

The United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands



FAMILY NEWS

Elmslie Memorial Charge Volume 223, December 2023



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Sundays
Elmslie Memorial United
10:30am

Robert Young United
583 Crewe Road
8:45am

From the Pastor's Desk

Do you remember the angels' words to the shepherds that first Christmas?

"Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:10-12).

If Christ's work had stopped with his incarnation, it would have been remarkable, but not redemptive. But he didn't stop there.

I love the joy of the Christmas season, but when I hear the lie that Jesus came to deliver twinkly lights and sparkly bows, I miss the point. The wonder of this season is only possible because of the horror of the cross. Yes, Christ was born as a baby, swaddled up tight by his young mother and placed in a manger, but that is only the beginning of the story, not the end. It was fitting for baby Jesus to feel the rough-hewn wood of that rustic crib on his tiny back, because soon enough he would hang from the splintered wood of the cross.

Our King did not just come to rescue a few. News of his arrival did not stop with the shepherds. Jesus came to bring good news to all people. What is the good news? That Jesus was willing to do whatever it took to obey the Father and become our Saviour. But what did he save us from? That is the question we must force our hearts to ponder this Christmas season.

Matthew 1:21 says, *"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins"*. Christ was not born to give us warm fuzzies, but to deliver us from sin and death.

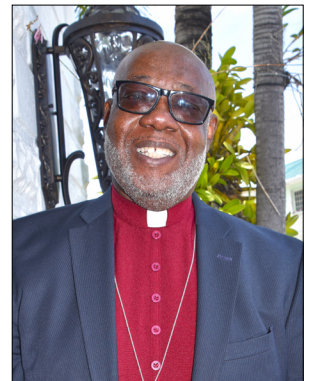
When we set aside our expectations of celebrations and perfect families tied up in pretty bows, we see that Christ was born for the redemption of our fractured marriages, our rebellious children, our secret sins, our relational turmoil, our broken systems and our diseased bodies.

He was born to save sinners - the worst of us - and to redeem our hard, sad, impossible situations. Christ was not born for Christmas trees (though they are beautiful), but because we are a people walking blindly in the darkness of sin and in desperate need of a great light. Our unmet expectations, ungrateful relatives and post-Christmas blues are not signs that we somehow

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New Elders Appointed

At a congregational meeting following the morning service on 26th November, **Suzanne Livingston** and **William Walmsley** were re-elected as elders following their initial three year term on the board. Elected for the first time were **Shana McLaughlin** and **Elitia Vassell**. Demitting office were **Anthony Bodden**, **Liz McLaughlin**, **Eric Vassell** and **Leonie Williams**. Those others remaining on the Board are **Nigel Boothe**, **Joan McField** and **Lorna Reid**. We need to pray for the Board of Elders as they provide spiritual leadership to the church.



Peace on Earth?

Each Christmas we sing, "Peace on earth, goodwill to men," words taken from Luke's account of the heavenly host's visit to the shepherds when they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men" (2:14 KJV).

With the war continuing to rage in Gaza, let alone in other parts of the world, are these words simply wishful thinking? In fact, has there ever been any period of time since they were first spoken that there has been no conflict somewhere?

So, what were the angels stating in their expression of praise to God at the birth of the "Prince of Peace"?

The truth is that God *did* bring peace to the earth with the birth of Jesus. But it was not in the first place a greater ability for people to get on with each other! Rather, it was the peace with God that he makes possible with people who are hostile towards him. Jesus through his death was going to provide the bridge to enable this. God was going to provide reconciliation. Paul stated it this way: "While we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son" (Romans 5:10). A few verses earlier, he had written, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 1).

This is the real meaning of "peace on earth." This is the true Christmas message. So, most other versions word the angels' song more correctly, to the effect, "Peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased (NLT). Peace starts with each of us as individuals being reconciled to God. This is what God wants – what pleases him. It is then, that we can forge relationships with others with whom we might otherwise hold hostile feelings. This is not some sentimental, 'Christmas-feel' peace but a genuine desire for reconciliation, despite all our differences.

But first, the greatest Christmas gift each of us as individuals must receive is "peace with God."

Michael Bowerman



Cathy Gomez: Robert Young Memorial's Pastoral Assistant

Cathy Gomez was appointed Pastoral Assistant to the Robert Young Mission Station in Crewe Road effective 1st October. This is the first such appointment in the United Church in Grand Cayman.

For the past six decades, Cathy has been actively involved in the music ministry, particularly at Elmslie and Robert Young, having learned to play the piano and organ from a young age.

She says, "I have come 'full circle' because my very first time playing music in church was at Robert Young at the age of nine! I can still remember operating the pump organ (an instrument that has long been forgotten), pulling out the stops and pumping up the volume! I have played at Robert Young for more than 50 years while at the same time assisting at Elmslie in the choir, with music, at Christian Endeavour and Sunday School.

