

DEC
2020

Caribbean Baptist Fellowship

CBF N  TES

Leadership is
WARRICK

Our Mission

The Mission of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship is to encourage and facilitate the coming together of Caribbean Baptists at national and regional levels for worship and for shared witness and ministry. To this end, the CBF works to provide its member bodies with opportunities to be inspired, motivated, encouraged and equipped for service; and to be an agent through which they can pool and channel their human and financial resources towards carrying out the Great Commission of Jesus Christ and expressing in word and deed the love of God for every person within the Caribbean region and beyond.



Dominique Dick, President



Everton Jackson, EST

Trinidad and Tobago is one of the wealthiest countries in the Caribbean; thanks to its large reserves of oil and gas, the exploitation of which dominates its economy. Inhabited mostly by people of African and Indian descent, the twin-island state enjoys a per-capita income well above the average for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Calypso music and steel drum bands feature in carnival celebrations in Trinidad, while Tobago attracts diving enthusiasts and nature lovers.

Baptists first came to Trinidad in 1816 when former slaves who fought as soldiers on the side of the British in the American War of 1812 were given parcels of land in British colonies. Their initial missionary work was greatly reinforced by the support and assistance of the Baptist Missionary Society of London who entered the island in 1836. Hence the members of the Baptist Union are familiarly called "London Baptists". This designation also helps to distinguish them from another group called the "Shouter Baptists" which is similar to the revivalists in Jamaica and the Jordanites in Guyana.

The Baptist Union of Trinidad and Tobago comprises 23 churches and two missions, with approximately 4700 members. The Union also manages three primary schools, one Secondary school and an Early Childhood Care and Education Centre. TnT is the home of our incoming EST. Join us in a little chat with him on pages 8-11.

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Richards Duncan, Vice Chair, Communications

FOR THE YEAR 2020
Jurell & Campbell
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COVER PHOTO : REV ANSLEM WARWICK, EST

EDITOR'S EPISTLE

Dorrett R Campbell

God through the prophet invites us to rise up to our full potential in Him. He has called us to do mighty things.

Isaiah's prophecy to the children of Israel came at a rather dismal time in their history. They were in captivity; they had lost everything they thought they would keep forever; they were homesick for the Promised Land and the blessing God had promised them. They were lamenting about their mistakes and disobedience to God, even while they yearned for the good old days with their many victories.

But God, through his prophet, exhorts them – even as He is exhorting us today: *Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland* (Isaiah 43:18-19).

As we stand on the edge of a new year, the tendency is to look back on the old, either with a sigh of satisfaction or a sigh of regret. However, as we reflect, let's not live in the past:

Do not allow your past failures to cripple you: We may not have achieved all that we had set out to do in 2020, but lamenting on what could have and should have been isn't going to help situation. We should allow those past failures to be instructive: learn from them and use them to prompt improvement in the new year.

Do not rely on past successes to sustain future plans: Don't rest on your laurels. The achievements of last year may inspire us to greater service this year; but they cannot suffice for what we ought to achieve this year. We are as good as our next achievement.

Move forward with a vision and discover what God wants for you. We may need to devise new ways of



QUIT GAZING BEHIND
START LOOKING
AHEAD

doing the same old things - it is called creativity. We may need to adopt a new approach to life; new thinking – a change of mindset.

God delights in doing something new. More importantly, God delights in involving us in His new plans. Unfortunately, for some, it is the 'new' which often makes us uncomfortable. We are not sure about how to handle the things which we do not see and have not done before. But for us to remain a learning organisation always innovating and re-inventing ourselves to remain relevant, we have to walk new walk; venture into the uncertain and tackle the unknown.

We do not walk alone. Emmanuel God is with us, walks with us. Take God's hand and let God order your steps in 2021.

On behalf of CBF Notes and News, I wish you a God-filled New Year.



2021 IS AT THE DOOR

Dominique Dick

When the reality seems to be hopeless, Christmas reminds us that God is our provider

50 years of journey.

As the new president, I pledge with the team to do the work with steadfastness in every way.

In this Christmas season, I want to encourage every one to keep their eyes and hearts open on this beautiful gift that the Lord gave to the world. And as Christians we ought to show what Christmas really is through our devoted life style.

We do think about some islands, which have been impacted by hurricanes, especially our family in San Andres. As one people, let us engage in prayer for those who lost relatives, houses and other possessions.

When the reality seems hopeless, Christmas reminds us that God is the provider for all human beings.

With confidence in our God, let us be strong in our faith. The year 2021 is at the door. Despite the challenges that we all face, we will endeavor to keep hope alive.

On behalf of the new officers, it is my privilege to wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy new year, under God's grace.

