



THE UNITED CHURCH IN JAMAICA & THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

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Congregational, Disciples of Christ, Presbyterian

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ADVISORY #15 TO: UCJCI MINISTERS, LAY PASTORS AND CONGREGATIONAL BOARDS RE: COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

My sisters and brothers,

Greetings,

The following are the decisions taken by the UCJCI COVID-19 Response Team, which met yesterday, June 9, 2020, under the various headings:

1. Compliance with National Orders/Protocols

We celebrate the fact that the recovery rate of persons who have contracted COVID-19 in both countries is relatively high. Cayman is currently experiencing a 59% recovery rate while the rate in Jamaica stands at 67.6%. We continue to encourage compliance with the directives and recommendations of the legitimate state authorities in both nations.

The Team noted the intention of the Jamaican Government to reopen the borders on June 15, 2020, which will enable tourists to visit the island under certain conditions. Concerns were raised by the Team regarding pre-testing/testing upon arrival of tourists, the potential level of exposure to the virus by workers in the tourism sector and the potential impact on our healthcare system if there is a spike in the number of positive cases of the virus. It was agreed that there needs to be a balance between the economic concern and the general health of the society, which could be attained by ensuring that the concerns are adequately addressed. A statement on behalf of the church to this end is being drafted and will be released to the Jamaican media before the end of this week.

2. Congregational Life

Church Worship

- The church in Jamaica is allowed to gather for worship under the following conditions:
 - **Distancing rule of one person per 40 sq. ft.**, with persons being at least 6 feet apart. **All persons are required to observe the social distancing rule, however families can sit together. Please use this principle as a guide for the inclusion of children/blessings/baptisms in your worship activities.**

- **Have multiple services.** (The same persons should not be present in multiple services.)
- **Temperature checks** prior to entering the sanctuary. We strongly recommend the use of infrared thermometers.
- **Ensure sanitization** measures are in place at entrances.
- **All persons must wear a mask.**
- **Choirs are not allowed.**
- Air conditioning units are not to be used in the sanctuary.
- No gathering of persons is allowed at the entrance, gate, church yard, annex, vestry, etc. for meetings and/or greetings.
- **Persons aged 65 and over who do not have underlying medical conditions are permitted to attend worship services. However, since this is still a vulnerable group, the encouragement given by the Government is that they stay at home if they have access to streamed worship services.**
- **In respect of the above, we are recommending the following:**
 - **Organize service(s) for this Sunday, only if you are able to meet ALL of the above conditions. Our duty of care has not changed with this opportunity.**
 - Establish a logistics team who will help to ensure that the conditions are met.
 - Where multiple services are arranged, as far as possible, different persons lead and preach at each service.
 - Ministers/Lay Pastors should continue to refrain from physically greeting members.
- **The restriction on gatherings for funeral services and weddings has increased from 15 to a maximum of 50 persons based on the capacity of sanctuaries using the 40 sq. ft. principle.**
- We encourage the continuation of streamed services and sharing on social media, as some persons will still not be able to attend worship services.
- **We remind you of the time of prayer every Wednesday between 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. We will share with you the specific suggested foci for each week.**
- We will continue to distribute the weekly **House Worship Liturgy**, and a team is now in place to produce these liturgies, using a thematic approach with sermon/reflection notes. **We welcome feedback on how this is being used within the church.**
- Tune in each Sunday to LOVE 101 FM in Jamaica at 3:30 p.m. for a rebroadcast of a congregational worship service. The broadcasts are being shared among all four (4) regional mission councils. Please contact your Regional Deputy General Secretary if your congregation has the capacity, and wishes to participate in this ministry.

3. Synod and Regional Offices in Jamaica

While the Synod Administration Centre and the Regional Offices in Jamaica have resumed their normal 5 days of operations, The Cayman Islands Regional Mission Council Office will remain closed until the restrictions in Cayman are lifted.

4. Pastoral Care

- Given the psychological impact of the restriction of movement caused by the coronavirus, we celebrate those persons who continue to call members and offer inspirational messages and other support systems. **Regional Counsellors have been appointed, and this ministry has now started in all regions.**
- We continue to encourage congregations and regions to be especially sensitive to the needs of the elderly. Please ensure that their basic needs are met (food, sanitization, medication) and, where possible, offer daily contact by phone or social media to those who live alone.
- We are also encouraging you to engage your congregants to determine their access to, and understanding of, the digital space in order to gauge our reach as a church.

5. COVID-19 Fora

The Church and Society Sub-Committee, chaired by our Moderator, Rt. Rev. Dr. Gordon Cowans, has organized a number of fora in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **The Cayman Islands Regional Mission Council has recorded, and will release online, a webinar on the topic: “COVID, Now and Then”. The release date will be communicated to you shortly.**

6. Communication

Please continue to pay close attention to the various pieces of information sent to you via our communication channels (radio, e-mail, WhatsApp Messenger, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook).

May we together continue to depend on God, *who has not given us a Spirit of fear, but of love and of power and of a sound mind* (2 Timothy 1:7).

Sincerely,

THE UNITED CHURCH IN JAMAICA AND THE CAYMAN ISLANDS



Norbert D. Stephens (Rev.)
General Secretary