

APRIL
2021

Caribbean Baptist Fellowship

CBF NOTES



FOLLOW THE WOMEN
Leadership is
BERYL ROOPER

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.

Jamaica is the third largest of the Caribbean islands, and the largest English-speaking island in the Caribbean Sea. Known for its strong sense of self identity and resilience expressed through its motto, music, food, sports and rich cultural mix, Jamaica's influence extends far beyond its shores.

With luminaries such as the black nationalist Marcus Garvey, musician Bob Marley, and athlete Usain Bolt, Jamaicans are proud of their cultural and religious heritage. Jamaica's landscape is mostly mountainous; a limestone plateau covers two-thirds of the island; karst formations with caverns and caves dominate the island. It has narrow coastal plains, green dense rainforests and sandy bays and beaches. The highest point is Blue Mountain Peak (2,256 m) in the east of the island.

The island has a population of 2.75 million people. Its capital and largest city is Kingston. Other major cities are Spanish Town and Montego Bay. The official language is English. However, its people treasure the Jamaican Creole, also known as Patois, an English-based creole language with West African influence.

The Jamaica Baptist Union, the fourth largest denomination in Jamaica, traces its beginning to George Liele, a 'free black slave' from Atlanta Georgia who came to Jamaica in 1783 and started preaching in Kingston. His work grew and spread to other parts of the island. The Baptist Missionary Society (UK) was invited to support the work, and in 1814 they sent the first missionary to the island. The ministry continued to grow and expand under the British. Jamaica now has 340 churches housing nearly 40, 000 congregants, shepherded by 121 pastors.

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FOR THE 13TH

JOYCE & CAMPBELL

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COVER PHOTO : BERYL ROPER

EDITOR'S EDICTS

Dorrett R Campbell

The emotional and social stressors, which accompany the virus may very well be impacting the children in a really negative way.

It is said that children are far more resilient to external shocks than adults are; and it would seem so when it comes to the coronavirus. However, the emotional and social stressors, which accompany the virus may very well be impacting the children in a really negative way.

And although they might find it difficult to understand what they are seeing online or on television, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) points out that "they can be particularly vulnerable to feelings of anxiety, stress and sadness".

As we approach Child Month in May, I share with you some recommendations made by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention on how we can help our children to understand the impact of COVID19.

Remain calm. Remember that children will react to both what you say and how you say it. They will pick up cues from the conversations you have with them and with others. Ensure that your conversations remain positive.

Reassure children that they are safe. Let them know it is okay if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn from you, how to cope.

Respond positively: Make yourself available to listen and to talk. Let children know they can come to you when they have questions.

Reject language that might blame others and lead to stigma.



Reduce the amount of screen time focused on COVID-19. Too much information on one topic can lead to anxiety.

Repeat information that is truthful and appropriate for the age and developmental level of the child. Talk to children about fake news and inaccurate information on social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.

Reduce the spread of germs by teaching children everyday sanitary actions.

Remind children to wash their hands frequently and stay away from people who are coughing or sneezing or sick. Also, remind them to cough or sneeze into a tissue or their elbow, then throw the tissue into the trash.

If school is open, discuss any new actions that may be taken at school to help protect children.

FOLLOW THE WOMEN

Anslem Warrick, EST

One cannot honestly deal with or read about the resurrection of Jesus without talking about the vital role women played in the most important event in Christian history

The message of Easter does not primarily deal with the issue of the role of women in the church, although this is a very important issue. It was much debated over the last 20 years and still is being debated today, especially since the world witnessed the activities, which prompted the “Me Too” movement in the USA and UK as well as other places.

Let us be aware that these atrocities and other violent acts are still being committed against wives, women and girls. That being said, one cannot honestly deal with or read about the resurrection of Jesus without talking about the vital role women played in the most important event in Christian history.

The records are clear in all four gospels. It is undisputed that in the most foundational event of Christian history, women were present. Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 15:14, “If Christ was not raised from the dead then our faith is in vain, we are yet in our sins and our preaching is in vain”. My point is that, in this most vital event in Christianity, women were very present and very active and the biblical writers made it a point of duty to include them.

In all four gospels we are reminded:

- ♦ Women were the first to see the empty tomb (Matt.28:1-6)
- ♦ Women were the first to tell about the empty tomb (Mark 16:9,10)



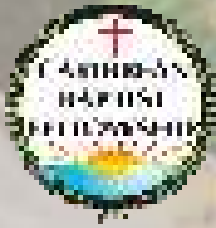
- ♦ Women were the first to see the Resurrected Lord (Luke 24:1-12, John 20:1-18).

Now, irrespective of the slight differences in the records, the essence of the narrative remains and proves that the authors did not collaborate or consult.

We see that in all four narratives the women came to the tomb with one task in mind - to anoint a dead body. They were going to the tomb with one intention, but God changed everything (Matt 28:5,6).

The Good News of the Resurrection Changed their Mood

The resurrection transformed their mood from fear to awe and wonder; from preserving death to celebrating life. What did they hear? What accounted for the change?



THEY WERE GIVEN A NEW MISSION

These followers of Jesus heard what they did not expect. They heard that Jesus was not in the tomb; that he had risen. There was nobody in the tomb. They literally saw the empty tomb. At first they were apprehensive, thinking someone had stolen the body of their Lord. When then heard the good news of the resurrection their mood changed from sadness to joy, from despair to hope and excitement.

