

The United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands



THE FAMILY NEWS

George Town Charge

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From the Pastor's Desk

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing (John 15:5).

Crises can be tough. In the fog of a crisis, it can be hard to see anything good that God might be doing. Whether your finances are at risk through a job loss, or you have a relationship that's threatening to implode, or you're experiencing some other devastating event, it's heart-breaking to see your world turned upside down. Eventually, you wonder whether God might be punishing you for something.

But, the fact is, we often seek to connect with God in our crises in ways that we wouldn't ordinarily consider. One rumour of lay-offs or one unexplained result on a medical test can change everything. Suddenly life isn't about you anymore, it's about God. A major crisis can persuade us to negotiate anything with God.

Is that bad? Obviously, suffering is painful. But Jesus' point in John 15 is that the only way we can thrive in life is by being naturally connected to him, like branches to a vine. That means our lives will be far richer connected to him in a crisis than if we are drifting off on our own.

The point is not that crises aren't bad; it's that being connected to Jesus Christ is good. Sometimes God uses the blinding fog of a crisis to help us find him. Has he ever done that with you?

Coronavirus and Psalm 91

The following column was recently issued by DAI, the organisation for which Paul Borthwick works, and is used by permission of its author, Ajith Fernando, who is the Teaching Director for Youth for Christ in Sri Lanka.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28)

Many people are asking today about whether we can quote Psalm 91 to assure ourselves that we will be freed from the Coronavirus. Let's look at this issue scripturally.

In the Bible there are promises, principles and commands that are generally true, but which have exceptions. The general commands to obey parents "in everything" (Col. 3:20) and to be subject to government officials (Rom. 13:1-2) have exceptions in the Bible (Luke 14:26; Acts 4:19-20). We sometimes need to disobey their commands if they clearly go against God's will.

Similarly, the Bible is clear that God looks after us, as Psalm 91 says. He can miraculously intervene and does intervene to deliver us. Indeed, he commands his angels to guard us (Psalm 91:11). He can prevent us from dashing our foot against a stone (91:12).



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William Returns to the Elders' Board

William Walmsley was reelected to the Elmslie Congregational Board of Elders after an absence of a few years, having served on two previous occasions.

He was born and raised in Northern Ireland and grew up in a small Methodist church just around the corner from the local Presbyterian and Anglican churches. In 1987, he moved to Cayman and, just over two years later, he married local girl, **Sharon Clarke**. They have four children, **Kirsten, Emma, Jonathan** and **Katherine**. William has been attending Elmslie since soon after arriving on the island.

William is a partner of the local office of Rawlinson & Hunter, a local professional services firm and has been involved in a number of professional bodies over the years, including Cayman Finance, STEP and Hedge Fund Cares.

With regard to his work with the church, he states, "I have been involved in a number of ministries at Elmslie over the years, apart from serving as an elder. These include leading



young adults and home groups. I have also been a

Sunday school teacher and a youth group leader. For many years I served as the church treasurer. I am still currently a member of the Global Missions Committee and one of the Sunday morning worship leaders. I was even a bus driver at one time!" he adds.

"Outside of church I enjoy spending time with family, reading, watching football - particularly games involving Manchester United whom I have supported for the last fifty years."

When he was asked his vision for the church, he replied, "I would love to see Elmslie church filled every Sunday, with a wide cross-section of persons from the local community but particularly young adults, including those with young children." He adds, "I want to see a vibrant community of believers devoted to loving God and each other and reaching out to the local community. I also want to see a worship service that is both a time of celebration but with a sense



A dated photo of the Walmsley family

of reverence while at the same time a continuing strong focus on the preaching of the Word of God."

Let us pray for William, along with the other elders, as they provide vision and godly leadership to the Elmslie congregation.

