



UCJCI 43RD SYNOD

APRIL 23-30, 2023

Popular Report

May 5, 2023

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Ready for Action**

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It's Time to Pull up Anchor and Move!

Rt. Rev. Gary Harriott, Moderator of UCJCI, delivered the sermon closing the 43rd Synod of UCJCI with a stirring call to the church to action after receiving the marching orders over the previous five days through sermons, bible study, deliberations and collective discernment.

Referencing the experience of the early church after the igniting of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the Moderator stated that the United Church must also be on the move and will never be the same.

Life in the Spirit is marked by boldness

Rev. Harriott called for the United Church to stand up and speak up and to defend the

'faith in the public space. In so doing the United Church should speak truth to power' as our mission is not only to the poor and vulnerable but also "to those who are strategically placed in society ... to set the tone for what goes on around town". He elevated advocacy as a core responsibility of the church.



Pull up Anchor and Move...Cont'd from p.1

Life in the Spirit is one in which the church makes a difference in the world and this difference is seen.

Some of the evidence of impact which the Moderator outlined were – communities living in peace, homes free of domestic violence, declining instances of children suffering abuse, young people moving away from scamming, more equity and justice; less discrimination and prejudice – all because of the presence of the church in society. According to the Moderator, “Where God’s Spirit is at work there is evidence to show, and critics are silenced by it”.

The Moderator had a word for those not willing to be a part of a movement to accomplish God’s will in the world. “This is a movement for everyone, so we either join the movement or be moved by it. Let us not stand in the way of what God wants to accomplish in our congregations. Let us not stand in the way of what God wants to accomplish in the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. Let us each examine ourselves – Am I being a stumbling block or a stepping-stone? Am I standing in the way of my congregation moving forward and realizing new exploits for God?...Am I ready to get on board?”

Declaring Jesus’ commission in Matthew 28, the Moderator invited members of the United Church to join a movement which “has the potential of turning your family, your community, your nation, and the world around”, beginning with an encounter with Jesus. “All hands on deck, rowing in the same direction”.



Synod delegates, Ministers and Lay Pastors

Be it Resolved..

On the final business day of Synod it is customary that resolutions may be brought for deliberation and acceptance. The following were passed.

WORK RELATED TO PERSONS LIVING WITH DISABILITIES

Be it resolved:

- That this 43rd Synod agrees to recommit itself to re-igniting the policy regarding persons with disability, with specific attention to the broad range of limitations that are included within the disability community.
- That the Synod ensures that there is inclusion and full participation at all levels of the church in engaging the disability policy
- That opportunities be guaranteed for the gifts and resources of persons with disability to be fully engaged and gainfully employed within the structures and agencies of the church
- That this Synod commits itself to a ministry of advocacy for the persons with disability in both societies to be provided with equal opportunities, consistent with the legislations and policies of the governments of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands.

Be it Resolved...

Work IN OUR SCHOOLS

Be it resolved that this 43rd Synod:

- Endorses the ecumenical initiative, which will introduce school pastors to all secondary schools in Jamaica by September 2023
- Affirms across the church membership this missional response to be urgently implemented at the congregational level.
- Confidently encourages members, whether clergy or laity, to offer themselves to be trained by the organizers of this initiative
- Alerts all United Church School Boards to the significant potential benefits to the school of this initiative and encourages administrators to receive and facilitate this intervention for collaboration with school Guidance Counselors, School Chaplains and faith-based student organizations within our schools.

