Ah, with a title like “A Confession” I knew that I would get your attention. Yes, I have a confession to make, but it is not of the negative type. We are entering into three special times as they affect our worship at Grace Church of the Islands. We just had Reformation Sunday; a yearly time of special attention on giving thanks to our God; and then a time to celebrate both the announcement and the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I confess that I truly enjoy preparing special messages for each of these times. They come after two specially prepared messages on Stewardship. While I think that Expository Preaching, going through books of the Bible, is an excellent way to preach, but I truly believe we should pause in that pattern and address whatever is on our minds such as Stewardship, The Reformation, a time to thank God and then celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Last December I focused on the birth of Jesus Christ as it is recorded in the New Testament. This year I will look first at places in the Old Testament that uttered prophecies about the birth of Jesus. Of course, there are a couple of times when we will look at Jesus’ birth as presented in the New Testament as we get closer to December 25th.

Please let me encourage you, especially from a spiritual perspective, to let all of the good news surrounding the Proclamations of Jesus’ birth offset more depressing news that often hits many of us during this time of the year. It seems to me that Satan attacks us with more vehemence during these special times to get our attention away from celebrating our heritage, giving thanks and worshipping the King who came in the form of a baby.

Especially during the Christmas season we should listen to what Paul wrote in Philippians. Philippians 4:4-6 tells us to rejoice always and one of the reasons we can is that nothing happens outside of our Lord’s control. We are always in His protective shadow. Then we are told to let our requests be made known to God and then we read, “And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

(Continued on page 2)
COME, YE THANKFUL PEOPLE, COME
Come, ye thankful people, come, raise the song of harvest home;
All is safely gathered in, ere the winter storms begin.
God our Maker doth provide for our wants to be supplied;
Come to God's own temple, come, raise the song of harvest home.

All the world is God's own field, fruit unto His praise to yield;
Wheat and tares together grow unto joy or sorrow grown.
First the blade and then the ear, then the full corn shall appear;
Lord of harvest, grant that we wholesome grain and pure may be.

For the Lord our God shall come, and shall take His harvest home;
From His field shall in that day all offenses purge away;
Giving angels charge at last in the fire the tares to cast;
But the fruitful ears to store in His garner evermore.

Even so, Lord, quickly come, to Thy final harvest home;
Gather Thou Thy people in, from sorrow, free from sin,
There, forever purified, in Thy presence to abide;
Come, with all Thine angels come, raise the glorious harvest home.

From the Missions Committee...

Why does GCI even have a Missions Committee and what do they do? Our mandate to have a Missions Committee and to be about mission's work as a church comes right from Matthew 28:18, where Jesus tells His disciples to go into all the world, make disciples of all nations, baptize them in the Triune name, and teach them to observe everything he has commanded. This provides the basis from which the Missions Committee gets its name and purpose.

One of the things your Missions Committee does is to prepare the annual missions budget and present it to the Session for approval. Our goal is to tithe 10% of the GCI budget to missionaries around the world. We work to stimulate prayer for the missionaries we support at GCI. There are over 12 missionaries and their families that we support, both with monies and prayer. We work to invite missionaries to come to GCI and share their stories of how the Lord is using them and their work to teach and encourage us to share our faith with others.

Some of the upcoming events planned by the Missions Committee? This January will be the 10-year anniversary of the earthquake in Haiti where we had 11 GCI members in Haiti during the earthquake and God had us there for a medical mission and He brought us home safely. We are planning to have an anniversary conference the weekend of March 29-30, 2020 at GCI. We have asked Merle to speak at our conference. He will just be returning from two weeks in Ukraine, so for the English harvest celebration. However, only

The tune we sing with "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come" was composed by organist, George Elvey, and named St. George's Windsor after the chapel in England where Elvey served as organist for 47 years. It was not written for this hymn but has been associated with it since its publication in 1861. The first verse of the hymn praises God for the harvest of crops and provision for our needs. The remaining verses refer to Jesus parable of the Wheat and Tares, which he tells in Matthew 13:24–30, and explain to the disciples in verses 37-43. The text of the hymn reflects Jesus' explanation. Verse two contains a prayer that we would grow, as his planting, into wholesome and pure grain. Verse three encourages us with the promise that evil will be done away and we will be kept for God. Verse four echoes the final verses of the Bible, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20), igniting our hope and anticipation of Christ's coming.

We are excited to see who God will stand-up as perfectly-matched for the GCI community. To paraphrase Jeremiah, we know our Great God has a plan for us, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give us a future and a hope. Soli Deo Gloria!

Be assured that your Committee covets your prayers!