

DEC
2021

Caribbean Baptist Fellowship

CBF NOTES



**Johnson
Returns to
LOCAL
PASTORATE**

**Don't look now but
GBV IS IN YOUR
CHURCH**

**SVG
PICKING UP
THE PIECES**

Leadership is

HAREWOOD

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.



Gillian Francis, Co-editor



Santana Morris, co-Editor

One of the most remarkable and phenomenal wonders of the Caribbean is the Mighty Kaieteur Falls. Nestled in the lush green Amazon Forests of Guyana, the Mighty Kaieteur is inarguably the eight wonder of the world.

Kaieteur is the world's largest fall by the volume of water flowing over it. Located on the Potaro River in the Kaieteur National Park, in Essequibo, Guyana, the Mighty Kaieteur is 226 metres (741 ft) high when measured from its plunge over a sandstone and conglomerate cliff to the first break. It then flows over a series of steep cascades that, when included in the measurements, bring the total height to 251 metres (822 ft). While many falls have greater height, few have the combination of height and water volume, and Kaieteur is among the most powerful waterfalls in the world with an average flow rate of 663 cubic metres per second (23,400 cubic feet per second).

Kaieteur Falls is about four times higher than the Niagara Falls, on the border between Canada and the United States, and about twice the height of the Victoria Falls, on the border of Zambia and Zimbabwe in Africa. It is a single drop waterfall.

Upriver from the falls, the Potaro Plateau stretches out to the distant escarpment of the Pakaraima Mountains. The Potaro River empties into the Essequibo River, which is one of the longest and widest rivers in South America and the longest river in Guyana. You simply cannot go to the land of many waters without visiting the Mighty Kaieteur.



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Highlights



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In a moment when tiredness seems normative and variants seem to stretch into the future, we are to be forerunners of expectant hope...For the hope of Jesus belongs to all people in all places ...



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Women tend to think that they need to shrink themselves to seem non-intimidating. But women must gain the confidence to know that we are in the room because **we earned the right to be there ...**



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Six months later on my return to St Vincent and the Grenadines...a sense of rebirth was palpable. The skies were now sunny, the ocean was clear, and the land was green with trees and shrubs. There was hope.



EDITOR'S EDICTS

Dorrett R Campbell

The corona virus with its many derivatives is still a clear and present danger. We must continue to adhere to the protocols and we simply must ensure that all our eligible family members become vaccinated.

I am a 'vaxer'. I declare it unequivocally so. When the Coronavirus hit Jamaica in March 2020, I was scared. There's very little of which I am afraid, but, tell me: how do you fight an invisible microscopic enemy that has the potential to climb its way through your mouth or your nostrils, grip your throat, and take residence in your lungs; sitting there until it squeezes the very life out of you? Kinda like how those police officers stepped on George's neck until they squeezed the very life out of him huh? A survivor told me that a COVID19 attack is worse.

Friends I loved became victims of this dreaded virus. I too had a major scare when contact tracing of an infected colleague came right to my door. I had a narrow escape and I had no intention of finding myself in such an emotional traumatic space again. I took all the precautions and observed all the protocols after my first scare; but more importantly I prayed privately and publicly that God would lead scientists to the vaccine as early as possible; so when that day came, I joined the line at the first blitz that appealed to my age cohort. I am now fully vaccinated and looking forward to my booster; I breathe easier, but I still adhere religiously, to all the protocols.

More than a year later, I am still COVID-free, praise God! but social interaction, which kept my brain and body healthy has gone virtual or rather virtually non-existent, but that's a really small price to pay to remain alive—don't you think?

So where am I going with this now?

The corona virus with its several variants and strains is still a clear and present danger to all of us in the Caribbean, especially in this Christmas season when all the spirits are seemingly flowing free and high. There really is no space for



**COVID: A CLEAR AND
PRESENT DANGER**

relaxing the protocols now, and we simply must ensure that all our eligible family members become vaccinated. COVID is no joke and although the vaccine may not prevent infection, the World Health Organisation (WHO) says it builds our resilience against the several variants and gives significant protection against severe diseases and death.

Oh my G...Omicron!

No sooner had we contended with the very contagious deadly Delta variant than the Omicron has reared its death-gripping head. The World Health Organisation (WHO) says the Omicron is a variant of concern based on the evidence that it has several mutations that may impact how it behaves.

Some researchers describe Omicron as a storm not a hurricane, noting that it is less likely to be as grave as the Delta strain but it is easily transmissible.

COVID19 A CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER

Dorrett R Campbell

However, the US-based Centre for Disease Control (CDC) which has been collaborating with global public health and industry partners to learn about Omicron, says, it doesn't yet know how easily Omicron spreads, the severity of illness it causes, or how well available vaccines and medications work against it.

Whether it's Delta or Omicron or some other strain, we simply have to adapt to the new normal and learn to live differently. Adaptation requires some very simple yet effective strategies: keep your distance, especially from crowds; wear your mask; don't touch your face; wash your hands regularly and take the vaccine.

Vaccine inequity

While I sermonise about taking the COVID vaccine, I am painfully aware that vaccines and other public health measures are not readily accessible to everyone, everywhere. Research suggests that enough vaccines have been produced in 2021 to cover 70 per cent of the global population of 7.8 billion. However, most vaccines are being reserved for wealthy countries, while other vaccine-producing countries are restricting the export of doses so they can ensure that their own citizens get vaccinated first".

Inequitable vaccine distribution is not only leaving millions or billions of people vulnerable to the deadly virus, it is also allowing even more deadly variants to emerge and spread across the globe.

In the 15-member Caribbean Community with a population of more than 18 million, only one member state, Antigua & Barbuda, boasts more than 50% of its population fully vaccinated to date. In Jamaica for example, at the time of writing, only 20% of the population has been fully vaccinated. Despite the fact that many have refused to take the vaccines, it is doubtful whether we would have had adequate doses to make COVID vaccination mandatory. Vaccine inequity leaves lower income countries at the mercy of COVID-19. Well-supplied countries must urgently deliver the doses they promised.

The Haitian reality

Haiti with the largest population of more than eight million people in the Community, has access to two types of vaccines and has only 0.6% of its population vaccinated. As at December 23, statistics show that Haiti has administered a mere 190,538 vaccine doses; less than a drop in the bucket for such a densely populated nation. There are nearly 26,000 cases of infection with an impressively low rate of 765 deaths and more than 22,000 recoveries. These stats are looking up for Haiti, but with low vaccine rates and little testing, hospital officials say it is difficult to know how accurate Haiti's COVID statistics are.

With sardine-packed public transportation and crowded living conditions in this impoverished Member State, Haiti should have had a higher contagion rate than has been reported, but according to one of its officials, the population is much more resistant to the virus because of strong immune systems built up by exposure to many other bugs over years. This may very well be so, we aren't certain, but what we do know for sure is that Haiti needs help to do significantly more testing.

