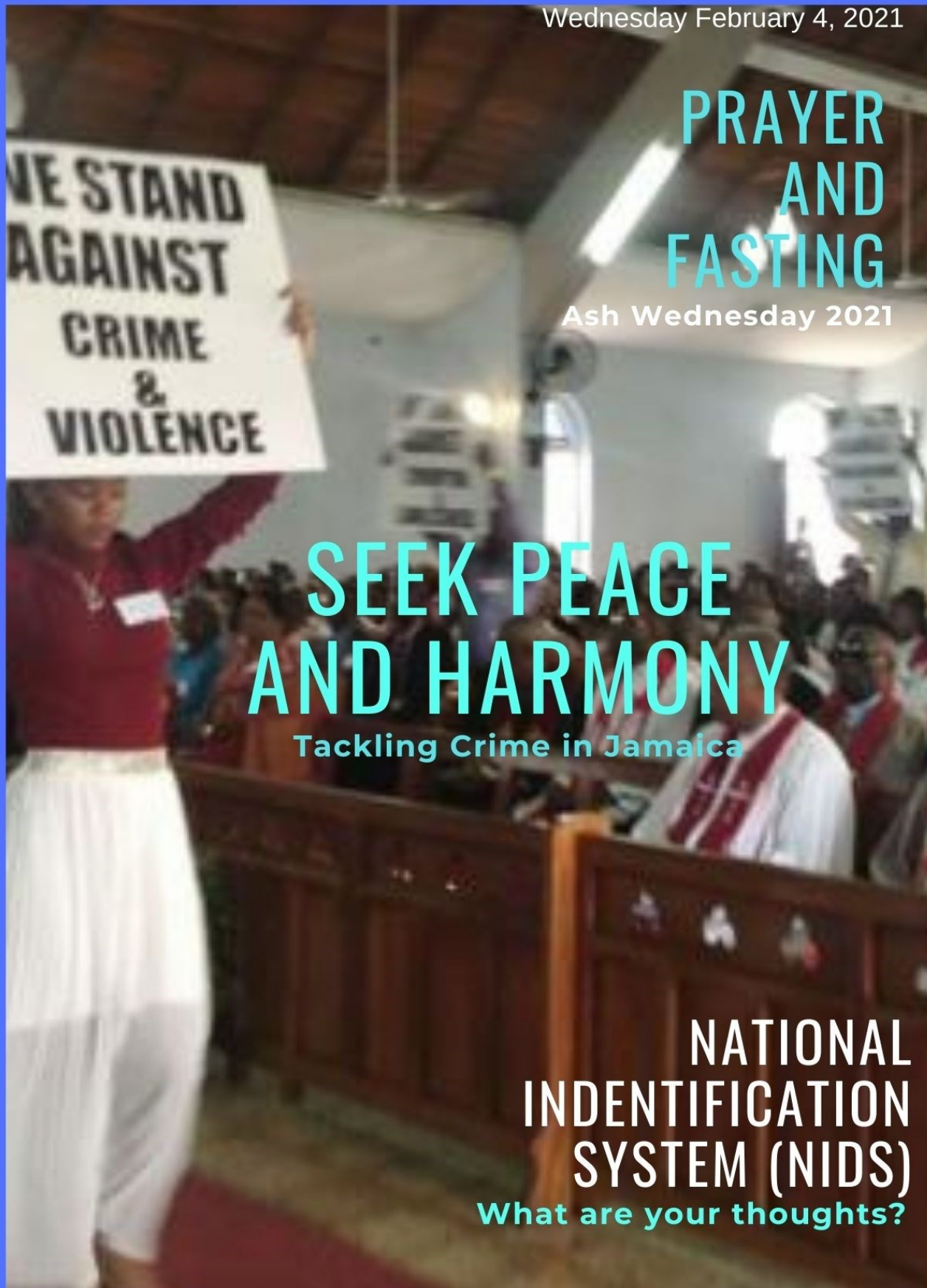


Wednesday February 4, 2021



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VOLUME 7
ISSUE 5



PRAYER
AND
FASTING

Ash Wednesday 2021

SEEK PEACE
AND HARMONY

Tackling Crime in Jamaica

NATIONAL
IDENTIFICATION
SYSTEM (NIDS)

What are your thoughts?

