



# CAYMAN ISLANDS REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL

WEEKLY UPDATE

**Season of Lent**

March 14, 2024

VOLUME 9 ISSUE 11

**Rooted and Resilient: Re-ignited by the Spirit to Re-connect**

## **Jesus: High Priest, of The Order of Melchizedek**

*Mr. Bryan Bothwell*

Please read Heb. 5: 5 - 10

Please pray with me.

Holy God, we bow before You with thanksgiving for all Your grace and blessings toward us and in awe of Your wonder, might, and love. As our Church celebrates **Girls' Brigade Month**, we especially thank You for all You have done for so many around the world and on our small island through the faithful service and obedience to You of that organization. Continue to bless them and magnify their work to Your glory, we humbly pray. And help us understand how we all need to embrace their motto, to "**seek, serve and follow Christ**," and adapt their Vision, "**Girl's lives transformed, God's world enriched.**" So, speak to us now, we pray, O God, our Redeemer Lord. Amen.

Probably, this is not a passage of the Bible that is a favorite of those of us who have grown up in the Christian tradition. In fact, like me, some of you might be uncomfortable with Christ being compared to or described as "in the order of" or "after the order of" any human priest. However, the writer of Hebrews was specifically addressing, literally, "Hebrews"! Hebrew people - the Israelite people. And particularly those who had become followers of Christ, some of whom were wavering in the face of much pressure and persecution. As the Editors of the New Living Translation of this letter put it, "were having second thoughts about their decision to leave Judaism and become Christians." So, the author of Hebrews was at pains to address their uncertainties over whether Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah. He did so not only from the eyewitness accounts, which we find in the four Gospels but also from other parts of the New Testament. He also respectfully showed how this is indeed in accordance with the prophecies of the Messiah in their Hebrew Scriptures. For he wants the waverers to reassure themselves that those prophecies have indeed been fulfilled in Jesus.

So, in our short passage, he includes two quotes from Psalms, which were regarded as speaking forward to the Messiah. Indeed, throughout the 13 Chapters of the Epistle, he maintained his focus on the superiority of Jesus Christ over the high priests, prophets, and angels, always carefully including the Messianic prophecies from their Scriptures. This follower of Christ, this 'disciple,' took his inseparable role as a "**discipler**" very seriously. And Melchizedek is named by him more than mentioned in all the rest of the Bible combined!

Obviously, in the face of the particular doubts that had been planted in the minds of many of those new Jewish converts to Christianity, he felt it necessary to demonstrate that Jesus had met the **Divine High Priest** role of their long-awaited Messiah, having come directly from God and been appointed by God, not a High Priest appointed by another. Furthermore, he also highlighted that Jesus was not a High Priest of the Levitical line, who had often failed God over the centuries, and who had to offer sacrifices for themselves, as well as for the people, continuously. So, as we read, he emphasized that Messianic Psalm - "a priest forever, in the order of **Melchizedek**."

That **King-Priest**, perhaps not coincidentally, King of Salem (Jerusalem), with which Jesus is also dramatically linked, appeared briefly in Genesis 14: 18 - 20, with no ancestral background, epilogue, or timeline - the "priest forever." Instead, he was introduced simply as having "brought out bread and wine" for Abram and his tired men; then he "blessed Abram" and "God most high." And Abram had offered up to Melchizedek, without being prompted, "a tenth of everything." A priestly king with the spirit of humility and caring of a servant king. And the one whom Abraham, the Father of their Jewish Faith, had 'recognized' with the offering of his tithe.

Clearly, the author of Hebrews was deeply committed to demonstrating to his fellow Israelites, including the wavering Christians, that they could indeed put their trust in Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah. As he did throughout the whole Epistle, he used and did not belittle the prophecies of their Jewish faith, including the Melchizedek-related Psalm. But what is that to you and me today?

Well, we might not hear Christ calling us to “follow” Him to Israel, but in today’s Cayman, we may easily get into a discussion with a person of the Jewish faith! However, its relevance is ‘way bigger’ than that. A Baptist Minister and Seminary Dean, Dr. Vernon Davis, observed that “The gospel of resurrection is not an easy word to hear and believe in the world where you go to minister. Millions have not heard it at all; millions who have heard it live as if it were not so.”

I doubt I would find disagreement from anyone in Cayman today that we have both those people ‘who have not heard the gospel of resurrection’ and even more who have heard it, indeed, have come from the Christian lineage but ‘live as if it were not so.’