A stay-alive Christmas

During this Christmas, we may be at our most vulnerable, rubbing shoulders with crowded shoppers; hugging friends and family visiting from abroad. That's who we are as Caribbean peoples: we lyme, we love and we laugh hard; and Christmas is the time of year when we do so with less inhibitions; but as we love this season, let's not forget that the coronavirus still lurks and lingers stealthily looking to crawl into your lungs through your mouth, your eyes or your nostrils. Let's keep out all the variants. Wear your mask, wash and sanitise your hands regularly and keep your hands out of your face. And when it's your turn, make sure to get vaccinated. If your vaccination involves two doses, it's important to receive both in order to have the maximum protection.

Get the facts; take the vax and have a healthy stay-alive Christmas!



LEARNING TO LIVE DIFFERENTLY

In this Christmas Season, the pleasure is mine to greet you on behalf of the officers in Guadeloupe.

It is already two years since the COVID19 pandemic, has majorly interrupted and impacted the whole world. The aftershocks are still lingering with us. There seems to be no end to our misery. A new and more contagious variant, has arisen and we don't know yet what life will be like; but do not despair, the prophet Isaiah said darkness will not always reign on earth, and light will shine from the bosom of the earth.

The coming of the son of God on earth is the best thing that could have happened to humanity. Jesus brought love, hope, salvation, peace, joy to fill the hearts of men and women who put their trust in the son of the living God. We have been experiencing difficult times; for months our fellowship has repaired to virtual communications. We are learning to live differently in a society where people become more and more self-centered and forget the Creator.

Christmas MESSAGE OF LOVE

Dominique Dick, President

May this Christmas season, beyond all the festivities and the commercial movements, remind us of the main reason of Christ's birth.

Let us bear in mind our brothers and sisters in certain regions who are touched by natural disasters, particularly, Haiti, having to go through the tragic death of its president, Jovenel Moise.

Christmas is about love and solidarity; this is the spirit we want to share in our CBF family. This solidarity should be seen in our different exchanges, in our prayers, in how we assist and support one another during natural disasters in the Caribbean.

I urge you to enjoy these moments; keeping in mind all these values of the return of the world's Saviour.

We will face a lot of challenges; this is why we need everyone of you, in your respective regions to continue praying and supporting one another, in order to strengthen the existing, and catch a glimpse of a better future.

It is not too early to wish you a Happy New Year 2022. We hope that it brings hope and joy to everyone.

May the peace and grace of the Lord be with you in the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Christmas is about love and solidarity ... This is the spirit we want to share in our CBF family.



LIVING WITH EXPECTANT HOPE



Forerunners of EXPECTANT HOPE

Elijah Brown, BWA, General Secretary

In a moment when tiredness seems normative and variants seem to stretch into the future, we are to be forerunners of expectant hope

The birth of Jesus is the hope of the world. Christmas is a portrait of hope embodied in the fragility of an infant. It is not the hope of a sudden, violent overthrow, but of a gentle dawning that calls to the faithful to live in the expectant hope of the kingdom of God.

Nestled into the arms of his mother and father, Jesus was taken to the temple to be consecrated to the Lord. What seemed on the surface a normal act of faithful family life was suddenly transformed. Three times described as being filled with the Holy Spirit, Simeon immediately recognized in the infant Jesus the fulfillment of an ancient promise of hope and salvation for all nations. Arriving at that very moment, the prophetess Anna joined in exultation, weaving together a testimony of men and women rejoicing that Jesus is the redeemer.

Though the circumstances were not what they anticipated and the timing longer than they expected, Simeon and Anna were forerunners who lived in expectant hope. For many around the world, the circumstances of this Christmas season are not what was envisioned. The wait has been much longer than anticipated. But like Simeon and Anna, we are called to live with expectant hope. The promises of God are true. What God has said he will do, he will do. In a moment when tiredness seems normative and variants seem to stretch into the future, we are to be forerunners of expectant hope. Hope that nurtures the soul and strengthens the imagination.

As forerunners, Simeon and Anna were satisfied in seeing the infant Jesus. They did not have the privilege of

receiving Jesus' incredible teaching, seeing his miraculous restorations of health, embracing the reward of relationship, or marveling at the redemption of his resurrection. For Simeon and Anna, the promise of Jesus in the tenderness of a newborn that cooed and cried was enough. Their hope was not dependent upon their own restoration, rescue, or reward but in the satisfaction of the presence of Jesus. Beyond the circumstances, consumerism, and self-centeredness that seems to permeate, forerunners of expectant hope embrace satisfaction in the presence of Jesus.

This Christmas is filled with discordant circumstances – the loss of many lives, lockdowns and long waits, and the difficulty of a global pandemic that is fraying many societies. Like Simeon and Anna, we are to resist resignation to fear and despondency and eschew self-righteous self-advancement. We are to praise and trust, and in our weary societies, live as forerunners of an expectant hope. God can take your seeds of hope just as he took the infant Jesus and work his miracles.

Let us live as a church that extends seeds of hope to our estranged family, neglected neighbors, and to the migrants and homeless refugees. Let us live as a church that extends hope to the persecuted, political antagonist, and the dying prisoner. For the hope of Jesus belongs to all people in all places even when the wait is long and salvation seems its most fragile. BWA Baptists, let us live as forerunners of expectant hope.

On behalf of the Baptist World Alliance and Baptists in 128 countries and territories, Merry Christmas!



**MERRY
CHRISTMAS**



From the Warrick Family

Anslem Warrick, EST

Christian hope and true biblical faith begins not with a denial of the realities facing us but with a realistic and honest view of the challenges and difficulties with which we are faced.

My dear brothers and sisters:

Holy and hopeful Christmas Greetings to you from the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship.

In normal times, the days leading up to Christmas are filled with cleaning, cooking and commerce. Office parties and functions would go late into the night and there would be an air of happiness and cheer all around.

But these are not normal times. The world continues to battle a pandemic which seems to be defying all medical, political and military strategies. Just when it appears as if the battle is being won, the virus mutates, and returns more virulent than before.

In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are confronted day after day with news of international and climatic disasters such as flooding, earthquakes; military coups, assassinations, migration issues in Europe and the Americas, racial tensions which frequently erupt into riots, mental health crises, growing national anger and anxiety and a general lack of trust in both political and religious leaders.

There are those who would use these events as a means of instilling fear; fear of judgment, fear of end time tribulation, fear of hell and damnation. Unfortunately, there are those who succumb to these fear mongers. Then there are those who have chosen to blindly deny the existence of the pandemic and all the other terrible realities facing our world, instead of approaching this season with the joy, peace and hope with which it was intended.

