



# CAYMAN ISLANDS REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL

WEEKLY UPDATE

## Season of Epiphany

January 12, 2023

VOLUME 8 ISSUE 02

UCJCI 43<sup>rd</sup> SYNOD THEME – **Rooted, Resilient: Re-ignited by the Spirit** (Return, Reconnect, Realign, Re-ignite)

### Let the Redeemed Return

*Mr. Mike Bowerman*

It was December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1963. Nineteen-year-old Frank Sinatra Jr. was relaxing and enjoying an evening with a friend in a Lake Tahoe hotel in Nevada prior to going on tour as he was, like his father, a musician. There was a knock on the door and, on opening it, two men pushed their way in, one aiming a gun at Frankie while the other tied up his friend.

Barry Keenan and Joe Amsler then drove Frankie, blindfolded, to an apartment in the suburbs of Los Angeles where a third man, John Irwin, called Frank Sinatra Sr. demanding a ransom of \$240,000. Frankie's friend had meanwhile managed to free himself and call the police who were already on the search. They, however, advised Sinatra Sr. to pay the ransom and they would then follow up. It took only a few days for the three men to be caught, Frankie to be freed and the majority of the ransom money retrieved.

The key to young Frankie being freed was the payment of a ransom. A ransom, by definition, is something paid or demanded for the release of someone or something from captivity. In his case it was \$240,000. We might describe it as the redemption price.

In the Greek language used in the New Testament, the words ransom, and redemption have the same root. It is 'lutron.' 'Lutron' has to do with deliverance and freedom won and purchased at a price.

It is a concept used throughout the Bible. One well-known Old Testament example is when the Israelites were released from Egyptian slavery. They were given specific instructions for the occasion the final plague would be sent on Egypt which would bring about the deaths of the firstborn sons. To escape the angel of death, the Israelites were told to kill a lamb – it had to be one without spot or defect – and some of its blood was to be smeared on the top and sides of their doorframes. This they did, and as a result their oldest sons were spared whilst those of Pharaoh and the Egyptians died, and he finally accepted defeat. The firstborn sons of the Israelites had been redeemed. The ransom price – the 'lutron' – was the blood of the lamb. Following this, God freed them from their slavery. Many times, later in Scripture, the people of Israel were reminded of the God who had redeemed them from slavery in Egypt, and that he would redeem them again – an allusion to the coming of Christ. The

Feast of Passover, still celebrated by orthodox Jews, continues to remind them of this great event in their history.

Shortly afterwards, as they made their journey to the Promised Land, God provided them his laws, part of which was the provision of the sacrificial system. Animals, including lambs, would be sacrificed. This was to be God's provision of deliverance, not now from slavery in Egypt, but from sin and its penalty. The ransom price was the blood of the lamb which was shed to atone for their sins. It was a temporary measure, pointing to Christ, the ultimate Redeemer.

We now know that it was on the Cross that the sacrifice of atonement was accomplished "once for all" so that we could be redeemed. It was Christ's death on the Cross, his Blood shed, that brought this about so Paul in both Ephesians and Colossians would say, "*In Him we have redemption, through His blood, for the forgiveness of sins.*"

The price was His shed blood. Peter would write some years later, "*For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value.<sup>19</sup> It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God*" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

But let's return to an incident just before Jesus started His ministry, recorded in the first chapter of John. Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist saw Jesus approaching him the day following His baptism and, with some God-given insight, called out to those listening, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Again the following day, he pointed Jesus out to two of his disciples, one of whom we know was Andrew, and again stated, "Look, the Lamb of God." God had given John an understanding three years before Jesus' death as to what His mission to the world was to be. He was to be the deliverer, the One who would redeem us, as "the Lamb of God", a clear indication that in some way He was to pay a price for that redemption. Jesus was fully aware of this so when Matthew and Mark wrote their gospels, they recorded Jesus' words about Himself, "...The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a **ransom** for many."

What are some practical implications?