Brethren, as Martin Luther King Jr said: The difference between a dreamer and a visionary is that a dreamer has his eyes closed and a visionary has his eyes open. Let us all be visionary people so that we can see God at work and join Him on the field.

A blessed Advent and New Year to you.

I greet you on behalf of the new officers and the whole family of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship (CBF)

Brethren, this year has been very special in many ways, for the entire world.

The COVID-19 pandemic was and still is the main focus of attention. Millions have lost their lives because of this health crisis.

We do continue to fight the virus; fortunately, God always has the last word.

We are so grateful for the work done by our outgoing EST Everton Jackson, President William Thompson and Administrative Services Manager, Santana Morris. We pray that God will continue to use them in their respective ministries.

Our vision is to carry out the mission, so that all member bodies will get involved in the family. That's what we are: a family in the Caribbean, since 1970 -

NO CRADLE NO CROSS

Everton Jackson

We affirm the reality of the birth of Jesus Christ. It is undeniable that Jesus lived among us in the garb of human flesh; was crucified, buried and rose on the third day.

It is with a sense of joy that I pen this Christmas message on behalf of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship. Christmas remains an important observance on the Christian calendar. Regrettably, this important season seems to have lost its true meaning in some cultures, as it has become a time for extravagance. This is seen in excessive spending, over indulgences, and increased commercial activities. The secularization and commercialization of this season reflect the spirit of the age seen in secularism and relativism.

The current debate as to when Jesus was born is an ongoing one, and will be for as long as time lasts. However, we shall not be detained by this debate; suffice it to say, we affirm the reality of the birth of Jesus Christ. It is undeniable that Jesus lived amongst us in the garb of human flesh; was crucified, buried and rose on the third day. This establishes an inextricable link, between the cradle and the cross - no cradle, no cross. Among the themes that are normally highlighted during this season is solidarity.

To say that God tabernacles among us in human flesh is to suggest that God experienced the tragedies of humanity. God stood in solidarity with the disadvantaged people of the world in Jesus Christ, so as to inspire hope and transformation. This is seen in the family tree of Jesus recorded by Matthew, where three women of questionable character are listed, namely, Tamar, Rahab and Bathsheba. The inclusion of these women is to make the point that God came in Jesus Christ for the bruised and battered, the ostracized and outcast and the shattered and scattered, in order to transform lives and inspire hope.



The identification of Jesus with the religious outcasts and inferior groups of his time is a strong indication of divine bias towards the category of the disadvantaged.

God takes sides with the powerless and voiceless, the weak and vulnerable. Perhaps, one of the best ways to observe Christmas is to similarly show interest in the disadvantaged people of the world. This requires love and compassion. Love is God's redemptive goodwill to all persons despite race, class or creed; while compassion is love in redemptive and liberating actions. During this time of pandemic, the call is to identify with the hurting in practical endeavors.

Let this Christmas be a time, when deliberate efforts are made to identify with the wretched of the earth, not in condescending or paternalistic ways, but in ways that seek to affirm our common humanity.



LEADERSHIP IS ANSLEM WARRICK

As of January 1, 2021 the CBF has a new Executive Secretary / Treasurer in the person of the Reverend Anslem Warrick from the twin island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Our brother is a visionary and astute minister of the gospel for over 30 years. He is the Senior Pastor of St. John's Baptist Church, in Port of Spain .

His repertoire of experience is underpinned by strong academic background, having earned a Bachelor's degree in Theology, and

a Diploma in Ministerial Studies from the University of the West Indies; Post Graduate Certificates in Foundations of Management and Management of People from Henley University, U.K.

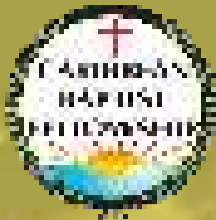
Warrick is both a transformational leader and a builder, who has planted two churches, which he has handed over to others to pastor. He now serves as General Secretary of the BUTT and Vice President of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA).

Rev Warrick has been married to Karlene Edwards for 29 years and

is the father of three children, Kerel, Khadine and Karissa.

He enjoys travelling with family, singing and listening to music.

In our little chat with him, he shares his New Year's greetings, noted on page 7 as well as his vision for the CBF, on pages 8-11.



Let us be Authentic in our love

Anslem Warrick

My dear brothers and sisters:

Warmest Yuletide greetings from the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship. We all know that this season is usually characterised by fellowshipping and spending time with family, friends and loved ones. We usually look forward to visits by relatives from abroad and hugs and kisses from those near and dear to us.

However, with the restrictions imposed due to COVID-19 all of these activities will be impacted. With this new reality there are many persons who will experience a sense of despair, uncertainty and hopelessness.

The biblical narrative of Jesus' birth tells us of the expectant parents of the Saviour experiencing a time of uncertainty and despair when they could find no place to deliver their baby (Luke 2:1-7). No friendly neighbours, no warm fellowship with family and friends and no hugs and kisses from loved ones.