The angel commanded them to be the first messengers of the gospel: the good news that He is alive; the good news that He would be going to Jerusalem to be with his disciples again. This new mission gave them a new energy. They ran with excitement to tell of the good news of the resurrection.

Thank God for the Good news of the resurrection. It changed the mindset of the first believers, it changed their mission and today it can do the same.

Contemplation of, and a firm belief in the resurrection can transform persons: those struggling with job loss, COVID fears, sadness and depression over the present state of our world; those caught in violent situations that appear to be hopeless; persons who have lost loved ones due to this pandemic.

May the same God that raised Jesus Christ from the dead transform your mood to one of hopefulness, joy and excitement.

May the God of the resurrection also empower us with a new ability to carry the message of love, salvation and new opportunities in Christ. We have this confidence that if God raised Jesus from the dead then no situation is beyond God's reach.

Thank God for the first female evangelists.

Thank God for the cross and thank God for the resurrection..



EASTER MESSAGE OF HOPE

Dominique Dick, President

Totally without hope one cannot live. To live without hope is to cease to live.

worship service in smaller numbers, and sometimes are obliged to keep two services on Sunday mornings. Anyway, thank God that we can embrace the opportunity to meet once a week, on Sundays.

In solidarity with St Vincent and the Grenadines, we have collected relief items (dry goods, household items, clothes, sanitary items, pampers for babies and disabled) to help persons affected by the volcanic eruption as part of our contribution. These goods will be shipped to St Vincent and the Grenadines in the second week of May.

Someone once wrote: "Totally without hope one cannot live. To live without hope is to cease to live. "

In the difficult and often confusing world in which we live today, hope, for many people, is seemingly waning . In a world of pain, grief and sorrow, of complex family relationships, of problems at work, hope, for many people, has died !

But hope, I believe, is one of the key Christian attributes and one of the most important gifts we can give to the world today.

Nothing brings hope back to life like Easter. The Easter message gives us hope in a bewildering world and hope to face the uncertainties of the future. This special day never arrives without its refreshing reminder that there is life beyond this one: True life. Eternal life. Glorious life.

Hope will not disappoint us.

Shalom

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.

All our yearly events are on hold due to the pandemic. We have not been able to do many of our programs, because of the physical distance and lockdown protocols. However, we are looking forward to having our virtual general assembly soon.

At the moment, I am writing to you, we are under lockdown, so things are not easy for us here.

Nevertheless, the young people of the French Federation of Baptists were able to host their youth convention on February the 16. Our member bodies keep their Sunday



JESUS WALKS WITH US

Elijah Brown

Even when we do not recognize him, Jesus walks the path of pain with us.

There is often a space between what Jesus says and what we understand. It is like the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). As they were walking and talking, they lost themselves in the despair of Jesus' death. When Jesus encounters them on the road, "their faces [were] downcast" (Luke 24:17). The Greek word is σκυθρωπός (skuthrōpos) and is only used twice in the New Testament. It refers to a pain so potent it is etched into the lines of your face. Perhaps it was the grief of death that clouded them from recognizing that Jesus was journeying with them.

These Emmaus disciples were living in the space between what they understood and what Jesus had already accomplished. Jesus had already defeated the chains of death. Jesus had already broken open not only his tomb but also the tombs of many throughout the city (Matthew 27:52-53). The disciples had already received the report from the women who visited the grave only to hear from the angels, "He is not here; he has risen, just as he said!" (Matthew 28:6). But in moments of great grief and great questions, the road can seem lonely. Jesus received their questions just as he will receive your questions.

If you are in a space between what has happened and what you understand, you are not alone. If you are on a road filled with questions facing unanticipated loss and violently shattered expectations, you are not alone. The resurrected Lord is here, and Jesus walks the path of pain with us. The Kingdom of God is often living in the tension of pointing to the hope of resurrection in the space between that truth and what is being experienced.

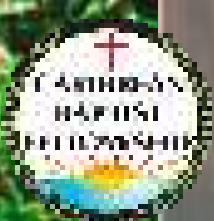
Violent death and unanticipated loss course through our world today. Tens of millions have lost their lives in a pandemic. Hundreds of millions have fallen deeper into poverty. Racial injustices, violent nationalism, war and

conflict, extreme weather, genocide, and the vacuous gasp of consumerism leave gaping holes and piercing questions. But this is part of the Easter message – the resurrected Lord is here. Even when we do not recognize him, **Jesus walks the path of pain with us.**

Undoubtedly, as Jesus accompanied these disciples in this space between what he had already accomplished and what they understood, his teaching was essential. But Jesus' teaching by itself was not transformative. Their eyes remained clouded until Jesus entered into their home and shared the intimacy of breaking bread with them. Teaching was essential; the intimacy of relationship was transformative. It was only when the bread was shared that "their eyes were opened" and they recognized that **Jesus had always been right there with them on the path of pain** (Luke 24:31).

The same is true today. To a world on a journey of pain, Jesus' teachings are essential, but a relationship in Christ is transformative. Let us receive the questions of this world and journey with those who are seeking understanding. But let us resolve not to share answers and lectures alone. Rather let us follow the model of Jesus by embracing grief and pain in the intimacy of relationship. Are we willing to follow this Jesus model? For those who are suffering, for those with questions, for those in the grip of death – are you willing to join yourself to that pain with an intimacy that breaks bread with them in their home?

