



UCJCI UPDATE

A WEEKLY NEWSLETTER OF THE UNITED CHURCH IN JAMAICA AND THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

THE UNITED CHURCH
IN JAMAICA AND THE
CAYMAN ISLANDS

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Congregational
Disciples of Christ
Presbyterian

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OUR VISION: "Touching
Lives, Nurturing Disciples,
Seeking Transformation
through Christ"

SYNODICAL THEME:
"Renewal and Transfor-
mation: Discipleship for
Life"

UCJCI VALUES

The Work and Worth of All People:

Displaying unconditional love to all people, acknowledging all in the ministry of Christ, affirming the priesthood of all believers, embracing the gifts of the Spirit, and enabling each person to participate to the fullest extent possible
(Matthew 12:28-31, 1 Peter 2:4-10, Ephesians 4:7-13, 2 Corinthians 1:12-14).

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YOUTUBE CHRISTMAS PRODUCTION FEATURES THE WORK OF REV. H. EARL THAMES



The production celebrates the many gifts of the United Church—the preaching ministry of Rev. Dr. Roderick Hewitt, President of the International University of the Caribbean; and the artistic talents from Grove Town, Ebenezer, Davyton, New Broughton, Andrews Memorial, Hope and Ridgemount United Churches.

Notably, *the Unspeakable Gift* will not only focus on the tremendous gift of God in His Son, but also highlight the issue of homelessness featuring Brother Roy, a homeless man, one of the many persons across the world who live in the shadows and are often ignored.

Tune in on Christmas Day—*The Unspeakable Gift*— using social media to present the good news of Christ.

The Unspeakable Gift is a production of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands which features the creative work of Rev. H. Earl Thames, the House Church writing team and the Performing Arts Ministry of the United Church.

Rev. Thames, known as a fierce advocate for youth, was a prolific writer. His work, 'Zachariah and the Gift with the String' was penned in the 90's. This work has been paired with the liturgy for worship at home which has been prepared for Christmas Day . The liturgy was written by Dr. Jane Dodman, a member of the House Church Writing task group. Both written materials will now be translated into film and will be available on the United Church You Tube channel on Christmas Day at 6 p.m.

CORRECTION

In the last issue of UPDATE, the dancer featured in this photo was identified as a member of Lincoln Kirk. This was an error. She is Celine Nicholson, member of the worship arts ministry at Ridgemount United and leader in the youth fellowship. UPDATE apologises for the error.



BRYCE UNITED CALLS FOR ACTION Support Education for Empowerment and Liberation



Students pose with their new tablets with (l-r) Hon. Audley Shaw, Member of Parliament, Hon. Fayvol Williams, Minister of Education, Mrs. Audrey Hinchcliffe, and Garth Hinchcliffe of Manpower and Maintenance Company Limited join Rev. Gary Harriott and children who received tablets.

The call for help for students facing difficulty accessing education has not fallen on deaf ears. At his induction service to the Bryce charge of churches on September 27, 2020, Rev. Gary Harriott, appealed to the community and two months later a member responded by donating 12 tablets.

Mrs. Audrey Hinchcliffe, C.E.O. of Manpower & Maintenance Company Limited, presented the tablets for the Educational Outreach Ministry of the Bryce United Church where her father had served as an Elder. She further committed on-going support for education and sports.

Bryce United church has re-affirmed its commitment to the mission focus of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands—Education for Empowerment and Liberation—by providing internet access for students and partnering with HEART Trust NTA to offer courses to youth and adults so they can upgrade their academic qualifications.

The UCJCI boasts a rich legacy and track

record in this area of national development.

Rev. Gary Harriott, a son of Manchester, former General Secretary of the Jamaica Council of Churches, and Moderator-elect



Rev. Gary Harriott—Minister, Bryce Charge of United Churches

for the UCJCI believes in investing in the community from which he came. The Manpower and Maintenance CEO believes the same as she too is a daughter of Manchester, from the neighbouring community of Battersea.

Rev. Harriott hopes that Mrs. Hinchcliffe's chosen means of celebrating the 30th anniversary of Manpower & Maintenance will inspire other members, friends and well-wishers of the Bryce Charge (Bryce, Pike and Robin's Hall United) to join in the response.

The presentation, on November 27, was also attended by the Honourable Fayvol Williams, Minister of Education, who lauded Manpower and Maintenance Company Ltd for its kind gesture as she reinforced the need for private/public partnership in responding to the digital climate and the educational needs of students as the government is not able to do it alone.