But God made a way. He provided a bed, even though it was made of hay; He provided companionship even though it was with the animals; and He sent men bearing gifts, even though they were not family.

What does this say to us?

It says that God will always provide for His people. He will make a way. It may not be in exactly the manner to which we are accustomed and it may not necessarily be in the timing we expect.

We must believe and continue to be hopeful. Let us see the hand of God in every situation even in times of difficulty and challenge.

I believe that God can and does work in times of uncertainty and disaster. He does his work in us, for us and through us.

It is anticipated that in the year 2021, approximately 2.7 million persons will be pushed into extreme poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean. Many have been left homeless as a result of natural disasters such as hurricanes and storms.

Let us allow God to work through us to alleviate some of the suffering. Let us stretch a helping hand to our brothers and sisters in San Andres and Providencia, many of who have lost home and possessions in the hurricane, which devastated the islands in November.

As members of the CBF and as Christians who have heard the words of the angels singing "peace on earth good will towards men" (Luke 2:14), this is the time to show the world we are Christians by our love. This is the time for us in the Caribbean and beyond to lend a helping hand to show solidarity with those suffering loss as a result of the COVID19 Pandemic.

This Christmas and beyond, let us be authentic in our love, selfless in our service and blind in our acts of goodwill.

On behalf of the CBF family and my own family, my wife Karlene, my children Kerel, Khadine and Karissa, I wish for you a blessed and Holy Christmas and a Christ-filled 2021.

LEADERSHIP IS ANSLEM WARRICK

CBFN Rev Warrick: Congratulations on being called to serve as the Executive Secretary Treasurer (EST) for the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship (CBF). What excites you about responding to this call?

AW Thank you very much for your kind congratulations. I am excited by the fact that the position of EST is more than a job or an assignment for me. I see it as a call from God to which I have responded in the affirmative. It is a call to be a vessel and an instrument in and through whom God will carry out his work of building his Kingdom. I am excited to see God at work in uniting, increasing, growing our fellowship and helping us to overcome the challenges, which we now face. I am also excited to continue and to build upon the legacy of strong leadership left by those who served before.

CBFN What is your vision for the CBF and how does this vision resonate with the mission of the CBF?

AW My vision is to see every Caribbean Baptist Fellowship member body united, equipped and motivated for witness, worship and ministry in every island and every continent. I see a truly strong fellowship that is built on mutual respect, timely and positive communication between and amongst all member bodies and enhanced through programs or ministries that foster unity and encourage fellowship.



I see a Fellowship that is identifying, developing and training emerging leaders for succession planning in their churches, islands and for the world.

I see a Fellowship that utilises every possible channel, platform and opportunity to accomplish the biblical mandate to make disciples and expand the Kingdom of God.

I see a Fellowship that is promoted as the best platform for united efforts in worship, training, witness, social action and disaster relief. I see a Fellowship whose agency is meeting the educational needs of its member bodies through culturally relevant, and biblically sound literature. This is what the CBF was called by God to do and what the founders stated in the mission sentence and that is what I will give my time, effort and energies to in the next five years, God being my helper.

CBFN What strategy or strategies will you adopt to help you realise this vision?

AW The Constitution states that the principal function of the EST is to supervise and coordinate the activities and programs of the CBF

and maintain effective communication with its member bodies.

I intend to carry out these functions through the strategic use of the technological platforms which have become a bit more common and accessible to most leaders, and member bodies. More frequent communication and information sharing is key to unity of efforts and purpose.

I also believe that in every member body, which is aligned to the CBF, there are skilled, talented and gifted persons who are willing to serve. I intend to call out, challenge and utilise these persons.

I will also encourage resource sharing across churches, member bodies and islands. Where member bodies are strong, they will be challenged to help those who are not so strong.

ONE – ON – ONE WITH WARRICK

CBFN What do you feel is / are the major strength/s of the CBF now?

AW I believe the strength of the CBF is in its common faith in the lordship of Jesus Christ; and its common mission of making Christ known to the world. We are also blessed with a strong legacy of effective leadership.

I believe we also have an effective structure that seeks to align our mission and vision with our committees, departments and agencies.

Our affiliation to the Baptist World Alliance is also a great source of inspiration and direction which gives us a sense of belonging to a worldwide body.

CBFN How will you build on those strengths to increase the growth of the organization?

AW I intend to continue the legacy of identifying, developing and utilising strong leadership. I also intend to keep working through and on the constitution to ensure that our organisation is properly aligned to our vision and mission.

I will provide the Youth and Women's ministries with the support and encouragement they would need to continue their good work and I will use them as a source of inspiration for the men and other ministries of the CBF.



