



# CAYMAN ISLANDS REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL

WEEKLY UPDATE

September 22, 2022

**SEASON OF PENTECOST**

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 38



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

## **Giving is a Grace from God**

By Rev. Donovan Myers

Please read 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

For many people, giving represents an appeal to altruistic feelings. We give because it's the human thing to do. If others are in need, our duty is to 'help out' where we can. But also, many see giving as a necessary outpouring of their excess. I have more than I need, so I should share. While those two motivations might be reasonable, the letter from Paul to the Corinthians speaks about giving in a way that challenges some commonly held assumptions. On the one hand, for him, giving fundamentally challenges the concept of ownership, the right we have to possess 'stuff'. It asserts that what we think is ours, is only ours on loan. We are not really owners but rightly managers. Giving, then is an outworking of the responsibility of our management of those resources. We don't lay claim to things in a way that ties us to them and them to us. On the other hand, when Paul wrote in the way that he did about the giving of the Macedonian Christians, he was challenging the Greco-Roman worldview that wealth was the result or sign of divine approval. That somehow, it is in having a lot of stuff that we demonstrate our strong connection to God or that God likes us. Both people who have a lot and people who have a little are blessed by God.

It seems then, that Paul is framing the discussion about 'giving' as essentially a matter of character. For him, our outlook on 'giving' or our disposition towards 'giving' speaks to who we know ourselves to be. It is an indication of the quality or nature of the person that we are. You might have heard it said that "...when it comes to giving, some people stop at nothing." So, whether we take the minimalist approach or give sacrificially might have something to do with our understanding of who we are and the nature of the person that we have become.

Paul is unashamed in making a case for giving and does so by appealing to the example of Macedonian Christians. He does three things in outlining his case.

**Firstly, he Examines their Motivation for giving.** Why is it that we give? Giving should come from an understanding of grace. In verse 1, he asserts that their outpouring of love came from the grace that God had given the Macedonian church. The ability to give beyond getting back or building up 'good will' only happens because of the supernatural deposit of grace in a person's life. It is an understanding of the unmerited and undeserved favor of God that we receive in Christ's sacrificial

giving of himself on the cross. Giving then becomes a virtue, an act of grace that we offer without the promise of anything in return or the hope to 'cash in our chips' at a later date. This requires that we embrace grace, live into grace, and then offer grace. So, in verse 7 he exhorts them to "...see that you also excel in this grace of giving". He seems also to employ another 'unlikely' method of encouraging this kind of giving. He suggests that they do a comparison of their giving with the giving of others. But it is not the quantity of the giving with which he appears interested. Instead, he wants to "...test the sincerity of (their) love (against) the earnestness of others." He wants them to give out of their heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for the grace they have received from Christ.

**Secondly, he Expresses their Maturity in giving.** He uses the takeaways from their demonstration and experience of giving in order to teach the principle that giving is an expression of the maturity of our faith. Their giving was not limited to or restricted by hardship. For it was "*in the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity*" (v2). They didn't use their challenging circumstances or their meagre resources as an excuse to hoard or to refrain from reaching out to others. In the face of severe trials, their joy transformed their poverty into generosity. This maturity of faith inspired them to give not only according to their ability, but also motivated them to sacrifice [to give beyond their apparent ability]. They gave as able yet even more than they were able. And this giving was not coerced but was an outflowing from this depth of faith which provided the internal motivation for their act of service. They did it all "*...entirely on their own...*" (v3), they "*...pleaded for opportunity to give*" (v4) and gave of themselves "*...first of all to the Lord, and then ... to (the apostles)*" (v5).

**Thirdly, he Encourages the adoption of their Mindset in giving.** By Paul's application of the Macedonians' approach to giving, he is offering to the Christians in Corinth as well as to us who read this something of a blueprint for giving. In matters of giving, he seems to suggest that we must recognize that good intentions are good, but not good enough. There is a need to follow through. So, in verse 11 he admonishes them to "*...finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your ability.*" In other words, don't let good intentions be the enemy of action. "Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have, not what you don't have" (v12 - NLT).

Additionally, he gives a word of warning that helps to guard against exuberance or the idea that our giving should leave us

‘worst off. He indicates that the goal of giving is to relieve not redistribute hardship. The objective is equity. In verse 12 he says, “I don’t mean your giving should make life easy for others and hard for yourselves. I only mean that there should be some equality.” God’s distribution of the manna in the wilderness set the standard that “...the one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little.” (Exodus 16:18)

In all of Paul’s discussion about extending self in reaching out to serve others who have needs, we hear the underpinning of the Hebrew scriptures understanding about wealth, possessions, or stuff. It is this: “the earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it” (Psalm 24:1). Our participation in ownership of any portion of it is but a trust from God. Humans are really empowered managers of the abundance of God’s earth. Whatever amount we have in our care and keeping AND however we gain wealth, our stewardship has accountability. It is to utilize being fundamentally aware that it is God’s and therefore should glorify God in all of its usage. And that awareness should propel us to sharing it – so that all of God’s creation are benefited by God’s provision. Freely you have received of the grace of God, and freely then should you give out of that grace to others.