The Bible challenges us as believers to have a different perspective and a different response. In the gospel of Luke chapter 21, Jesus responds to the disciples' question about the timing and signs of the end of all things. He first of all predicts and gives the warning signs before the destruction of the Jerusalem temple (Luke 21:5-24). He then goes on to tell them of signs preceding the coming of the Son of Man with power and great glory (Luke 21:23-27). Many of the signs are similar to the aforementioned disasters now confronting our world. He speaks of strange cosmic happenings in the skies, moon and stars, nations in turmoil, perplexity and terror. But then in verse 27 he says when all these things happen 'stand and look up, for your salvation is near'. Jesus' intent in pointing to these signs was not to scare his disciples but to encourage and strengthen their faith in the God who keeps His promises.

Christian hope and true biblical faith begins not with a denial of the realities facing us but with a realistic and honest view of the challenges and difficulties with which we are faced.

Christian hope also involves the application of a biblical understanding of trials and disasters. For those who are not living under God's rule and Christ's Lordship these signs are an opportunity to change their ways and to turn their hearts over to Jesus Christ. For the believer it encourages a greater sense of alertness (stand) and it encourages hopefulness (look up).

At this Christmas time when we reflect on and celebrate the breaking in of God into the world to save a lost and hopeless humanity, let us not yield to the temptation, give in to anxiety, fear and terror. Instead, let us be encouraged to greater alertness to God's sovereign activity and may our faith in his promises be strengthened so that we could be of greater service to God and to our fellow human beings.

Anslem Warrick, EST

Young people will find it increasingly difficult to find employment and with unemployment comes the increasing scourge of crime.

We function in a world which has been drastically altered by the ongoing COVID19 pandemic and its concomitant challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a dramatic loss of human life worldwide and presents an unprecedented challenge to public health, food systems, education and the world of work.

According to a WHO report of April 2021, the economic and social disruption caused by the pandemic is devastating: tens of millions of people are at risk of falling into extreme poverty, while the number of undernourished people, currently estimated at nearly 690 million, could increase by up to 132 million by the end of the year, confinement measures by health and governmental authorities have strongly affected supply and demand in many sectors, particularly tourism, reducing household incomes and private consumption Education systems have been severely impacted.

A recent UNESCO report notes that “the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented educational disruption in the Caribbean Small Island Developing States. Most governments in the English and Dutch Caribbean sub-region have temporarily closed educational institutions in an attempt to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic”.

School closures have left 7 million learners and over 90 000 teachers across 23 countries and territories in the Caribbean sub-region grappling with a new reality of distance-learning. Even with the reopening of schools and the authorities attempting to safeguard children and teachers from contracting the virus by implementing mandatory vaccination, millions of students have not returned to the classroom.



Teachers and teachers’ unions are complaining that virtual teaching is causing both mental and emotional stress. Although many of these challenges are being met and dealt with by governments, there still lingers many ongoing battles, such as getting COVID-19 vaccines to everyone who needs them, building trust within communities wary of their governments and fearful of or hesitant to be vaccinated.

Young people will find it increasingly difficult to find employment; and with unemployment comes the increasing scourge of crime. The impact of this COVID-19 pandemic has also rippled through our churches and by extension the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship. But in the same way we have weathered the effects of globalization, destructive storms and hurricanes, and other disasters, so too we shall overcome this pandemic.

We can rejoice even in the midst of trying and difficult circumstances that our Sovereign God has sustained, protected and provided for his people. He has also given us the grace and wherewithal to carry out his work of witnessing to his love and care for his creatures and His creation.

The Ravages of Haiti

One of our member islands has been particularly hard hit by multiple disasters within the months of July and August.

On the 7th July they faced the assassination of their President H.E. Jovenel Moise. This was followed in little over a month by a 7.2 magnitude earthquake on 14th August.

As if that were not enough, Haiti was pummeled on 16th August by Tropical Storm Grace leading to widespread flooding, more deaths and additional loss of homes, schools, churches and businesses.

Haiti needed then and still needs today, our help and support through our financial gifts, our material relief and support and our spiritual upliftment in prayers.

The CBF through its Communications Ministry issued a press release in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago condemning the assassination of the President and the attempted murder of his wife, extending condolences to and expressing solidarity with the people of Haiti.

EST NOTES

Anslem Warrick, EST

Volcanic Eruption in SVG

The Soufriere Volcano in SVG began erupting on 8th April 2021. Several eruptions have taken place since then. Thankfully, no deaths or major injuries have been reported.

However, there was massive displacement of persons who were evacuated from the North to the South of the Island. Some persons are being housed at homes, shelters and evacuation centers.

Six Baptist Churches were evacuated and at least one Baptist Church is being used as a center. The CBF again stepped in to provide humanitarian and financial assistance and many individual churches also sent much needed supplies and funds directly to the SVG Baptist Association.

Hurricane in San Andres

The CBF's newest member body, San Andres Baptist Association, was hit days apart by two devastating category four and five hurricanes.

The island of Providence with a population of about sixty families was totally destroyed. Many of these families are now in shelters on the main island San Andres. Relief efforts continue with the rebuilding of homes, business and

infrastructure. CBF has provided a grant to assist with the rebuilding of churches. We will continue to solicit financial donations towards continued relief efforts.

Standing together in Prayer

In response to the many disasters in the region and around the world, Caribbean Baptists were called to a season of prayer beginning with a two-and-a-half-hour virtual prayer session held on Saturday 4th September, 2021.

This time of prayer focused specifically on Haiti, however we also remembered our other brothers and sisters both in the Caribbean and the wider world suffering natural and man-made disasters e.g. San Andres, Providence and St Catherine, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Cuba, Germany and Myanmar.

Eighteen conventions participated in this powerful day of prayer and we were particularly blessed by the presence of Rev Tomas Makay, President of the BWA and Rev Marsha Scipio, Director of Baptist World Aid who also led us in a prayer for Haiti.

We believe that Haiti will rise and recover as a result of our prayers and our material support.

Certificate in Pastoral Ministry



Anslem Warrick, EST

The certificate in Pastoral Ministry (CIPM) program which commenced on 8 January 2017, in Trinidad and Tobago completed its first 3-year cycle in August 2020 with the final session being done virtually due to the COVID19 Pandemic. Fifteen students from five Caribbean countries namely, Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago completed the certificate program.

Regrettably, we mourn the loss of one of our graduates, Rev Dennis James, husband of Marcellene James and president of the Independent Baptist Mission Churches of TnT. His certificate will be awarded posthumously.

Caribbean lecturers included Rev Dr Glenroy Lalor, Rev Dr Neville Callam, Rev Everton Jackson, Rev Anslem Warrick and Rev Dr Randy Von Kanel from the Northern Caribbean Baptist Theological Seminary (NCBTS). Professors from South Western Baptist Theological Seminary included Rev Dr Harry Lewis, Dr Deron Biles, and Dr Greg Smith. Graduation exercises were delayed due to the Pandemic but are now scheduled to take place virtually on the 15th January, 2022.

This program is made possible through a partnership between CBF, the Azariah MacKenzie Scholarship Fund and the NCBTS.