SEEK PEACE, HARMONY AND GOOD- WILL



General Secretary of The United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, Rev. Norbert Stephens, reflects on the troubling matters of violence and crime in Jamaica.

In preparing this brief reflection, I engaged a colleague minister on the topic. Consequently, some of the thoughts expressed here, while I am in concert with them, did not originate with me.

STARTING WITH DATA

According to the Jamaica Constabulary Force, Jamaica recorded 1,301 killings in 2020 and had the region's highest homicide rate at 46.5 per 100,000 people. Note that the United Nations considers any homicide rate of 10 per 100,000 citizens or above to be an "epidemic." It would not be far-fetched to state that COVID-19 is not the only pandemic we are currently facing.

CONSIDERING THE CAUSES

Five factors can be identified:

The Justice System – our seeming inability to investigate, arrest, take to court, convict and punish, those who have committed crimes leaves the door ajar for persons to continue to kill, maim, rape and abuse others with impunity. Data suggests that only 40% of murders are cleared up, that is someone is arrested and charged.

The Weakness in our Social System – the main perpetrators of crime are men, young men. Studies have suggested that our education system has failed these men and coupled with limited opportunities, they operate on the fringes of society and view crime and violence as avenues for progress. That the majority

of our crime and violence occur among the poor, again points to a failing social system.

Major players with power and resources - weapons imported to our island in large quantities are not easily achievable by those with limited resources. There are puppet masters, pulling the strings and playing a dangerous game with people's lives.

The death of our humanity – how else can we explain the brutal killing of homeless people, or a woman in church, or the elderly and young? Death, it would seem, has become the sole remedy for any conflict persons have. We seem to have lost our conscience or our spirit, and without doubt are becoming more immune to the spiraling rate of killings in our land.

A culture of aggression – we have always been labelled as aggressive people, but this aggression now finds expression in the least of our engagements, joining a line, driving in traffic, waiting to be served. Aggression is the bedrock of violence.

SPEAKING TRUTH

We live in a disruptive society. This is true in relation to our economic, political, social and religious realities. *(Cont'd on page 4)*

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BEYOND THE PULPIT

A space for leadership perspectives on issues which impact community.

“NIDS is not the Mark of the Beast.”

The National Identification System (NIDS) has been on the lips of many Jamaicans here and in the diaspora in recent years. Much work, time and money have been invested in the project. While there were those who were advocating for its implementation, there was much disquiet in the society as concerns were expressed regarding the invasiveness of some of the measures outlined in the Bill; privacy issues, biblical and theological misgivings, among other issues.

Due to legal action by the Parliamentary Opposition, Jamaica's Supreme Court had ruled that elements of the Bill went against some of the rights of Jamaica's citizens as guaranteed under our Constitution and so the Bill was made null and void. The Government has responded to the concerns and so the Bill is back on the front burner; placed before a Joint Select Committee of Parliament for deliberations. The Joint Select Committee issued an invitation to the public for persons to offer written submission by **February 15, 2021** expressing their views on this Bill called **“The National Identification and Registration Act, 2020”**. This approach of engagement is a clear response to those who felt that such a critical Bill needed to benefit from a wide cross-section of stakeholder input.

The establishment of a National Identification System (NIDS) has been the intention of governments formed by both political parties and so the idea is not new. The intention, as expressed by the Government, is to develop a unique, reliable and verifiable identification for Jamaican citizens and other persons who live in Jamaica. Based on the proposal, each person would have a National Identification Number for his/her life time. This should assist in improving the governance of the country and the management of social, economic and security programmes.

The NIDS is intended to:

- prevent persons from successfully taking on different identities;
- make for smoother delivery of Government services, e.g. pension, health care, and transacting business online;
- support persons fulfilling their responsibility to Government, e.g., the paying of taxes;
- enhance public safety, etc.



