



CAYMAN ISLANDS REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL

WEEKLY UPDATE

December 30, 2020

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 52

The Road Map

nd
UCJCI 42nd SYNOD THEME 2021
Rooted, Resilient: Responding in HOPE
(Health, Opportunity, Peace, Evangelism)

By Rev. Norbert Stephens
General Secretary

Beginning this new Journey

As a Church we started a process fifteen years ago (2005) of rereading our context and discerning the signs of the time, towards meeting the spiritual (holistic) needs of the people we serve. This led to the **Renewal and Transformation (R&T) Agenda** of the United Church.

At our Synod in 2009 the R& T agenda was enacted and the process has been one of mixed engagement/s and mixed review/s for the most part, for varying reasons. However, what cannot be denied, is, given where we found ourselves 12 years ago, it would have been very unproductive and disheartening to remain there.

In 2020, we have all experienced and are experiencing what no one in this present generation (the last 50 years) has experienced before – the Covid-19 pandemic. We had and still have no choice, but to find new and innovative ways to live, connect and above all engage ministry and mission, while restricted by the protocols given by our 2 Governments (The Cayman Islands and Jamaica). With our best efforts and best intentions, many persons became disturbed, distressed and discontented. Some persons were disillusioned into thinking that Covid-19 would have disappeared in short order and that our lives would have gone back to what we call normal. Nevertheless, the elusive nature of Covid-19 is teaching us to live with it and has left us no choice, but to emerge from our places of fear, doubt and anxiety to a place of **HOPE – health, opportunities, peace and evangelism by being/remaining rooted and resilient.**

Navigating the Journey

We now look to the future, being reminded of who we are. If anything, our reformed identity, ethos and worship continue to remind us that we **“reformed and always being reformed”**. The meaning of Church in both the Hebrew and Greek, places emphasis on the gathering of people; people coming together for a common cause and purpose, which is to offer corporate worship to God, though not exclusive in its meaning. However, of the many words translated Church, the Hebrew **‘ey’dah,**

invites us in this season of the Church’s witness, to move beyond the physical sanctuary and to ‘witness’ in times of crisis and chaos, as we emerge and evolve with inspiring and life-giving ministries. We are called in this time be a living ‘testimony’ of who we believe in as Christians and what we believe in as Christians.

To be **“rooted” (firmly implanted)**, speaks to our foundation: immovable, unshakeable, unchangeable and unstoppable. **WE ARE ROOTED IN CHRIST.** The Church has stood the test of time: historically, socially and politically and still stands, because her foundation was not of human initiation or intervention. The Church is God’s divine initiation and intervention for a world in need of redemption and hope. Hear the words of Jesus, from St. Matthew 16:18:

“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” (NIV)

The discourse between Jesus and Peter in St. Matthew 16: 18-20 affirmed three things:

1. Jesus is the rock on which the Church will be built... The cornerstone.
2. Peter will be a 1st generation apostle to activate the work of the Church (The Movement), after Jesus ascended to heaven.
3. Peter’s public confession of faith, would lead others to be a part of the movement (Acts 2).

It was Peter’s confession of faith in St. Matthew 16: 16 that **“Jesus is the Christ, Son of the living God”** that led to the foundation of Christ kingdom on earth, propagated by the Church to this very day.

To be **“resilient” [returning to the original form or position after being bent, compressed or stretched]**, speaks to what 2 Corinthians 4:8 & 9 declares as our way of being:

“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.” (NIV)

Resilience and hope are directly connected. To be resilient is to have hope and to have hope is to be resilient. Paul writes to encourage the Church in Corinth to see beyond their physical and present circumstances and to see through spiritual eyes that whatever it is and how it may appear to be, God has not abandoned them. The same is true for us. In other words, our present situation be it:

- Covid-19;
- all the other ills and vices in the two societies;
- our personal struggles and trials;
- spiritual apathy, dullness and dryness,

positions us to harness new opportunities for God's power and presence to be manifested in our lives, Church, Communities and the world at large. The difficulties and hardships of the day are a test of our faith and will in Christ, therefore we must press on.