Graduation exercises were delayed due to the Pandemic but are now scheduled to take place virtually on the 15th January, 2022 at 4:00 pm AST (3:00 EST).

This graduation promises to be a grand affair with a virtual choir rendition by students, an inspirational message, virtual distribution of certificates and prayer for the students. It is also expected that we will see a large turn-out of family members, friends, Caribbean Baptists member body leaders and church members.

The link for the ceremony will be sent out shortly.

Make plans to be there and support our emerging Caribbean leaders.



LEADERSHIP IS BRENDA HAREWOOD



Rev. Brenda K. Harewood, President and Superintendent Pastor of the Guyana Missionary Baptist Church-Lott Carey is an internationally renowned preacher and educator; an ecumenical missional leader who is involved in global community development, global popular education, writing and organizing, to promote radical discipleship that encourages renewal in individuals, churches and faith-based movements. She works with global partners to usher in the reign of God through peace, justice, discipleship and radical hospitality. She is also the president and founder of Imago Dei Leadership Development Center.

Harewood, who is one of our vice presidents, has been the director of the Lott Carey Pastoral Excellence Program since 2003. She is also the Lott Carey Regional Liaison for the Caribbean and South America and currently serves on the Commission for Theological Education and Leadership Formation of the Baptist World Alliance.

CBF Notes caught up with her in between one of her busy stints and decided let you have a peek into the mind and heart of this servant leader:

CBFN. Rev Harewood, thank you for agreeing to share some insights on leadership with our CBF family.

It is an honor and privilege to have this opportunity to share a bit of my ministry journey with my CBF family through the CBF Notes. I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to our EST, Rev. Ansem Warrick, Sis Dorrett R. Campbell and the rest of the CBF media team for making this possible.

CBFN. Share with us a little about yourself and how you decided to respond to a call to pastoral ministry, especially in a patriarchal society.

BH. My response to God's call to the Gospel ministry was a gradual process. I grew up in a Christian home and made a personal salvation decision when I was about nine years old. I was subsequently baptized and became an active member of my local church. I started teaching Sunday school at age 12; led service during junior church and soon after started bringing the morning message at junior church. I was too short to be seen from the lectern, so I stood on a small chair for my speaking engagements. I served in a variety of roles in my local church and later at a denominational and ecumenical level. In my late teens, I started coming to grips with the reality that God was calling me to the Gospel ministry.

With the support of my family and my church community I embarked on the journey of preparation.

According to Bell Hooks - "Patriarchy has no gender," patriarchy does not just describe male actions of domination, but also how most organizations, including the church, function. Proponents of oppression, including patriarchy, try to convince the world that "things are the way they are because they have always been that way, that there are no alternatives and that they will never change." However, from an early age I defied specified gender roles and was convinced that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

CBFN. What made you decide to serve in the Baptist denomination?

BH. My Christian formation was in the Guyana Missionary Baptist Church-Lott Carey. I grew up in the Mt Zion Baptist Church, a GMBC member church. As my journey progressed, I had a privilege of serving in ecumenical settings through the Guyana Council of Churches and the Caribbean Council of Churches. Additionally, my theological training took place at interdenominational institutions with Methodist (Duke University and Boston University) and Lutheran leanings (University of Bonn in Germany).

So



Patients at the A Carlyle Miller Health Center at Long Creek



GMBC Founding Leaders Rev. Dr. Allan and Erma Miller



Seekers Youth Camp at Camp Somerville

Although I have remained a Baptist, I understand that I am a part of the church universal, and that ecumenism is an important aspect of the Christian witness.

CBFN. Let's pause here to take a look at the formation of the Guyana Baptist Missionary for which you have been the third superintendent pastor:

The Guyana Missionary Baptist Church-Lott Carey (GMBC) is a Christian denomination that answered the call to Christian service in 1960. The mission of the GMBC is to strive faithfully to fulfill God's commission to the church through worship, evangelism, Christian formation, mission outreach, and Christian stewardship.

Founding members

The GMBC was founded by the Reverend Dr Allan Carlyle Miller and Rev Erma Miller. Dr Miller a Guyanese American who was trained as a physician and Minister of the Gospel in the Southern region of the United States of America. As soon as circumstances allowed, he returned to his native home, Guyana, to answer God's call to medical ministry. His wife and ministry partner served alongside him through the years. Rev Erma Miller, a licensed Nurse who received her training from the Georgetown Hospital and the University of Cambridge, England; she also earned

an Associate Degree in Child Psychology from Taft Institute in Bronx New York; and a Diploma in Pastoral Ministry from the Wesleyan Bible College, Georgetown Guyana.

New plants

In 1960 the Millers and a group of believers planted a new church in Beterverwagting on the East Coast of Demerara. On October 16, 1960, this church plant was organized into the Calvary Baptist Church. They also planted a new church in Campbellville, a newly developing community in Georgetown. On April 12, 1962, this church plant in Campbellville was organized into a church and they became the Mount Zion Baptist Church. These congregations developed early childhood learning centres and the Mt Zion Church also housed a health clinic that served indigent persons in the community.

Medical mission

In the early 1970's the Millers answered God's call to Linden/Soesdyke highway for medical missions. They traveled weekly to various communities rendering medical services to people under trees. Eventually they built a log cabin and served patients from there. But because the Millers were convinced that the people in this area also needed spiritual healing, they established the Long Creek

Baptist Church (1973).

Growing ministry

Over the years the ministry at long creek expanded to include Camp Somerville (1973); the Carlyle Miller Cottage Hospital and Health Centre (1977); Long Creek Farming Project; Bob's (community groceries in 1978); and the Lonnie A. Simon School Feeding Centre. (1979). In 1974 the GMBC also expanded its ministry to Kuru Kururu, New Town and planted M.L Wilson Baptist Church there. On January 8, 1979, Dr Miller answered God's call to eternal rest.

On January 15, 1979, the GMBC Board Trustees unanimously called Rev Erma Miller to lead GMBC. Under her leadership GMBC launched a weekly radio ministry that was broadcast throughout Guyana, Suriname, and in many Caribbean nations. She expanded the Somerville Camp, planted Yarrowkabra Baptist Church (1984) and the Abrams Creek Baptist Church ((1989) She also led expansion of projects in all GMBC congregations which included new church buildings at Long Creek, Calvary, and Mount Zion. Rev Erma Miller also played a significant role in developing GMBC leadership capacity. She facilitated this by providing scholarships for clergy and lay leaders training.

LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES

Consequently, under her leadership GMBC moved from being a circuit of churches with one pastor to a network of congregations with multiple trained clergy leaders.

Rev Erma Miller also played a significant role in expanding GMBC national and international relations. The Government of Guyana under the leadership of President Desmond Hoyte recognized her outstanding Service to God and humanity by awarding her the National Medal of Service Award. In May 2012 Miller retired from active ministry in the GMBC. In recognition of her outstanding Service to the GMBC community the GMBC board of Trustees unanimously appointed her Superintendent Emeritus. She answered God's call to eternal rest on 14 November 2014.