WORK RELATED TO GENDER ISSUES AND WOMEN IN ORDAINED MINISTRY OUR SCHOOLS

Be it resolved that this 43rd Synod:

- Reaffirms its commitment to the authentic place of women in the ordained ministry;
- Commissions a small taskforce to hear and respond to the stories of women in the ordained ministry as a critical step in working toward their acceptance, healing, renewal and hope; and that a summary report of the outcome of this process be presented to the appropriate Committee of Synod to inform the development of a gender policy;
- Works, during this Synodical period, to establish a gender policy, to include an emphasis on the place, rights and needs of women in the ordained ministry and that this policy be accompanied by an awareness-building programme

WORK IN ESTABLISHING THE DENOMINATIONAL IDENTITY OF OUR SCHOOLS

- **Be it resolved** that schools and institutions owned by the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands are required to display the approved photograph of the current moderator according to the rules established by the appropriate authority within the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands; and
- **Be it further resolved** that photographs of past moderators be managed according to the rules established by the appropriate authority within the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands; and
- **Be it further resolved** that the protocols to guide the display of the photograph of the current moderator be developed, and reviewed, when necessary, by the Education Commission of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands; and
- **Be it further resolved** the protocols for managing photographs of past moderators be developed, and reviewed, when necessary, by the Education Commission of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands; and
- **Be it further resolved** that the approved photograph of the Moderator be purchased by individual schools and institutions of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands or their sponsors.



The Synod reflected on the dire situation of our Caribbean neighbour Haiti where the United Church has been engaged in mission for many years in a variety of ways including through the service of Nurse Joan Page Bain. The following statement of a call for action was declared at the Synod.

OPEN LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF JAMAICA, CHAIRMAN OF CARICOM AND THE PRESIDENT (CARIBBEAN) WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

The 43rd Synod of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands convened in Savannah, Grand Cayman, in April 23 – 30, 2023, to April 30, 2023, acknowledged with very deep concern the desperate conditions being endured by citizens of the neighboring nation of Haiti. The Synod heard from Christians, including a retired missionary residing in an area of acute crisis in Haiti, and carefully considered the legacy of oppression that has plagued Haiti since its early aspiration to become the first independent democratic nation of African descendants from the Transatlantic Slave Trade and chattel slavery.

The Synod expressed profound sorrow for the historical interventions and complicity in the injustices inflicted upon the Haitian people. Over the centuries, the Haitian economy has been weakened, governance institutions destabilized and security services disrupted. The health and nutritional status of the population has deteriorated while the natural environment has suffered significant damage, including widescale deforestation, depletion of arable land resources and contamination of water sources.

The current crisis in Haiti, exacerbated by the assassination of its president and the natural disasters in the earthquakes of 2010 and 2021 is to be viewed in this historical context.

The Synod resolved to advocate in the international arena for a deliberate, conscientious and bold response from the global community to the legitimate and urgent plea of the Haitian people for a security force to be deployed to rescue communities held captive by violent gangs operating with impunity, under conditions which have overwhelmed the local police force.

CHALLENGED AND INSPIRED THROUGH WORSHIP AND BIBLE STUDY



DAILY BIBLE STUDIES (Monday to Thursday), provided opportunity to dig deeper into the bible based on daily themes. The use of recorded content conveyed via YouTube enabled delegates, ministers, lay pastors and other members not present in Cayman to participate in the experience.

Persons present in Cayman, at the Savannah United Church where business sessions were held, also accessed the YouTube content and then engaged in discussion in groups wrestling with the challenges to action.

WORSHIP services at the start and end of Synod and other times of worship during the week were Spirit-led and inspirational.



CHALLENGED AND INSPIRED BY REGIONAL STORIES

Each region showcased an example of the church at work in community tackling issues of justice, spreading the Gospel, meeting needs and engaging children.

WRMC



A hopeful story of the Theodora Foundation for Educational and Personal Development – a community outreach of Negril United Church. Theodora House was established by the late Rev. Dr. Margaret Fowler, former UCJCI minister (inset), as a safe house to rescue young women who were

victims of human trafficking and unable to continue their secondary education. The Intervention provided safe lodging, skills training, exposure to entrepreneurial opportunities so they can prepare to reconnect with society. Now re-named Margaret House and partnered with HEART for skills training. The project faced challenges after COVID and when the funding from international partners ended. It was closed but a new partnership was formed with local and international Rotary Club. Margaret Fowler's dream was rescued.

Margaret's House was repurposed as a building for practical training in housekeeping and villa management. In February 2022 the skills training centre reopened with 86 trainees and new skills training added. A new block was constructed.

