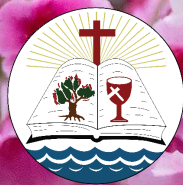


The United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands



FAMILY NEWS

Elmslie Memorial Charge

Volume 214, March 2023

Zooming In or Zooming Out?

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Service Times:

Sundays
Elmslie Memorial United
10:30am

Robert Young United
583 Crewe Road
8:45am

I recently read an article which caught my attention. It was a blog I receive daily from the Colson Center for Christian Worldview and was written by its director **John Stonestreet** with **Shane Morris**, and it was highlighting something that has been increasingly concerning me. It was the title which first got my attention: 'Why So Many Are Choosing Couches Over Pews.'

The article covered a number of issues but the essential one it addressed was that, following the recent pandemic, a large number of people have not returned to in-person church services, with many of these listening by way of streaming or YouTube.

We live in a new, technological world. One modern invention for which many were indebted during the recent pandemic was Zoom, and churches and Christian ministries quickly realised how important it was when people could not meet physically. It still has many excellent uses. Many are able to work from home instead of commuting to work, for example, and meetings, church and otherwise, can be held internationally. But, like some other things, what was a wonderful servant is becoming a questionable master.

The primary reason many Christian leaders have reservations is because by attending church services on-line we miss something fundamental in the Christian faith. The Bible gives it the name fellowship. Fellowship is a God-ordained practice. Of the five fundamental things to which the first believers devoted themselves after Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost, one was fellowship (Acts 2:42). Later, we read the author of Hebrews exhorting his readers to not give up meeting together, as some were in the habit of doing (10:25). Again, he was encouraging fellowship.

The Colson article whimsically quotes a well-known ditty - with a twist: 'Here's the church, and here's the steeple; open the door... but where's the people?'

Where, indeed? Some have found they no longer want or need church but a significant number simply find it much easier to listen on-line. Instead of coming out to church or meeting together in a home group, its more convenient to go to the computer. While this is better than nothing it is not best and, in the long term, it is neither spiritually healthy nor good for the Body. It doesn't enhance the kind of fellowship we need, the kind we find when we come together in person. It is rather like a married couple who have to be away from each other and can only communicate by telephone or Facetime. It is okay for a short while, but to maintain a healthy relationship, they need to come together, to spend time together. Of course, there are people who have to be off-island and there are those few who are shut-ins who are thankful for technology that keeps them in touch. But, for many others, failure to go out to church has become a bad habit.

Our church has some impressive statistics as to the number of views it has had of its services, and for how many are listening live. However, for many this way of worshipping is second best. They need to be worshipping with their brothers and sisters in church. They also need to meet in a small group, enjoying that special fellowship and friendship that comes as a result.

As did the author of Hebrews, I want to encourage those of you who have stayed away from church or home group to return to the habit of attending Sunday worship - sitting in a pew instead of on your couch - and also to become a regular part of a small group, wherever it meets.

Michael Bowerman

**Them: I don't need to go to church.
I worship God at home!**

Them, worshipping God at home:



Congregational Meetings

Elmslie held its Congregational AGM after church on 12th February. There were essentially three items on the agenda: the approval of the minutes of the previous two meetings, a reminder that the church would be electing elders the following month, together with an explanation from the minister as to their responsibilities, and the presentation of the 2023 budget by the treasurer, **Linda McField Bodden**, which was also approved.

Copies of the minutes and the budget are available from the church office for those who would like them.

There is to be another congregational meeting on 12th March. At this, the plans for the year discussed at the leaders' retreat the weekend of the AGM will be presented to the congregation. This will be followed by the election of elders. A nomination committee has been appointed to whom the names of those the congregation would like to nominate should be given.

Cayman Keswick

Those who regularly attend and enjoy the interchurch Keswick conventions each year may have noticed that there has been no word about a Keswick for 2023 – until now.

Internationally renowned speaker, **Charles Price**, will be the guest speaker at First Baptist Church's missions conference the second weekend of March and, on the Sunday evening, 12th March, there will be a one-night service under the auspices of Cayman Keswick, starting at 6 pm, at FBC. Charles Price has been twice before to speak at past Keswick weeks and has been among the most appreciated speakers.