The Minister of Education referenced other tablets that the Bryce Primary School had earlier received in support of some PATH students. She encouraged other non-PATH students who are in need to apply for the \$20,000 grant on offer by the government towards the purchase of a tablet or laptop.

Member of Parliament, the Honourable Audley Shaw, was also in attendance and brought greetings.



Youth in attendance performs dub poetry on environmental stewardship.

BEYOND THE PULPIT

Providing a space for leadership discussion of issues of faith in community

POVERTY AND EDUCATION

It is said that education is the key to success and the vehicle for upward social mobility out of poverty. But what if the key is broken?

Education inequality is defined as the unequal distribution of academic resources, including but not limited to; school funding, qualified and experienced teachers, books, and technologies to socially excluded communities. Poverty is defined by the United Nations as the denial of access to opportunities to provide for one's basic needs as well as access to education and health care. One could argue that poverty is one of the major causes of education inequality but not the only cause. For the purpose of this piece, two ways in which education inequality as a result of poverty will be explored.

First, I propose that educational inequality exists within the school system in Jamaica. The reality is some schools have better resources than others. From as early as infant school the educational inequality can be seen. A school that has a low student to teacher ratio, adequate materials for teaching and extracurricular activities for the growth and development of its students stands a better chance of producing students who are able to move on to another stage of learning and, in some cases, will be far more advanced than their counterparts whose reality is the total opposite. The flipside is classes that have too many students for one teacher, inadequate teaching materials and little to no extracurricular activities. Often the schools that produce students who are ready for and, in some cases, far advanced for the primary level are private schools, whose fees are unaffordable for children in the lower socio-economic class. This trend continues into the secondary level of education. The schools with greater access to resources will easily produce excellent pass rates in local, regional and even international examinations. These schools are better able to challenge and stimulate the minds of their students, exposing them to a wide cross section of offerings. These schools also benefit from strong Alumni that pour into the school from time to time.

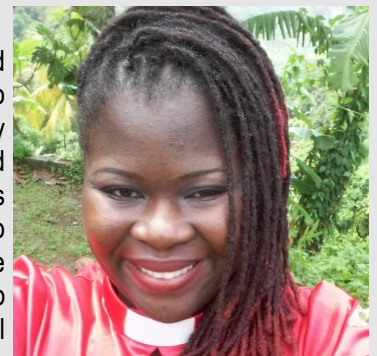
The solution to the problem faced by schools is education equality. There must be a system in place that allows for the elevation of the offerings of the schools that are not private, that are not considered 'top schools'. The quality of education offered at private and 'top schools' must be the same for all schools. As members of this society, we are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the quality of education being offered at schools attended by children from low socio-economic levels is the same as their counterparts. We must be willing to lobby, agitate and hold accountable those in high authority, especially the education sector, to ensure all schools are on the same level, providing a little more than the bare minimum.

Secondly educational inequality exists among students. In 2005, Mrs. Maxine Henry Wilson in her capacity as Minister of Education, Youth and Culture, declared that "Every child can learn and every child must learn". This bold and promising statement was made fifteen years ago and is yet to be fully realized. Our children are certainly not equal in the school system. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the inequalities and inconsistencies the nation's students face in education. Long before the pandemic there were students who had access to the gadgets, internet and the know-how needed to learn remotely while others struggled to find the necessities. While some are at home comfortably and safely learning remotely, others

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the educational inequalities and inconsistencies faced by the nation's students.

must put themselves at risk daily to secure their future or travel miles to libraries, family members and even church halls to get access to the internet for remote learning. The stress of poor internet connections, electricity problems, spaces not being readily available for comfortable learning are only some of the challenges faced by students. These students are to be commended for waking up every day and finding the will to continue.

We must not only applaud these students, we must also assist them. Whether it is by supplying the gadgets needed or offering to open our spaces for them to use or offering to teach them how to navigate the technical space. No help is too small in ensuring educational inequality is eliminated.



Rev. Laddia Young

NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! NEWS!

CAYMAN POST- COVID YOUTH LINK-UP



On December 4, 2020 over 50 young people from our congregations in the Cayman Islands Regional Mission Council gathered for a Post COVID-19 Youth Link Up at the Elmslie Memorial United Church in George Town. Since the pandemic forced us to cancel the regular youth activities for 2020, such an event as this was long overdue and much looked forward to by both our youth as well as our youth leaders. The evening was filled with a lot of fun, food and fellowship. At the end of the event Rev. Euthman Wray, Vice-Chair of Children and Youth MAT encouraged all those to strike the right balance between the many opportunities, demands, and needs in their lives.



