



CAYMAN ISLANDS REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL

WEEKLY UPDATE

November 24, 2022

SEASON OF ADVENT

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 47

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

Welcome to the Season of Advent

The beginning of the Advent season signals the coming of Christmas and so our preparations begin. There are gifts to buy, cards to send, menus to plan for, and people to see. The four Sundays – and weeks - of Advent remind us of the importance of the spiritual aspect of this preparation, the readying of our hearts and minds, not only for the celebration of Jesus’ birth (1st coming) but also for His future return in glory (2nd coming) when He will set up His kingdom, judge His enemies, and reward the faithful, both living and dead.

Advent is full of symbolism and meaning. These are expressed by the themes of the four Sundays/weeks.

- 1st Sunday - HOPE
- 2nd Sunday - PEACE
- 3rd Sunday - JOY
- 4th Sunday - LOVE



Advent 1 – HOPE

On the 1st Sunday in Advent, we light the candle of Hope in our Churches as a reminder that as followers of Jesus Christ, we are the people of hope who can boldly approach God’s throne of grace with our needs (Heb. 4:16), who can overcome great obstacles (1 John 5:4) and who – because of God’s promises - can look into the future with complete confidence.

“May the God of Hope fill you with all joy and peace, as you trust in Him, **so that you may overflow with hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13).



Re-ignite and spread the flames of Hope

Rev. Dr. Yvette Noble-Bloomfield

On Sunday, December 3, 2023, we will begin the new Liturgical Year by celebrating the first Sunday of Advent. During the Advent season, God calls us to prepare our hearts, our minds, our communities and our world for the second coming of Christ. God calls us to find hope, peace, joy and love as we make ourselves and our world ready to receive Him.

We are conscious of the disagreements and tension that plague us in the home, society and even in the Church. Wars are also raging in some places across the world. In humility, we pray that hope, peace, joy and love will attend to us in this Advent season.

On the first Sunday in December, the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands also celebrates Union Sunday. We recall the first union between the Presbyterian Church and the Congregationalists in 1965, thus forming the United Church of Jamaica and Grand Cayman. We also recall and celebrate the 1992 union of the United Church of Jamaica and Grand Cayman and the Disciples of Christ, thus forming the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. We thank God for the obedience of our forefathers and mothers who responded to Christ's prayer that they may all be one.

We treasure the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace and pray that our Church will remain united in our vision, mission and ministry. We pray that the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands will remain an expression and a reality of the two nations' culture, economies and social norms being lived out in the name of Christ and under the banner of Christ's peace.

On December 3, 2023, we also recognize the International Day of Disabled Persons. We remember all those who are living with any type of disability and pray that in the Church, the society and in our homes, we do all that we can to make life more manageable and without discrimination.

The word **Advent** is derived from a Latin root that means “coming” or “arrival”. As Christians, we celebrate at Christmas time the first coming or Incarnation of Christ as a Child in a Manger, born of the Virgin Mary, surrounded by the animals, announced to the Shepherds and revealed to the Wise Men.

The Second Advent is what we are awaiting as the Church of Jesus Christ. We know from scripture that we are awaiting the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. Many have tried to predict the exact date of His return, but we are reminded in Matthew chapter 24: 36-44

36 *“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. 37 But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 38 For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 40 Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. 42 Watch, therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. 43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. 44 Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”*

Whilst we are awaiting Christ’s second coming, we are called to be a people of **HOPE**.

We read in Colossians 1:27 *that He (Christ) is our hope*. Christ provides us with an outstanding future because of the glorious promise that Christ will be with us regardless of the nature of our journey.

What does this hope mean?

I wish to posit three dimensions of this hope:

1. Hope moves us beyond the present state of affairs. Hope is not just a smile of resignation or a giving up on life. We do not rest satisfied with the notion of defeat. Instead, hope takes an interest in life and moves us away from the concept of despair and decay. Hope helps us move forward with possibility and have great anticipation of that which is to come. To keep hope alive, we are guided by our love for God and our obedience to the Word of God. To have hope, we must love God in deep and meaningful ways. Love for God is unconditional and is therefore expressed even during the dark night of the soul. When our personal struggles seem to overtake us like an avalanche, it is our hope in Christ that will sustain us. No matter the depth, height or breadth of our distress or disappointment, hope in Christ is the surest posture we can adopt to aid us in overcoming the crisis. Psalm 42:11 reminds us,

“Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me?

Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God”.

2. Hope is based on the faith we have in the promise of God that God will never leave us nor forsake us. Hebrews 13:5

5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

This means that regardless of our state of pain and suffering, distress and disease, God will remain true to God’s promise to be present with us. Even if our circumstances result in death, we can look towards a future with Christ, who has gone to prepare a place for us.

To have this kind of deep hope means that we **must be grounded in our faith** in Jesus Christ. How deep is your faith? We have to believe in the promises of Christ, as without faith, hope becomes a utopia, and in the end, we will be left in a state of deep disappointment and distress.

John 11: 25 informs us of the conversation Jesus in conversation with Martha:

“Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

If hope is to have profound meaning for us, we must believe in Christ.

3. If we believe and have this Hope, we must become the Harbingers of Hope. Harbinger means a person or thing that announces or signals the approach of another. As Christians, our lives must indicate to others that there is hope in Jesus Christ. We must help persons overcome the sin of despair and hopelessness by offering them the message of salvation, full and free.

Our lives must reflect that we know Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord. Our words must be words of kindness, and our deeds must show forth the love of God in Jesus Christ.

The daily interactions we have with people must be indicative of the fact that we serve a living Saviour who allows us to have hope in the midst of a crisis, patience in the face of adversary, and joy even in the presence of loss. This posture is difficult to achieve and can only resonate with us if we are grounded in Christ. Then and only then can we be true harbingers of hope.

Let us then, as God's Children, make it our daily goal this Advent 1. to be filled with Hope (Christ), 2. to be grounded in God’s enduring love and presence, and 3. through our actions and words actively and purposefully re-ignite and spread the flames of Hope in a world marked by despair (hopelessness), misguided expectations and assurances (false hopes).

May this season of Advent prepare us to celebrate the strength that can be found in weakness and the power of hope that is held in humility and love.

The Advent Journey:

HOPE becomes Peace, **PEACE** becomes Joy, **JOY** becomes Love, **LOVE** becomes **CHRIST**

R. Schuller



Cayman Council Women's Fellowship Thanksgiving Service

"Thanksgiving is an Expression of the Inner Condition of the Heart"



The Annual Thanksgiving Service of the Cayman Council Women's Fellowship was held on Sunday afternoon, November 26, 2023, at the East End United Church, with fifty (50) persons in attendance representing the various Branches.

The service was a joyous occasion filled with singing, Scripture readings, and heartfelt testimonies. In her meditation, based on Psalm 99, Rev. Dr. Yvette Noble-Bloomfield emphasized that **thanksgiving is an expression of the inner condition of the heart** that is reconciled, ransomed and rejoicing. In addition, she added that thanksgiving is also an outward expression of giving freely and gladly, regardless of the circumstances. Finally, she pointed out that thanksgiving is an act of worship whereby we honour God as the source of all blessings. In this sense, our thanksgiving goes beyond mere gratitude; it becomes a sacred and worshipful interaction with God.



At the end of the service, the President of the Cayman Council Women's Fellowship, Mrs. Jacynthia Anderson, expressed gratitude to all for their contributions and participation. Following the event, light refreshments were served.



The United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands

Union Sunday December 3, 2023

Union Sunday is the celebration of the formation of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. On December 1, 1965, Congregationalists and Presbyterians joined and formed the United Church of Jamaica and Grand Cayman. In December 1992, the Disciples of Christ followed suit, and the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands was born. Union Sunday is observed annually on the first Sunday in December.



Sunday, December 3, 2023

Cayman Thanksgiving is a weekend-long national celebration honoring Caymanian heritage, culture, way of life and everything Caymanian. Observed annually on the first Sunday in December - marking the end of hurricane season - it is also an opportunity to stop and express gratitude.

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

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,

Those caught in the middle of armed conflicts,

persecuted, mistreated, exploited,

disenfranchised, or abused.



on Radio Cayman 89.9
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December 3, 2023

Rev. Dr. Yvette Noble-Bloomfield

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