The roots have deepened achieving more than originally intended. Rooted to give shade, resilient during turbulence, reignited by the Spirit of God through partnership and the positive response of trainees and trainers.



CIRMC

Mission House is a story of partnership, hospitality, compassionate care and hope. Heart surgeries are offered by Heart City in Cayman facilitated by Children's Heart Project of Samaritan's Purse (humanitarian organisation). This ecumenical endeavour is led by UCJCI engaging host congregations to incarnate God's love in practical ways. Here is a scrapbook of CIRMC's regional story.



• 71 babies and children have stayed in the Mission House to date.

• 18 more scheduled for rest of 2023.

Mission House in action!

• No groups in 2020 and 2021 due to Covid.



• 4 Ugandan groups coming July - September do not have host churches.

Each group on island for about 6-7 weeks

As a Host Church:

- Covers all costs for groceries etc. while the group is at Mission House.
- Quick welcome at the airport before the group is taken directly to Health City.
- Maintain contact with the group while in hospital.

Savannah United will host one of two Iraqi groups coming in June.



After surgery the group moves to Mission House for the last 3 weeks of their time while on island.

Group gets to meet persons from their host church whether thru attending Bible Study (any group from Bolivia invited to Spanish bible study at First Baptist) or host church members can visit them at the Mission House. Groups love to share meals from their country with their host church members.

Sunday Worship service - Moms are invited to give their testimony how God has healed the hearts of their children and how they have come to know Christ as well.

Savannah United has baptized 3 mothers to date. Other churches have as well.



BETH SHALOM - HOUSE OF PEACE

KNOWN AS THE MISSION HOUSE LOCALLY

Gifted to UCJCI - Cayman Regional Mission Council

By Rev Joe and Mopsis Crawford in 2017

NERMC



NERMC showcased an initiative of Webster Memorial United Church - Sunday School in the Park (Emancipation Park in Kingston).

Beginning February 2022, every Sunday between 4 and 6 pm scores of children are introduced to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The programme involves worship, singing the National Anthem and repeating the pledge, bible stories and object lessons, science experiments, games and prizes. The theme for the day is shared in engaging ways which are age-appropriate.



The team of volunteers work hard to make the lessons fun and the children are treated to a healthy Sunday dinner and snacks.

SRMC

SRMC presented 'Stories of sparks across the region'. Among the stories was an account of the dogged determination to inspire a culture of urgency around evangelism dubbed 'It Must be Evangelism'. The region searched for places where people were looking for light but where flames were going dim. The region found opportunities for reigniting faith and added fuel to embers. The 'Take the City for Christ' campaign was launched. A Prayer Breakfast was held aimed at motivating, inspiring and equipping the laity and clergy for the work of evangelism. The interventions under the leadership of Rev. Clinton Bailey lit up the areas of Blue Mountain, Colonel's Ridge and New Broughton and many others.

The region proved resilient in efforts with children's ministry despite COVID 19. The Ash Wednesday Convention in 2022 was led by the children and youth. Congregations partnered with UCJCI Children's Commission to reignite the work with children – changing the structure of the work to improve impact, establishing a youth ministry team to find strategies that would fuel youth work.



The region celebrates that 10 church schools were re-started, bringing to 28 the number of active church schools out of a total of 59 congregations. Kidsquake was held virtually in 2022 and in-person in 2023 with over 100 children. The 2023 Children's Rally gathered some 300 children.

Congregations have been challenged to re-start Church Schools with a weekly roll call, and determination to be intentional in monitoring and capturing data.



CHALLENGED AND INSPIRED BY ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUTH AND CHILDREN

A RESILIENT CHURCH WITH RESILIENT LEADERS

The leadership of Children's Ministry in UCJCI brought to the Synod their vision, celebrations and challenges regarding youth ministry. These are excerpts of the engagement.

Celebrations

The Children's Commission was rooted and resilient in keeping the children's ministry flame going in the midst of a pandemic with the introduction of virtual church school lessons.

