rt. Rev. Gary Harriott** and the **Chair of the Children's Ministry Commission -Mrs. Cheryl Shaw**. These will be sent before the first Sunday in November.

### **Church School Sunday**

One Sunday Worship Service in the month should be led by the Church School children under the guidance of their superintendents and teachers.

### **Prayer For Our Children**

We invite the Church School superintendents, teachers, parents, children and the whole UCJCI to **designate a time in your service on November 27, 2022** to pray for our children and the issues affecting them. We will **meet virtually in the evening @5:30pm** to collectively pray with and for our children. We invite the Church School Leadership Team, parents and children to join us in the evening. More information will be sent out in the coming weeks.

### **Virtual Church School Teacher's Training**

We will be hosting a Virtual **Church School Teacher's Training on December 3, 2022 at 9:30am.**

### **Upcoming Events**

Kidsquake -November 19, 2022 -Ridgemount United Church, Southern Regional Mission Council

Children's Rally -November 26, 2022-St. Andrews United Church, Ocho Rios, St. Ann, Western Regional Mission Council

Day of Prayer for Our Children -November 27, 2022 @ 5:30pm

Church School Training -December 3, 2022 @9:30 am

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Contact Information for the Children's Ministry Commission:

Email: [ucjchildrenscommission@gmail.com](mailto:ucjchildrenscommission@gmail.com)

Cellular#: 876-238-3588 (F)

Subscribe to our

**YouTube Channel:**

United Kids For Christ (Name Change)

**Instagram Page:**

@unitedkids4u

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## Meet our Ordinand

### Pastor Alja Dias

I like watching movies and listening music.

Did you know I am a Trained Supervisory Chef?

Home Region:  
Charge:  
Congregation:

Western Regional Mission Council  
Lucea Charge  
Lucea United Church

Assigned Region:  
Charge:  
Congregations:

Southern Regional Mission Council  
Low River  
Low River, Tooting Hall & Cascade United

*The Rt. Rev. Gary Harriott, Moderator of Synod,*

*invites you to the*

# Service of ORDINATION

*for*

*Pastor Alja Dias*

*to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments*



Ridgemount United Church  
Thursday, November 10, 2022 || 2:00 p.m.

 YouTube: UCJCI's Channel

## **Believers Baptism in Bodden Town**

The members of the Webster Memorial Church (Bodden Town) gathered for a Believers Baptism at Coe Wood Beach after the Sunday morning Worship Service on October 23, 2022. Three young persons from the Congregation accepted Christ and received the Sacrament of Baptism.



*The three young persons in the company of Rev. Wray and Elder Dale Ebanks from the Savannah United Church.*

## Liturgy for Worship at Home

November 6, 2022  
Pentecost 22  
(Pirate's Week – Cayman)

Haggai 1:15b – 2:9; Job 19:23-27  
Psalm 145:1-5, 17-21  
Luke 20:27-38

### From Former to Future Glory

When the children of Israel faced the reality of the destroyed temple, they knew that God's presence was no longer with them. They were traumatized by the removal of their final visible proof of God being with them. God reminds them that faith is more about Who is on the inside, than what is seen on the outside.

The current state of affairs locally (economic and social in both Cayman and Jamaica) may incite despair of 'back in the days', the 'Good ole Days', and the temptation to consider that God has forsaken the believers. But remember -

- When faced with life's disappointments, like Job, we must declare that regardless of the now – 'I will behold God for myself'.

Possible song, 'For I Know that my Redeemer Lives'

(Pirate's Week is a Caymanian festival that has had mixed reactions from the church. Please recall that in reality many pirates worked for the Crown during war-time and were left to their own devices during peace treaties. They thus lived in a very tenuous space, not as romantic as movies have presented. If choosing to incorporate Pirate's Week in the Liturgy, consider how to factor the uncertainties they faced in the reflections.)

### Prayer Corner

Renew our strength, Lord. Fill us with your supernatural power to overcome each obstacle in our path. With our eyes on you, Lord, with you walking beside us, working through us, We can make it.

Thank you, Lord!