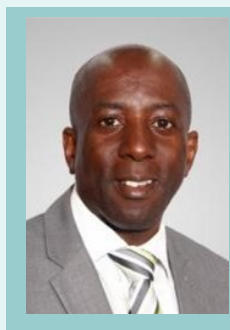
What are your thoughts ?

The new Bill being studied by the Joint Select Committee of Parliament will make for

- voluntary enrolment, so persons can choose to be enrolled;
- those who are 18 years and over will be required to submit biometrics such as facial image, fingerprints and manual signatures. It is important to note that the other biometrics, such as scanning of eyes, is not included in the new Bill.

Many belonging to the Christian faith saw the first NIDS Bill as the Mark of the Beast referenced in the Book of Revelation. Those voices are not as pronounced these days. The Bible is an authority symbol to which many Jamaicans turn to find support in defence of their moral, ethical and other convictions. We are known to take much of the scriptures literally. However, an investigative study of the context and text of the Book of Revelation will reveal that NIDS is not the Mark of the Beast.

One of the implications of the COVID 19 pandemic is that more and more of us are being forced to go online to transact our business. In a world of sophisticated criminality perpetrated by highly educated and trained individuals whose lives are not governed by ethical and moral values, it will become more critical that our identity can be verified and protected. It is also of critical importance that there is robust legislation aimed at protecting our personal data.



Rev. Gary Harriott
Minister, Bryce United Charge of Churches

(Cont'd on page 4)

(cont'd from page 1...*Seek Peace, Harmony and Goodwill*)

Where there is disruption in a society, this tends to lead to uncertainty and where uncertainty is the result of a disruptive space, such a space requires leadership.

One could say that such leadership at the political and security levels call for further States of Emergencies, or other security or social interventions, or bipartisan action rather than mere speeches or commitment.

OFFERING LEADERSHIP

What one should offer is leadership - that for ordinary citizen and more so Christian ones, our leadership ought to be characterized as those who engage in activities which serve to minimize aggression. Those who look at the other with humanity, those who offer an example of those who live by the values of peace and harmony and goodwill, in the small things, like joining a line or driving in traffic. But those who will not be silent in the face of the abuse of power, who will advocate for a better more equitable social system and who will not cease until our justice system is reformed in order to make it more effective.

May we collectively make it so!

(Cont'd from page 2...*NIDS is not the Mark of the Beast*)

In response to the ruling of the Supreme Court, efforts are being made to protect the rights of our citizens by making enrolment with the NIDS a voluntary act. Education, provision of critical information, assurances; particularly having to do with the protection of our information, and moral persuasion will be required to assist individuals to benefit from the NIDS. The Government will have to find ways of reaching those who have no interest in being known or being identifiable, as to remain incognito is advantageous to their behaviour and activities.

Let us access the Bill from the Parliament website, www.japarliament.gov.jm, offer our submissions and pay attention to the debates to follow.

NEWS FROM OUR CONGREGATIONS

Disciple-making at Immanuel and Boscobel



Immanuel/Boscobel charge of United Churches rejoiced in the baptism and confirmation of persons from their communities. Three persons were baptized and two young people—Joshua and Suwlanji confirmed. Indeed, a wonderful day to the glory of God.

DAY OF FELLOWSHIP 2021

On Ash Wednesday 2021, members and adherents of The United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands will gather virtually for Day of Fellowship worship events. This has been the tradition in UCJCI. It is a day of worship, teaching, fellowship and witness. In the past, face to face gatherings engendered spirit-filled and enriching upliftment. This year with strident conviction of faith in God and a determination to be faithful to God's call to the church to make disciples, UCJCI declares we are: **Rooted, Resilient: Responding in H.O.P.E. (Hope, Opportunities, Peace and Evangelism.)** This is the theme of the 42nd Synod of UCJCI which will be launched on Ash Wednesday. Here are details of how regions are planning to worship together on **February 17, 2021.**

Fasting, Prayer and Worship in the West



Western Regional Mission Council

ASH WEDNESDAY
VIRTUAL Day of Fellowship
A day of Fasting - Worship & Prayer

Wednesday
FEB 17
9AM-12 noon

*STREAMED LIVE FROM
St. Paul's United Church
(Montego Bay)