First, as William Barclay has stated, it is "this redemption wrought by the death of Christ which makes possible for us the forgiveness of sins, a new relationship with God, a new life on earth and, in the end, the glory of heaven." Every person born is in slavery to sin and its consequences. There is no

conceivable means whereby we can affect our own liberation or break the power of sin. There is no ransom price great enough to satisfy. Nothing we can do that would be good enough, nothing that we could pay out or sacrifice would be sufficient. The Bible calls it *grace*. It is God's grace towards us. It is only possible by God's grace. In the words of Augustus Toplady in the hymn *Rock of Ages*:

*Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to thy cross I cling;  
Naked, come to thee for dress,  
Helpless, look to thee for grace...*

Our freedom was effected by the coming of Jesus, the Lamb of God, who alone could, and did, pay the price which was necessary to achieve our redemption. This was the supreme act of a God who "*so loved the world that He gave His only Son.*" It cost the life and death of Christ to liberate us human beings from the past, the present and the future power of sin. In other words, to be *saved* – to know God's salvation.

We need to be clear: there is no other way to have a relationship with God. Peter expressed in his defense before the Jewish Council, recorded in Acts 4: "*There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.*" Paul was later to remind the Corinthians, "*The right time is now. Today is the day of salvation.*" So, don't delay; don't put it off.

There is a second implication. Returning to the account when John the Baptist pointed Jesus out to two of his disciples as "the Lamb of God", we read these words in John 1:37-41.

<sup>37</sup> *When John's two disciples heard this, they followed Jesus.*  
<sup>38</sup> *Jesus looked around and saw them following. "What do you want?" he asked them. They replied, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?"* <sup>39</sup> *"Come and see," he said. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when they went with him to the place where he was staying, and they remained with him the rest of the day.* <sup>40</sup> *Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus.* <sup>41</sup> *Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means "Christ").*

Andrew and his friend immediately recognized something very special in Jesus to the extent they left John to follow him. But that wasn't enough for Andrew. He didn't want to keep this to himself, so he went to look for his little brother, Simon – the one we know better as Peter – so as to have him meet Jesus, too. "Peter, come quickly, leave the fishing nets, I want you to meet someone really important. I believe we've found the promised Messiah."

Those who have met Christ, the Redeemer, are those who will make it their business to tell others – at least, if they are truly thankful that they are redeemed. Gratitude will motivate them in such a way that they will do all they can to share the good news with others.

Many Christians are reluctant to talk about their faith. They feel it is something private and personal. They fear being ignored, rebuffed or worse. Some feel that they haven't got the right words or enough understanding about the faith, or that they don't have the right to push their beliefs on someone else.

We know little else about Andrew from the Bible, but we do know a lot about his brother, Peter. Maybe Andrew was shy – the guy who says little in company – but he became the bridge to Jesus for the man who was far from shy – the one of all those first disciples who became the most influential – the leader. It was his brother Peter who stood up to preach the first sermon on the Day of Pentecost, leading to 3000 becoming Christians. We have no letters in the Bible written by Andrew, but Peter is the author of two of them and, probably, was behind Mark's Gospel, too. What an enormous result started by a simple invitation to meet Jesus.

We may never know to whom we witness to our faith or share the gospel. We may never discover the results. Few know of the preacher who filled in at a little country Baptist Church on a snowy day when the regular pastor couldn't make it, a man who had never preached before, which led to the conversion of Charles Spurgeon, probably the greatest preacher of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Mordecai Ham, the preacher through whom Billy Graham gave his life to Christ, was a largely unknown evangelist who happened to be holding a revival in Billy Graham's town.

Might I encourage you who are redeemed – you who have been saved through the price paid by the Lamb of God - to be encouraged and emboldened to share this good news with family, friends, work colleagues and anyone else who might come along your pathway.

We used to frequently sing a song in church which comes from words spoken by Isaiah in chapter 51 verse 11 – in the old King James Version: "*Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.*"

May those of us who are Christians find everlasting joy in our redemption.

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January 18-25, 2023

Since 1948 the ecumenical Christian community, coordinated by the World Council of Churches, has been observing worldwide the annual **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**, encouraging Christians of all denominations to join in prayer.

**"Do good; seek justice."**

Isaiah 1:17

The theme for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2023 was selected by the Minnesota Council of Churches, USA in the aftermath of the extrajudicial killing of George Floyd. The events brought anguish and anger, but also time for the Christian communities to contemplate ways in which they may be complicit in perpetuating racial injustice. Christian unity is necessary as a source of reconciliation and unity.

The theme, taken from the first chapter of the Book of Isaiah, reflects the Prophet's concern for the oppressed who suffer from injustice and inequality fed by hypocrisy that leads to disunity. Isaiah teaches that God requires righteousness and justice from all of us, to create the peace and unity that God desires. Righteousness and justice originate in God's love for all, and racism is incompatible with these. Isaiah's challenge to do good and seek justice applies to every place and age.