### Prayer Requests

- Rev. Dr. Cephas Stern whose mother, Rena Stern, passed on
- Ms. Heather Thompson whose aunt passed
- Students, staff, parents and other members of the Oberlin High School community
- Rev. Dr. Marjorie Lewis whose mother, Mrs. Nellie Lewis, passed
- The family of the late Karl Bright who passed recently
- Lay Pastor John Macmillan and Mrs. Itza Bodden, Youth Worker, in Cayman who both face health related challenges
- The family of Ms. Rose Spalding, who passed recently
- Rev. Dr. James Gibbs, who is recovering from illness and who lost his brother, Winston George Gibbs
- All who have experienced weather related to the passage of Hurricane Ian
- Members of staff with relatives affected by COVID-19
- People affected by the war between Ukraine and Russian
- Victims and perpetrators of crime and violence in Jamaica and the security force and government as they respond

THE UNITED CHURCH IN JAMAICA AND THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

SYNOD ADMINISTRATION

MINISTRY & EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Job Vacancy

The United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands is seeking to fill the position of **Accounting Clerk within the Finance and Planning Unit in the Synod Administrative Centre**, and invites dynamic, highly motivated and qualified candidates to tender their applications.

Applicants are invited to submit their resumes/CVs via e-mail no later than **Wednesday, November 9, 2022** to [synodhr@ucjci.com](mailto:synodhr@ucjci.com)

*-Only short-listed applicants will be interviewed*

End Violence Against Women  
and Children



Share your **Thursdays in Black** photos on **Twitter, Facebook and Instagram** and tag us **@ucjci**

**#WCC, #UCJCI #evgw  
#ThursdaysinBlack  
#endviolenceagainstwomen**



Tune in to **United in Faith Sundays** on **RJR 94 F.M at 6:30 a.m.**



You can listen to **United In Faith** episodes at your convenience on our **Anchor F.M. Platform**.

Click the link either in our **Instagram bio** or when it is circulated via **WhatsApp**.

**THE UNITED CHURCH SENIOR CITIZEN HOME**

WE ARE ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS!  
 VACANCIES ARE AVAILABLE FOR BOTH  
 MALE AND FEMALE SENIORS.



Send us an email to [ucschome32@gmail.com](mailto:ucschome32@gmail.com) or call the Director, Miss Bailey, at 876-373-8474 or 876-962-3768 to make your enquiries.

32 Villa Road, Mandeville P.O., Manchester

**NOTICES**



THE UNITED CHURCH IN  
 JAMAICA AND  
 THE CAYMAN ISLANDS



THE INTERNATIONAL  
 UNIVERSITY OF THE  
 CARIBBEAN

**LAY LEADERS  
 GRADUATION 2022**

**SUNDAY  
 NOVEMBER 13,  
 2022**

RIDGEMOUNT UNITED  
 CHURCH, MANDEVILLE  
 3:00 P.M.

**GUEST SPEAKER  
 - REV. DR. COLLIN COWAN**  
 MINISTER, IMMANUEL/BOSCOBEL CHARGE

**COVID 19 HEALTH AND SAFETY PRACTICES WILL BE OBSERVED.  
 ALL ATTENDEES ARE REQUIRED TO WEAR A MASK.**

VIRTUAL VIEWING IS ALSO INVITED VIA THE UNITED CHURCH  
 YOUTUBE CHANNEL



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*November*

**Church School Month**

**Men's Month**





## The Pringle Home for Children

*100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*  
Calendar of Events  
2022

*"Pringle at 100: preserving a legacy of service"*

Church Service July 31

Open Day August 24

Panel Discussion:  
Child Care and  
Protection in Jamaica November 17

Gospel Concert December

## MARLON ANDERSON SINGING MINISTRY

Presents

A Grand Gospel Fundraising Concert

on  
Saturday, November 05, 2022



Cost: \$1,000.00  
Time: 5:00pm

@ RIVERSIDE UNITED CHURCH

MC: Sis: Jamelia Haughton

Proceeds in aid of medical expenses for Tifelia Thompson

COME & RECEIVE A BLESSING

## The United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands Congregational, Disciples of Christ, Presbyterian

### Moderator:

Rt. Rev. Gary Harriott

### General Secretary:

Rev. Norbert Stephens

### Regional Deputy General Secretaries

Cayman Regional Mission Council-  
Rev. Dr. Yvette Noble-Bloomfield

North-Eastern Regional Mission Council -  
Mrs. Rose Wedderburn

Southern Regional Mission Council-  
Mrs. Janet McConnell

Western Regional Mission Council-  
Mrs. Maureen Henry

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comments and input to  
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