First Baptist Church is hosting its annual Missions Conference entitled '*ULTIMATE PARTNERSHIP: Working together with God*' on 11th March, from 8:30 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. and is inviting anyone from other churches to attend. There is no cost for this event, and no registration required. However, if you want to avail yourself of childcare, please send the name(s) and age(s) of your child(ren) to deb@fbc.org or 938-9394 no later than Saturday, 4th March. Coffee and tea will be available beforehand, and light snacks will be served at the break.

This weekend provides a wonderful opportunity to sit under the teaching of Charles Price and everyone is encouraged to attend either or both events.



Cayman Islands Regional Mission Council Meets

Council meets three times a year and is comprised of the Regional Deputy General Secretary, all ministers and retired ministers, two representatives from each congregation and a number of others involved in the life and ministry of the United Church. The first meeting of the year took place in Elmslie's hall on 31st January.

Of special note to our charge are the updates provided by our representatives. Robert Young expressed its ongoing concern and prayers for **Lay Pastor John Macmillan**. The particular challenge is its small congregation and the problem finding parking.

It was reported that Elmslie's evangelism committee is planning for 'community saturation' in the neighbourhood. Council was also told that a new worship format had been introduced. Mention was made of the Friday night youth programme to which more than 30 came, and that an after-school programme was about to be introduced. It was also reported that Sunday worship streaming is far-reaching with an average of 200 views each week.

Appreciation Dinner Held



Special March Anniversaries

Congratulations to

Amelia & Antonio Sanchez who will celebrate 10 year of marriage on the 4th and to **Evelyn & Nickerson Godfrey** who will celebrate 64 years on the 27th.

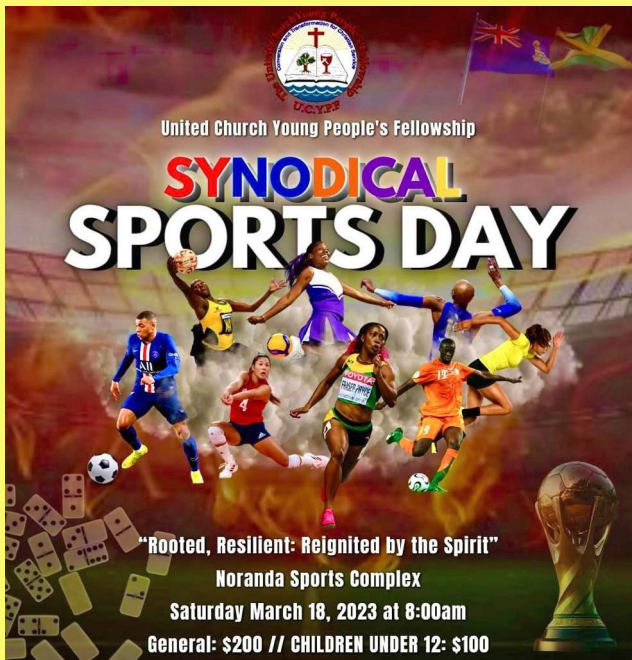
Special March Birthdays

Happy Birthday to

Lisa O'Neil - 50 on the 13th
Emma Whittaker - 70 on the 15th
Michael Evans - 25 on the 19th

Members of the *Anniversary Celebrations Planning Committee* posed for a picture following an appreciation dinner which was held on Saturday, 4th February. From left are **Antonio Sanchez, Roy McGregor, Noria Eccleston, Chrysannae Mason, Rev. Chris Mason, Ann-Marie Mason, Gwen Hughes-Coward, Carmen McField, Ellen McField, Alex Oneil, Harriet Vassell, Gregory Merren, Terri Merren** and **Brian Barnes**. Also in attendance (but not pictured) was **Evelyn Rockett**. Others who assisted in the planning of the celebrations but could not attend were **Anthony Bodden, Magalyn Clarke, Leonay Williams, Carmin Godfrey, Tony McField, Susy McField, Jennelle McLaughlin, Liz McLaughlin, Thomas Myles** and **Susan Whittaker**.

UCJCI Sports Day



On Saturday, 18th March, United Church Young People's fellowship will be hosting its Sports Day at the Noranda Sports Complex in Discovery Bay, Jamaica, for all councils of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. The aim is to have 16 participants from the Cayman Council including four youth from Elmslie in addition to leaders and Elmslie's Youth Minister, **Roy McGregor**. Sponsorship is being sought to cover airfare and accommodation. In addition to praying for a successful and injury-free event, if you are able to sponsor a child or assist in any other way, contact Roy McGregor at 345-928-0085 or roythemuse@gmail.com. No amount is too small.