This Easter, on behalf of the Baptist World Alliance, a family journeying together in 126 countries and territories, the resurrected Lord is here. Even when we cannot fully see him or fully understand, **Jesus walks the path of pain with us all the way to resurrection.**



Leadership is

Beryl Roper

Beryl Roper started her journey with the Caribbean Christian Publication (CCP) in 2010, as Editor of the Adult material. She was appointed Director in January 2013. Immediate past EST Everton Jackson described her meteoric rise as “a testament to her effectiveness, efficiency, love and commitment to the work and ministry of the literature agency of the CBF.”

It was her show of interest, among other things, that led the Board of Trustees to employ her as director, succeeding Gillian Francis who retired during her tenure.

Beryl's expertise in Human Resource Management was evident in her inspiration and motivation of the staff in the realization of their outputs on a timely basis .

She was reputed for an acute eye for details and never once short-changed the Board in providing critical information necessary to make informed decisions. Beryl retired in December 2020.

CBF took to the virtual Caribbean streets and gained some insightful comments from persons with whom Beryl worked over the years. Note pages 10 and 11.



LEADERSHIP IS BERYL ROPER



Rev. David C. Serrant, Dominica

UNDERSTANDING, HELPFUL AND APPROACHABLE

The Caribbean Christian Publication, over years have been blessed with Directors like the Rev. Arthur Edgar and Mrs. Gillian Francis who had a heart for placing Bible lessons written by Caribbean Nationals, for the Caribbean Churches.

Mrs. Beryl Roper who succeeded Mrs. Francis, continued in the same vein.

My personal recollection of Mrs. Roper was that of having a very pleasant and warm disposition. She always greeted me with a smile, and inquiries about my wellbeing, family and church. Mrs. Roper is a very understanding, approachable, helpful and patient person. She would constantly inquire about the impact of the CCP literature in Dominica.

Her voice will no longer be heard on the line calling from the CCP office in Jamaica.

As she enters another chapter of her life, I Pray God's richest blessings on her life as she retires.



**Marilyn Selby-Townsend
CCP Writer, Younger Children
(St. Vincent and the Grenadines)**

BERYL ROPER THE CONNECTING BRIDGE

Thank you for being a 'Connecting Bridge' for Christian Education in the Caribbean. Jesus was God's connection from heaven to earth. He gave the Holy Spirit to provide the power to maintain it. Standing in the gap was no easy task, but you took up the challenge and maintained the vision through difficult times. God bless you.

WARM AND FRIENDLY PERSONALITY



Sis. Beryl Roper has been known to me for many years, usually in the context of Sunday School workshops and more importantly, as a sister in Christ. Her warm and friendly personality as well as her devotion to Christian Education is contagious. I pray that as she continues her walk with Christ; she would allow Him to lead her all the way.

**Penny Forde,
CCP Adult Writer , TCI**



**Atlee P Rodney
Adult Sunday School writer/teacher
Antigua and Barbuda**

BERYL, A SERVANT OF LOVE

As a writer of Caribbean Sunday school lessons, I have had the opportunity to work, learn and minister in the area of Christian Education with a number of blessed saints. During this ministry, I had the privilege to meet Sis Beryl Roper.

She can be described as a kind hearted, committed, dedicated worker of Jesus Christ. Her attention to details and her flexibility to express love and kindness are exceptional qualities.

My visits to Jamaica for writers conference are special moments in life: thanks to the contribution of sis Roper and her remarkable team at CCP.

On behalf of the Antigua and Barbuda brethren I say thank you for your ministry of love in Christian Education.

LEADERSHIP IS BERYL ROPER



Rev Dr William Thompson
Immediate Past President, CBF

COMMITTED AND SPIRIT-FILLED LADY

It is indeed a signal honour for me to offer my congratulations to my sister Beryl Roper on her retirement. Beryl is a hard working, dedicated, committed and spirit-filled lady whom I believe God had called and appointed for her season of leadership at the Caribbean Christian Publications (CCP).

I join with many others in seeing this retirement as an opportunity to reflect upon the faithfulness of God in your life; and your faithfulness to the Lord and his calling on your life.

Thank you for consistently modeling that example and for the years of impact in the CBF and CCP in particular. I also celebrate this retirement with you, your family and with many others who have invested in you and had released you to pursue the challenge of the CCP.

May this retirement also serve as something of the Kairos moment that continues to refill you and open additional doors for living out the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



Rev. Lincoln Conner, St. Kitts.

BERYL IS SELF-GIVING

Sis Beryl gave of her time selflessly; and worked tirelessly to build networks and collaboration that would benefit the work of CCP. God Himself sees and rewards those who diligently work for Him with little or no regard for earthly recognition. Her life of service has had a tremendous impact on the wondering world around us and only eternity will reveal her true impact.

GENUINELY CHRISTLIKE

The very first time I met Mrs. Beryl Roper, she met my physical need for rest. I had not even asked. What a woman – genuinely Christlike in her words and actions! My dear sister, congratulations on your retirement. May God bless you bountifully in this new season of your life!



**Yolanda Brathwaite -
Barbados
Adult Writer-
CCP**



Rev. Victor McLeod
Baptist Union of Trinidad and Tobago.