Our main "**response**" [our answer less in words and more in action], at this time is HOPE. The Greek rendering for HOPE – "*elpis*" invites to have an expectation of good at all times; joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation. In the Hebrew rendering for HOPE there are many words, basically meaning the same thing with different emphasis. However, for the purposes of this theme – "*yachal*" – to be patient, trust and wait, stay in expectation; "*sabar*" – to scrutinize, to expect with patience and "*chacah*" – to make a refuge (confidence and trust) are pertinent. The Greek and Hebrew words are not suggesting that we sit, wait and do nothing, but as we wait, with careful discernment and prayer, we act, knowing that Yahweh [I am, that I am] is working alongside us. While there is no need to rush, to give up and throw in the towel...there is a sense of urgency to stick with our call as Christ disciples.

Whether or not we are able to see the physical evidence of the fruit/s of our labor, we are called to remain **FAITHFUL**. To this end, for this time and for the future HOPE calls us to:

- Become and be **HEALTHY**.
- To make good of a bad situation, harness all the God given **OPPORTUNITIES** in this time and for the unfolding future.
- To always pursue **PEACE** and yes,
- **EVANGELISM** remains the heartbeat of the Church.

Become and be HEALTHY: JANUARY – MARCH 2021

In this period our focus will be on: spiritual, emotional, mental, physical and financial health. No one can deny and particular in these times that 'health' is now a priority. While the Health Ministries across Jamaica and the Cayman Islands have called on their citizens to see to their physical health. The United Church will call on her members and friends to take a holistic view on the matter of health. Without health, we can forget our mission and our vision as a Church. Being healthy will undergird all that we are and all that we must do, in proclaiming the kingdom of God on earth.

OPPORTUNITIES in this time and for the unfolding future: APRIL – JUNE 2021

This will be a period of great discernment as we seek to work together to "be the Church." Our Synodical year will start in this quarter, as we prepare ourselves for Synod 2021, we will be encouraged to put our minds, heart and hands together for the advancement of the Kingdom of God, wherever there is a United Church congregation. We must learn from the past and these lessons ought to inform, as well as, inspire our future. Therefore, we will be encouraged to see what we considered to be arduous and impossible to be motivating and very possible.

Always pursue PEACE: JULY – SEPTEMBER 2021

In pursuing peace, it is God's peace that seek to follow. This kind of peace is not from human achievement/s, neither can it be achieved humanly. This peace is a gift to each of us from God. God's peace is the unruffled serenity of God's presence in our lives. The Greek "*eirene*" for peace, allows for the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, which dispels fear and welcomes contentment, knowing that it is God who is in control. During this period the intent is that we may examine the gift of peace from three angles: peace from God; peace with God and peace of God.

EVANGELISM remains the heartbeat of the Church: OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2021

The last quarter of 2020 saw us as a Church looking at the "*Disciple as an Evangelist*." Maybe, that was one of the ways in which, God has sought to prepare us for 2021 and maybe it is God's way of ensuring that we never lose sight of our core calling to proclaim the Gospel, even more intentionally in 2022. If our hearts stop beating then we are dead and at all cost, we must remain alive, because our very lives and the lives of God's people depend on it. During this period a diagnostic [a precise approach] will be used to dig deeper into ensuring that our heartbeat remains healthy and strong.

Staying on course of the Journey

A deliberate effort will be made for us to journey together as a Church by providing written liturgies for each Sunday through our house Church liturgy writing group. This can be used in the worship spaces of the sanctuary or in the comfort your home. We are encouraging every Congregation to get on board. The written liturgies are not prescriptive; they are intended to be one of many resources. So whether or not we chose to use the written liturgies... engage the themes for each Sunday and let us emerge and grow together, all for Christ's sake. SHALOM!

UPCOMING EVENTS

December 31. (Thursday) Watch night

- 10:00 pm - East End/Gun Bay U. joint service (at EE)
- 10:30 pm – Robert Young-Savannah U. joint service (at Savannah)
- 10:30 pm – Elmslie-South Sound joint service (at Elmslie)
- 10:30 pm – Webster M.-William Pouchie M. joint service (at Webster M.)
- 11:00 pm - John Gray Memorial

January 01. (Friday) New Year's Day – PUBLIC HOLIDAY

January 03. (Sunday) 2nd Sunday after Christmas

Worship the Lord

-on Radio Cayman 89.9 every Sunday at 7:45 am-
January 03, 2021
 The Right Rev. Dr. Gordon Cowans (Moderator)

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 cirmcinfo@gmail.com
 Website: unitedchurch.org.ky