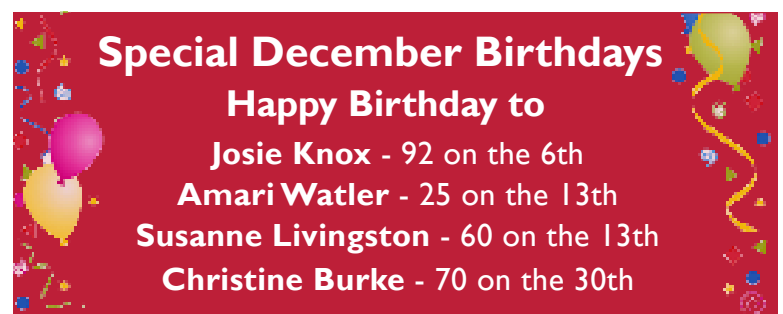
"I eventually became a member of Elmslie and served on the Board of Elders from 2008 to 2011. I grew up on Crewe Road - just two houses down from Robert Young Church where my Mom **Janilee Clifford** was a faithful member, serving in many different capacities. I am so thankful for the Christian legacy Mom left behind.

"I am honoured to have been asked to fill this position at this time of my life, and even more honoured to serve God and the members and adherents of Robert Young in this capacity."

In addition to an active church life and raising a family, Cathy served in healthcare at the Government Hospital for over three decades. She worked first in the hospital laboratory for 19 years, during which time she served as Laboratory Supervisor and subsequently in Hospital Administration for a further 12 years.

In keeping with Government policy at the time, Cathy realised that she would have to retire at the young age of 55 and decided that she wanted to pursue a counselling career. She approached **Bishop P.J. Lawrence** who encouraged her to pursue a Master's Degree in Pastoral Psychology & Counselling, and she subsequently graduated from St. Stephen's College in

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Condolences

We extend sincere sympathy to the families of:

Alvernie Watson - d. 31st October - a faithful member of Elmslie for many years

Gay McGee - d. 8th November - congregant of both Elmslie and the Cayman Islands Baptist Church through the years

Norman Anthony Davis - d. 8th November - father of **Ann-Marie Webb**

Susan Boothe - d. 22nd November - mother of **Dr. Nigel Boothe**

Traute Backer - d. 23rd November - member of Elmslie along with her husband **Gunter** for many years before returning to Germany some years ago



Pray for the McGregors

We extend heartfelt condolences to Elmslie's youth minister, **Roy McGregor**, and his wife, **Rev. Anna-kay**, as they grieve the loss of their twin baby sons, **Azriel Candio** and **Adriel Vinton**, who went to be with Jesus on 11th November 2023. Please keep the McGregors in your prayers as they plan for the funeral service which will be held on Tuesday, 12th December, at Carron Hall United Church in St. Mary, Jamaica, Anna-kay's home church.



Gospel Growers

On Thursday, 9th November 2023, we welcomed **Karen Thomas** from Gospel Growers Ministry. This is the ministry of our long time supported missionary **Sam Rice**. This visit gave us information of how the ministry is currently organised and operating. We were also updated on the various projects currently operating under Gospel Growers.



On Friday night, Karen visited our youth group where she shared about the schools we support in Haiti. The youth wrote letters to the school children in Haiti, and she will have these passed on to them. Karen also

spoke at the Men's Breakfast, South Sound Church and the Elmslie service. Some important things she shared:

- Currently the ministry supports 330 children with school education.
- The school sponsorship would welcome more monetary support as it currently does not include meals.
- The Christian radio station is a very important ministry. It is in need of new equipment, costing approximately US\$5,000
- The church in Metayer has started construction but needs about US\$7,500 to finish the building.

If anyone would like to support this ministry in Haiti, you may send your donation to the Global Mission Committee or place it in the offering, marked Gospel Growers/Haiti.

Farewell, Austin 'Junior' Ferguson

On the last Sunday of October, the church bade farewell to **Junior Ferguson** who has been a part of Elmslie for the past nearly 15 years. He was baptised here and became a member in 2009.

Junior is a naturally quiet man but has, behind the scenes, played an important role in the ministry of the church. He has been part of the media team since 2015 but before that assisted with the church website and was responsible for recording and posting sermons. Since the start of Covid, he along with the team, has been streaming the morning service online.

He was an invaluable part of the Global Missions Committee, regularly attended the home group held in the home of **Richard & Sue Trull**, and faithfully attended the Saturday Men's Fellowship.

Junior has returned to Jamaica and to his wife of 32 years, **Zamarine** who works as a realtor. They have two children, **Corey** who is in his final year at UTech in Kingston and **Zanaa** who is in the 6th form at St. Hugh's High School for Girls.

Having worked as the manager with responsibility for engineering at Cayman Airways, he is to be retained by the airline working remotely. He will continue to travel to Boeing on the US West coast as needed.

We wish God's blessing on Junior in the days ahead.