For daily focus, meditation, and prayer, visit <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/resources-for-the-week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2023>

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Save the Date!

CAYMAN ISLANDS REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL'S

**ASH WEDNESDAY GATHERING**

Prospect Youth Centre Beach  
February 22, 2023  
6:30 - 9:00 AM

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### January 14. (Saturday)

**Women's Fellowship Council Meeting** – 10:00 am - Council Office

### January 15. (Sunday) 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after the Epiphany

### January 16. (Monday)

**Council Executive Meeting** – 6:30 pm via Zoom

### January 21. (Saturday)

**Council Meeting** – 9:00 am – Elmslie Memorial UC

## Remember in your prayers

All those God has placed on your heart and those brought to your attention in some way. Please also include in your prayers at this time

Lay Pastor John Macmillan (RYMC), Mrs. Itza Bodden, Youth Worker (EE-GB), Mr. Trevor Watler (GB)

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Epiphany

January 15, 2023

**Let the Redeemed RETURN**

Isaiah 49:1-7 Psalm 40:1-11  
1 Corinthians 1:1-9 John 1:29-42

**Like the disciples, we heed God's call**

UNITED CHURCH IN JAMAICA AND THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

NORTH EASTERN REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL

INVITES ALL

MEMBERS, CONGREGATION EVANGELISM LEADERS, ELDERS, MINISTERS AND PASTORS

MAIN PRESENTER  
REV. DR. STEVENSON SAMUELS

AN Evangelism CONVERSATION

THEME: "WE ARE IN IT TOGETHER"

SATURDAY FEB 4, 2023 10AM

MEETING ID: 886 6574 4944  
PASSCODE: EVANGELIZE

**CIRMC - Council Meeting**  
**Saturday, January 21, 2023**  
**9:00 AM**  
**Elmslie Memorial UC Hall**



**United Church Women's Fellowship Council**

**FELLOWSHIP BREAKFAST**

Saturday, January 28, 2023

Time: 8am - 10am

Venue: Morritt's, East End

**Theme: Being a Peace-Maker**

Guest Speaker: Rev. L. Christopher Mason

All Are Invited

Ticket: \$30



(CCPP)

**Child Care & Protection Policy**

**WORKSHOP**

For all those assisting in Children & Youth Ministry, who have not been trained yet

Saturday, February 4, 2023  
9:00 – 11:00 am via Zoom

To register please contact your Minister or the Council office at 947-1963 or [Cirmc.info@gmail.com](mailto:Cirmc.info@gmail.com) by Friday, January 27, 2023

**Child Care & Protection Policy Workshop**

Every year our Regional Mission Council conducts the Child Care and Protection Policy Workshop to ensure that both the Children and Youth Ministry in our region satisfies our denominational, national as well as international policy standards. These policies aim to protect not only the children/youth but also the leaders and volunteers who work with them, as well as to bring awareness to the importance of providing a safe overall environment in which these ministries are carried out. Naturally, we expect that all our staff and volunteers who are engaged in these ministries complete the training provided via the Workshop, at the end of which they receive a certification from our Regional Mission Council. This certification is valid across all the regions of the UCJCI and participation in the workshop doesn't need to be repeated.

**IS/IVCF Prayer Breakfast**

**January 14, 2023 8:00 AM**



**Prayer Breakfast**

**SAVE THE DATE!**

SATURDAY  
JANUARY 14, 2023

// AT 8:00 AM //

VENUE: CASCADE ROOM AT UCCI

IS/IVCF CAYMAN INVITES ALL MINISTRY PARTNERS TO JOIN US FOR A TIME OF PRAYER AND FELLOWSHIP



All Students, Christian Teachers, Alumni, Supporters, and other Stakeholders are invited to join us for a time of prayer for our schools.

RSVP!

Contact us: [ISIVCFKY@gmail.com](mailto:ISIVCFKY@gmail.com)  
Tel: 345-929-5111



on Radio Cayman 89.9 every Sunday at 7:45 am

**January 15, 2023**  
**Mr. Mike Bowerman**

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](mailto:rdgs@cicucjci.com) or [cirmcinfo@gmail.com](mailto:cirmcinfo@gmail.com)  
Website: [unitedchurch.org.ky](http://unitedchurch.org.ky)