



UCJCI UPDATE

A WEEKLY NEWSLETTER OF THE UNITED CHURCH IN JAMAICA AND THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

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THE UNITED CHURCH IN
JAMAICA AND THE
CAYMAN ISLANDS

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OUR VISION: "Touching
lives, Nurturing Disciples,
Seeking Transformation
through Christ."

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PRAY FOR:



Rev. Stotrell Lowe and Rev. Dr. Margaret Fowler, who are both recovering from surgery.

'THE CHURCH -RESPONDING TO GLOBAL CHALLENGES IN A DIVIDED WORLD'



Rev. Dr. Roderick Hewitt

We continue Rev. Hewitt's presentation on the challenges being faced by the Church in a divided world.

■ **Ministry and Mission implications for the Church in Jamaica**

The necessary exposure of alleged sexual act against a minor by a church pastor that has shamed and disgraced the ministry and mission of the Jamaican church has served to expose the precarious nature of Spiritual leadership. This dark epiphany that has befallen the church poses serious questions about moral integrity and accountability of church leaders; and discipline and

authenticity of the church's ministry governance.

When the public loses trust in church leaders then the moral fiber of the nation also declines. The public shame may serve as a cathartic agent to expose and cleanse other hidden corrupt and immoral behaviour if processes of good governance are diligently applied.

The days when spiritual leaders can use their status to hide from public accountability, whether they steal money, engage in illicit sex, engage in corrupt and illegal behaviour are no longer tolerated by an uncritical public. Appropriate and effective sanctions must be enacted and the full course of the law must be applied. Let judgement begin with leaders in the House of God. Only so will there be moral integrity and influence to hold other centers of power in the private and public sectors accountable. Indeed, data from the Child Protection Agency confirm that long after this sad case in the court has been dealt, many more minors will

continue to be abused because by close relatives, and by leaders such as politicians, business men and even journalists. The media has had a field day rightly exposing alleged sexual wrong-doings linked to untrustworthy leadership within the church. The same passionate commitment and vigor must be done with other professions, not only the clergy.

■ **A Ministry corrupted by love of money**

Another area that is in need of serious overhaul is the perception that Churches and money making businesses rather than nonprofit institutions are committed to the service of the people.

The stories of ministers, pastors, preachers, apostles, prophets, bishops preying on the vulnerable and fleecing them of the little that they have as the price for a miracle.

This is one area of life that impacts heavily on the poor where there is very little protection against financial exploitation".

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70:

**Rev. Dr. Yvette Noble
Bloomfield.**

March 8

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY



COMPETENT, PROCESS-ORIENTED, SELF-MOTIVATED WORKER NEEDED

The Partner in Mission Unit of Council for World Mission is seeking to identify a

INFORMATION AND RECORD ADMINISTRATOR

This is a temporary post which will require the successful candidate based in Jamaica to work from home using his/her own computer, mobile phone and internet service beginning on 1st April 2017 initially for 6 months. The application form and job description are available by emailing -

cwm_applications@yahoo.com
Please send completed application form to
cwm_applications@yahoo.co by
March 3, 2017.

Only candidates who have submitted a completed form will be considered.
For further information you may call
920-0931

THE UCJCI POLICY ON SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

POLICY POSITIONS CONTD.

3. All arms of the Church shall be made aware of the Synod's approved policies and procedures to deal with complaints of Sexual Misconduct.

4. Any member, adherent or employee, of the United Church, its congregations, Councils or related agencies, who has personal knowledge of the act of sexual misconduct may make a complaint, in writing, to the Congregational Board, the Council or the Church and Ministry Committee of Synod.

5. When a complaint of sexual abuse is brought to the attention of the Church, the Church through its courts will thoroughly investigate the allegations, taking into account information from all relevant parties, and determine the veracity of the complaint. If this complaint is confirmed and it is determined that someone in a designated leadership position in the Church has violated the policy, all reasonable efforts, consistent with the Constitution of the United Church, will be made to ensure that the person is not placed in a position to take advantage of someone else.

Where the complaint is not upheld, all reasonable efforts will be made to affirm and support the accused within the community.