With respect to our affiliation with the BWA, I intend to remind member bodies that our contribution to and support of the BWA help us to promote the gospel across the world; assist persons who would have experienced natural or man-made disasters; and work towards social justice in countries where persons experience persecution and injustices because of their faith.

The BWA is also another platform through which members can offer their service and expertise on the presidium, as well as on various commissions and committees. We are truly proud of our Caribbean brothers and sisters, who have served at the highest levels of the BWA.

CBFN Your strategies are well aligned with your vision and the mission of God Rev. What do you see as the major challenges facing the organization at this time?

AW The most immediate challenge is that of the COVID – 19 Pandemic and its effects on the economic, social and ecclesiastical life of almost every

country in the world. Many of our churches have struggled to navigate the new architecture of worship, mission and ministry demanded by the various governments and health departments. Even though we have been able to hold various statutory meetings virtually, many CBF programs have been adversely affected, including its 50th Anniversary Celebration.

The finances of CBF have all but dried up and our main educational agency, the CCP has had to cease operation due to, among other things, a lack of orders for Sunday School and VBS material. These are very challenging times for the CBF.

However, we are working at restructuring, repositioning and realigning the organization to better respond to the changes taking place in our world today.

We also face challenges of disunity among churches, member bodies and islands, which seriously impact the programs and witness of the Fellowship.

ONE - ON - ONE WITH WARRICK

AW Leadership capacity and succession planning are other issues which affect our effectiveness and continuity.

Financing the CBF and its secretariat is another major challenge with which this administration will have to contend.

CBFN Challenging Challenges indeed, which require effective leadership. How have your previous experience and training equipped you to tackle these challenges?

AW I have a deep and abiding love for God and for God's people which is rooted in an appreciation of God's own gracious mercy towards me. Very soon after my conversion and baptism, at the age of 18, I gave my time, energy and efforts to growing in the faith, firstly through the establishment of a successful Sunday School in the community in which I lived.

I later led my home church's youth ministry and then the Baptist Union's youth department. I have taught in the United Baptist Training Institute for 30 years and have been General Secretary of the Baptist Union for 25 years.

Of greatest significance and satisfaction to me, however, is my leading the St John's Baptist Church as its Senior Pastor; Chairman of the Board and also Chairman of the Board of the Home for Senior Citizens for over 30 years. During this time, I led



both organisations through several building campaigns, church planting and expansions, land acquisition and renovations and increasing the asset value into millions of TT dollars. I have also led the strategic planning exercises for these organisations, including the Baptist Union, as we sought to respond to the fast changing economic, social, technological and ecclesiastical environment.

I believe that all of the aforementioned experiences along with my theological training at the United Theological College of the West Indies and my management training with Henley University, UK, greatly assisted in preparing me for this role.

CBFN We believe also that you have been well prepared and called out by God through the Holy Spirit to provide leadership to the CBF at such a time as this. Please share with us some strategies you will employ in mobilizing your diverse team in this volatile uncertain, complex and ambiguous Caribbean environment.

AW I intend to motivate the new CBF team of leaders by showing my respect and appreciation for their giftedness, unique abilities and their willingness to serve.

I also believe in regular communication to assist, encourage and give direction and support when necessary.

I will make myself available and accessible so that they could feel free to contact me for advice.

I believe that the achievement of common goals gives persons a sense of value, hence I will ensure that all committee chairs and department heads understand their role and contribution to the common mission and vision of the CBF.

I will try to ensure that team members have the opportunity to meet around a meal or activity at least once per year so that we could build a sense of community and camaraderie.

ONE - ON - ONE WITH WARRICK

CBFN What do you think are the most important attributes that effective Christian leaders should possess in these times?

AW I believe the most important attribute Christian leaders need today is authenticity. We desperately need leaders who not only communicate effectively, but who match their speech with their lifestyles. It is a true saying that we need persons who not only talk the talk but walk the walk.

Authentic leadership supports and strengthens transformative actions. If we want to change mind-sets and lead our people into new, challenging and ever changing times, we must be prepared to set the example ourselves. So authenticity undergirded by love, integrity, passion, faith and confidence are of great value to a modern day leader.

Leaders today also need to be collaborative, creative and display high emotional intelligence, bringing together diverse groups of people and perspectives to influence change.

Today's leaders need to have a working knowledge of the technology. The world is going virtual and every leader must be able to navigate the technologies with some measure of competence for greater effectiveness.



CBFN So in your opinion, what then is the most dangerous trait or characteristic in a leader today?

AW A lack of integrity and accountability. Any leader who believes that he/she is a law unto him/herself will not only self-destruct, but will destroy others in the process.

CBFN What are the most useful resources that you would recommend to someone endeavouring to becoming a more effective leader?