Zerah is off to Canada!



On Sunday, 12th February, a special prayer was said for **Zerah Allen** and two of her team members before they headed off for Toronto, Canada to participate in a basketball tournament with the *Women of Valor Basketball Club*. Pictured from left are **Thomas Myles**, **Alyssa Myles-Powell**, **Jade Cole**, **Zerah** and, youth minister, **Roy McGregor**.

Five of Elmslie's Youth Give Testimonies



Five of Elmslie's youth gave their testimonies during the 19th February Sunday morning service and were baptised on Ash Wednesday in the sea behind the Prospect Youth Centre. They are from left: **Nakayla Clarke**, **Halle Challenger**, **Justice Ramoon-Dixon**, **Keneek Anthony McDonald Jr.** and **Aaron Allen**.

Baptism in Prospect



In addition to the five youth (pictured right) who gave their testimonies on 19th February, two others, **Jennelle McLaughlin** and **Kenya Bush**, were baptised during the United Church Ash Wednesday service at Prospect Community Centre. **Rev. Chris Mason** and **Roy McGregor** flank the group (with two of the church's babies) on the shoreline in Prospect following the baptism.

Please Support the Youth Ministry Fish Fry

Saturday, 25th March 2023 - 7:00 am until ...

Menu: Mahi Mahi fillet \$15, Snapper \$12

Sides: fried breadfruit, plantain & fritters

Pastries, water and soft drinks available for purchase, too.

Tickets available for purchase after Sunday services in the belfry or contact Nelly McLaughlin or Roy McGregor.

Congregants Honoured on Heroes Day

Many congratulations to present and past members of our Elmslie (EM) and Robert Young (RY) congregations who were given awards at the 2023 National Heroes Day Awards Ceremony for Volunteerism and Charitable Services.

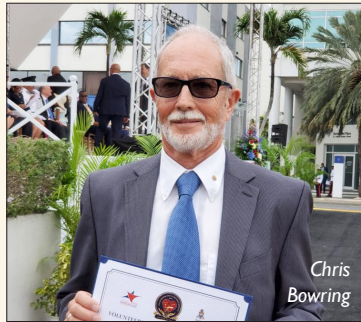
- Present members of EM and RY awarded were **Chris Bowring (RY), Neils Godfrey, Tony McField, Iva Good, Effie Johnson, Sherry Lee McLaughlin, Joan McField, Debra McLaughlin, Thomas Myles, Francilla Myles, Lisa Oneil, Lorna Reid, Theoline Wellington, Madda Whittaker, Susan Whittaker and Nancy Whitefield** (all EM).

- Past members receiving awards were **Elsie Chisholm and Brad Taylor**.

- Past members to be honoured who have gone before us were **Frances Boddin, Una Bush, Janilee Clifford (RY), Olive Miller, Ernest Panton, Elizabeth Hurlston and Ena Watler**.

(Our sincerest apologies if anyone was inadvertently omitted.)

Pictured below are just a few of the recipients.



Training for Lay Leaders

Classes will start again on Saturday, 11th March, and module 1 will continue until the end of August, all done by Zoom. There is to be an orientation meeting on Saturday, 4th March at 9 – 11.30 am.

Zoom details are: meeting ID 879-2238-3834, with password 192859

The details are as follows:

- 2nd and 4th Saturdays of each month: 9 am – 1.30 pm
- Thursdays following these Saturdays: 6 – 8 pm

There is a small cost payable.

For further information, call the Council office at 947-1963 or email either cirmc.info@gmail.com or rdgs@cicucji.com.

Council Meets (Cont'd. from Pg. 2)

One of the main items on the agenda was the upcoming Synod that is to take place in Cayman at the end of April. More details will be forthcoming in the next edition of Family News.

Of special interest to the Elmslie congregation is that **Bernard McGrath** has been added to Cayman United Church Corporation.

A copy of the Council Meeting's Popular Report is available from the church office.

Water Ministry at Elmslie is in Need of Help!

Please contact the church office and speak with **Rev. Chris** if you can assist with manning the church sanctuary on the days that cruise ships are in port - just an hour or two, once or twice a week.

Happy 50th to Diana & Ernie



Congratulations to **Diana & Ernie Boddin** who celebrated 50 years of marriage on 18th February. May God bless you with many more years of happiness together.