Thoughts on Covid-19

Members of the George Town Charge were asked what was one thing they had learned or were learning from God during this Covid-19 crisis? The following were some of the responses:

I find that I've been reading more inspirational material on how to conquer fear and experience more calm. I'm learning to be less fearful because God knows all and he is in control! (Judy Ebanks)

Covid 19 has taught me inner peace, not to fear but have a deeper faith in God. With him all things are possible. (Leoany 'Fay' Williams)

I have learned patience, understanding and not to be fearful. I thank the Lord for the glorious days and ask him to help us help those in need. (Helen Merren)

I have been reminded that people matter more than things, that we humans are the crown of God's creation, and instinctively everyone, Christian and non-Christian alike, puts people's health first. That led me to recognize again that God's greatest desire is their salvation, and that a crisis like this, with all its fears and uncertainties, can be his way of grabbing their attention. (Michael Bowerman)

I have always appreciated time alone with God and often felt like there was never enough time. This experience has taught me the importance of that alone time with God and the power of the verses in Matthew 6: 5-15. (Cathy Gomez)

In this pandemic, as we isolate and remain in lockdown or in quarantine, we are always comforted by the presence of God. (Phillip 'Slim' Vassel)

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Coronavirus (Cont'd. from Pg. 1)

However, that does not always happen, as the noble army of martyrs testifies. One-third of the same book of Psalms are laments where righteous people suffer misfortunes and God doesn't seem to be helping them. Psalm 91 teaches that God looks after us, but other passages in the Bible show us that the way God looks after us is not always as is specifically stated in Psalm 91. There are exceptions. And yet through all of it God is continuing to bless us.

Presently I've been reading Job for my devotions. God's plan was to glorify his name through Job going through experiences very distant to what Psalm 91 says. Job's friends who quoted biblical principles regarding how God looks after the righteous are finally proven to be wrong and even unkind. Their speeches were very inspiring in the Psalm 91 tradition. But they were wrong in applying those principles to the suffering that Job was experiencing.

Romans 8 looks at this issue theologically. The whole creation is subjected to frustration (8:20). There is sickness, disappointment, pain, and death. That frustration includes us

Elmslie Meeting Needs During Covid-19

As we are all aware, the global spread of the Coronavirus, COVID-19, has become a central topic of discussion and concern for many of us. It has caused us to think about the things we take for granted and to respond to the spiritual and physical need around us.

Elmslie has established an Emergency Assistance Team to respond to the needs of our members, adherents and community with food, medical needs and other essentials for life during this very difficult time. Our team of volunteers can be seen weekly in community responding to needs.

for them because we know that out of that suffering God is working out something beautiful.

- Yes, we're not immune to problems, but God's love is deeper than all of that and nothing can separate us from his love (8:35, 38, 39).
- People relishing the experience of loving and being loved are happy people. So, like Paul wrote, while he was in prison, we rejoice in the Lord always (Phil. 4:4), and we have learned to be content whatever happens (Phil. 4:11).

The happiest people in the world are not those who don't have problems; it is those who are not afraid of problems. As Paul said, again from prison, the greatest wealth we can have is contentment (1 Tim. 6:6). A dreary prison is not a place which implies God's blessing. But Paul was blessed, he was rich!

Amid all the confusion of this time, let's relish the wealth of contentment!

Special May Anniversary

Happy Anniversary to
Deborah & Alistair Cowper
who will celebrate 5 years of
marriage on 16th May!