It is said that the best leaders are continuous learners. I will therefore encourage potential and emerging leaders to learn from other great leaders. Seek out a mentor in a leader for whom you have high regard and look at, listen and learn from such a person. One can also enroll in a business school or do some key business courses.

There are many online training resources and certificate programs available today. Of course reading good leadership books and journals is essential. Books by Dale Carnegie, Steven

R. Covey and Jim Collins were very helpful in my own leadership development.

In recent times, I have been exploring various leadership websites, podcasts and blogs by such writers as Carey Nieuwhof, John Maxwell and Jim Clemmer, all of which will be helpful for potential leaders.

Rev it was indeed a pleasure chatting with you. On behalf of CBF Notes and News, I want to thank you for responding willingly to the Macedonian call to come over and help the Fellowship . We welcome your leadership and pledge our support to you in implementing your vision and strategies .

Thank you very much for pausing to chat with us.

AW It was my pleasure.



ENOUGH TO BE WITH JESUS

Elijah Brown, BWA General Secretary

In the actions of the Magi, we are reminded to be formed by worship.

As these sisters and brothers are on their unexpected journey, we are called to stand with them. Mary and Joseph ask if we will follow their example: Will we choose to have a home hospitable enough to welcome unexpected guests on a journey from the margins, receiving the gifts for Christ they carry and that we need?

In the actions of the Magi, we are reminded to be formed by worship. The Bible reads, “We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him” (Matthew 2:2). “On coming to the house ... they bowed down and worshiped him” (Matthew 2:11). The uncertainty of the destination did not override their focus to worship. The demands of the day did not detract from their kneeling in worship.

They did not allow the call of the palace or the promise of access and power to co-opt their priority to worship. They worshipped Jesus. Finding him as an infant, Jesus did not lay his healing hand on them. Jesus did not change the contours of their life by driving out the demons that tormented them. Jesus did not share words of insight to them.

In this instance, as an infant, Jesus could not offer any blessing to them except the blessing of his presence. It was enough to be with Jesus. The Magi ask if we too - more than practical blessing, profession, or power - will be formed by worship that says it is enough to be with Jesus?

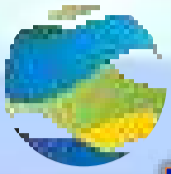
On behalf of the Baptist World Alliance and Baptists in 126 countries and territories, this Christmas, may we journey together and find the joy of Jesus.

The Magi moved through mountainous terrain and desert landscapes, covering hundreds of miles over dozens of days. It was a journey marked by unexpected turns; an unclear destination; and collision with an unsettled government.

In the star that guided the Magi, we are reminded that there are seasons of uncertainty. There are seasons when the journey seems perilous and calls us to an uncertain destination; when the comforts of familiarity must be left behind; when planned objectives must be set to the side; and all that is before us is to find Christ and join Him. For in the birth of newness, Christ inaugurates the Kingdom of God. To a world weary from the unexpected journey of this year, if all you can do is to take one more step - take that step holding to the hope that God is present and Christ welcomes you. In the Magi, Christ asks: Will we welcome all people from all countries of all ethnicities?

In the travels of the Magi, we are reminded there are many who are traveling through the night and navigating contexts of conflict. The Magi remind us to listen to those on the margins. The government did not anticipate the Magi; the religious leaders did not anticipate the Magi; and the home of Mary and Joseph did not anticipate the Magi. They came from the margins. There are many who feel as if they are on the margins.

Today, more people are forcibly displaced from their homes than at any other point in the last 70 years.



BWA TO HOST VIRTUAL CONGRESS

The Baptist World Alliance (BWA) is going fully virtual for its 22nd World Congress set for July 7-10, 2021. This means that every Baptist, families and friends can attend this first fully-online, globally-accessible event.

According to the BWA, the decision was made after much prayer and consultation with global Baptist leaders.

The Baptist World Congress is a quinquennial event originally scheduled to take place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in July 2020. The event was postponed in March 2020 due to rising coronavirus cases and upon review of travel and health advisories nationally and globally. With the pandemic still impacting so many communities worldwide, the BWA Executive Committee voted to hold the event virtually.

BWA General Secretary has noted that while the physical doors of many churches have been closed, technology has opened new spiritual doors of opportunities for gospel-centred mission.

"We saw this firsthand when thousands from our global Baptist family gathered online for worship, prayer, and engagement at Pentecost. Now I am eagerly awaiting what the Lord has in store as we host a Congress for the 21st Century. Open to Baptists worldwide, this multilingual, multinational event will unite us in Jesus Christ and His gospel mission," Brown said.