The Clarion Call

In May 2012 the GMBC Board of Trustees voted unanimously to call Rev Brenda Harewood, daughter of the Millers, to lead the GMBC. On December 2, 2012, Rev Brenda Harewood was consecrated the 3rd Superintendent Pastor in the GMBC-Lott Carey (GMBC). She was ordained by the GMBC in 1988.

Rev Harewood served as Youth Coordinator from 1980-1988, she served as student minister in various GMBC congregation and as probationary Pastor at Calvary and Long Creek Baptist Churches. She has served as Deputy Superintendent of GMBC since 1991.

CBFN. An interesting and intriguing story there Rev Harewood. Share with us some of the challenges you encountered while growing this ministry. How did you respond to those challenges?

BH. Ministry, like all other professions, has its challenges. I have found that addressing these quickly and forthrightly is the key to striving and thriving.



Consecration service for Rev. Brenda Harewood as GMBC President and superintendent pastor

Some of the key challenges I have faced in my current ministry capacity are:

1. Setting Boundaries

All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one. Matthew 5:37."

I had to learn the hard way that I can juggle multiple responsibilities, but that I can only do them one at a time. Learning the importance of establishing boundaries on my time and space is essential. So, clergy meeting can only be about that — At this meeting I must be fully present and available to my clergy team. This means that during this meeting I am not keeping up with texts and e-mail. It also means that date night with Philip, the love of my life, is only date night. However, honoring these boundaries necessitates, that when someone asks me to move past a boundary, I say, "NO."

I have learned and am still learning that a boundary is not a flimsy wish, but a critical method of taking ownership of my own life. Boundaries are also critical to preventing burnout, making room for selfcare, maintaining good relationships, especially with my spouse, kids, grandchildren, friends, and colleagues.

2. Honing my effectiveness as a leader

"Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers 1 Timothy 4:16"

have learned that knowing and understanding my own strengths and weaknesses and maximizing my unique value are a critical part of increasing my self-awareness and reinforcing the need for my continuous growth and development. To facilitate this, I strive to be proactive in setting goals, establishing timelines and deadlines so that I can remain focused on always offering my best and working diligently to produce the outcomes that matter most to God, humanity, the church I am called to serve.

3. Building and leading a team

"Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace. 1 Peter 4:8-10"

BH. I have learned that ministry takes place in community hence effective leadership requires building and leading a team.

This required learning to foster team spirit, establishing team norms, providing moral and spiritual support; engendering a spirit of collaboration and finding the grace and courage to effectively take over and lead a group I have inherited.



GMBC Women's Council

4. Guiding Change

Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:21-23"

Throughout life change is inevitable. The challenge of managing, mobilizing, understanding, and leading change requires knowing how to mitigate consequences, overcome resistance to change, and learning facilitate team members reactions to change.

CBFN. Those are four remarkable leadership principles you have shared Rev. Despite the challenges, I have noted tangible evidence of growth in this ministry. Would you like to share some other major achievements since you assumed leadership?

BH. The capacity building of clergy and lay leaders has been one of the primary foci under my leadership. To this end I have facilitated opportunities for persons in the GMBC community to participate in leadership conferences, and other leadership development opportunities.

Additionally, I have done significant fund development for the Erma Scholarship fund and since its establishment in 2012 GMBC has awarded approximately 20 scholarships that have supported the tertiary education of persons in the GMBC community.

We continue to partner with the Ministry of Public Health to provide quality health care at the A. Carlyle Miller Health Centre at Long Creek. Through faithful and consistent advocacy, the Ministry of Public Health has improved its service to this clinic by expanding the staff, improving physical facility, and replacing the solar system for electricity.

We also continue to provide various other outreach programs through our local churches. Some ongoing projects are our learning clubs, that provide academic tutoring and support for primary and high school children. Our congregation also serve as food distribution centres that provide food hampers and various household items to families in the communities.

Due to the pandemic, our evangelism outreach has had several setbacks. However, through creative and innovative work, we have been able to use our virtual platforms to reach new audiences.

CBFN. What has 'shepherding' been like for you in a multicultural society such as Guyana?

BH. At an early age I learned that all people are created in the image of God and are therefore worthy of God's love; the love of self; and the love of neighbour. The GMBC community is a very diverse community.

I am aware that cultural differences can cause some challenges. However, with awareness and intentionality we can overcome many cultural difficulties. Some key tips for working in a diverse context are:

Flexibility: a multicultural environment always demands adaptability. Flexibility ensures that the people I encounter do not feel I am judging them by their ethnicity, religion, or race. They must know that I affirm their humanity and that their personal qualities are valued above the colour of their skin or ethnicity.

Respect: It is important to develop an understanding for different cultures and values and respect those differences. This means learning not to look down on anyone who does not confirm to my beliefs, and that I must be prepared to go out of the way to accommodate others at times.

No Stereotyping: It is necessary to avoid sweeping generalizations, I have learned that stereotypes are very fallible, therefore the best way to get to know a person is through observation and interaction.

Fairness: Regardless of the religion, ethnic or cultural background of a person, everyone must be treated fairly. As a Leaders I try to always choose persons for a specific task and to place them in leadership roles based on their capabilities and potentials alone. fairness demands that each person get the task he or she deserves.

CBFN. Are there peculiar challenges that confront women in pastoral leadership; if so, what are they and how do you think women ought to respond to them?

BH. Women pastoral leaders continue to face some unique challenges. Below I have indicated some of the common challenges and some creative solutions to these challenges.

LEADING IN A PATRIARCHY



Preparing food hampers to support families during the Pandemic

Being treated equally: Women pastoral leaders must prove themselves over and over to male counterparts that are often far less qualified than they. My advice for women pastoral leaders everywhere is to stay the course, continue to hone your skills such as your communication skills, leadership development, and emotional intelligence. Stand with confidence and continue to serve, speak up and be heard.

Building a Sisterhood: Women pastoral leaders can find it challenging to garner support from other women. It is important to realize that women have internalized the sexist teachings of the church. Women pastoral leaders need to re-educate the church; they should direct their focus to the younger women and men so that they can empower them to know who they truly are in God.

Tackling Imposter Syndrome: Many female pastoral leaders are unable to internalize their accomplishments. This issue must be tackled at the root. We must own the image of God in us and know that we are worthy.

By tackling imposter syndrome, women pastors will continue to emerge as strong and excellent leaders.

Standing in their Success : Some women pastoral leaders shy away from speaking on their accomplishments for fear of



Some members of the GMBC Clergy Council

being boastful or conceited. Women tend to think that they need to shrink themselves to seem non-intimidating. But women must gain the confidence to know that we are in the room because we earned the right to be there, and we therefore belong there. We must ensure that we continue to be voices of truth and justice.

CBFN. Let's focus a bit on your role in the CBF. What has your journey been like as the lone woman Vice President of the CBF?

