



CAYMAN ISLANDS REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL

WEEKLY UPDATE

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SEASON OF LENT

Thoughts for These Uncharted Times

By Rev. Dr. Yvette Noble-Bloomfield
(RDGS-CIRMC)

*O Sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee
The silence of eternity
Interpreted by love!*

*Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.*

The words from the hymn 'Dear Lord and Father of Mankind' written by John G. Whittier in 1872 are very appropriate for these uncharted times. This sense of calm eluded by the hymn writer must be regarded as the antidote to the frenzy that some have adopted in response to COVID 19.

As we listen to the world's news and as we read and interpret COVID-19 in the local context it is easy to become overwhelmed. There are many voices speaking at the same time and persons are passing on via social media every little titbit that they receive. The ears are attuned to the noises and the tongues and fingers send the information along in rapid speed. There are rumors mingled with fear and many are trying to cope with the new normal.



Warning!

There are however truths about this disease which is of pandemic proportion. Coronavirus is real and dangerous and governments and medical professionals around the world are working assiduously to stave off the edge and to keep populations safe. This disease, although some persons have survived, is deadly and must be regarded with a deep level of seriousness as it has the potential to destroy not only individuals but the institutions such as family, community, culture and religion as we know them now.

In our own context the Governor, Premier, Government and Health and Security professionals have been tireless in their warnings and prodding for us to obey the orders, to care for self and others, to remain restrained in our buying and acquisition

behavior, to deal fairly and honestly in business, to care for the employees, to remember the most vulnerable and to **STAY HOME**.

Above all, the Cayman Islands Government is aware of the implication for these islands if the coronavirus is not held in check. To adequately cope with the death and sickness of persons to the proportion we have seen in larger jurisdictions is impossible to imagine if this became our reality.

So, as Members and Adherents of the United Church, let us go above and beyond to help in this great cause to stymie the spread of the virus in the Cayman Islands. Please **stay at home** if you are not listed as part of the essential services!



Theologically, I sense a call for us to understand the need to draw on the silence of eternity, interpreted by love. The still dews of quietness need to pervade our being.

*Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
(and COVID-19)
O still, small voice of calm.*

Yes, these are days we never dreamed of or could imagine that we would or could live through but here they are, and we are called to reach into the crevice of our faith, to lean into our God and to **survive as those who have hope**. Paul, in writing to the church in Thessalonica, in 1Thessalonians 4: 9 – 13 stated:

9 But concerning love of the brethren ye have no need that one write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to **love one another**; 10 for indeed ye do it toward all the brethren that are in all Macedonia. But we exhort you, brethren, that ye abound more and more; 11 and that ye **study to be quiet**, and to do your own business, and to work with your hands, even as we charged you; 12 that ye may walk becomingly toward them that are without, and may have need of nothing. 13 But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye **sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope**. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. (KJV)

There are three clear instructions that I wish to lift from this text:

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

1. Through all this, let us **love one another**. If we truly love each other, we will:

a. Place human life above all else—economy, profit margin, the need to gather – even in worship, the urge to think that we must continue our way of life to the demise of others and set aside our selfish desires and ensure that we do not glean the entire supermarket for ourselves.

b. Be conscious of information overload and with sense filter messages we have received before passing them on as gospel truth.

c. Practice social distancing and love from a distance.

d. Stay home and learn and appreciate anew the gift of your immediate family.

e. Consider the most vulnerable and look after their well-being. Call the elderly, share some of our provisions when we are able so to do. Take care however to practice social distancing peradventure we transmit the disease to them.

f. Pay attention to the children, some of whom maybe bewildered by these times as their entire social well being is ruthlessly changed in some ways. They are listening to our words, watching our actions and are marking this time in their lives by our examples. Let's ensure that we are carefully walking through this with our children so that they will learn good coping skills and become a generation of survivors.

g. Think of and pray for the health professionals who are risking their very lives to save ours. Pray for the Government. Let us remember to give a word of encouragement and when possible provide them with the simple but needed items to show we do care.



2. **Study to be quiet** – if we make good use of this time – we will:

a. Seek to discern from the Word of God and through the Spirit of God, what God is saying to humanity at this time. The whole world has been brought to attention by COVID-19. There is hardly any other news even though there are those who would still seek the stage of the world for the promotion of the self. Let us be quiet.

b. Understand that all across the world and here in the Cayman Islands there were many noises. We were knee deep in conversation, activism, condemnation, discrimination, corruption in many forms, selfishness and haste. This is a time for quietness and to re-set the moral compass of our lives. Let us use this time for quiet, personal reflection – even those of us in the Church -let us pause and seek anew God grace and favor and above all, earnestly seek God's will.

c. Quiet our restless spirit which can be difficult to achieve in these critical days. Let us learn to be of a peaceful and quiet disposition. There are those who cannot be still, but this is an art form that we are being compelled to learn. Hence, we are encouraged to spend time in prayer and meditation even as we work and study at home.

d. Quiet the need to talk incessantly and to pass on what we have heard. Let us internalize something and seek after the presence of the Holy Spirit in our being.

e. Develop a new appreciation for the Word of God, prayer and learn to dwell in God's presence.

Living Hope

3. **Sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope** - if this is our posture we will:

a. Abound in holiness so that we are able to have hope. Holiness in a time of bereavement and uncertainty maybe difficult to grasp. However, once we are girded by the Holy Spirit of God, we learn how to depend on God and how to trust God even in the darkest hours.

b. Understand how to mourn in a time such as this. Deaths from are real and it is distressing each time we watch the count of persons who are dying around the world. Thousands of persons, old and young, male and female, rich and poor, famous and unknown are dying. COVID-19 is no respecter of persons. It recalls the James Shirley poem '**Death – the Leveller**' and that is indeed scary. We must therefore be touched but not be disproportionate in our grief for each and every death even if we do not know the person.

c. Cling to the God of hope, who has promised never to leave us nor forsake us. (Hebrews 13:5). Let us also comfort ourselves with 2 Timothy 1:7 - **For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.**

d. In the midst of COVID-19, we can know with certainty that the God of hope is with us and in this we can be comforted. Let us secure our faith and anchor our souls on Christ the solid Rock.

e. I invite you to embrace the words of the song 'The God of hope be with you', written by Words by Ken Bible and music by Tom Fettke © 1993, 1995 by Pilot Point

The God of hope be with you, The Lord of love among you, The Prince of Peace reign in you, His mighty Spirit fill you. May God Himself surround you, And His presence be your joy. May God Himself surround you, And His presence be your joy. Amen.

Worship the Lord

-on Radio Cayman 89.9 every Sunday at 7:45 am-
March 29. Rev. Dr. Yvette Noble-Bloomfield

March 29. (Sunday) 5th Sunday of Lent

Local United Church Worship Services will be distributed via video links.

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