Guided by the theme **Together**, the 22nd Baptist World Congress will include the following:

- ◆ Daily sessions with worship, fellowship, prayer, and spiritual challenge led by global Baptist leaders.
- ◆ More than 30 Breakouts with recognized ministry experts featuring live Q&A
- ◆ Virtual roundtables focused on worship, mission, aid, religious freedom, and transformational leadership
- ◆ An easy-access virtual platform with the ability

to facilitate networking and community building by region and/or ministry focus

- ◆ Three powerful pre-conferences including the "Life" Global Conference of Baptist Women, Youth Leadership Conference, and the "Together with the Persecuted" Religious Freedom Summit
- ◆ Multilingual opportunities for engagement
- ◆ A powerful opportunity for Baptists worldwide to stand together at this critical time across borders, languages, and ethnicities

The BWA says its staff and global Congress leadership are committed to offering a virtual event that builds upon the years of strong planning already invested, ensuring that returning attendees and newcomers alike experience the meaningfulness of this gathering.

Since the first Baptist World Congress gathering in 1905, the event has had a long-standing impact on its attendees and the world. Congress leaders prayerfully anticipate that the new platform will only serve to further the event's unchanging purpose to network the Baptist family to impact the world for Christ.

More than 1,000 people from over 40 countries have already registered for the Congress, which is poised to becoming a milestone in this pivotal time in history.

You may register at <https://bwa2021.org/fr/register/>.

CBF NOTES AND NEWS

JBU ASSEMBLY STILL A KEEP



The Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU) wants the Caribbean to know that its 171st General Assembly is still on.

There has been speculation concerning the fate of 2021 General Assembly, given the uncertainties caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, General Secretary Karl B Johnson, said that the JBU Executive Committee has reviewed preliminary plans and believes that despite the necessary restrictions, the Union can host the Assembly in ways that make the experience meaningful and positively impactful.

The four-day assembly is scheduled for February 24-28, but according to General Secretary Johnson, the normal face-to-face format will be modified to include online activities.

With the exception of Saturday and Sunday, two major slots are planned for each day (10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.). There will be one session on Sunday

The 69th General Assembly will be hosted under the thematic banner, **Keeping Faith with the Word in an Ever-Changing World: Reaffirming Identity**, and will open officially on Wednesday, 24 February, with the President, the Rev Norva Rodney, delivering the opening address.

A tentative schedule of activities is available and the Union will provide further updates regarding the logistics of registration, the slate of speakers and the digital platform that will be used.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24

10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. WORSHIP

10:35 a.m. – 11:25 a.m. CONVENTION LECTURE

11:25 a.m. - 11:35 a.m. BREAK

11:35 a.m. – 01:00 p.m. ASSEMBLY TALK I (Plenary)

07:00 p.m. – 08:30 p.m. OPENING SERVICE

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25

10:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. ACT OF MEMORIAL SERVICE & BIBLE STUDY

11:15 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. BREAK

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. WORKSHOPS

02:00 p.m. – 04:00 pm MISSION BLITZ IN ASSOCIATIONS

07:00 p.m. – 08:00 p.m. CONCERT

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26

10:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. BIBLE STUDY 1

10:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. BREAK

11:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon ASSEMBLY TALK 2 (Plenary)

02:00 p.m. – 04:00 p.m. SECTIONAL MEETINGS/FOCUS GROUPS

07:00 p.m. – 08:00 p.m. Town Hall Meeting

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 28

10:00 am – 11:30 am CLOSING/COMMITMENT SERVICE



San Andres In the aftermath of Iota...



Nearly seven weeks after Category 5 Hurricane Iota wreaked havoc in the largest archipelago in Colombia: San Andrés, Providencia, and Santa Catalina, thousands of persons are attempting to pick up the pieces of their lives .

In San Andrés, roofs were blown off houses and roads and power lines destroyed. The flooding and wind damage left 60% of the island without power.

The devastation was even worse on the smaller island and popular tourist destination of Providencia. Reports indicate that 80% of houses on the island were destroyed and the remaining 20% damaged. The hospital is too damaged to function, making it

difficult to treat those injured in the hurricane. Santa Catalina, the nearby island, lost the only pedestrian connection to Providencia.

Although difficult to quantify, the hurricane also left an important environmental toll as it caused significant damage to the archipelago's endemic ecosystem by falling trees, damaging coral reefs, and hurting the mangrove forests on the islands.

The human toll of the crisis is significant as many islanders are now living in temporary shelters after they were evacuated from badly affected areas. Thousands have been left homeless, unconnected, and economically vulnerable.

The First Baptist Church in San Andres was not exempt from the impact of Iota, as the parsonage was destroyed and several of their members left homeless; yet the Church has been busy coordinating assistance for the many persons who have been left with nothing.

Let us remember our brothers and sisters in San Andres and Providencia; not only in offering prayers for them, but tangibly reaching out to help them with basic necessities as they seek to rebuild their lives in the wake of two catastrophic disasters - Hurricane Iota and COVID-19.

