



THE UNITED CHURCH IN JAMAICA & THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

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Congregational, Disciples of Christ, Presbyterian

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ADVISORY #20 TO: UCJCI MINISTERS, LAY PASTORS AND CONGREGATIONAL BOARDS RE: COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

My sisters and brothers,

Greetings,

The UCJCI COVID-19 Response Team now meets every two weeks. Consequently, these updates will follow the scheduled meetings.

Following are the reminders and decisions taken by the Team, which met yesterday, August 4, 2020, under the various headings. **New/updated information is in bold print.**

1. Compliance with National Orders/Protocols

We celebrate the fact that **Cayman is now COVID-19 free. In Jamaica, we are seeing a spike in the number of persons who have contracted the disease, combined with a fall in the recovery rate, which currently stands at 81%.** We continue to encourage compliance with the directives and recommendations of the legitimate state authorities in both nations.

New measures under The Disaster Risk Management Act took effect on August 1, 2020 in Jamaica. We have attached a copy of the Act for ease of reference. Among the measures are those related to church worship and outdoor gatherings.

2. Congregational Life

Church Worship

- Most of the United Churches in **Cayman** have resumed services in their sanctuaries. There is no restriction on the number of persons who may gather in sanctuaries, and the physical distancing rule has been reduced from 6 feet to 3 feet. Public gatherings have been increased from 25 to 50 persons.
- The church in **Jamaica** is allowed to gather for worship under a number of conditions. We have, however, received reports that in some cases, persons have not been following some of the protocols, including the wearing of masks and physical distancing. We strongly urge

Moderator: Rt. Rev. Dr. Gordon Cowans, General Secretary: Rev. Norbert D. Stephens,
Regional Deputy General Secretaries: Mrs. Maureen Henry, Rev. Dr. Yvette Noble Bloomfield, Rev. Dr. Henroy Samuels, Mrs. Rose Wedderburn

Registered Charity Organization

Registration Number: CA100-57C

you to ensure that all of the following conditions are met for Sunday worship in your congregation(s):

- Distancing rule of one person per 40 sq. ft., with persons being at least 6 feet apart. All persons are required to observe the physical distancing rule, however, families can sit together. **The new measures allow for gatherings outside of Sunday Services, as long as the physical distancing rule is observed and the other existing protocols followed. This therefore permits larger weekly gatherings in the sanctuary, including Regional meetings, events and activities.**
- Outside of the sanctuary, all gatherings are limited to 20 persons under physical distancing rules. Given this ease in restriction, where possible or necessary, physical board meetings, bible studies and small group meetings should be held under the existing protocols.
- 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.
- The Stay-at-Home Order now applies to persons aged 75 years and over. Consequently, persons aged 75 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.
- The inclusion of children in worship is at the discretion of the leadership of the local congregation. However, in cases where a request is made for infant blessing or baptism, the following protocols should be followed:
 - All of the participants, including the Minister/Lay Pastor, must maintain the required distance of 6 feet and wear a face mask during the celebration of the sacrament.
 - Only the parents should hold the child.
 - Where there is a baptism, there should be no touching/holding of the child by the Minister/Lay Pastor. However, the Minister/Lay Pastor, from a distance of 3 feet, will sprinkle the child with water.
 - The Minister/Lay Pastor should sanitize his/her hands with a sanitizer of 70% alcohol content immediately before sprinkling.
 - The parents/guardians should be advised of these protocols prior to the event.
- Based on the social distancing rules, coupled with the warning from the state authorities of the spike in the number of confirmed cases, we do not endorse adult baptism at this time. However, we will be engaging our congregations in a time of reflection on the theology of baptism and conversations on the practices of baptism in light of COVID-19.
- We encourage the continuation of streamed services and sharing on social media, as some persons will still not be able to attend worship services.

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- 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 continue to distribute the weekly House Worship Liturgy, 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 or the sharing of reflections or activities by the UCJCI.**
- The number of persons allowed to gather for funeral services and weddings is a maximum of 50, based on the capacity of sanctuaries, using the 40 sq. ft. principle.

3. Other Gatherings

The Jamaican Government has lifted the restriction on outdoor events and now permits church activities (assemblies, conventions, celebrations, camps, etc.) with a maximum of 250 persons plus 30 staff. Consequently, church crusades can be held at venues where the maximum number or portion thereof can be accommodated using the distancing rule. (We discourage the holding of crusades on church compounds, as this may breach the gathering of 20 persons rule on church grounds.) Please note that all such events must be approved by the Municipal Corporation.

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 also encourage 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 Relief Grant

The UCJCI has now received a COVID-19 Relief Grant from the Council for World Mission (CWM), which will be used in all regions to address:

- Technology needs (training and equipment for streaming services)
- Ensuring technology access for students within UCJCI educational institutions
- Other urgent and critical needs, including the provision of food packages.

6. Communication

Please continue to pay close attention to the various pieces of information sent to you via our communication channels (radio, e-mail, website [www.ucjci.com], 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