

The United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands

THE FAMILY NEWS

George Town Charge

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9:00am

From the Pastor's Desk

"Do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9). On the first day of a new year many of us wish each other a happy New Year! But, as we begin a new year, we need more than a hopeful greeting from the people around us. We need to listen to what God told Joshua about 3,400 years ago. As Joshua was about to lead God's people into the promised land, he had reason to be afraid. He had an enormous task ahead of him, and he was aware of the dangers that he and the people would soon be facing. He needed God's encouragement. A new year brings lots of questions: Will our health hold? Will our marriage last? Will I be able to hang on to my job? Will I get into the right school? Will I live to see the end of this year? Will the economy improve? Will there still be a pandemic or some natural disaster that takes me or my loved ones? The Creator of the universe comes to us and says, "Don't be afraid; don't be discouraged." What happens in this new year is not left to chance. God is in charge, and he promises to stay close: "The LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." Many years later, the Lord Jesus made the same promise when he said, "I am with you always" (Matthew 28:20). That's the reason we can wish each other a happy New Year!



And So Into 2021: A Reflection

I'm sure you've heard the expression, "One man's rubbish is another man's treasure."

I was reminded of the truth of this when we held a big 'tent sale' a couple of weeks before Christmas. We had decided it was time to downsize, and the process involved getting rid of much which we had gathered over many years. When we started the exercise several weeks before the sale, we came to realise just how much 'stuff' we had accumulated. Having given some of it away and thrown away large amounts we considered 'junk', we decided – initially against our better judgement - to hold a sale. So much stuff we no longer wanted or needed was snapped up by dozens who came by. Our 'rubbish' became others' 'treasure.'

It got me to thinking. How easy it becomes to store up treasure on earth, often inadvertently. How unthinkingly we accumulate material things we don't need. Jesus warned of this danger in Matthew 6. "Don't do it," he stated.

If we are to be Christian disciples, we are to resist the widespread trend called materialism. Materialism isn't simply an acceptance of the reality of the material world; furthermore, God created it, and made its blessings available to us. Rather, as John Stott says, materialism is a preoccupation with material things which can smother our spiritual life. So, Jesus went on in the chapter to say, "But seek first (God's) kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things (those necessary material needs) will be given you as well" (v. 33).

We are wise to travel light through life; when we die we can take nothing with us. You have probably heard the story of a discussion following the death of a very wealthy man. One person asked another, "And how much did he leave?" "Everything," was the reply.

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South Sound United - Annual Fellowship Breakfast



South Sound United Choir singing at Elmslie

SSU Christmas Programme



The children and youth of SSUC performing in the annual Christmas programme before a full church. Light refreshments and fellowship followed the event.

Message from South Sound United Church

The year 2020 was undoubtedly a very challenging one for us all. Despite the many setbacks, however, SSUC worked assiduously throughout to keep things afloat and alive. This hard work and commitment is now yielding fruit and the church of joy and fellowship is celebrating this return to near normalcy.

On the last Sunday of November, immediately following the service, our annual Christmas Fellowship Breakfast was held at the Wharf Restaurant. The event which was organised by **Sheila** and **Sarah**, attracted over 70 congregants and their family members. **Rev. Mason** welcomed all, made a brief speech and opened with a prayer.

On Sunday evening, 13th December, the Sunday school children performed their Christmas concert

which was described as most enjoyable and truly inspirational. As can be seen in the photos, left, there were lots of sheep, donkeys and camels, and



the Magi. There was also a very beautiful and 'accomplished' children's choir performance which was truly magical, thanks to **Penny**, **Birch**, **Janet** and others from the SSUC Choir. Well done and many thanks to **Val** and **Nadine** who were so creative in their production of a most enjoyable children's concert.

On Friday, 11th December, a lovely evening was enjoyed by all board members and their spouses at an appreciation dinner for **Rev. Chris** and his wife **Ann Marie**.

The choir, under the leadership of Penny (who also sings with the Cayman National Choir), started its advent preparation very early, and each Sunday there was high anticipation for their performance. One outstanding and very well enjoyed song was their rendition of the *Twelve Days of Christmas* with specially adapted lyrics and performances! Since this performance, the choir has received several requests for them to share the lyrics as well as to sing at other United churches, which is all very encouraging.

All in all, SSUC has been very alive not only within their own congregation but also with their outreach to the wider community. The Sunday school has certainly grown and attendance is almost back to capacity. Praise the Lord!