The Commission ran Vacation Bible School (VBS) and 'Camp' online for both years of the pandemic, 2020 and 2021. The responses indicated that they were well received by the children. Online teacher training preceded the events.

A Child Month programme was introduced, culminating with the "Dynamic Kids in Action for Christ," in which children showcased their gifts, were taught how to share their faith, and were themselves invited to receive Christ. From these efforts 52 children committed their lives to the Lord.

Challenges:

A number of our children were not able to join in online programmes due to the lack of internet connectivity or device.

Some of our children are spiritually deprived of a living relationship with God as they have stopped coming out to church school and girls and boys brigade.

Based on the feedback from parents and observation, on a given Sunday, a number of our children are being baby sat and taught through their electronic gadgets.

Insufficient resources to position children's ministry in this technological age.



Ministry with CHILDREN

A MISSIONAL CHURCH INCLUDES CHILDREN

For UCJCI to be a missional church, it must begin with our children by helping them to be Christ centered, engaged, effective partners, accountable and empowered ; thus providing mission opportunities locally and internationally. Children's Ministry needs motivation to be an active part of a missional church so the church won't die. How therefore, can UCJCI Synod 2023 help? Some ways suggested were:

- Focus on education of the congregation in areas such as Bible study, Evangelism, Leadership, UCJCI's Constitution, Vision Statement and Mission Statement
- Ensure that congregations budget for Children's and Youth Ministries.
- Involve children in international mission.
- More active School Boards, present and alert to the functioning of the UCJCI's day schools.
- Each congregation should annually identify and implement a missional activity that includes the participation of children.

The panel challenged the church to intentionally engage Mentorship and Training in Child Evangelism.

YOUTH PANEL ADDRESSES THE SYNOD

Youth ministry took centre stage during one afternoon of the Synod. A panel consisting of persons who work in youth ministry and young people themselves brought to the Synod their joys and celebrations, issues of concern and possible solutions. These are excerpts of the engagement.

Celebrations

- They have been reignited by the Spirit.
- The success of Synodical Sports Day
- The return to regions by some youths who had left their worship spaces and youth fellowships.
- Their diverse gifts and skills.
- Technology use to enhance communication among themselves.
- Opportunities to be involved in programmes like Jamaica Ecumenical Mutual Mission (JEMM), Training in Mission (TIM) and camps.
- The bridging of generational gaps and exploring balanced programmes for the age group of focus.
- strong youth leaders who reassured and offered support in these areas of spiritual, financial, emotional and physical needs.

Challenges:

- The need for more inclusion of youth in the planning and execution of youth-related events
- Difficulty in instilling values/principles in youth
- Insufficient understanding and/or knowledge of the UCJCI
- Lack of knowledge of the bible/scriptures in order to adequately and effectively address the challenges youth face
- More dynamic activities for the youth
- Disconnect that exists between the older people and the youth.
- Youth struggled with the use of on-line platforms- they were used for school so they were not excited to use them for youth fellowship.
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Ministry with YOUTH

POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE FROM DISCUSSIONS

- Small study groups led by adults, using creative ways to study the bible.
- Continued inclusion of the literary arts in youth ministry
- Strengthen youth ministry with youth ministers.
- Address the realities of various contexts e.g. ensure that funds are available for youths to attend camps.
- Provide more support to the sports ministry to ensure continuity of interest by youth.
- Encourage/ host/ plan leadership conferences and offer required support.
- Build positive relationships between older people and youth.
- Adopt best practices.
- Establish two panels, one from Jamaica and one from Cayman, to discuss issues, experiences, and responses to their challenges.
- Connect the history of the UCJCI to the current time.
- More intentional and focused strategy to address males (adult and children).
- Utilise the human resources that exist in the church, for example, retirees.



Sightings and Soundings of Synod



Scenes from services

Sightings and Soundings of Synod



Sightings and Soundings of Synod



POINTS OF FELLOWSHIP AND BUILDING FRIENDSHIP

"Bible studies and break-out groups; looking deeper at issues facing the church."