HOUSE WORSHIP LITURGY THEMES FOR DECEMBER

During the remaining Sundays in the month of December and on Christmas Day, the writers of the House Worship Liturgy produced for use in households have focussed on
THE NAMES OF JESUS

December 20

Redeemer

December 25

The Unspeakable Gift

December 27

Saviour of the World

Liturgies are available from your Minister/Lay Pastor, Communication Officer for your congregation and from your Regional Mission Council Office.

Help Grant A Wish

Two United Church institutions
—**Mount Olivet Boys' Home**
and Rolph Grant Senior Citizens' Home
could be the beneficiaries of a share of
J\$19 million

National Commercial Bank's Foundation will support charities and individuals in need across Jamaica. Donations will be made in 5 categories - Children's Homes, Nursing Homes, Special Needs, Individuals In Need, Organisations In Need

Please vote

Nominees with the most votes in each category, will receive a share of J\$19 million.

Please Visit

[Grant a Wish | Gratitude Project JA \(jnbc.com\)](http://Grant a Wish | Gratitude Project JA (jnbc.com))

Do invite friends and family to do the same

Send comments and news about your congregation to: ucjciupdate@gmail.com

CELEBRATIONS!

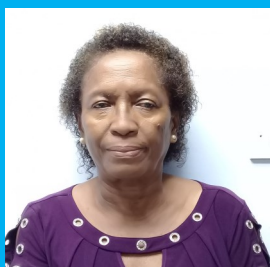
HAPPY BIRTHDAY

December 21

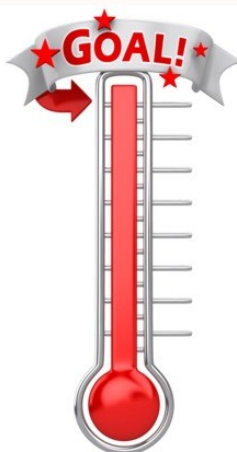
Rev. Nicole Ashwood



Mrs. Jeannette Rose-Bryan



UCJCI EXCEEDS FUND-RAISING TARGET



\$377,033.00

have been collected in the fund-raising drive to provide foodstuff for communities in need in Bloxburgh and Bito

THANK YOU TO ALL GENEROUS CONTRIBUTORS

PRAY WITHOUT CEASING:

LET US PRAY ABOUT:

- ◆ Meaningful and safe celebrations of the Advent and Christmas season.
- ◆ Persons for whom Christmas season is difficult due to recent bereavement or memory of loved ones, illness, relationship or financial challenges.
- ◆ Rev. Donovan Myers, Minister of John Gray Memorial (Cayman Islands Regional Mission Council) and his family
- ◆ The family, colleagues and friends of Lesley Hare.
- ◆ Frontline workers and their families in Cayman, Jamaica and across the world .
- ◆ Communities still wrestling with the effects of flood rains
- ◆ Rising COVID 19 infections and community spread in Jamaica

UCJCI'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19
CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Individual Prayer:
Every Wednesday
from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.

(2 Timothy 1:7)

Send comments and news about your congregation to: ucjciupdate@gmail.com



Advent

A Time to Prepare

The Season of Advent reminds us of the importance of spiritual preparedness, of the readying of our hearts and minds for the life transforming presence of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.


On the 1st Sunday in Advent, we lit the candle of **Hope** in our churches as a reminder that as followers of Jesus Christ we are the people of hope. On the 2nd Sunday in Advent, we lit the candle of **Peace** as a reminder that we are the people of a special kind of peace, one that transcends all understanding.

The third candle reminds us that we are also the people of joy. **JOY** is fundamentally different from happiness. Happiness is a temporary feeling dependent on favourable circumstances and events that seldom last and can change quickly. Joy, on the contrary, is a choice, a decision of our inner being, the recognition, and appreciation of God's presence in our lives, the treasuring of our relationship with God. In addition to this, it is also

the recognition of God's many favours to us, the celebration of God's goodness and love, forgiveness and mercy, God's gifts, promises, and countless blessings.

In our fallen world, almost everything is about chasing the promise of happiness in some way or another and many lives are ruined directly or indirectly in its relentless pursuit. Let us remember not to fall into the same trap. Let us also remember those who find it difficult to experience this joy because of their loss, suffering, or circumstances. Ours is the sacred duty not only to have but also to share this joy – and to do so in a sensitive and meaningful way.

Rev. Otto Menko



“Rejoice in the Lord
always. I will say it
again: Rejoice!”

(Philippians 4:4)



Joy to the World!