A NOT SO MERRY COVID CHRISTMAS?

David Serrant, Pastor, Deliverance Baptist Church, Dominica

Christmas, in spite of the varying reactions to, and beliefs about the Season, does present some rather unusual opportunities for expressions of love and goodwill to our fellowman.

The unwelcome presence of the Covid19 pandemic threatened or disrupted what many look forward to as a festive time, spent with family and friends.

The various restrictions have made it all but impossible to do what we are accustomed to. Visiting and spending time with each other we have not seen for some time, the hugging and sharing of love as we all knew it, among other activities, seemed to be a thing of the past, and thus the phrase expressed by many was, “a dread Christmas this year.”

However, the Christmas season, with the presence of the Covid19 virus, provided an opportunity for some reflection on life and what is really important. It should be a time to celebrate life. Many who began the year, fell victim to the Covid19 virus, as the numbers from a worldwide perspective is staggering: many have died, some are dying, or are suffering in numerous and varied ways. If you are alive, it should be a time to give thanks, and evaluate your purpose for being alive.

Truly, we are alive because of the ‘Mercies of God.’ If you are still employed, be thankful that you are; it should not be taken for granted as so many have lost their jobs. Their plans of having a ‘Merry

Christmas’ became a dismal memory, as surviving from day to day has become the focus of their existence.

The bright lights and echoes of the songs of the season, only seemed to remind them of their dismal situation because Christmas is many times celebrated with the wrong motive. What an opportunity to discover the true meaning of Christmas!

Many have lost loved ones, leaving a void in their hearts, as they realized that in returning home to family and friends, life and things would not be the same. This has forcefully brought home the realization that we need to cherish loved ones and show appreciation as we have opportunity.

There were many who normally would have gotten time off from work to spend with family and friends. This was not realized because of the demand that the pandemic placed on their lives: some had to care for persons affected, while others worked behind the scenes in critical areas to ensure that supplies were available in order that lives could be saved. While many were singing, ‘Joy to World,’ some were going to work with fear and apprehension. The following questions ran through the minds of many: ‘Will I make it through the day without contracting the virus?’ ‘What about my family? Will I be the one through whom a family member would get infected?’

While some hope seems to be on the horizon with the advent of the



Serrant

vaccine, it will take some time before we return to a semblance of normalcy as it relates to treatment. In the meantime, the apprehension continues and life is lived under a cloud of uncertainty.

The Christmas Season and the prevalence of the Covid19 virus have presented many challenging lessons from which we all can learn, and yet we choose to ignore them. The remembrance of Jesus’ coming into the world as a baby was a sign of hope for all Mankind. Never has it been so evident that Mankind needs divine help. That help is found **only in Jesus**. The season should serve as a catalyst to help us understand our true purpose for being alive today.

In the midst of all the disruption, and devastation that Covid19 has brought, God is still working miracles and saving lives as He said He came to do. Let’s aspire to be part of what God is doing during this time of uncertainty and share the light of His love.

PREPARE TO EVACUATE SVG ON VOLCANO ORANGE ALERT

Adapted from iWitness News

Residents of St Vincent and the Grenadines were warned to stay away from La Soufriere volcano after increased seismic activity was detected in the dome over the weekend.

The alert level associated with La Soufriere in St. Vincent was on Tuesday raised to orange, the third highest on the four-colour scheme, as the volcano entered an effusive eruption stage.

This means that magma is oozing from the volcano and is distinct from the explosive eruption such as that of 1979, although one could follow the other.

With the orange alert, residents of the northern third of St. Vincent — from Georgetown to Fancy, in the east, and north of Belle Isle, in the west — have been told to prepare to evacuate at short notice, should such an order be given.

Volcanologists Dr Erouscille Pat Joseph and Professor Richard Robertson of the University of the West Indies Seismic Research Centre (SRC), joined Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves in a live address to the nation on Tuesday evening to provide an update on the activity.

According to Professor Robertson the situation was serious, as “the volcano is erupting,”



The new dome, at right, created by the ongoing activity at St. Vincent's La Soufriere volcano

He added that scientists would try their best to give at least 48 hours warning in the case of an explosive volcano.

Robertson said there was minor seismic activity in November and again on December 16 and 23, but on December 27 a NASA satellite detected a hot spot in the crater.

Professor Robinson explained that when the National Emergency Management Organisation (NEMO) in Kingstown visited the 4048-foot high volcano on Tuesday, they discovered that there was a diffusive emission of magma extruding out of the volcano.

He added that there is not enough data to determine whether it will continue to slowly build or activity will increase to the point where there is an explosive eruption.