HER VISIONARY PERSPECTIVE

Beryl Roper, the outgoing Director of CCP has shown that you can find joy and satisfaction in whatever you do.

She has travelled across the Caribbean sharing about and inspiring persons with the word of God, through the Caribbean Bible Lesson (CBL). She has a great passion for the work of CCP and for the promotion of Sunday School through the use of the CBL.

Her visionary perspective even earned her the opportunity to share the CBL with non-English speaking believers in Haiti.

As Director and head of staff she was able to impart many valuable qualities into the lives of the members of her staff and also to those of us who were and still are members of the Board of Trustees of CCP.

My prayers continue to be with her and her family as she continues to do the work of God. She certainly has made a great impact on my life.

IN MEMORY OF HORACE RUSSELL

A Caribbean pioneer who helped shape a Caribbean vision and identity, who was at the forefront of forging a Caribbean theology for more than 50 years

Renowned Caribbean theologian, pioneering Jamaican and former pastor of the East Queen Street Baptist Church, the Rev. Dr. Horace Orlando Russell, died on Easter Monday at the age of 91.

CBF Notes that he was a pioneering Caribbean voice on the international ecumenical scene. From 1968 to 1990, he served as a member of the Faith and Order Commission (FOC) of the World Council of Churches, one of the most highly regarded memberships in world Christianity. The first person from the Caribbean to do so, he eventually served in the prestigious position as Vice Moderator of the FOC's Standing Commission.

Dr Russell had also served the Baptist World Alliance in numerous capacities, including serving on that body's Commission on Baptist Heritage and Identity, and its Academic and Theological Education Workgroup.

In the field of Education, Russell not only served as chaplain of Calabar High School, his alma mater, but also as tutor at Calabar College and United Theological College of the West Indies (UTC). He was reputed as the first Jamaican to be engaged in theological education full-time, the first Black person, and first Caribbean person, to head UTC. He lectured in Church history and developed courses in Caribbean Church History.

He later served as dean of chapel and professor of historical theology at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, USA.

He is remembered as being responsible for educating and mentoring a generation of pastors and theologians in Jamaica, the Caribbean, North America and the wider world.

Regarded as one of the leading historians in the English-speaking Caribbean, Rev Russell continued his historical and theological interests outside of the classroom, as was the case while in Jamaica. He held professional status within the American Society of Church History and the American Baptist Historical Society. He continued his long association with the Society for the Study of Black Religion,



the Marcus Garvey Foundation, and with the National Heritage Trust of America.

Russell also held lectureships and consultancies with some of the most august academic and church institutions, including Cambridge University in England, Andover-Newton Theological Seminary in Massachusetts, Michigan State University, and the National Council of Churches USA.

In all this, Russell was a prolific writer, much of it coming from his own groundbreaking work in Caribbean Church History, as well as in theology, mission, and ecumenism, writing half a dozen books and numerous journal articles and book chapters.

He is described as a Caribbean pioneer, among the few remaining from an era that has helped to shape a Caribbean vision and intellectual thought, and who was at the forefront of forging a new Caribbean theology.

CBF extends its deepest sympathies to his wife Beryl of over 50 years, his children, Elizabeth, Heather and Johnathan as well as his church families

PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS FROM GETTING SICK

wash your hands with soap and water:

- after coughing or sneezing
- when caring for the sick
- before, during and after you prepare food
- before eating
- after toilet use
- when hands are visibly dirty
- after handling animals or animal waste



COVID-19 VACCINE

Clinton Chisholm, Theologian, Journalist and author

CBF VIEWS

One can sympathise with the unease among many Christians about taking any COVID vaccine, but such a vaccine could in no way be seen as the mark of the Beast mentioned in Revelation. But first a bit about the notion of 'end times'.

The ancient Jews into the time of our Lord had a double-edged view of time, the present age and the age to come. The New Testament documents seem to make a striking modification of this view, especially of 'the present age' so we read about 'last days', 'latter time(s)', 'end of age(s)'. KJV texts; 1 Cor. 10:11 "Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.";

Acts 2:17, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams."; Heb.1:2, "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.";

1 Jn. 2:18, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time."; 1 Pet. 1:20 "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you."

Remember this simple yet crucial point: the last days, last times, ends of the world began in the 1st century with our Lord's coming in flesh. We are now simply in the later portion of these time expressions.

The Identity of the Beast

The identity of the beast in Rev. 13 and 17 has intrigued many for a long time. The scare that the number of the beast has produced in Christian and non-Christian alike is well known. Who or what is the beast in these passages? We explore just a few key aspects of this fascinating if grotesque creature.

First, we need to notice that there is dual imagery involved from the texts themselves. Whereas Rev. 13:18 says the number of the beast is "the number of a man" i.e. *individually portrayed*, the angel in 17:10, says the 7 heads of the beast represent 7 kings. Seemingly, these 7 kings "arise in chronological succession; some have already died, one is now reigning, one is yet to come (17:10-11). Thus, the beast is *generically portrayed* as a kingdom [or line of kings]" as Kenneth Gentry argues in *The Beast of Revelation*.

Somewhat puzzlingly, Rev. 17:11 declares "the beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is one of the seven." Given the centrality of the Emperor to the Roman Empire, at times, the one was treated as synonymous with the other, so, writing about Augustus, the Roman poet Ovid (43 BC – AD 18) says "the state is Caesar".