The GMBC community is elated to be a part of the CBF family. We have found the CBF community to be welcoming, supportive, and encouraging. I deem it a privilege and an honor to serve the CBF community as one of its vice-presidents. I am grateful to all the women who have served through the years on the CBF executive in various capacities and who have paved the way for this generation of women leaders. I pray that many of the Conventions and or Associations in CBF would learn from CBF's Gender inclusive example and find the courage to recognize and incorporate the gifts of all their believers especially women in their communities.

CBFN. What are your views on the future of the CBF's Regional presence; what do you see as the major obstacles to the growth and development of the CBF and what

are some of the solutions and responses you would propose at this time?

BH. CBF is operating in the Caribbean region where all the countries are classified as developing countries and many of these nations are still grappling with the effect of post colonialism. CBF member bodies are relatively small but diverse in terms of geography and population, culture, social development, and financial resources. Additionally, we must face the challenges of frequent natural disasters.

CBF member bodies share similarities and challenges. On the one hand we are emerging as independent church bodies who are recovering from withdrawal of resources and personnel of international mission agencies. I believe that God is calling CBF to realize that we are stronger together and that God can use us as a body to expand the Christian witness across our region through collaboration and cooperation. For this to be fully realized, CBF members must step up and step out in faith and truly support this body by giving generously of our time, talent, and resources.

CBF is poised to be leading Christian body in our region if we all offer our full support.

LEADERSHIP IS BRENDA HAREWOOD



L-R GMBC Youth Leaders Retreat and Men's Council retreat

The pandemic has provided us with unique opportunities to connect virtually so we now have additional ways to learn from, to share with and support each other.

CBFN. What do you believe are important qualities of church leaders and pastors?

Church leaders should be active listeners, compassionate missionaries, generous givers, forgiving servants with the capacity to love unconditionally.

CBFN. What resounding sermonic note on which to end! Rev Harewood, on behalf of CBF Communications team, I thank you for dropping by and share your thoughts on leadership. This has been truly an enriching and inspiring dialogue which will certainly be a blessing to our readers, even as it has blessed me.

BH. It has been my pleasure. Thank you so much for having me.

Rev Brenda Harewood is a graduate of the Wesleyan Bible Institute; (Diploma in Christian Ministry) Shaw University; (BA in Philosophy and Religion and BA in Public Administration) and the Divinity School at Duke University (M. Div. and TH.M.) She did post graduate studies at the Boston university and the University of Bonn, in Germany.

Some of Rev. Harewood's other professional ministry experiences include: Assistant Camp Director of Camp Rockfish (Fayetteville NC); Research Assistant for the Karl Barth Professor at the University of Bonn (Bonn Germany); Campus Minister Duke University Chapel (Durham NC); Research Assistant Boston School of Theology .



Sports Day at GBMC





JOHNSON



PHILLIPPO BAPTIST



HYDE RILEY

“For those of us who have this call upon our lives, there is nothing that can compare to exercising this vocation in the knowledge that it is God who has called you, and despite all the vagaries and vicissitudes, it is this assurance of call that takes precedence.” #Johnson

Johnson RECALLED TO PASTORATE

CBF NOTES that First Vice President of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), the Rev Karl B Johnson who has served as General Secretary of the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU) for the past 20 years, has decided to hang up his executive, administrative spikes to return to his first love as shepherd of God’s flock.

Johnson who has been a proponent of regional integration and an unrelenting advocate for mission and evangelism now serves as pastor of the St Catherine / Spanish Town based historic Phillippo Circuit of Baptist Churches.

For Rev Johnson, this move is perceived as God granting him the desire of his heart. From the day he accepted the call to serve the Union as its General Secretary, he had always prayed for the Lord to open a door for him to return to congregational pastorate. Therefore, he knew that although ‘way leads on to way’, it was only a matter of God’s timing before he would have walked the Pastorate’s way again.

For some, the return to the local church may be perceived as a ‘step down’ but for Johnson who had served the pastorate for 11 years before tackling the formidable role of General Secretary, the difference between the two roles lies in scalability. The role of general secretary, he explained, requires knowledge, skills, experience and gifts that are non-negotiable for a pastor. In this regard, he believes that there may be a lack of appreciation for the pastoral role in the post of General Secretary and he hopes that this would change overtime.

“When you are in the local congregation you have this wonderful opportunity to relate more directly to individuals where they are ... It is so much more than managing systems and processes; it is serving in the trenches, walking alongside people, holding their hands, equipping and empowering people ... growing together in our spirituality, in our faith journey; understanding and discerning God’s will for both pastor and people... assuming responsibilities that you simply cannot delegate ...and that calling is challenging, taxing and consuming as any other...” Johnson explained.



Johnson

Returns

Looking back on his journey as General Secretary, Rev Johnson tells his story with a sigh of satisfaction. In his estimation he has served with sincerity of heart; and if any of his actions were perceived as an error of judgement, he did it with sincerity of heart and in the interest of the Union he served.

He recalled that two of his lowest heart-broken moments were the death of a staff member and the news of the almost fatal shooting of the Rev George Simpson, a former JBU president and late pastor of the Mt Carey Circuit of Baptist Churches.

Rev Johnson also recalled with another sigh, (this time of relief) the Saturday night before the Closing Service of a General Assembly, the stage that was built to accommodate the choir collapsed, but despite the symbolic interpretations that some might have imputed to that incident, the team delivered a most memorable Closing Service in the National Stadium amidst the burning sun; a testament to God's reassuring presence even when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

Johnson recalled some heart-warming moments too; especially in his interactions with congregants all across Jamaica and his instrumentality in the vision for the construction of a permanent and modern home for the JBU at 2B Washington Boulevard. This became a rejoicing reality for Jamaican Baptists in 2007, despite the fact that many dissenting and cynical voices were raised when the vision was just a dream.

It is perhaps by God's design that he now pastors the circuit in which he was baptized. As a young child The Phillippo Baptist Church is like a modern day Pergamum, located in the heart of one of the most volatile and violence-plagued towns of Jamaica—a veritable mission field. It is with this in mind that Rev Johnson feels that his immediate plan includes leading his church to becoming more and more of “a missional church, a mission-minded church, and a mission-conscious church ... impacting and making a difference in the wider community ... touching and improving the quality of life of the people in Spanish Town and its adjoining communities”.

According to Rev Johnson, who is very passionate and vocal about social transformation and community development, “it is not good enough for people to continue to live in squalor ...It is not good enough for the church to remain inward looking in a place where people can't flourish”. To this end, he has been focusing his sermons on mission even while doing his research, understanding the culture and context in which he serves in order to gradually re-engineer the culture and achieve a paradigm shift through the social gospel.

“I think I can appreciate the timing that God has so crafted for me to be here, because there's so much that people want to see happening in Spanish Town and in the Church and hopefully in God's will and God's timing it will happen,” Johnson said.