6. Any complaint made by a Court of the Church shall be heard by the next higher court. A complaint made by the Church and Ministry Committee, shall be referred to the Disciplinary Committee.

7. When a complaint of SEXUAL ABUSE OF A PERSON designated by the law as a minor is disclosed, or

where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that such sexual abuse has occurred, the grounds to suspect that such sexual abuse has occurred, the person to whom the disclosure is made or who suspects such abuse, shall comply with any reporting obligation imposed by law, and also immediately report the suspicion and the circumstances on which the suspicion is based

- The body to which the initial complaint is made shall ensure that there is a detailed record of the alleged offence committed, including the relevant dates and times.

The body receiving the report, shall forward a detailed report to the next higher court that shall then proceed to initiate an investigation, in accordance with disciplinary procedures outlined in the Constitution.

- In cases involving United Church institutions and agencies, the report shall be made directly to the Church and Ministry Committee of Synod, and...
- Where the allegation is proven, the perpetrator shall not be allowed to hold any position of leadership within the Church or represent the Church in any official capacity.

END OF UCJCI SEX MISCONDUCT POLICY.

(copies of this policy are available from your Regional Office)

Hewitt's Address contd.

Persons can become pastors with no system of accreditation except their claim to be sent by God in an age when there are **many false gods**.

There is a serious health and safety risk to the public that must be addressed.

Maybe churches/denominations should publish once every two years a list of their accredited clergy in the newspaper to help people to make the right choice about who they should trust.

■ Greed has been baptized as Faith

This greed that has enveloped the ministry of the church has been undergirded an accompanying **theology of prosperity** that is effectively marketed by charismatic leaders who have fused the building faith and claiming victory in Jesus' name with the poor getting healthy and wealthy. **The certain result is that the pastor is the one who gets wealthy, at the expense of the people!**

All that matters is profit by whatever means necessary.

Once you claim it in Jesus name it is certified as ultimately right.

In this religious landscape of self-made new unaccountable prophets and apostles, church has become a business.

The new 'Man of God' and his 'First Lady' are principal owners of the Business, They become the principal marketers of the brand that promises healing and prosperity.

This presentation is therefore arguing that sections of the church are engaging in ministry practice that is also devaluing what it means to be human because of avarice.

Whenever, human value is measured by money and buying power, **people can easily be fleeced by religious ma-**

gicians and entertainers carrying out 'tricks' as healing in Jesus name.

In this deceptive landscape, reality is shaped less by the rules of reason and more by passions and emotions that can make people feel good.

■ Focus on building authentic human relationships

In this new landscape, the godlike status of the market and the acquisition of money will be what validates truth.

Harvey Cox states in his text: **"The Market as God"** warns of this deadly virus that can paralyze the Church's witness because this alternative religion of the market has its own theology, doctrine and liturgy.

Every working day the bell rings for trade to begin. It has its own saints, prophets, priests, elders and followers that believe it is the only way to salvation on earth.

The struggle of our time is therefore all about what it means to be human. Will the church join in the anti-Christ spirit at work that is classifying the human being as a commodity to be used for profit or a bearing of God's image?

The most urgent ministry agenda for the Jamaican church is to engage in teaching, preaching and mission action that seek to build authentic human relationships modeled on Jesus.

■ Hold all leaders accountable

Neoliberal capitalism has left commodified people has bequeathed to our nation and wider world a multitude of destroyed lives, whose future is mortgaged to continuous exposure to violence and threats to life.



The wave of murders and savage violence that seems to be unstoppable in our society represent in part an expression of pent up anger, especially among young men who have lost hope in any structural changes in our

nation that will result in economic justice.

They have tried piecemeal approaches of using the police and army to stamp out the problem but it reveals how short-sighted politics have become in our nation.

My take is that the economic and political ruling class already have the security that they need to protect their wealth.

The murders are poor blacks killing poor blacks and sadly become for the ruling class a tolerated form of population control.

When poor black men die, their economic worth is minimal and therefore the system consider their lives not worth saving.

They see hypocrisy and commodification of justice in which the security and judiciary of the state protect the political and economic powerful.