How does the number 666 assist in identifying the Beast individually?

Well, by appealing to the age-old and 1st century Jewish tradition of Gematria (playing with the numbers behind letters of the alphabet, called isopsephism in Greek). You may recall that Latin letters also double as numbers, e.g. XVI is 16, x = 10, v = 5, I = 1.




Interestingly, there are a couple manuscripts of Rev. 13:18 that have 616 instead of 666 as the number of the beast. This manuscript change seemed not to have been accidental. As the revered late textual critic and Greek scholar Bruce Metzger says, "Perhaps the change was intentional, seeing that the Greek form Nerōn Caesar written in Hebrew characters...is equivalent to 666, whereas the Latin form Nero Caesar...is equivalent to 616."

Metzger further says "When Greek letters are used as numerals the difference between 666 and 616 is merely a change from X [chi] to I [iota]..." (p.752)

Do note that contrary to the mistranslation of Rev. 13:17 in the KJV and the NKJV "...the mark or the name of the beast or the number of his name." and a consequent misunderstanding by a certain denomination there are not three different things re the mark of the beast but two, "...the mark of the beast or the number of his name." as the Greek text reads!

AND THE MARK OF THE BEAST



Nero is the only emperor whose name fits the Gematria riddle hand in glove, so he seemed to have been the individual beast John had in mind.

"The generic identity of the Beast is the ancient Roman Empire of the first century" (Gentry, **The Beast**, p.11) headquartered in Rome, the centre of the empire and the city with seven hills or mountains (Rev. 17.9).

The Character of the Beast

The terror and dread that the beast generated is most apt as a description of the character of Nero as of no other Emperor. Nero's epitaph is dreadful. As a person he was regarded as a beast, a monster and was popularly called 'the tyrant'. Here are a few select quotations about Nero:

"In my travels, which have been wider than ever man yet accomplished, I have seen many, many wild beasts of Arabia and India; but this beast, that is commonly called a Tyrant, I know not how many heads it has, nor if it be crooked of claw, and armed with horrible fangs...And of wild beasts you cannot say that they were ever known to eat their own mother, but

Nero has gorged himself on this diet." (Apollonius of Tyana, b. 4 BC, cited in Gentry, **Before Jerusalem Fell** p.214)

"[Nero's persecution claimed] a vast multitude of the elect ...through many indignities and tortures." (Clement of Rome, b. AD 30, cited in Gentry, **Beast**, p.54)

"[Nero] compelled four hundred senators and six hundred Roman knights, some of whom were well to do and of unblemished reputation, to fight in the arena." (Suetonius, b. circa AD 69, cited in Gentry, **Before Jerusalem**, p.213)

"[Nero] ...inflicted unheard-of punishments on...Christians...And their death was aggravated with mockeries, insomuch that, wrapped in the hides of wild beasts, they were torn to pieces by dogs, or fastened to crosses to be set on fire, that when the darkness fell they might be burned to illuminate the night... whence it came about that, though the victims were guilty and deserved the most exemplary punishment, a sense of pity was aroused by the feeling that they were sacrificed not on the altar of public interest, but to satisfy the cruelty of one man." (Tacitus, b. circa AD 56, **Annals**, 15.44)

Nero killed his parents, brother, aunt and many others close to him and even kicked his pregnant wife to death.

So then the character of the beast as described in Revelation matches what is known about Nero's character. It is instructive too that Rev. 13.5, 7 speaks of the beast warring with the saints and overcoming them for forty-two months (3 ½ years).

Nero was the first Emperor to persecute Christians as Christians and this persecution began some months after the great fire of Rome (July 19, AD 64). From the middle or late November, AD 64, Nero assaulted the Church, causing the deaths of many Christians (including Peter and Paul and this state of affairs haunted the Church until his suicide on June 9, AD 68, **almost exactly 3 ½ years**).

If the warning about the mark of the beast was only to be fulfilled now how would that warning have made sense from the writer to the original readers of the 1st century?

MEMBER NOTES AND NEWS

JBU RE-AFFIRMING IDENTITY

The unprecedented 171st General Assembly of the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU) opened on Wednesday, February 24, without the usual pomp and ceremonies.

This is the very first time since 1783 that the JBU was convening a fully virtual assembly – a casualty of the alarming COVID-19 pandemic that has caused the Jamaican Government to restrict large gatherings and impose an islandwide curfew on the country.

Guided by the new thematic banner, **Keeping faith with the word in an ever-changing world: Reaffirming identity**, the historic virtual assembly got underway at precisely 7:00pm just one hour before curfew, with the usual warm yet abridged welcome and opening remarks by General Secretary Karl B Johnson;.

The usual splendor of the more than 100 voice combined choirs was conspicuously absent this year, but its abridged replacement - the seven member JBU Chamber Choir - compensated with their inspiring interpretation of Randegger's *Praise ye the Lord*.

JBU President Rev Norva Rodney in his presidential address pointed to the timely relevance of the theme within the context of global realities that had impacted life and quality of life. He noted that now more than ever, Christians needed to “draw strength and meaning for life from the unchanging word of God ...”

The JBU president painstakingly described the permissive ‘selfie’ culture that had given cause for critical self-examination and renewal. It is in this context, he asserted, that Baptists needed to understand, accept and reaffirm their kingdom identity as agents of God’s divine agenda.

Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done

Inspired by the Lord’s prayer in St Matthew 6 and with particular emphasis on verse 10, the JBU president explained that a prayer for God’s kingdom to come and God’s will to be done was a confession of our deliberate distortion of God’s creation; a call for deliverance from social oppression and injustices; and a resolve to use God’s power to end social chaos and oppression.



RODNEY

Reaffirming our identity in Jesus Christ, therefore, was an imperative to reframe and deepen our understanding of God’s ongoing mission in God’s world (the Agenda) and how we understand ourselves (the Agents) in relation to God’s agenda.

Against this background, the president emphasised that in order to strengthen and secure our Christian identity, Baptist Christians ought to ensure that the Church’s agenda mirrors the sovereignty of God and that God’s agents model a commitment of Christ-like submission to God.

The preacher urged the Baptist Union to pursue relentlessly, its advocacy for social justice, kingdom values and attitudes.



LALOR

GLENROY LALOR

JBU PRESIDENT-ELECT

Meanwhile, CBF Notes that the Rev Dr Glenroy Lalor has been elected president in waiting to lead the nearly 40, 000 member Baptist Union for the year 2022.

President-elect Lalor currently serves as pastor of one of the fastest growing Baptist churches smack in the middle of Half-Way-Tree, the Bethel Baptist Church.

He succeeded the Rev Dr Burchel Taylor in September 2018 . Prior to that time, Lalor served for nine years at the United Theological College of the West Indies (UTC), as Warden, Tutor, Graduate Students Coordinator and Head of the Department of Theology. He also served as pastor of the Port Maria Circuit of Baptist Churches for more than 17 years.

Rev. Lalor has been a member of the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU) Executive for more than 20 years; he has served on the Baptist World Alliance Doctrine Commission since 2015, and has been a Member of the Standing Commission of the World Council of Churches Commission on Faith and Order since 2007.

Lalor served as a director of the JBU Mission Agency, and Parish Association Moderator. He is a Justice of the Peace for St. Mary.

His career is underpinned by two Bachelor of Arts degrees in History and Social Studies and Theological Studies; Diploma in Ministerial Studies; and a PhD in Theology, all from the University of the West Indies.

He is married to Sharon Bramwell and together, they share a son, Dominic.

According to the preacher, pursuing God's social justice agenda would result in exposing corruption and criminal elements; renouncing self-centredness and self-preservation; even while improving the quality of life of the most vulnerable; and ensuring that scarce resources like the COVID-19 vaccines were distributed equitably.

Rodney further noted that for Baptists to become God's effective agents and ambassadors of reconciliation, they would need to engage in and subject themselves to "ongoing assessment of their character, convictions and conduct in the light of our unique identity".

He emphasized further, the need for Baptists to be 'all-inclusive' in God's mission; avoid self-serving, self-centred prayers and programs; and live as "spiritually transformed citizens of the kingdom, doing justice, loving mercy and walking humbly with God".

"We are God's agents committed to God's agenda. Let us reaffirm our identity by submitting our wills to the sovereign will of God, and pray for 'Thine O God is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever' amen," Rodney concluded.

BUTT WENT VIRTUAL WITH ITS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Baptist Union of Trinidad and Tobago (BUTT) held its annual Assembly over a two-day period from the 30th to 31st January 2021. The Saturday Business meeting was held using the popular Zoom conferencing application.

This was a first time experience using this forum for Assembly, owing to the Pandemic. The meeting was well attended by over 70 participants and representatives from more than 23 churches. The session was a fruitful one and the discussions went extremely well.



FILE PHOTO

NEW OPERATIONS PLAN

1. The main area of discussion was the rolling out of the **New Operation Plan (OP)**. The OP was streamlined with the **Strategic Plan** presented in Assembly 2020. The goals and objectives are integrated and are structured upon four main pillars:

1. Strengthen Unity
2. Equipping pastors and leaders for effective and committed service
3. Development of Baptist Union Resources and Identity
4. Promoting the 'London Baptist' Brand

GENERAL SECRETARY DESIGNATE/UNDERSTUDY

An understudy to the General Secretary was appointed in the person of Rev. Victor McLeod, Pastor of the Mt. Bethel and Mt. Carmel Baptist Church and trustee of the Board of Directors for the Caribbean Christian Publication - CCP.

ONLINE SUNDAY WORSHIP

On Sunday, January 31, a blend of in-person and online worship service was conducted and live streamed from the Mt. Elvin's Baptist Church, where we all praised and worshipped God in the beauty of holiness. The service was also well attended by worshippers, even though the time

allotted was merely an hour and half.

The Guest Speaker was our very own Rev. Anslem Warrick, who spoke from Ephesians 4: 1- 6 on the topic: **The Strength, Source and Service of Christian Unity**.

This was indeed a unique and blessed experience. Once again we have seen that God is truly omniscient and omnipresent. He orchestrated the events of history so that his people would not be prevented from carrying out the work and ministry of the Kingdom. He ensured that through the very technology used to discredit the things of the Spirit he would be worshipped, glorified and proclaimed throughout.

HOW TO HELP SVG AFTER THE VOLCANO

For the first time in decades a volcano located on the Caribbean island of St. Vincent and the Grenadines erupted on April 9, covering the main island of St Vincent with ash and displacing thousands of people .

