

The United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands

FAMILY NEWS

Elmslie Memorial Charge

Volume 226, March 2024



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From The Pastor's Desk

Easter is one of those occasions when most of us go to church already knowing the story. Due to our familiarity with the Easter narratives, we might be tempted to let our minds wander during the reading of the Scriptures. There is certainly no shortage of issues competing for our attention on Easter morning. We dress up. There is the smell of lilies all around the sanctuary and Easter music enhances the worship. However, as Christians, we must not underestimate the power of Scripture, no matter how familiar it may be.

In John 20:1-18, there is the story of Easter morning chaos. There is confusion, mistaken identities, and rejoicing. The emotions are intense. Disciples run in desperation. Mary is weeping. She is weeping with intensity and passion. She cannot stop herself. We hear her cry echo down through the ages as she stands not only next to the grave of Jesus but next to all the graves of the world. For thousands of years, we have taken our loved ones, parents, children, teachers and friends and placed them in the ground. We have covered them with dirt, and all we can do is weep.

Mary is weeping at this grave as she searches for the dead body of her friend and teacher. She is not finding what she expected. In her weeping she hears the question from Jesus, "Why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?" Like Mary, we weep in our confusion when we stare into the open grave of this world. But, like Mary, we hear the question in our weeping, "Who are you looking for?" Like Mary, we are so sure we know what we are looking for that we fail to see the resurrected Christ or the resurrection he brings to us in our darkest hour.

A new reality is here, a new humanity in Jesus Christ. A new vision of eternal life is ours in Christ and we will not see it if we, like Mary and the other disciples, are merely expecting to find the dead body of a young hero. The Jesus of Easter is alive and comes to us in word and sacrament, and we are filled with the joy of that first Easter.

A blessed Easter to everyone.

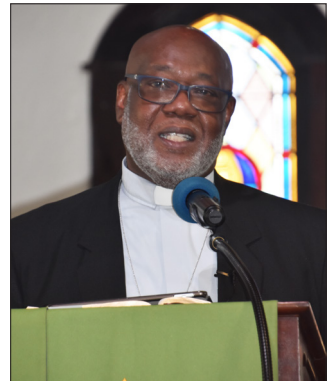
Our Sunday School As We Begin 2024

With an average attendance of forty-four students each Sunday so far this year, the Sunday school is very pleased to report an increase of almost 20% in the number of children when compared with the same period in 2023. On two Sundays, we exceeded fifty which was wonderful as it has been some four years since we last had Sunday school attendance figures in the fifties and above with any consistency.

Our Sunday School is a longstanding programme at Elmslie and our ministry workers continue to pray and work for further growth in our weekly attendance. We also recognise the need to:

- *Prepare ourselves spiritually* to bring God's Word and His message of salvation creatively, but always clearly.
- *Prepare our church premises* to accommodate an increased number of children with adequate and safe teaching spaces.
- *Increase our complement of teachers and leaders* in order to effectively manage increased numbers.

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Cayman Islands Regional Mission Council (CIRMC)

The first Council meeting of 2024 was held on 20th January with special guest, **Rev. Norbert Stephens**, the UCJCI General Secretary, in attendance. Some decisions and special points of interest to Elmslie are the following:

1. The Executive Council for the next three years was appointed, which includes those responsible for the Mission Action Teams (MAT):

- Chair of Council - **Rev. Rohan Forrester**
- Vice-chair of Mission MAT - **Ms. Tessa Bodden**
- Vice-chair of Children and Youth MAT - **Rev. Euthman Wray**
- Vice-chair of Evangelism MAT – **Ms. Cathy Gomez**
- Council Treasurer – **Mrs. Sharon Thomas**

The offices of the Vice-chair of Discipleship MAT and Vice-chair of Leadership MAT currently remain vacant.

2. The Financial Report noted a small net deficit for 2023. However, all the Council's bills had been paid.

3. The General Secretary presented the Synod Remit. This is the summary of the remarks, questions and comments:

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Outstanding Ministry at Cayman Keswick

The inter-church Cayman Keswick covered just four days this year, and was held at First Baptist Church. We were blessed by the excellent Bible teaching given by

Dr. Jeremy McQuoid, the current Chairman of the Trustees at Keswick Ministries, and pastor at Deeside Christian Fellowship Church in Aberdeen, Scotland. He focused on four sections in Romans, addressing the subjects of "Salvation," "Slavery," "Sonship" and "Sovereignty."