Junior, with his family

Advent, Christmas and New Years Services

DECEMBER			EMUC	RYMC
3rd	1st Sunday in Advent	HOPE	10:30AM	8:45AM
10th	2nd Sunday in Advent	PEACE	10:30AM	8:45AM
10th	Youth Christmas Production		5:30PM	
12th	Cayman National Choir Cantata		7:30PM	
14th	Cayman National Choir Cantata		7:30PM	
17th	3rd Sunday in Advent	JOY	10:30AM	8:45AM
17th	Christmas Musical Morning		10:30AM	
24th	4th Sunday in Advent	LOVE	10:30AM	8:45AM
	[Christmas Eve in the Morning]			
25th	Christmas Day Service		9:00AM	
		Joint Service with		RYMC
31st	New Year's Eve Service		10:30AM	
31st	Watch Night Service		10:30PM	

Cathy Gomez (Cont'd. from Pg. 2)

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada in 2008. She then published her thesis 'Coping with Sudden Job Loss', taught 'Marriage & the Family' at UCCI and wrote more than 150 job loss related articles for Cayman Net News. She also gained experience as a school counsellor at the church's school, Cayman Prep and High. In addition, she holds a Master's in Public Policy & Management from the University of London.

"I am thankful to Bishop Lawrence for believing in me and encouraging me to study pastoral counseling," she says.

Cathy then became involved in prison ministry. She volunteered for six and a half years, during which time she formed a male gospel choir in the prison, and subsequently served full-time for eight and a half years as the first female prison chaplain.

"I am so grateful to be able to reflect at this stage of my life," she continues, "and see the hand of God. Although I have been going to church all my life, it was not until 1992 that I began a meaningful relationship with God. Ironically, I was in church at Robert Young! The sermon that morning was from the book of Luke and it reminded me of the passage in Jeremiah 29:11-13. I had my Bible opened in Luke and I wanted to look up the passage in Jeremiah. I made one flip of the pages and there it was, staring me in the face! A message from God for sure. Prison ministry for me was nowhere in my future but God knew, and I can honestly say that working in the prison was the most meaningful time of my life - and I continue to be involved. If we see people as God sees people, if we seek to understand and encourage rather than condemn, God will give us His love and His forgiveness to pass on to others."

Cathy has been preaching at Robert Young and other United churches over the years. Her new duties and responsibilities at Robert Young will include preaching, music ministry, serving on the Board of Elders and Council, providing pastoral counselling, and visiting members and adherents at home and in the hospital.

"When I retired from HMCI Prison Service in December 2020, I asked God to show me what else He had in mind for my life. My Christian walk has not always been perfect, but I knew that nothing would shake the solid foundation that I had found in Christ."

Cathy has two grown-up children and became a first-time grandmother in January 2021. She now has three precious grandchildren under the age of three - the youngest was born on November 9th! They are her pride and joy! She adds, "I also enjoy reading, writing, and listening to gospel music in my spare time."

Let us support Cathy with our prayers as she embarks on this new ministry at Robert Young.

Cathy's Third Grandchild



Cathy Gomez's third grandchild, **Ryan Leigh Wilson**, born on 9th November. Parents of the baby are **Lewis & Crystal Wilson**.

Rev. Yvette Demits Office

Rev. Dr. Yvette Noble Bloomfield resigned as the Cayman Island Council's Regional Deputy General Secretary, effective 31st October. She has, however, agreed to stay on in an acting capacity until the end of the year. Meanwhile, the process for her replacement is in progress.



Rev. Yvette has been the RDGS for the past eight years, based at the Council office on Old Prospect Road.

We prayerfully wish her God's wisdom and guidance as she seeks to determine his plan going forward, and we thank her for her faithful and excellent service to the United Church here in Cayman.

Pastor's Desk (Cont'd. from Page 1)

missed the "reason for the season." They are ever present reminders of why we need a Saviour so desperately. Consider the gap between the Old and New Testaments. For a span of 400 years, God's prophets stopped prophesying. His priests stopped making sacrifices. His kings stopped leading his people. It was the darkest moment on the entire timeline of history and a stark reminder of the state of the kingdom before Jesus came. Everyone needed a permanent remedy for their sin problem. And we needed to be saved from the spiritual death that sin inevitably leads to. It was a historical picture of a personal problem. Without Jesus, our lives and hearts are dark, not merry and bright.

When things were continually bad in the kingdom, God did not just send a message. He did not use couriers to announce a royal edict. He came himself, with a message of hope. He was the message we needed.

"[Christ] saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:9-10).

It does not make for a cute Christmas card, but I need the reminder that I am a sinner. Without the Light of men, we would all be forced to walk in perpetual darkness. But - here is the good news - Jesus chose to wrap himself in humility, in weakness, and in humanity to save us. The gospel is what Christmas is about. Truly, Christ was born for this.

May you all have a peaceful Christmas and a hope-filled New Year, and bring some peace and hope to others, too.
Adapted from *Christ Was Born for This* by **Erin Davis**