"I was able to interact with people from other councils and share in discussion of best practice. I was also able to interact with clergy and discuss issues and ideas outside of the actual sessions".

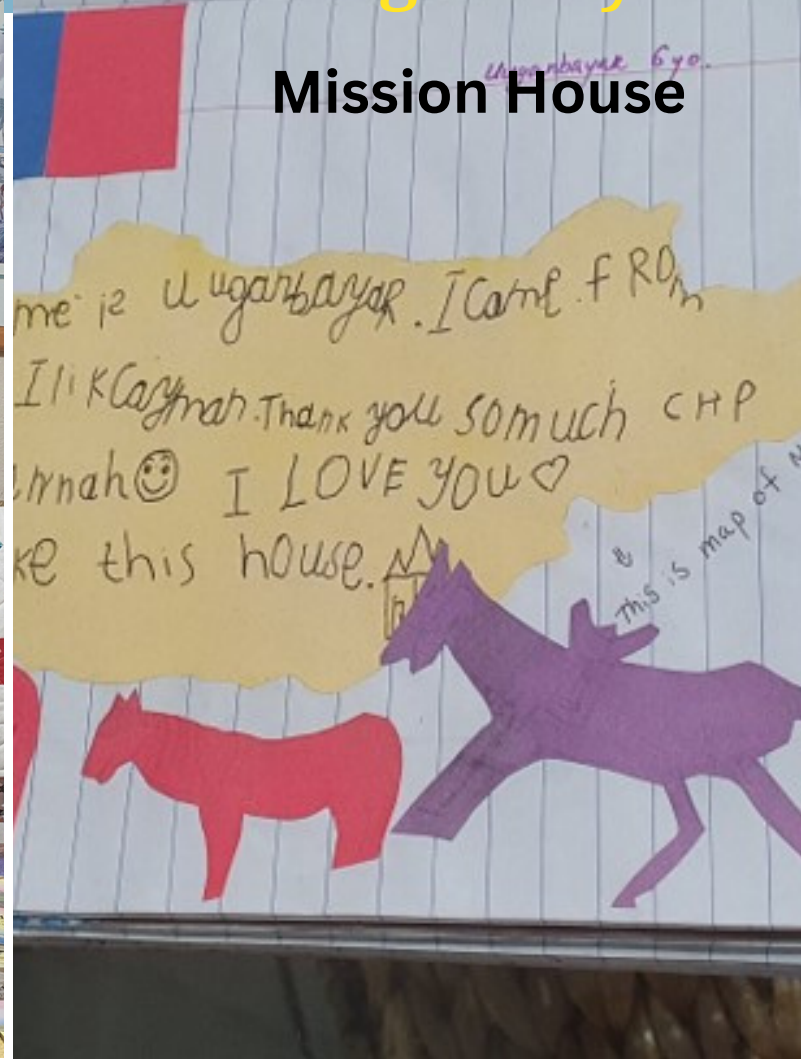
"The areas of the children's ministry, the youth ministry and the area on Stewardship/Evangelism had the greatest impact on me. The first two areas mentioned gave me some suggestions as to how the ministries can be re-ignited and the area of stewardship / evangelism has encouraged me to continue to serve in whatever capacity I can, willingly doing so to honour God with the resources He has given me".



What areas had greatest impact personally?

Sightings and Soundings of Synod

Mission House



IMMERSION EXPERIENCE

The presence, work and impact of the UCJCI in the Cayman region as well as the history and stewardship of the Cayman environment became the focus of activities at the end of Synod during IMMERSION.

The Museum



Sightings and Soundings of Synod



"While the discussions are healthy and meaningful, I pray that the points put forward will be seriously reviewed and the necessary actions taken. I pray we all leave this Synod realizing that the change have to begin with us. We all need to be more intentional about the business of the church and be in obedience to the call to serve in whatever capacity without wavering. Passion without action is meaningless and will yield no result."



What did you think of the Synod?



"There is not enough focus on implementation strategies or sufficient assessment of the recommendations to see how feasible they are. The resources of the church must be deployed efficiently and effectively."