It has been said that there are three kinds of givers -- the flint, the sponge, and the honeycomb. To get anything out of a flint you must hammer it; and then you get only chips and sparks. To get water out of a sponge you must squeeze it; the more pressure, the more you will get. But the honeycomb just overflows with its own sweetness. Which kind of giver are you?

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## Reunion Sunday at Elmslie Memorial on September 11, 2022

By Mrs. Terry Merren



It was a glorious Sunday in September when hundreds of old and new congregants gathered in the historic sanctuary of Elmslie Church for Reunion Sunday – an event held as part of Elmslie’s 100th Anniversary Celebrations. The theme for the service was ‘Hope Is Here’ on which the sermon was preached by Rev. Chris Baillie, (minister of Elmslie Church from 1989-2000) who travelled all the way from the UK with his wife Carol to reunite with their beloved Elmslie congregation. It was

a wonderful day of worship with a fellowship lunch following the service in the church hall...



...and out in the parking lot.



Rev. L. Christopher Mason with Mrs. Carol Baillie (wife of Rev. Chris Baillie) cutting the Reunion Sunday cake.



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## 'Back to Church' Sunday at South Sound

The annual 'Back to Church' Sunday Service of the South Sound United Church was held on September 18, 2022, to welcome back all those who - for whatever reason - were 'away' for a while and also to celebrate the resuming of in-person Sunday School classes that were held virtually during the summer months.

Rev. Donovan Myers, Minister of the Congregation emphasized in his message addressing a sanctuary filled to capacity that the call 'Back to Church' is not a call to come back to a physical building but rather a call to be the church. We need to shift the perception common among many, even among Christians, from a Church that exists to dispense religious goods and services (Consumer Church) to a living, serving, fellowshiping community of Jesus Christ that exists not for its own sake but others (Missional Church).

The service was followed by the always-in-demand Fellowship Breakfast.



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UCJCI July – September 2022 Focus  
***A Church Responding with God-Given  
Confidence***

**15<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Pentecost**

September 25, 2022

***Guided By God's Promises***

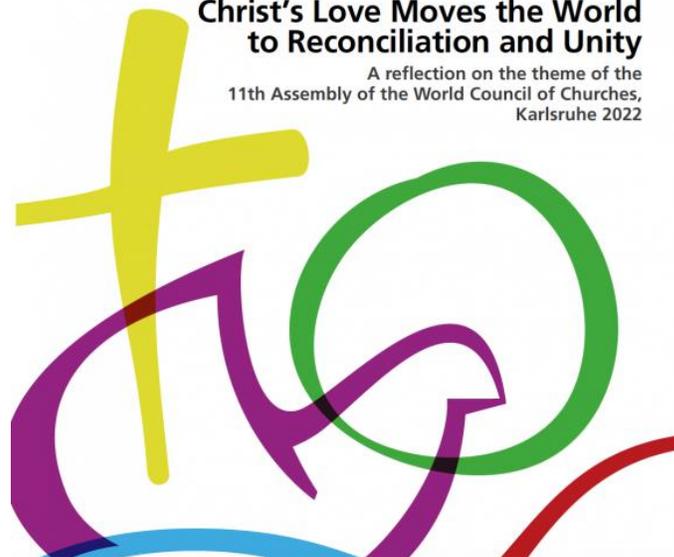
Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15;  
Psalm 91:1-6; 1 Timothy 6:6-19  
Luke 16:19-31

Jeremiah was told to go and buy a field within a context of uncertainty and conflict. Yet, based on the directives and promises of God, he acted. This was a sign of confidence and hope. God would honor God's word and reward the prophet's obedience.



## Christ's Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity

A reflection on the theme of the  
11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches,  
Karlsruhe 2022



Between August 31-September 8, 2022 more than 3,500 Christians gathered for the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Karlsruhe, Germany under the theme "Christ's Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity." This is the first time since 1968 that the Assembly met once again in the European continent.

The UCJCI was represented by past Moderator Rev. Dr Gordon Cowans and Mrs Kim Voaden from the CIRMC, (John Gray Memorial Church, WB). Mrs Voaden has been elected to the Central Committee of the WCC.

Expressing concern and suggesting ways to address some of the world's major challenges the Assembly issued four public statements with the following focus,

1. Living Planet: seeking a just and sustainable global community.
2. The Things that Make for Peace; moving the world to reconciliation and unity.
3. War in Ukraine, Peace and Justice in the European Region.
4. Seeking Justice and Peace for All in the Middle East.

You can find a lot of information in detail about the 11<sup>th</sup> Assembly and plenty reading materials on the WCC website, <https://www.oikumene.org>

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on Radio Cayman 89.9  
every Sunday at 7:45 am

**September 25, 2022**  
**Rev. Donovan Myers**

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