



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

Fan the fire with Wisdom

(Mr. Bryan Bothwell)



The theme for our discernment this week is “*Fan the fire with Wisdom.*” In the United Church, we spent October delving into the absolute necessity to “*Reignite the Flame.*” In November, we turned our focus to the fact that *keeping a flame going strong does not end even with a successful Reigniting.* It requires continuous attention

and fuel so that the fire does not die down again since ashes cannot do the work for which we would have needed a fire in the first place. Even worse, perish the thought, should the fire die out completely. Therefore, for this month, we are looking at the need to “*Fan the Fire*” in order to ensure it is *kept truly alive and ‘healthy.’* Caymanians have never needed a fire for warmth. However, for Caymanians of my age, we certainly *needed* to keep fires going for other reasons, including light, as in our Scripture for today. But most of all, *we needed fire for protection from mosquitoes!* And there is no exaggeration whatsoever in that statement. Smoke pans had to be kept burning outside the screen doors to stop the mosquitoes from swarming inside every time the door was opened and to take with us to the shops and such. We also had to *keep smoke-fires going* for the cows during the nights of peak mosquito times. That meant going in the middle of the night *to stoke up and add new wood to those fires!* Then there were the fires for wood stoves and for the boiling can for bleaching the clothes. All of these fires *needed to be fanned* at different times *to power* them with the oxygen to get and keep them going at the strength needed. *For younger generations,* a more relatable analogy would likely be keeping the *batteries* in their smartphones *always fully charged* and with a *good connection* to the internet.

And so we turn our minds to the *necessity* to “*Fan the Fire,*” the *fire of the faith* of each of us in Christ, in order that we continue to allow the Spirit of Almighty God to live within us, *flaming, powering, empowering, keeping us ‘alive in Christ’ – not burnt out ashes, dead sticks or dead devices.* And today, specifically, to “*Fan the Fire with Wisdom.*”

Let us at this time consider the Gospel Text for today, Jesus’ parable in Matthew 25: 1 – 13 [NLT]:

“Then the Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten bridesmaids who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ²Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³The five who were foolish didn’t take enough

olive oil for their lamps, ⁴but the other five were wise enough to take along extra oil. ⁵When the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. ⁶“At midnight they were roused by the shout, ‘Look, the bridegroom is coming! Come out and meet him!’ ⁷“All the bridesmaids got up and prepared their lamps. ⁸Then the five foolish ones asked the others, ‘Please give us some of your oil because our lamps are going out.’ ⁹“But the others replied, ‘We don’t have enough for all of us. Go to a shop and buy some for yourselves.’ ¹⁰“But while they were gone to buy oil, the bridegroom came. Then those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, *and the door was locked.* ¹¹Later, when the other five bridesmaids returned, they stood outside, calling, ‘Lord! Lord! Open the door for us!’ ¹²“But he called back, ‘Believe me, *I don’t know you!*’ ¹³“So you, too, must keep watch! For you do not know the day or hour of my return.”

The crux of Jesus’ parable is that no other person’s faith can save “*me.*” Either *I* have it, or *I* do not. And that, therefore, those who allow the flame of their faith to dim, then die, are being *deadly foolish.* Especially as no one knows when that door between our earthly life and eternity with God will be shut. Jesus was at pains to stress, therefore, how foolish and futile it was to try to time when you should be ready for the Second Coming, the subject the disciples had asked him about. But you and I know that, as regards which side of the door we will end up on, welcomed in securely *or* shut out, *the closing of the door for us is definitely going to happen,* either *on our earthly death or the Second Coming.* And we have no idea *when either* will take place. So we cannot afford to *not be ready, always.* It would be *deadly foolish* to either put off accepting Christ’s offer of ‘the fuel of’ Salvation (which many of us men have done, especially in those high-risk teenage/young adult years) or, having received it, let the fuel and the flame of faith run down.

Jesus’ parable, immediately before this one, dealt more explicitly with *how* to keep the flame of faith from dying out. In Matthew 24, Jesus again describes the “wise” person, or, in this case, the “*faithful and wise,*” as the one who, even over a long period of ‘waiting,’ does not become complacent, distracted, and misled, but continues to *eagerly do* that which has to be done to keep the flame alive. Whereas the one who is ‘too smart for his own good’ decides there is still plenty of time before I will face the Master again. So, *in the interim,* I’ll spend some time being *my own master, my own little ‘god.’* Thus, he begins mistreating those he was supposed to care for and demeaning himself as well as the principles of his Master. Once

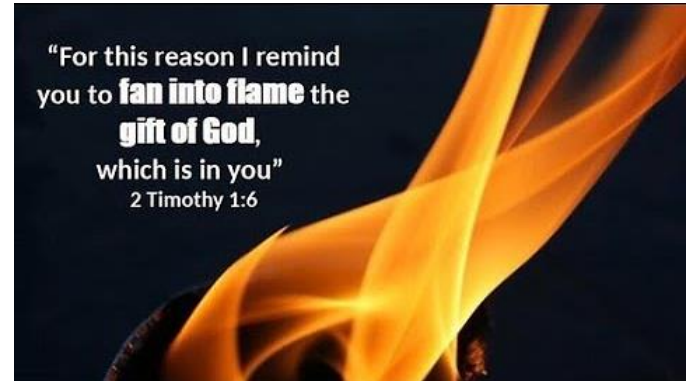
again, it is a *fatally foolish* move, for suddenly, *in that unrepentant time*, he comes *face to face with the Master*, and so ends his life on the *wrong side* of the *eternal door*.