This was the 50th anniversary of Cayman's Keswick ministry, the first meetings having taken place in Elmslie Memorial Church in 1974, with an eminent preacher of that day, **Rev. Alec Motyer** as the speaker. January meetings have been held every year since, with two exceptions. There was a last minute cancellation in 1991 due to the outbreak of the Gulf War which prevented the speaker from coming, and in 2021 no meetings could be planned due to Covid. For twelve years, during the late '70s and '80s, a second week of meetings was held in August and, up to recently, lunch-time meetings were also held.

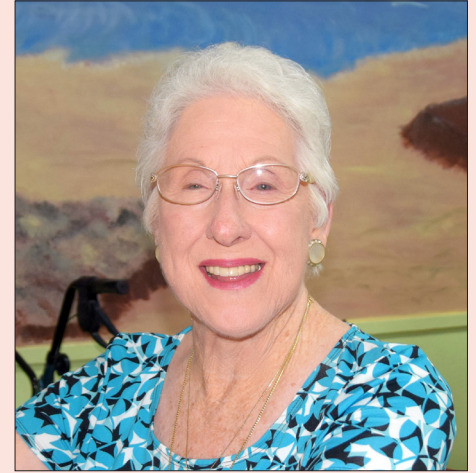


The choir leading worship during Keswick

Deaths

We extend sincere condolences to **Sharon Walmsley** and family on the passing of her father **Stanley 'Sonny' Clark** on Tuesday, 30th January.

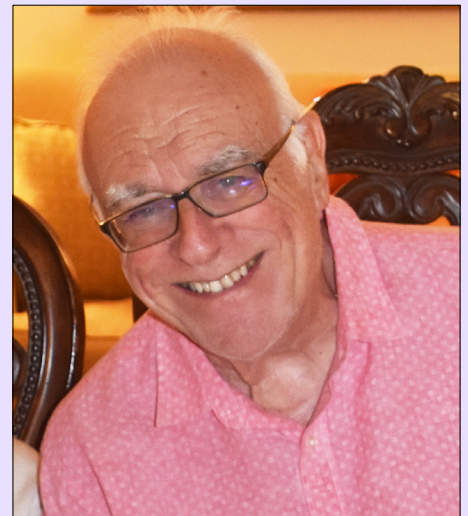
Josie Knox Has Passed



Our heartfelt condolences to the family of **Josie Knox** who passed away on Thursday, 8th February. Josie, a faithful adherent of Elmslie Church for many years, was the sister of **Beth Roulstone** and the late **Grace Hurst**. Remember to keep their families, and especially Beth, in your prayers during this time of grief.

Colin Receives a Special Award

We congratulate **Colin Wilson** on receiving a Cultural Luminary Award at the recent Heroes' Day presentations "for protecting and promoting Caymanian culture, heritage and identity through demonstrated and consistent excellence in the creative arts for 20 years or more."



Women Fellowship Sunday



On 28th January - Women's Fellowship Sunday - the platform was appropriately taken up by all women, including the pulpit which was occupied by **Jusan Hamilton-Lewis** who delivered an inspiring message entitled *Purpose People*. Mrs. Hamilton-Lewis is the Youth Minister at John Gray Memorial Church.

Sunday School 2024 (Cont'd. from Pg. 1)

• *Economically identify the teaching resources/aids we really need, especially for the younger groups of children, as over the past many years the Sunday school has had to manage in this area mainly from donations from youth ministry workers.*

Currently, the Sunday school has leaders/teachers assigned as follows:

- **Madda Whittaker** and **Shana McLaughlin** - 16-18 year-olds
- **Lisa O'Neil** - 13-15 year-olds
- **Thomas Myles** - 9-12 year-olds
- **Suzanne Livingston** with two assistants, **Nadine Napier** and **Julisa Ramoon-Challenger** - 3½ - 8 year-olds.
- **Susan Whittaker** is responsible for the creche, with two or three leaders/carers assisting

I serve as superintendent with **Jennelle McLaughlin** as the assistant superintendent. Jennelle carries out the important tasks of recording the names of all students in attendance, as well as collecting the offering.

Time and special attention for each student is a consistent requirement for teaching, especially when it relates to leading children to accept Christ as their personal Saviour. We need more classes with fewer children, and therefore more teachers. Our long-term aim is to have enough volunteer teachers on a rota basis so that each teacher will be assigned to teach only twice per month.

From September 2023, attendance in the 9-12 year-olds group reached up to 16 students with only one teacher currently assigned to it. There is therefore an urgent need for another teacher for this age group. These children are energetic and questioning and the teacher would need to have a good knowledge of the Word of God and preferably some experience with dealing with this age group.