Special May Birthdays

Happy Birthday to

Jennifer Gray - 16 on the 11th

George Craig - 80 on the 12th

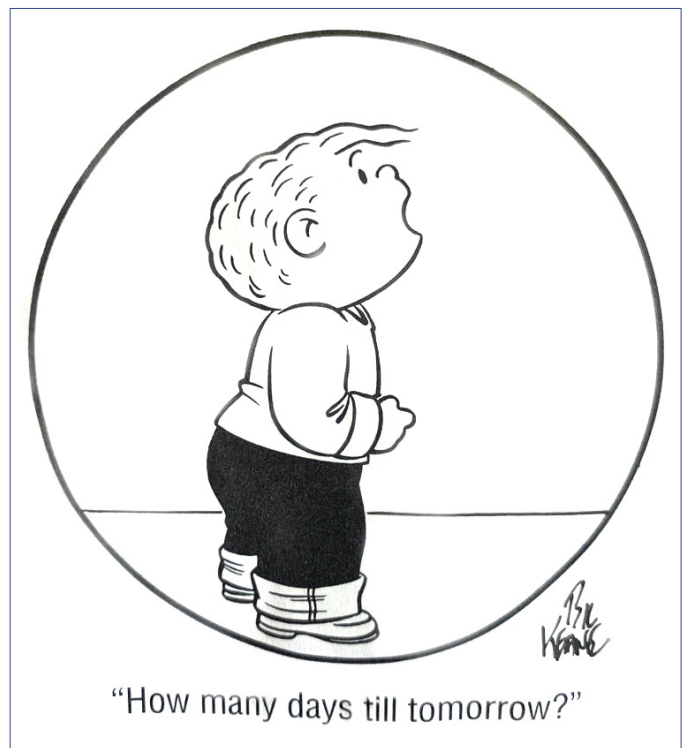
Jane Ramoon - 80 on the 22nd

Uriah Clarke - 85 on the 28th

Conor Macmillan - 16 on the 30th

“who have the first fruits of the Spirit” (8:23). That is, we have a taste of what heaven is like here and now. But we groan (8:23) with the rest of creation (8:22). Through that groaning with the rest of creation, like Jesus, we develop deep ties with the world and have a deep impact on it. Our lifestyle is one of incarnation. When we talk of incarnation, we mean that Jesus took on human flesh with all the frustration that entails. We can have a deep impact on the world by identifying with its pain, just like Jesus did. In a mysterious way suffering helps the church to grow, just like the death of Stephen showed. When the tsunami hit Sri Lanka, some Christians were miraculously saved and testified about it to the glory of God. Others suffered, like the church in Mullaitivu where the faithful who came to church that morning died and those who stayed at home were saved. The pastor of that church lost his wife and, I think, his son. But he stayed on and served his people and now his two daughters have entered the university—a great achievement in Sri Lanka. He brought glory to God through his suffering. There are some deeper, more important realities that govern us amidst our frustration and pain.

- The Holy Spirit groans with us as we groan (8:26). Not only is it acceptable for Christians to groan, when they do, God groans with them. And that verse says that he helps us amid our weakness. We experience the nearness of God in a deep way.
- God turns everything we experience into good (8:28), making us more than conquerors in all things (8:37). While we mourn and identify with Christians who suffer we don't need to have pity



I know that at the end of the day God is truly in control, and we have to trust that he has us covered and will take care of us. We must not let all the videos and news reports take our focus off him. (Harriet Vassel)

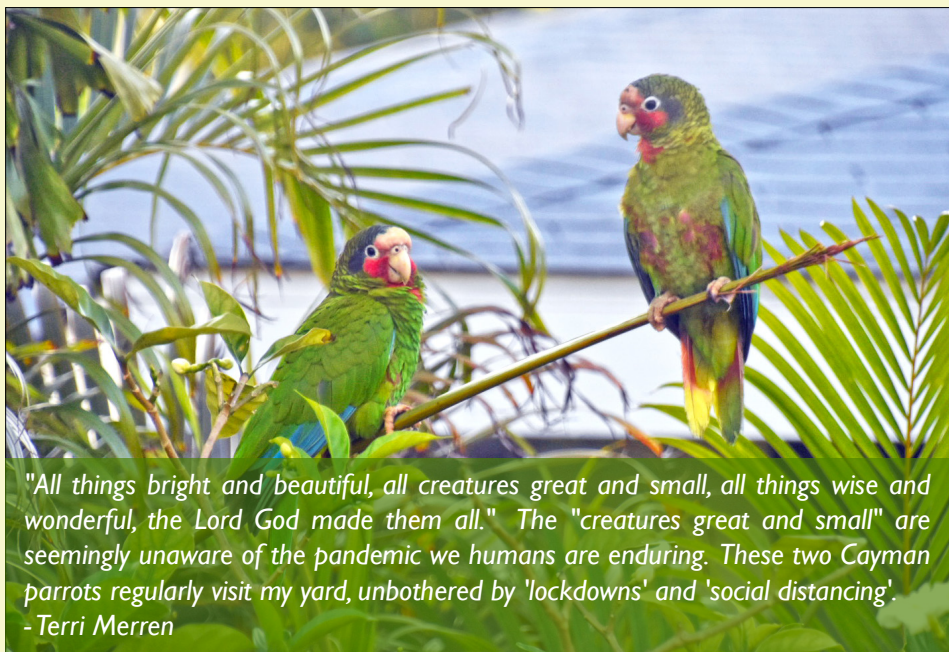
This has reminded me to trust and obey, and that God will see us through. (Greg Merren)