Via
WRMC YouTube Channel

Preacher: **Rev. Glenroy Clarke**
(Minister, Lucea United Charge)
Theme: Rooted, Resilient: Responding in HOPE

*Sacrament of Holy Communion
will be observed

*Liturgical Colour:
Purple/Lavender

Southern Region Celebrates Youth

In SRMC a service will be streamed live from **Ridgemount United Church** and can be viewed on Ridgemount's YouTube channel. **Start time is 10:00 a.m.**

SUB-THEME- A People of Hope: Youth Arise

Features of the service:

- **Children & Youth Emphasis** - Service devoted to Children & Youth as our best symbols of resilience. They will lead and be responsible for the Service.
- **Stories of Resilience** - from children & youth will be pre-recorded and shared in the Service
- **Sermon** - Four speakers (1 adult & 3 young people) each addressing one of the following for about 8 minutes: **Health, Opportunity, Peace, Evangelism**

Cayman at Prayer

Multi-point Worship in the Northeast

NERMC's service will be streamed live from **Portmore United Church** (with a gathering at **Port Maria United Church**) from 9 am -12 noon.

Theme: Rooted, Resilient: Responding in HOPE.

Features of the service:

- Sermon delivered by Rev. Joel Downer, Minister of North Street United Church.
- Holy Communion
- Recommissioning of Lay Pastors



United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands

CAYMAN ISLANDS REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL

Ash Wednesday
Worship

February 17, 2021
7:30 - 9:45 am

Location: **Savannah United Church**

Rooted, Resilient: Responding in HOPE
(Health, Opportunity, Peace, Evangelism)

Upcoming Events



The United Church in Jamaica
and the Cayman Islands

HUMAN AND MISSION RESOURCES UNIT
presents a Workshop on

**THE CONGREGATION AS
EMPLOYER:
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
UNDER THE LAW**

via Zoom

FEBRUARY 11, 2021

9:30 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

Who should attend:

**Ministers and
Congregational
Secretaries or
Administrators**

of congregations where staff
members are employed by
congregation/congregational

To register:

Email Ms. Monique Lofters
programmeassistant-hmr@ucjci.com
by **January 31, 2021**, to book your space.

For additional information, contact:

Mrs. Janet McConnell
Human and Mission Resource Manager
janet-mcconnell@ucjci.com
or 876-926 6059 or 876 509 4669

TRAINING FOR LAY LEADERS RESUMES FEBRUARY 13, 2021



TRAINING WILL NOW BE DELIVERED ONLINE

For those who started the training in 2020, please contact your Regional Mission Council office which will provide information on plans for you to access and continue the training.

New learners welcome

REGISTER NOW

through your Regional Mission Council office.



**North Eastern
Regional
Mission
Council Youth
Fellowship**

**OUTREACH
PROJECT**

For details call or
WhatsApp
876 274 1319



1 PETER 4:8

***A New Way to
Love***

NERMCPYPF Outreach Project

•All proceeds go
towards a Home
or Individuals
within the United
Church

•Donations may
include Food
Items, Clothing,
footwear,
toiletries etc

Collection period ends Feb 27, 2020

FOR EVENT DETAILS
CALL OR WHATSAPP 876-274-1310 FOR
MORE INFORMATION.