It is also proposed to split the group of 3½ - 8 year-olds into two groups as we have found that the teaching methods and materials for the 3½ - 5 year-olds need to be different from those used for 6 - 8 year-olds.

There are plans to upgrade the creche because of the increased numbers in that group as well as to standardise the teaching and activities for the 2 - 3 year-olds. We are very grateful to **Loretta Ramoon** who has already begun donating significant items for the creche upgrade. This project to upgrade is awaiting formal approval from the Property Committee.

The increase in our numbers has partly resulted from the efforts of our youth minister, **Roy McGregor**, along with the Friday Night Ministry youth workers, who have encouraged the youth to attend church and consequently Sunday school.

Having more children on a Sunday means many things for us as youth ministry workers, one of which is that children, even young ones, are inviting friends and relatives to come with them to Sunday school! For us, that means children are telling other children about coming to the house of Lord! That is wonderful!

Please pray for this important ministry of our church.

Suzanne Livingston (Sunday School Superintendent)

Mr. Roy is Back!



Elmslie congregants were happy to welcome back their Youth Minister, **Roy McGregor**, who was tremendously missed during his recent leave of absence.



CIRMC Ash Wednesday Gathering



On the 14th of February, an uplifting Ash Wednesday service was held at the Prospect Youth Centre beach at 6:30 am with approximately 120 members and adherents from United Church congregations, as well as from other churches, in attendance. **Rev. Donovan Myers** served as liturgist and **Rev. Dr. Yvette Noble-Bloomfield** delivered the reflection on the theme 'Here I am, Lord' based on Isaiah 6:1-8.

Melody McLean and **Isaiah Robinson** read the scriptures. **Betty Ann Mobley** shared an inspiring personal testimony, and the musicians and praise team led the gathering in songs of praise and commitment throughout the service.

Following a time of personal and group prayer, the Sacrament of Holy Communion was administered and there was also the Imposition of Ashes.

The Women's Fellowship provided a light breakfast at the end of the Gathering. (See more pictures on insert.)

Girls' Brigade Tea Party



On Saturday, 10th February, the Girls' Brigade held a tea party which was hosted by **Audrey and Handel Whittaker** at their home in North Side. Word has it that it was a beautiful afternoon filled with "great food, lots of fun and many opportunities to catch up" with old friends and make new ones.

CIRMC (Cont'd from Pg. 2)

- The Synod's strategic priorities serve as a framework and guide for the regional mission councils and congregations.
 - The UCJCI aims to be an emerging church, ready to review its current operations, structure, model and perceptions of finance and ministry, including full-time ministry, etc., to better respond to the changing environment presented by the post-Covid era.
 - Regional mission councils have the power to determine their directions, programmes, methodologies, and what is best for their region.
 - Congregations have the autonomy to do the same as long as those decisions and practices abide by the constitution and the polity of the UCJCI.
 - Congregations can call only ministers ordained by the UCJCI or from UCJCI partner churches.
 - Currently, the UCJCI does not knowingly accept practicing homosexual persons into full-time ministry.
4. The members of the Council deliberated on a document which had been prepared to enable the selection of a new Regional Deputy General Secretary following the resignation of **Rev. Dr. Yvette Noble Bloomfield** at the end of October last year. There is a search committee in place, consisting of **Rev. Norbert Stephens, Rev. Tara Tymes, Rev. Rohan Forrester, Rev. Chris Mason** and **Dr. Liz McLaughlin**, which hopes to complete its work shortly. Further information will be forthcoming.
 5. The dates for summer camps this year are July 9th - 14th (Children's) and July 16th - 21st (Teens').
 6. The UCJCI Convocation will be held on 5th May 2024 at the Montego Bay Convention Centre under the synodical theme, *Rooted, Resilient: Re-ignited by the Spirit*. The proposal to hold a convocation in Cayman at an earlier date was approved by the Council. The event will provide an opportunity to install the new Council Executive Committee and commission the new RDGS.
 7. There was discussion on the possible physical expansion of the Cayman Prep and High School and KPMG is currently doing a feasibility study on this.
 8. The CIRMC will be hosting the Caribbean and North America Area Council General Assembly of the World Communion of Reformed Churches from 23rd - 30th October 2024.

Special Wedding Anniversary

Congratulations to **Evelyn & Nickerson Godfrey** who will celebrate 65 years of marriage on 27th March. May God bless you with many more years together.

Special March Birthdays

Happy Birthday to
Janet Macmillan - 75 on the 3rd
Ann Marie Webb - 50 on the 13th

Ash Wednesday Gathering