This eruption has precipitated a growing humanitarian crisis that some experts believe will last for months.

The National Emergency Management Organization of St. Vincent and the Grenadines (NEMO) said that the volcano had moved into an explosive state and urged residents to evacuate.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines is home to just over 110,000 people, 4,000 of whom are currently living in shelters across the island. Some of the shelters lack basic services, and the entire population of the main island does not have access to clean water and electricity.

According to the Guardian Newspaper, officials on the island are worried about an accelerated COVID-19 outbreak as residents flee affected areas and crowd into shelters and family home .

Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves has thanked world leaders and volunteer efforts for their support of the people affected and displaced by the volcano.

Throughout the pandemic, collaboration among nations has been essential, and Gonsalves announced his support for Global Citizen's Recovery Plan for the



SVG in the wake of a volcanic eruption

World earlier this year to ensure equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines.

Director of the Agency for Public Information (API) Jennifer Richardson, who is currently working with NEMO to coordinate the country's response to the volcanic eruption, told Global Citizen that people who want to support relief efforts in St. Vincent and the Grenadines should refer to organizations working with NEMO.

She is asking persons who want to donate to relief efforts to make their donations through NEMO.

To join the global effort to supply drinking water, basic hygiene items, and cots to those affected by the La Soufrière volcanic eruption, here is a list of organizations working on the ground with NEMO that you can support.

- ♦ St. Vincent and the Grenadines Red Cross (SVGRC)
- ♦ The Salvation Army
- ♦ UNICEF

- ♦ Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA)

The United Nations has also launched a funding appeal to support St. Vincent and the Grenadines, during the crisis and assist with devising a clean-up plan for the volcanic ash that has covered the area.

However, you may also take your donations to any Baptist church or the office of any member association in your country and they will coordinate efforts to send to SVG.

As the residents of St. Vincent and the Grenadines prepare for a months-long relief program to deal with the aftermath of the La Soufrière volcanic eruption, international humanitarian assistance and volunteer efforts will be crucial in helping those affected access basic necessities.

DUAL DISASTER CALLS FOR

Chelston Bradwaits, Director General Emeritus of The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA); and Manuel Otero, Director General of The IICA

The Covid-19 crisis has exposed the vulnerabilities of the economies of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Barbados, Saint Lucia and other small, tourism-dependent Caribbean countries.

These economies typically must contend with a limited availability of arable land, small and often scattered populations, fragile natural environments, an energy import dependency, extreme vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters, as well as high rates of diet-related illnesses. In recent years, these countries have also experienced high levels of external and internal debt.

The grave situation for these small economies was further heightened with the recent eruption of La Soufrière volcano in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The eruption on April 9 at 8:41 in the morning released a column of ashfall that drifted towards the Atlantic Ocean. Since then, subsequent eruptions continued to aggravate the situation. Approximately 20,000 people in St. Vincent had to be evacuated and will not be able to return to their homes for at least three or four months.

Multiple social implications

There has been a disruption in the drinking water supply to most of the island and the presence of smoke and ash has forced the closure of the air space.



Barbados Defence Force organizes aid to SVG

This disaster has multiple implications for St. Vincent, from an economic, health, social and safety perspective. The natural phenomenon is having a particularly detrimental effect on agriculture, as farmers in the affected zone had to be evacuated, abandoning their crops and leaving their animals unattended. The fall-off in agricultural production in the short-term will be severe.

Negative impact on agriculture

Since the 1950s, the economy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines has been based on agriculture, primarily banana production. In recent times, tourism, industry and financial services have become important sectors of the economy.

Regular income generated by banana exports fueled the economic growth of the 80s and the start of the 90s. However, given that the crop is vulnerable to hurricanes, drought and pests, it has weathered serious challenges.

Recently, the country has aimed for agricultural diversification and today St. Vincent exports a wide variety of fruits and vegetables to the United Kingdom and livestock to the Caribbean market. The fishing industry also generates significant income.

The eruption of the volcano will aggravate the situation of the tourism-dependent economies of the Eastern Caribbean, given that its effects have spread to Barbados, Saint Lucia and other neighboring islands.

Agriculture in most of these countries has been negatively affected by the ash fall. This scenario foreshadows an even greater reduction in tourism and systemic daunting challenges for regional food security caused by and aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic respectively.

A DEEPER REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/dual-assault-pandemic-and-volcano-eruption-has-sparked-need-deeper-caribbean-regional>

Extreme vulnerability

Caribbean countries are also extremely vulnerable to natural disasters. Hurricanes are common in the region – the passage of hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017 and Dorian in 2019 are stark reminders of this.

It is important for countries to be prepared to face potential similar events in 2021.

In the Caribbean, a single hurricane can wipe out a small island's annual GDP, with the poor often taking the hardest blow. Preventive measures must be implemented to protect people's lives and income.

Within the context of the volcano eruption, the pandemic and a looming hurricane season from June to November, there is an opportunity to reposition the agrifood sector of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The first step involves solidifying the strategic role of the Caribbean agriculture sector in guaranteeing food security, generating employment and addressing the high incidence of chronic non-communicable diseases.

Time for collaboration

The time has come to engage in joint, collaborative work based on the Regional Food and Nutrition Security Policy approved in 2010 and the Regional Food and Nutrition Security Action Plan 2012-2026, and in response to the call to create a Caribbean Food Plan and a Caribbean Food Security Development Fund.