You have heard all the dramatics about whatever might be the latest crime, our failure to pay a living wage, the imbalance of housing costs even for salaried workers, homelessness, environmental damage, etc. Then, there is all the confusion about what can be done, as if we had never seen this coming for at least the last 50 years. Or that we had never heard about the principles of living justly with one another that God had laid down for the Israelites before allowing them to cross into their new home in Canaan, which Jesus emphasized, exemplified, and championed so passionately. So, right here at home, we know we as a nation are “living as if” the gospel of resurrection, the gospel of redemption, the gospel of living right “were not so.”

As Christians, even in our imperfections, we also know the truth, which Dr. Davis observed: “People need to look at life from the vantage point of the empty tomb and in the energizing power of the living Christ.” We cling to that belief because of our personal experiences after we allowed Christ to energize us to endeavor to live rightly by following Him.

But we also know that even His remaining eleven Apostles, as we are told in Matthew 28:16, went to the mountain where the risen Christ had told them to meet Him, and “they saw Him, they Worshipped Him, but some of them doubted.” Nevertheless, Christ gave them all the Great Commission. He had not given up on the doubters, just as the writer of Hebrews refused to give up on the wavering new Israeli Christians.

For those of us who claim Christ as Lord of our Lives, which is the only way we can have Him as Saviour, we too have committed to the role of ‘Discipler.’ And though we may not all be called to do so by authoring learned dissertations, we need to undertake whatever we do for Christ with compassion and respect for others, with the perseverance, the thoroughness, and passion for the integrity of the gospel, with which the author of “Hebrews” equipped himself and pursued his calling.

For, as Dr. Davis also emphasized, “When we fail to use the best we know in the service of what we believe, we fashion new tombs for the Christ.” From this Epistle, we can learn much to guide our own journey and improve our response to Christ’s call on us. Including how to help others address whatever the ‘Melchizedek viewpoints’ they struggle with so they can see the true Christ and the outcome God wants for all of us. And will embrace the faith that provides both a ‘firm anchor of the soul,’ secured directly to God, and that tremendous uplifting in our earthly lives when we each turn to the Light of God, away from the darkness of sin.

And all of that must start with us. Indeed, our focus passage and the rest of Hebrews, with its deep emphasis on Christ Jesus, enables that aim of our Synod, for all of us, during March, to **‘Reconnect and Repent’ by Deepened Faith** so that we may grow in the depth of our understanding of God, Jesus, and the Church. We must embrace the truth that to **worship Jesus as the High Priest of the Order of Melchizedek** demands that we seek the righteousness offered by the only High Priest Who bears our sin and makes atonement for us once and for all. Thereby enabling us to re-root, re-nurture, reignite, and re-strengthen our own life in Christ. Otherwise, our attempts at helping others to become disciples of Christ will drive them further away. For as Hebrews 12: 12 -13 warns us, “Therefore strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.” [NIV] “Mark out a straight path for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong.” [NLT]

Let us, then, truly embrace, by helping others to embrace, that transforming invitation in Hebrews 4: 14 - 16: “Therefore, since we have a great high priest Who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have One who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet He did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” Amen

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## **Worship MAT Sunday at Savannah United Church**

The Savannah United Church had its Worship MAT (Mission Action Team) on Sunday, March 10, 2024, a week after their Evangelism MAT Sunday. The following information was shared during their presentation:

### **THE WORSHIP MAT’S PURPOSE**

1. To support the Minister in the oversight of all worship-related activities.

2. To ensure that corporate worship services meet the needs of the Congregation and are in alignment with the Mission and Vision of the wider congregational focus and the UCJCI.

### THE WORSHIP MAT'S GOAL

To discern, organize, and implement, through the utilization of intergenerational involvement and the incorporation of different art forms/styles, worship experiences that are lifegiving, transforming, enabling, and dynamic.

### WORSHIP MAT AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITIES

- Worship Planning
- Music and Arts
  - Young Voices In Praise (YVIP)
  - Youth Band
  - Young Adults Praise Team
  - Sanctuary Choir
  - Men's Choir
  - Dance
  - Drama
- Sanctuary care
- Sacraments

### WORSHIP PLANNING

- Plan special services
- Evaluate and critique past services to enhance future services
- Promote the involvement of the Congregation and the adherents of all ages
- Updates on upcoming Worship MAT subcommittee offerings

*Some photos from the Worship MAT Sunday Service.*

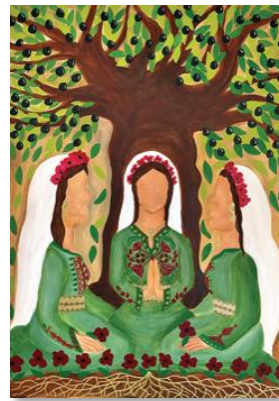


## World Day of Prayer (A Women Led, Global, Ecumenical Movement)

The World Day of Prayer was observed worldwide on March 1, 2024. The theme was based on Ephesians 4: 1 - 6. "I beg you, bear with one another in love." A group of Palestinian Christian women prepared the service booklet before the current conflict, hoping to encourage and inspire other women around the world to bear with one another in troubled times.