Special January Birthdays

Happy Birthday to

Jermaine Webb - 21 on the 4th

Sarah Faulknor - 16 on the 7th

William Walmsley - 60 on the 11th

Chris McCoy - 55 on the 12th

Joshua Merren - 30 on the 15th

Jana Moore-Ebanks - 60 on the 28th

Answers to “So you think you know the Christmas story!” (from last month)

1. Only two Gospels, Matthew and Luke, record any stories surrounding Jesus' birth.
2. No one knows for sure what day of the year Jesus was born but it was very unlikely December 25th! The dating system we use today was unknown then. It may have been autumn; it would have been too cold for sheep to be out in the open in winter. As to the year, we know that Herod died in 4 BC so the year of Jesus' birth would have had to be before that.
3. The name Jesus means “the Lord saves” (Matthew 1:21), the same meaning as the name Joshua.
4. We are told Jesus would also be called Immanuel (Matthew 1:23).
5. There is no mention of a donkey! Being as she was heavily pregnant, it is likely that she rode one but nowhere in the Bible does it say this!
- 6-8. It is traditionally assumed that Jesus' birth happened the night after they arrived but the Bible does not say this. Luke 2:6 simply says, “While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born.” It does not even say he was born at night, or in a stable! We only know that he was placed in a manger – a feeding trough used for animals – as being an ideal crib. The ‘stable’ may have been attached to the home of a relative (both Joseph and Mary's families originated from there so there may well have been relatives who would have looked after Mary), and far from being unhygienic would probably have been thoroughly cleaned.
9. The line of the carol, “We Three Kings of Orient Are” has a number of inconsistencies with Scripture. One, there is no mention of how many there were. The number, three, is assumed because of three gifts offered. Two, they were not ‘kings’, they were astrologers - educated and probably wealthy, prominent people. Three, they did not come from the ‘orient’ but from the area known then as Mesopotamia (ancient Ur where Abraham came from and Babylon in later years and, today, modern Iraq).
10. Jesus would have been circumcised in Bethlehem on the eighth day, according to the law. However, Luke 2:22-24 tells us that there were other requirements of the law which required new born babies to be brought to

Lay Leaders UCJCI Training

The UCJCI Training for Lay Leaders (TLL) programme will resume in January 2021. This is for all members of the United Church who are interested in being trained for service in the church. All prospective elders and new elders are required to undergo the training. Training will be done in each region during January to June focusing on topics which are vital to the role of leadership and includes areas such as Effective Caregiving, The Spirituality of the Leader, Leading Small Groups, etc.

For more information and for registration forms please contact your minister or the Council Office. Council office phone 947-1963 or email: cirmc.info@yahoo.com or rdgs@cicucjci.com.

the temple in Jerusalem after seven weeks when purification rites were to be performed and a sacrifice offered. The distance to Jerusalem is only about six or seven miles.

11. We can be sure he wasn't newborn when the wise men arrived! And we know he wasn't still in a manger or a stable! Matthew 2:11 says they found him in a “home”. We are told that Herod worked out the time the star had appeared (v. 7), presumably when he was born and before the wise men started their journey, and that Jesus was “a child” (vv. 8 & 11). Further, Herod ordered “all boys in Bethlehem and the vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi” (v. 16). So he was probably a toddler!

12. The Gospel of Mark (6:3) and the Gospel of Matthew (13:55-56) mention James, Joseph/Joses, Judas/Jude and Simon as brothers of Jesus, the son of Mary. The same verses also mention unnamed sisters of Jesus. The first brother became the leader of the church in Jerusalem as well as the author of ‘James’, and Jude is probably the author of the little book called ‘Jude’.

2021: A Reflection (Cont'd. from Page 1)

Job stated it like this: “Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart” (1:21).

I was reading Hebrews 11 in my morning devotions the other day and was again struck by the faith of Abraham who saw himself as a foreigner and stranger on earth. The writer comments of those who recognize this, that they “show that they are looking for a ... better country – a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them” (vv. 13-16).

As we move into 2021, we need to have the mindset of Abraham who “when called to go to a place he would receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went ...” (v. 8a). It was an act of faith.

So, Christmas has just passed the time when our minds were focused on the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ and, just as Paul addressed the Corinthians, we, too, need to reflect on his “grace, ... that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

May this year be one when we seek to “store up for (ourselves) treasure in heaven ... for where (our) treasure is, there (our) heart will be also (Matthew 6: 20-21). Such an approach to life will involve a life of faith. - **Michael Bowerman**

Congrats, Truman!



Albeit late, we wish to congratulate **Truman Bodden** and family on the birth of his grandchildren who were born 8 days apart in September. Pictured above are **Chloe Lee Beaudet**, born 17th September to **Roberta & Pierre-Yves Beaudet**, and **Mitchel Arthur Wright** (“Arthur”), born 25th September to **Alexandra & Mitchel Wright**.



Christmas at Elmslie