But, if those two parables were not enough to warn and secure His disciples of that day and all of us who have followed since, *Jesus left us two more, even more explicit*, in the rest of Matthew 25. First, there is the second basic point. Namely, that you or I *might not start doing bad things*, like the ‘wicked servant’ of Matthew 24: 48, but *neither can we* simply attempt to receive the Gift of Salvation *and then do nothing* with it; the Flame of Faith *cannot* live that way; therefore we will not be accepted at the Door.

Then that graphic parable of *the sheep and the goats* ought to be really worrying all of us here who claim Christ as Lord, no matter how well our *transformed hearts* are responding *personally to individuals* in need. It has been clear for a long time that as a nation and a people, we are moving in *opposing directions*, a scenario that clearly would be as *calamitous* as the two polar regions of Earth continuously being pulled further apart from each other. Just grab a few headlines – whether on long ignored inadequate pay, pensions, other economic conditions, and policies that worsen them, including those that have allowed – might even have subsidized? - the destruction of our national treasure, Seven Mile Beach; or gun crime, where in the same report that rightfully screams about the discovery of an illegal AK47 and loads of ammunition, it is *casually added* that those arrested for possession have *already been granted bail*; or delays on mental health needs; or recurring disparities in education, *etc.* *It is not* a scenario that creates conditions for those for whom Christ expressed such concern *to be properly fed, clothed, housed, and not languishing in any form of prison*, regardless of how heavily they toil and “sweat” while functionally able to do so. The *faithful and wise servants* should, therefore, *be very busy*, as *practitioners* as well as *advocates*, if we are *doing* what Christ has left us to do so that *all* can “soar high on wings like eagles” [Isa 40: 31 NLT] and live the way God requires, in His *bountiful world*. I am always amazed by how freely *everyone*, it seems, can quote God’s words, “There will always be poor people in the land,” *but never mention* what God said *seven verses earlier*, that “... *there should be no poor among you ... if only you fully obey the Lord your God ...*”. [Deut. 15: NIV]

So the Fire *must indeed be fanned*, be given the *oxygen*, or the *oil* the Bridesmaids needed, or whatever ‘*fuel*’ we can best relate to, so we do not trip and get stranded in the darkness, separated from the *Living Light*. Calling Him “*Lord, Lord,*” as the Bridesmaids did, *is not enough*, as Jesus had previously explained from early in His ministry [e.g. Mt. 7, Lk 6]. *True faith*, He stressed, is known *only by “doing the will of” God, doing, from the heart, what Christ called us to “do”* – *love and serve others, teach them what He taught His disciples*. And make sure we do *not* teach them that Salvation is *for dying*. Salvation is *for truly living*, to be “*alive with Christ*” in *both* this world and the next. Do we truly appreciate the *magnitude* of being ‘*Alive in Christ*’? Where, as the hymn writer put it, we ‘*bring our sorrows and trade them for joy ... leave behind our regrets and mistakes, [and] from the ashes a new life is born*’! That is the *Wisdom* we are

called upon to use *to Fan the Fire*; the *wisdom*, as the Gospel proclaims, of *putting into practice the transforming love of Christ* [Lk. 6: 46 NIV]. *In thankfulness and humility, will we?*



Recognition of Service At John Gray Memorial Church

(Ms. Gerry Robinson)

On Sunday, November 5th, the John Gray Memorial United Church (West Bay) expressed gratitude to Rev. Donovan Myers for his seven years of exceptional, innovative, and thoughtful service. He was also recognized for his many years of dedication to the Cayman Islands Regional Mission Council, the Cayman Prep and High School, and the wider Cayman community. The Congregation commended him for his Christian commitment, leadership, inspiration, creativity, patience, and kindness.





EMPOWERED

"Understanding, Relating, and Connecting more effectively to today's children and youth!"

Seminar for those involved in Children and Youth Ministry

Saturday, November 11 & 18, 2023, 9:00 am - 12:00 noon and 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm at the Council Office

Presenters and Topics

- Cognitive Behaviour - Dr. Richard Wildman
- Developmental Psychology - Mr Denver Bloomfield
- Counselling Techniques - Ms April Lewis
- Mental Health Awareness - Ms Ginelle Nelson

"Magical Moments start with Music!"

You are cordially invited to join us for

An Evening of Music

in Celebration of the Launch of the Lilla Nell Music Fund

at

John Gray Memorial Church
24 Church Street, West Bay
Sunday, November 19th 2023
at 6:00 pm

Enjoy over 60 minutes of continuous music from some of the most well-known musicians on the Island: Nicole Bodden, Rebecca Jefferson, Arek Nicholson, Glen Inanga, Cayman Male Voice Choir, JGMC Choir and many more.

A Special Offering will be received with thanks in support of the Lilla Nell Music Fund being created to advance education in music and song amongst the children and young people of the John Gray Memorial Church, including its Youth Choir.

Donations will be graciously accepted at any time by direct deposit to John Gray Memorial Church account #011-12794 at Cayman National Bank and earmarked for the Lilla Nell Music Fund

Join us after the concert for refreshments in the Church Hall.



Cayman Islands Regional Mission Council Women's Fellowship
Presents

An Evening of Worship Giving Thanks

Singing, Praying, Testimonies

Date
November 26, 2023

Venue:
EAST END UNITED CHURCH

Reflection: Rev. Dr. Yvette Noble Bloomfield

All Are Invited

Time
5:30 p.m.

By Love Serve

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 especially those who are

Caught in the middle of armed conflicts, persecuted, mistreated, exploited, disenfranchised, or abused.

The bereaved

The sick and ill

Those going through a challenging time

Those before an important decision

Those needing guidance, support, or encouragement

Those who feel lost and hopeless.

Your prayer matters!



on Radio Cayman 89.9 every Sunday at 7:45 am

November 12, 2023
Mr. Bryan Bothwell

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@ciucjci.com or ciimcinfo@gmail.com
Website: www.unitedchurch.ky/