It is this passion, translated into positive action that led to his national acclaim as a social advocate and forward-thinking clergyman. Many still recall his sermon at the 2007 National Leadership Prayer Breakfast where he highlighted several troubling issues plaguing the country. Also in 2020, he was vested with the Order of Distinction Commander rank for exceptional contribution to Religion and Community Development.

Johnson believes that his mandate, which is God's mission, is really to lay a solid foundation on which others can build. He passes the baton to the Rev Merlyn Hyde Riley, who has served as his Associate General Secretary for almost 15 years and is now best positioned to becoming the first woman General Secretary that the Union has had.

Rev Hyde Riley says she has learnt many lessons from Rev Johnson, both in precepts and examples. However, one she recalled that Johnson always advised her: “You have to care about the people you serve and in loving and caring for the people you serve, you'd be well-positioned to serve them better”.

Rev Johnson's advice to his successor is simply to ensure that s/he has a strong and consistent prayer life; be very observant; listen well and be decisive.



PICKING UP THE PIECES



Didier Trebucq & Bernadette Duncan Richards

On 9 April 2021, the La Soufrière volcano in St. Vincent and the Grenadines erupted, causing a crisis on top of the COVID crisis for the people of the island nation.

Didier Trebucq, UN Resident Coordinator for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, visited affected areas of the country shortly after the eruption, and again six months after. Here are his reflections.

Apocalyptic wasteland

“Apocalyptic” is the word that sprang to mind when I visited communities in the orange and red zones just nine days after the devastating eruption of La Soufrière.

A thick sulfur odour permeated the air. Desolate villages, once alive with community spirit, were blanketed in grey ash. Homes were damaged, roofs bowed, crops decimated, and paved roads reduced to tracks. Some residents took on the arduous task of shoveling stubborn debris from roofs and roadways, as stray animals roamed on what looked like a lunar landscape.



The social, productive and infrastructure sectors had been hit with damage and losses of about US\$275 million, affecting livelihoods and displacing 20,000 people and putting them at risk of food insecurity.

It was difficult to reconcile the sight of this wasteland with the lush landscapes, bountiful banana crops, and lively island vibe I’d experienced on previous visits. The dystopian sight will forever remain etched in my memory.

There was hope

Six months later, on my return to St Vincent and the Grenadines on 28 October to observe United Nations Day, a sense of rebirth was palpable. The skies were now sunny, the ocean was clear, and the land was green with trees and shrubs. There was hope.

The UN team continues to support national authorities on the path to recovery in the areas of ash clean-up, cash support, relocation and temporary housing, livelihoods, WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene), and health systems to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The UN received support from various nations.

The Church’s response

Similarly, the St, Vincent Baptist Convention received support from brethren including the BWA, CBF and Associations, Send Relief, Women Missionary Union, Samaritan Purse (via a third party) and individual supporters.

Thanks again, we have been able to provide social and spiritual outreach, including material assistance and delivery of over 14,000 meals during the disaster.



SVG 6 MONTHS AFTER THE VOLCANO

During the recovery period, much needed cleaning equipment was provided to our targeted communities via our Baptist churches to prepare homes, sanctuaries and properties.

From August to the present, more than 100 bags of groceries valuing EC\$100 to EC\$150 were being distributed monthly.

The programme ends this December and 450 bags of groceries are being prepared, which will include donations via the national health centres in the 'red and orange' zones. This signals the end of the food-based intervention, but we are looking for means of sustaining it into 2022, specifically for the very critical cases.

Upon the return to the communities that were evacuated, there has been an uptick in support; and churches are more resolute regarding stewardship, record keeping and management.

Additionally, there is greater solidarity within our national Convention.



Before/after in a section of Owia, St. Vincent



Neighborliness and optimism

The tight constraints of the disaster dragged out the raw human nature in its truest form: the deepest of gratitude, the dejection of those with unmet needs, challenges to faith, fear of insufficiency, but ultimately strengthening of faith. Thank God for the comfort of his word, his covering and the many tangible acts of kindness.

I concur with the words of the UN Resident Coordinator for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean in the referenced article.

“My colleagues and I are inspired by the neighborliness and optimism of the people of St Vincent and the Grenadines, under even the most harrowing circumstances”.

There’s still a lot of work ahead.

THE PRESUMPTION OF RESOLUTIONS

Clinton Chisholm, Theologian, Journalist and author

CBF VIEWS

AND MUSE

One Sunday, in one of the Baptist churches where I worked, I had announced my sermon topic as **'Learning From a Fool'** (Lk.12:13-21). Of course I readily covered myself—since they know my obsession with teaching from the pulpit - by saying that the Fool was in the text not in the pulpit.

After defending the rich fool against preachers and Christians who fault him for selfishness and lack of neighbourliness, I went on to identify his main problem as a **faulty presumption** on life and on time.

Where does this arise in the text? In a string of future tenses without any attached conditional statement plus a presumptuous statement and command to himself.

Where is this string of future tenses?

Ponder verses 18-19 from the New King James Version.

18 **So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry."**

Do you pick up the unbridled future "I will?" The whole cast of his plan, **his resolution** is based on a presumption about the future. I say there is no conditional statement because this man—like so many of us at year's end—does not talk about his future plans like how old people in the region used to talk and possibly still do talk in some areas. If an older person is making plans to weed the field tomorrow or go

somewhere tomorrow you would usually hear the plan mixed with some conditional statement like "if life spare", "if bret inna de baddy" or "please God" or "if Jesus tarry" or "God willing".

The rich man's faulty presumption comes out in his string of future tenses without any conditional statement but it also comes out more in the statement and command he makes to himself in v. 19. **The statement "Soul you have many goods laid up for many years" joined to the command "eat, drink, and be merry" is as presumptuous as it is faulty and foolish.**

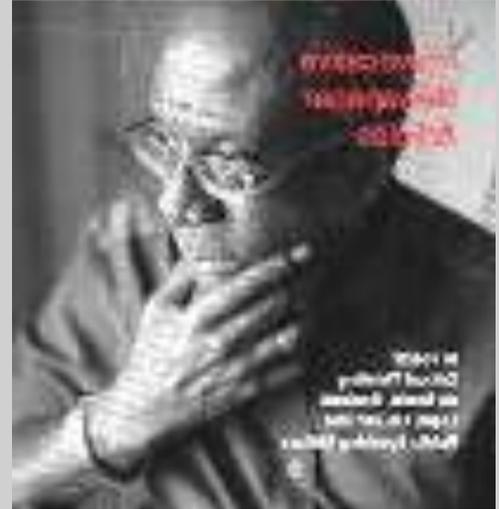
The man's language betrays a faulty presumption on **time and life** as if he were dead sure that he would of necessity live for a long while yet.

Every New Year resolution is based on a presumption of extended life and time for which we have no guarantee; therefore, our thinking and language must reflect this reality in conditional statements.