They know and see many of the powerful who have engaged in serious crimes dressed up in suites and attending parliament, national prayer breakfast and using powerful lawyers to protect them from accountability.

Until the powerful of this land are seen to be held accountable by the judiciary and go to the same jail that poor black men are locked away crime will continue to reign in our land (Jamaica).

Unless their human dignity and worth is restored and respected through equal rights and justice then violence will continue to weaken the very core of the nation.

■ Needed: New moral imagination that risks building wholesome relationships.

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The systematic violence that has enveloped the DNA of our nation suggest that a new moral and ethical compass is needed in the leadership governance of the nation that must begin first within the Christian community.

At the core of our violence is the absence of wholesome life affirming relationships in our local communities.

To overcome and move beyond the enslavement of violence, new moral imagination is required that can risk building relationships that embrace the other, even those considered to be enemies of the community.

This new era of violence cannot be overcome by returning to what was considered normal. One must move on to a more vulnerable state of embracing the unknown and more risky environment of peace-building.

■ Conclusion

"I wish to conclude by emphasizing the need for the church in this time to develop a spirituality of putting up resistance by re-reading the bible and re-appropriating the apocalypse for our era of systemic evil of the imperial Babylon system. Burchell Taylor's book on: **"Saying No to Babylon, A Reading of the Book of Daniel"**, must become a required study text for all conscious Christians. It can equip us to resist and overcome the politics of the Antichrist, demonic powers and principalities with the politics of God's sovereignty over all creation.

The evil of our age offers us no other option but to resist.

With no guarantee for success but with an undying spirit of risking failure to non-involvement, the

church must confront evil within and without, unwilling to surrender even when weakened and close to death.

The challenge cannot be postponed or delayed. **It calls for the urgency of the now!**

Vigilance in maintaining Critical distance: Followers of Jesus must learn the lessons of the past and stay away from two kinds of corrupting and enslaving Christianity,

- a) **State theology**, in which the church and Christians succumb to state capture and mission becomes that of serving the State's political agenda.
- b) **Settling for a comfortable conservative church theology** that majors in maintenance, within the walls, clergy centered mission and fails to equip the people of God for life-giving ministry and mission beyond the walls of the church.

The recent report of some clergy member seeking funding for churches from government for social services was an unwise request by those who have not adequately understood the long term implications of their request. **Funds from any government carries grave risk of compromising and corrupting the ministry and mission of the church.**

This continuing commodification of the gospel has grave consequences for the future of the Jamaican Church because ultimately it will de-authenticate and delegitimize the credibility of Christians in

the public sphere. Integrity and authenticity of Christian leaders will be determined not only by educational achievement, competence but more so by transparency for a radical shift to prophetic theology that fashions an authentication of Christian faith that is rooted in the Jesus dictum of **Matthew 25**, in which expressions of the Gospel becomes practical life transforming relationships that results in:

'I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was homeless and you gave me a room, I was shivering and you gave me clothes, I was sick and you stopped to visit, I was in prison and you came to me.'

Finally, everything that I've reflected upon can be summed up in a brief phrase: **Become the gospel.** The ministry and mission of the church must focus on building life-giving relationships to overcome the de-humanizing spirit of our age. The missional priority of the church is to authenticate Christianity around relationships that become the living experience of the gospel. Our task is to help people to steward their lives and resources on relationships and experiences...not things that fade away. When Christians **"Become the Gospel"** that they claim, it leads to transformation of lives and the social environment in which they live. **Theosis** is a transformative process in which the believer's goal is

to seek to become like Jesus (2Peter 1:4). The focus is on becoming like and imitating Jesus, the teacher who sets the standard for our lifestyle. It involves transformative actions of participation in the life and character of the God of life as reflected in the Jesus ministry and mission.

The concern is not so much about the profession but the character of the practitioners.

The spirituality of Churches and Christians can therefore no longer be privatized around family and church community whilst neglecting the threats to life being faced by their local communities. Church must leave the safe haven of ministering behind **"closed doors"** of the local church because of fear to become a church **"without walls"**, "sitting where the people sit" and listening to their cries.

Only so, will our nation and people experience the transformative power of the