*Press Release*

### 'I beg you, bear with one another in love.'

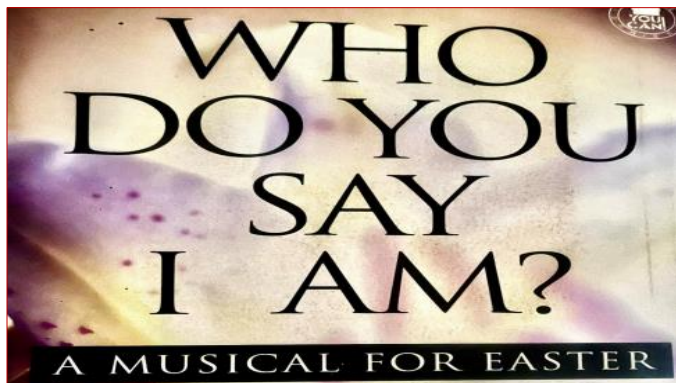


The Christian Women of Palestine are calling us to connect with the land from where Jesus came; where He was born, ministered, and died - and from where our faith began and is rooted. Despite living in an area of the world where there is ongoing conflict and the future is uncertain, the women of Palestine are sharing with love a reminder that they are there, and they want to give hope to everyone. The theme of the service 2024 'bear with one another in love' seems very appropriate for these women who will not give up witnessing the love of Jesus Christ.

World Day of Prayer is an international, inter-church organisation led by women which enables us to hear the thoughts of those women from all parts of the world: their hopes, concerns, and prayers. The preparation for the day is vast. An international committee is based in New York and there are national committees in each participating country. Regional conferences meet to consider the service and then local groups make their plans. Finally, at a church near you on Friday 1 March 2024 people will gather to celebrate the service prepared by the women of Palestine.

The Day of Prayer is celebrated in over 146 countries. It begins in Samoa and prayer in native languages travels throughout the world - through Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and the Americas before finishing in American Samoa some 38 hours later.

*(artwork by Halima Aziz; source: wwdp.org.uk)  
(source: wwdp.org.uk) (All information and images in this article: Copyright © 2023 World Day of Prayer International Committee, Inc.)*



Webster Memorial United Church  
 Presents Easter Cantata  
 Sunday March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024, at 11 AM  
 Featuring  
 Webster and Savannah Choirs  
 261 Bodden Town Road

## GLOBAL MISSIONS CONFERENCE

*Nations United for Christ*

Guest speakers

**BISHOP RAPHAEL HAULE**  
 Bishop of Ruwma Anglican Diocese, Tanzania

**MRS. KEITRA VILMA**  
 OM Regional Director Northern Caribbean

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10th-14th April 2024 | Elmslie Memorial United Church

**MORE INFO**  
 949-7923  
 @ELMSLIECHURCH  
 ELMSLIEUNITEDCHURCH.KY

**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

## TRAINING FOR LAY LEADERS MODULE 1

**NEW START DATE -  
 MARCH 23, 2024**

**TOPICS INCLUDE**  
 EVANGELISM, DISCIPLESHIP,  
 COMMUNICATION, BIBLE  
 STUDY, WORSHIP,  
 CAREGIVING

**THIS TRAINING IS FOR  
 PERSONS PREPARING TO  
 SERVE AS:**

- Elders
- Specialized Ministry Leaders
- Lay Pastors

2nd and 4th Saturdays- March to August 9:00 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
 via Zoom. Registration through regions opens February 27

**COST  
 JMD  
 \$10,000**

**FOR MORE INFO**  
 ucjci.karen.francis@gmail.com  
 1876-4327057

**RECORDED ORIENTATION SESSION  
 AVAILABLE BY EMAILING  
 UCJCI.SHERYL.CHUNG@GMAIL.COM**

Anyone interested in the **UCJCI Training for Lay Leaders 2024 Module 1**, please speak with your Minister or call the Council Office for Registration Form and further information.

Telephone: 947-1963 Email: cirmc.info@gmail.com

## BETHESDA COUNSELLING CENTRE

<https://www.bethesdacounsellingcenter.com/>  
 Tel: 946-6575

on Radio Cayman 89.9 every Sunday at 7:45 am

**March 17, 2024  
 Mr. Bryan Bothwell**

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