

On behalf of the Cayman Council of the United Church, let me add a special welcome to all our Management, Teachers and other Staff of Cayman Prep and High School as we give thanks this morning to God for our School and for all of you who serve there, in all capacities, as you continue to enhance the lives of the children and young people entrusted to you. It is an *awesome* responsibility and we truly appreciate all that you do to justify that trust and confidence in you. We pray that God will continue to pour out His blessings and protection on all of you and on the students of the School and that you will continue to make yourself available as instruments of God in this great cause.

Let me also, please, extend a special welcome to those students and parents of the School who are here especially this morning because of this service of appreciation for the Staff, and to my fellow Governors. Thank you all very much for coming and also for your integral roles in the continued success of the Cayman Prep and High School.

On behalf of the United Church, I want to say to the Staff of the School that we do recognise that this annual service of appreciation for you is but a symbol of the thankfulness you deserve every day – as indeed do all others who are helping to positively shape the lives of the young people of our community. (Clearly the Church’s interest in the education and welfare of our children and young people is not limited to our ministry through Cayman Prep and High. And this Church is, and has always been, truly honoured by the exemplary dedication of its Members involved in education in this country at all levels, and by its children, and the responsibility taken by their parents, in nearly every learning institution on the Island.) But today’s service is especially dedicated to those of you at Cayman Prep and High. So please accept our thanks and our prayers and forgive us if and when we do not always uphold you and value you as we should.

A recent cover story in Time magazine, referred to a slogan used by one of the new organisations formed in the US to try to improve education and the recruitment of teachers there, “Be more than just a role model. Be a teacher.” I thought that captured well the tremendous responsibility that each of you has taken on. For most of us, trying to be a good role model is *enough* of a challenge – a teacher can and needs to be even *more* than that.

That article also contained much information which we in Cayman, and the Church as owner and operator of the School, need to draw caution from. For instance, it noted that by 2014, only about 3 years away, the US will need *1 million* new teachers. And it warned that one of the major impediments is not just pay levels but the lack of prestige with which the teaching profession in the US feels it is now viewed in so many areas.

It contrasted that with countries such as Finland, Singapore and South Korea, where the teaching profession is recognised as an *elite* career, with 100% of educators coming from the top third of their college graduating class, compared to only 23% in the US, while at the University of Helsinki only 1 in 15 applicants is accepted into its teacher-training programme.

At our School we have been well aware of the competition there is internationally for excellent teachers and so we are truly grateful that you have chosen to be with us, and that we have all the other members of staff, as together you are all critical to that capability which has helped make Cayman Prep the largest private school here. And we certainly recognise the level of your competence and professionalism as educators and as school leaders; anyone who read the Caymanian Compass on Friday will have seen evidence of this, with the picture of the large graduating class and the record 100% pass rate at GCSE and IGCSE exams. With 92% of the students completing from 5 to 13 subjects at *the top grades* of A* to C, those are truly exemplary results. We extend to you, and to your students and parents, our sincere congratulations on these achievements and on the records you also reported in your A level passes. Well done, indeed. And we know Jesus likes 100% - no one lost, no one left out - something your Director and I have talked about regularly. That we can never lose sight of the fact that the student body, no matter how fantastic the overall pass rate may be, is made up of almost 800 unique *individuals*, and you have to toil away to make sure that each of them, from Kindergarten to Year 13, is motivated, challenged, nurtured, educated and shaped, uniquely, to his or her full God-given potential.

It is truly an awesome challenge and we thank you most sincerely for your dedication to that goal. May God continue to bless you and may you look to Him for guidance and strength.