



# THE UNITED CHURCH IN JAMAICA & THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

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*Congregational, Disciples of Christ, Presbyterian*

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## **ADVISORY #29 TO: UCJCI MINISTERS, LAY PASTORS, AND CONGREGATIONAL BOARDS RE: COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

My sisters and brothers,

Greetings,

The UCJCI COVID-19 Response Team now meets every month. Consequently, these updates will follow the scheduled meetings.

Following are the decisions and reminders taken by the Team, which met yesterday, January 19, 2021, under the various headings.

### **1. Compliance with National Orders/Protocols**

We celebrate the fact that Cayman is relatively COVID-19 free. In recent days, 9000 vaccines have been administered among those in Phase 1A within the population, with another 4000 scheduled to arrive in the island in February.

In Jamaica, we continue to experience community spread across the island, with a daily increase in the number of persons who have contracted the disease, which now stands at 14,487 with 331 deaths.

We continue to encourage compliance with the directives and recommendations of the legitimate state authorities in both nations.

### **2. Common COVID-19 Issue**

The UCJCI successfully applied for a project grant from the Council for World Mission (CWM) to provide tablets for needy students in Jamaica and to underwrite counselling costs for persons who utilize the Bethesda Counselling Centre in Grand Cayman. We are in the process of distributing the tablets in the Jamaican Regions with a special emphasis on primary school students who are without devices.

We continue to encourage you, where your church hall has internet access in a community with children who have limited or no access to online learning, to establish a ministry that offers the space and access to these children using clear guidelines and with adequate supervision.

### 3. Congregational Life

#### Church School

Given the importance of our ministry of nurture, we are pleased that in Cayman this ministry among children, including church school, Girl's Brigade and other related ministries are returning to life.

In Jamaica we are encouraging congregations to pay attention to the inclusion of our children in our ministry at this time. We celebrate those of you who have been intentional and creative in engaging our children at this time to ensure their nurture. Some of you have employed a blended approach, with smaller groups gathering on Sundays or church school services and/or online learning opportunities on the same or another day with the children. If your nurture ministry in this area is not active, please engage your church school leaders, speak to colleagues for best practices as we seek to ensure our children's nurture in the faith is not stymied by the pandemic.

#### Funerals

In Jamaica, Funeral services are NOT allowed at this time. We encourage online gatherings for the celebration of the life and witness of those who have passed on, while the restriction remains in place. Burials are permitted with a maximum of 15 persons including the pastor, family members, and cemetery/grave personnel. Please note that the duration of burials should not exceed 30 minutes.

We continue to note the inconsistency in practices among a number of groups. Our meeting agreed to use all our connections to continue to make representation, through the Jamaica Council of Churches and other bodies, to seek audience/clarification with the Jamaican authorities on the discrepancies in practice based on the published Orders.

#### Reminders

- We remind you of the time of prayer every Wednesday between 12 p.m. and 1 p.m.
- We continue to distribute the weekly House Worship Liturgy, using a thematic approach with sermon/reflection notes. We welcome feedback on how this is being used within the church.
- Tune in each Sunday to LOVE 101 FM in Jamaica at 3:30 p.m. for a broadcast of a congregational worship service or the sharing of reflections/activities by the UCJCI.

### 4 Pastoral Care

- **We continue to encourage congregations and regions to be especially sensitive to the needs of the elderly.** Please ensure that their basic needs are met (e.g. food, sanitization, medication) and, where possible, offer daily contact by phone or social media to those who live alone.
- We also encourage you to engage your congregants to determine their access to, and understanding of, the digital space to gauge our reach as a church.

### 5. Synod and Regional Offices

The Synod Administration Centre and each Regional Office (Jamaica) have resumed weekly operations from Monday to Friday, from 8.30 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Cayman Regional Office continues to operate its normal working hours.

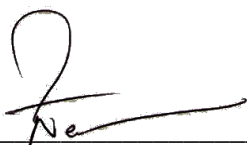
## 6. Communication

Please continue to pay close attention to the various pieces of information sent to you via our communication channels (radio, e-mail, website [www.ucjci.com], WhatsApp Messenger, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook).

May we together continue to depend on God, *who has not given us a spirit of fear, but of love and of power and of a sound mind* (2 Timothy 1:7).

Sincerely,

**THE UNITED CHURCH IN JAMAICA AND THE CAYMAN ISLANDS**



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Norbert D. Stephens (Rev.)  
General Secretary