It is not by chance that at the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Summit in February 2020, Barbados Prime Minister, Honourable Mia Amor Mottley, then chair of the regional organization, asserted that food security is a key issue for the region and invited the private sector to submit proposals aimed at reducing food imports by 25% by 2025.

Deepening regional integration by means of a single, common market and an economic union would be key pillars of economic reconstruction. Consequently, the Caribbean Food Plan must foster joint actions aimed at capitalizing on national comparative advantages such as land, water and markets, as well as drive strategic partnerships between governments and the private sector.

The actions that would allow for repositioning Caribbean agriculture include reducing dependence on extra-regional agri-food imports; strengthening linkages between the agri-food, tourism and health sectors; establishing public-private partnerships in local food production and processing; implementing climate-smart

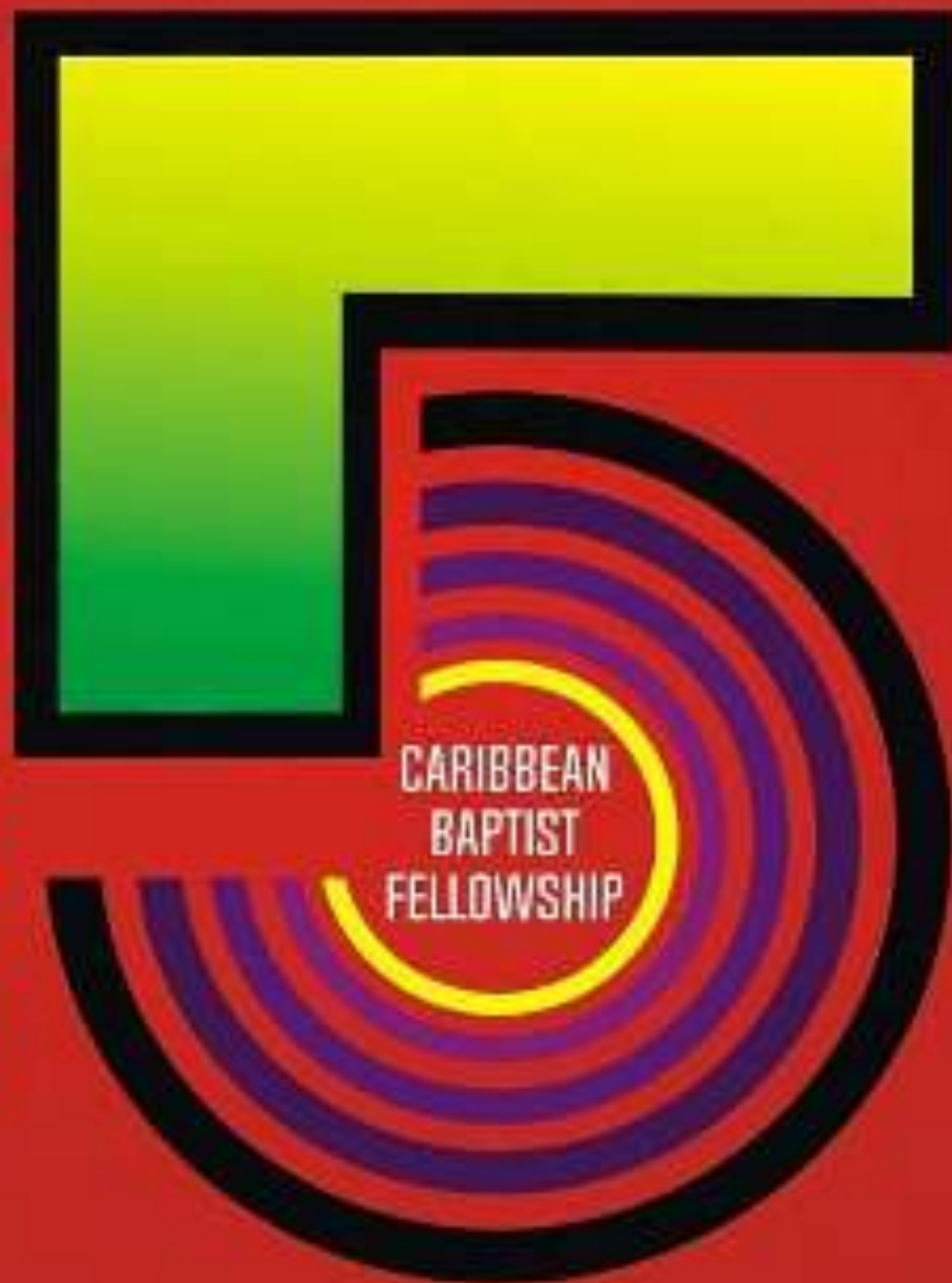
technologies; transitioning towards digital agriculture; building awareness among Caribbean societies of the importance of producing and consuming healthy food; and implementing the Regional Food and Nutrition Security Policy approved in 2010.

Implementing this agenda will require coordination among national, regional and international agencies. The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) stands ready to serve a bridge for cooperation and as a unifying force in this broad partnership, working side by side with national and international partners to lay the foundation for a “new” agriculture sector in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and by extension the Caribbean region as a whole.

IICA conveys its solidarity to the government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and all Caribbean nations, reaffirming its commitment to align forces and working towards a more sustainable, diversified and resilient agriculture.

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