Spread love with #lovedwayswins

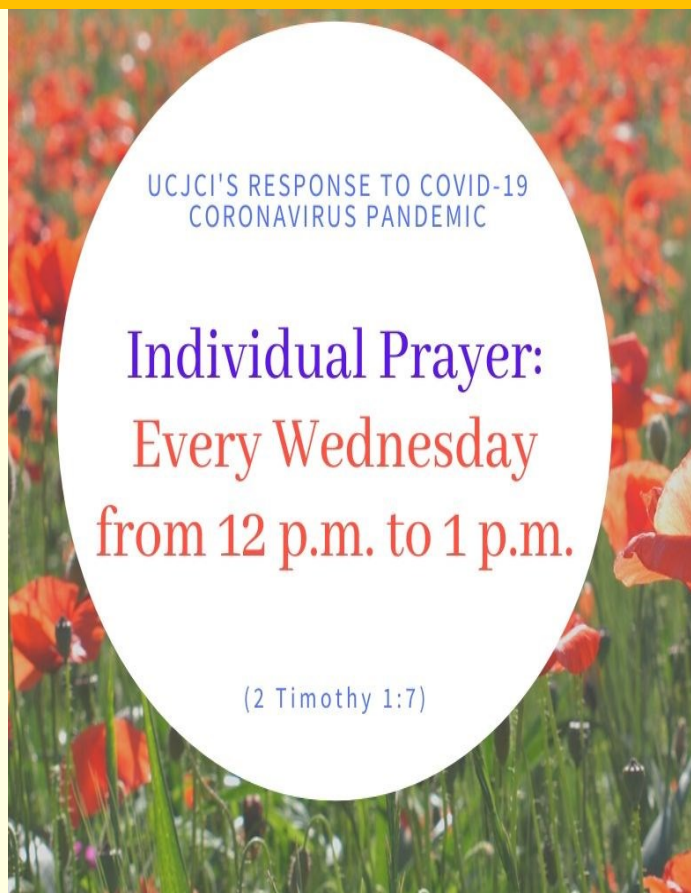
Send comments and news about your congregation to: ucjciupdate@gmail.com

PRAY PRAY PRAY PRAY

Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.- 1 Chronicles 16:11

LET US BE DILIGENT IN PRAYER FOR:

- ◆ The family of the late Rev. James Davis, his colleagues and members of the congregations he served.
- ◆ Persons in Cayman and Jamaica whose mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health have been impacted by COVID-19
- ◆ Good judgement and decision-making in relation to the COVID-19 vaccine.
- ◆ All UCJCI and other ministers of the church as they serve and practice self-care
- ◆ High incidence of crime in Jamaica, especially since the start of the year.
- ◆ Access and delivery of education and the challenges faced by children, parents, teachers and administrators in Jamaica
- ◆ Rev. Donovan Myers' and family
- ◆ Family members of Doreen Barnett and Sheila Arscott Smith who have health challenges



Devotional available from the CWM website <https://www.cwmission.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Sundays-with-CWM-2021.pdf>

HOUSE WORSHIP LITURGY THEMES

The liturgies developed by the House Worship Team reflect the Synodical worship themes.

**THEME FOR FEBRUARY:
Rooting our Emotional Health in God brings us Hope**

FEBRUARY 7

God cares about our emotional health

FEBRUARY 14

We too are beloved by God and can be used by God to be a blessing to others.

Liturgies are available from the Minister/Lay Pastor, Communication Officer of your congregation and from your Regional Mission Council Office.

Send comments and news about your congregation

UCJCI VALUE S

“In seeking to live out our calling, we particularly value and are committed to:

The Bible:

The preaching, teaching, studying, and obeying of God’s Word, as the supreme rule of faith and life (2 Timothy 3:16-17, Matthew 4:1-11, Ephesians 6:10-17).

IN THE COMING ISSUE...

BEYOND THE PULPIT
Fasting in a Feasting Culture

THE UNITED CHURCH IN JAMAICA AND THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

Congregational, Disciples of Christ ,Presbyterian

12 Carlton Crescent, Kingston 10

Tel: 876 926-8734

E-mail: synod@ucjci.com ♦ Website: www.ucjci.com

Moderator

Rt. Rev. Dr. Gordon Cowans

General Secretary

Rev. Norbert Stephens

Regional Deputy General Secretaries

Cayman Regional Mission Council
Rev. Dr. Yvette Noble Bloomfield

Southern Regional Mission Council
Mrs. Rose Wedderburn

North Eastern Regional Mission Council
(Interim)
Rev. Norbert Stephens

Western Regional Mission Council
Mrs. Mauleen Henry

SYNODICAL THEME:

“Renewal and Transformation: Discipleship for Life”

Follow us on    @ucjci