Covid 19 has taught me to be more caring for others, to be humble and patient and not to take things for granted. We're only passing through this world and if I can help somebody, my living will not be in vain. I have been reading and studying the Bible. I am spending more time with my family. God is so good. (Nicky Godfrey)

I would say that the biggest thing I have learnt during this isolation period is patience and to be still and just be. (Karen Coles)

I think this isolation time due to Covid-19 is teaching me patience. (Gwen Hughes-Coward)

I'm learning from God that comfort comes from praying to him a lot - perhaps more than when life is going well! Also, as **Minister Seymour** said today in the press conference, the more faith is exercised, the stronger it becomes. We need to have faith that God will direct the leaders in our lives. My thoughts aren't earth shattering but this is probably not needed at this time anyway! As the island is in lockdown, nature is flourishing, We've had Whistling Ducks, an agouti as well as parrots in the garden. (Nancy Whitefield)



*"All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small, all things wise and wonderful, the Lord God made them all." The "creatures great and small" are seemingly unaware of the pandemic we humans are enduring. These two Cayman parrots regularly visit my yard, unbothered by 'lockdowns' and 'social distancing'.
- Terri Merren*

Psalm 5:11-12 states, "But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you. Surely, Lord, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favour as with a shield." The desire of my heart is simply to spend time with him and rest in his presence, praising Him. I wanted to give to him but, unexpectedly instead, I received from him, and he reassured

me of His love, protection and faithfulness, simply because He was and is the focus of my heart. "Your love and favour, Heavenly Father, is as a shield around us. It is fierce, protective, eternal, unyielding - impossible to understand. Thank you, Abba Father." (Pearline Myles)

After we have suffered for a while, God will restore us and make us strong. God is to be feared and he is the one who gives Satan permission to buffet us. (Ella Kaye Lockwood)

It's teaching me to be still and spend more time with God, rather than the material things that we so get caught up with. (Francilla Myles)



I have been able to spend more time reading the Scriptures and pondering the truths, not always easy to understand, found there. I am discovering more of the character of God, his greatness, power and majesty, and that it is he who has made the world and therefore knows the state it is in, and he is working out his purposes. We need to be still – listen and learn, trust and obey and thus learn the peace that only he can give. (Mary Bowerman)

One of the many things God has taught me through this pandemic is to value all the beautiful things he has created (such as nature) and the privileges we have (such as worshipping in our church) that we sometimes take for granted. (Terri Merren)

I think that God is using this virus from the evil one for good for those who trust in Jesus. He has allowed this period of stillness to reflect on what He knows is of eternal importance for us, so that we now have time to rearrange our routines in obedience to His will as expressed in Philippians 1:27, to actively love Him and our neighbours more fully through our thoughts, our prayers, our words, our deeds and our finances. We can see that much of what society considers so important can be simplified, to make it

our priority to praise and show our thanks to our Creator and Lord Jesus Christ. (Richard Trull)

If we ever needed a sign as to who controls the world, the Coronavirus has just proved it. God does. It is our faith and trust in God that will see us through this difficult time. And it will also help us to help others. (Colin & Joan Wilson)