However, sulphur-rich gases will be released into the atmosphere; and although it is not potentially harmful when it mixes with the atmosphere, residents should still stay away from the area at this time.

“It’s probably if you’re on the crater rim it’s going to be really difficult to breathe because some of the sulphur, some of the constituents of that gas ... is smelly, but also, it

dries out your respiratory system, makes it difficult to breathe.

In the meantime, the Centre will continue to monitor the situation, and work in conjunction with NEMO, will put more equipment to collect data.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves has urged residents in the red zone to be ready to evacuate at short notice, but emphasized that the alert was not an order to evacuate.

The Seismic Centre is expected to deploy a team to St. Vincent as early as Wednesday, Gonsalves said.

We pray that God will preserve and protect our brothers and sisters in St Vincent and the Grenadines at this time.

CBF will continue to monitor the situation and stands ready to support should the need arises.



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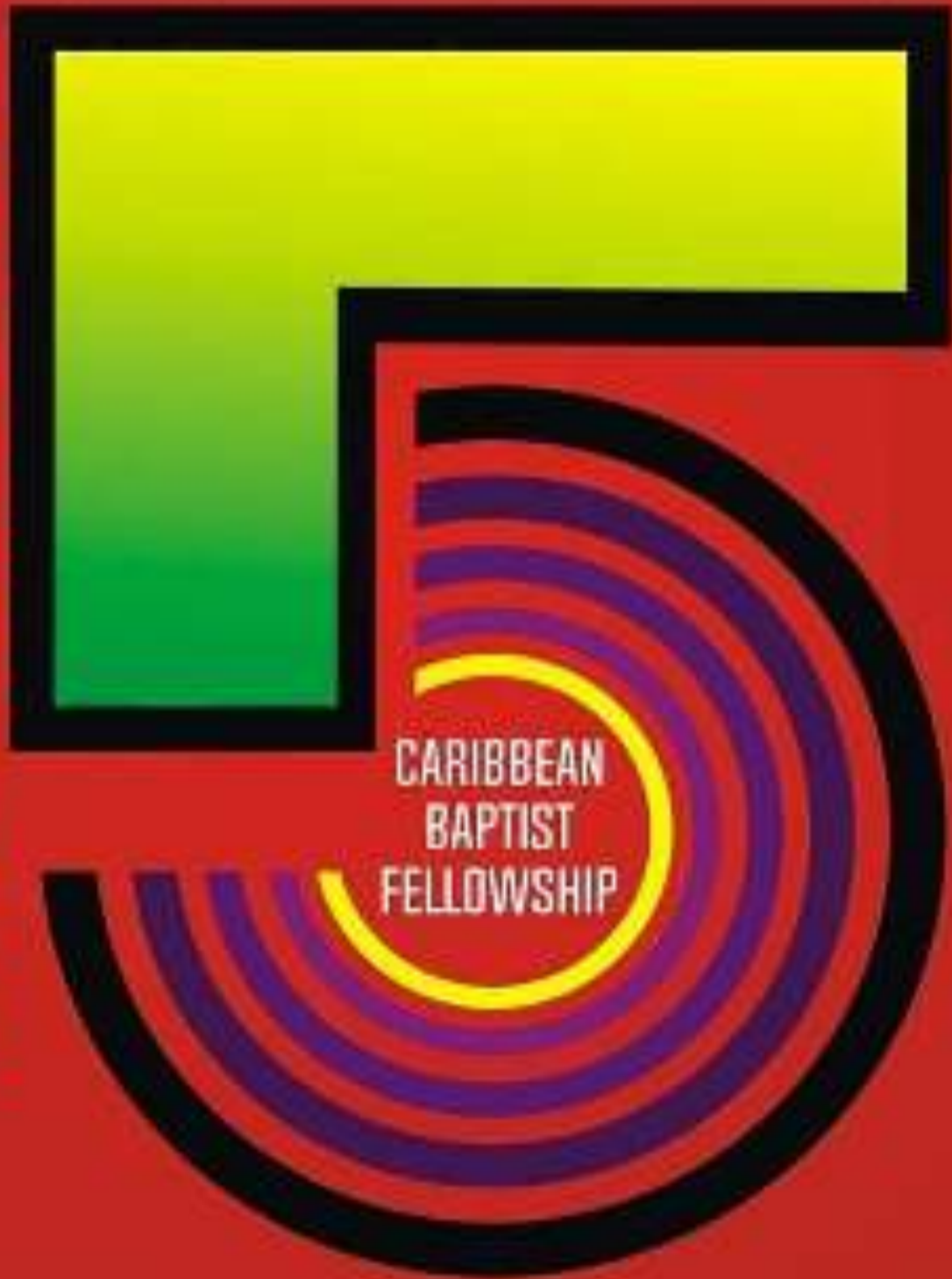
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