Fatal pronouncement

The fool's faulty presumption was checked and rebuked by God's **fatal pronouncement** in v. 20 **"Fool, this night, your soul is required of you then who will get what you have piled up?"** (Chisholm's rendition).

The language of God here is very vivid and instructive. Contrary to the man's plans for many years, the fatal pronouncement came on the same day he spoke, reflected in the Greek present tense 'is required' (though most translations have 'will be required').



The expression 'is required' = 'is demanded back.' It is the language of a banker who, having lent, is now foreclosing on the loan.

We may talk as eloquently as we might about the 'right to life' in our little human legal enterprises but let us never forget that at the most fundamental level, life is a loan from God and God can foreclose that loan of your life when He sovereignly pleases.

All I ask is that we reckon with the presumption beneath all of the resolutions we made for 2021 and if we have not yet done so revisit them and add a conditional statement, "if God..."

*Excerpted from my book **A Controversial Clergyman** (available on Amazon as ebook and print edition)*

NETWORKING THE BAPTIST FAMILY TO IMPACT THE WORLD FOR CHRIST

BWA Women Launch Domestic Violence Initiative

In response to pervasive violence experienced by women around the world, the Baptist World Alliance and BWA Women are launching the "Stand Against Domestic Violence" Global Initiative.

Worldwide, 18% of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in the past 12 months. Women in Asia and the Pacific report the highest rates of domestic violence, including 68% in Papua New Guinea, 46% in Afghanistan, 54% in Bangladesh, and 64% in Fiji.

To address this crisis, BWA and BWA Women have created an online resource hub to educate and equip individuals, churches, and communities to help bring an end to domestic violence. Through the high-quality resources available on the website, women and men will be informed about domestic violence and inspired to act – bringing about the change required for women, children, and families to thrive.

"It's time to speak up. Never has there been a time where the voices of women have been needed as much or oppressed as greatly. Violence from one gender to the other is far from God's heart and his good plan for us from creation," said BWA Women President Karen Wilson. "We will stand together. We will support where needed. We will speak up for those who have no voice (Proverbs 3:8), and we do that alongside our Baptist sisters all over the world."

The "Stand Against Domestic Violence" initiative grew out of a domestic violence workshop offered at the Global Conference of Baptist Women earlier this year. Workshop presenters Dr Valérie Duval-Poujol (France) and Jenni Entrican (United Kingdom) were moved to share this information more widely and to create something long-lasting.

In collaboration with BWA Women, a team was formed to develop the global resource hub. Coordinated by Elissa Macpherson (Australia), President of the Baptist Women of the Pacific, the steering team also includes Duval-Poujol, Entrican, Patricia Ihlenfeldt (South Africa), Margaret Warren (Australia), Beulah Wood (New Zealand), and J. Merritt Johnston (USA), new Executive Director of BWA Women.

A virtual gathering to launch the new resource site was held on Tuesday, November 23, at 8 am EST. The session included information about the project origins, a preview of the new resource hub, and a special Question & Answer segment with the steering committee members. To register for this special event, visit bit.ly/standagainstdv.

The launch formed part of a long-term emphasis on this issue for Baptists worldwide, including observation of the 2021 International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on Thursday, November 25.

"As people of faith, we must be on the frontlines – responding to needs with the love of Christ. That's why the BWA is committed to providing resources like Stand Against Domestic Violence to equip individuals and faith communities to respond to this global issue," said BWA General Secretary Elijah Brown.

"I am grateful for BWA Women's leadership of this initiative, and I call on all of us to stand with them in love with a boldness that transcends and transforms violence."

Don't look now but ... Gender-based violence may be in your church

By definition, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is an umbrella term that includes all types of violence towards women, girls, and other marginalized groups - human trafficking, domestic violence, rape, elder abuse, disabled persons abuse, abuse of persons with HIV positive status, discrimination and abuse of persons living in inner-cities, and violence towards LGBTQ+ persons.

Domestic Violence is a type of GBV, which includes abusive behaviour in any intimate or domestic relationship, as defined by law, which is used to gain or maintain power and control over a current or former intimate partner or family or household member. Domestic violence may include physical, sexual, emotional, economic, and psychological actions or threats of actions. Abusers may also commit verbal threats, acts of intimidation, property damage, animal cruelty, elder and child abuse, strangulation, and stalking. The trauma and harm caused by domestic violence can be complex.

Violence against women, girls, and other marginalized groups is perpetrated in all types of intimate and family relationships and crosses economic, educational, cultural, racial, and religious lines. Nearly twenty five percent of women murdered each year in Jamaica are killed by their current or former intimate partners. Countless numbers of women are harassed, stalked, sexually assaulted or raped, and abducted. As a result, across the



Caribbean region, women live in constant fear that they will be attacked at home, school, work, or in public places.

There is a chronic shortage of emergency shelter beds and crisis services for battered women, men, and their children in Jamaica. Most sexual assault programs struggle to provide core services such as hotlines, medical and legal system advocacy, and crisis counseling to women in their communities. Few communities have developed services specifically designed to assist victims with special needs.

The Jamaica Coalition Against Domestic Violence (JCADV) envisions our country free from Domestic and Gender-Based Violence. Our organization provides recommendations for strengthening prevention efforts and improving services for victims or survivors, their family, and communities. Our hotline

and website is designed to help persons quickly pinpoint information and resources relevant to more than one group of individuals. We encourage persons to call us toll free or WhatsApp 1 (800) 598-7607 or visit the JCADV website <https://www.jcadv.org/> for instruction, guidance, inspiration, and resources available to inform, educate, and assist victims or survivors of abuse.

How can Church and State Respond?

Ensure that all victims have a safe place. Provide services and advocacy to women and their children by creating crisis hotlines, support groups for victims, “safe homes” and emergency shelters for battered women. Identify gaps in services for all victims of sexual assault, dating, stalking, domestic and gender-based violence.

At your doorstep In your pulpits ... among your pews

Educate the public, legislators, and community leaders. Develop strategies to increase the availability of core crisis services and shelters where none exists. We recommend a shelter for different marginalized groups to ensure that abused women, men, girls and boys, can have a safe place with trained individuals to meet their needs.

Expand services. Expand the services offered to survivors of GBV to include more long-term counselling, assistance. Increase assistance for individual women to negotiate the courts, health care, and social service systems. Rural communities, inner-cities, maroon communities, immigrant and refugee groups, incarcerated women, older women, women with disabilities, LGBTQ+ and others too often remain marginalized and have benefited far less from the advocacy efforts than women in the mainstream.

Seek and use survivor input. Develop a range of mechanisms to ensure survivor involvement in the design, evaluation, and enhancement of outreach strategies and services.

Support the leadership role of victim advocates and survivors in coordinated community responses, coordinating councils, task forces, and other collaborative entities. By doing so, remove institutional responses that are biased, uncoordinated, confusing; seek to blame victims for the assault or abuse; and often endanger women and children by forcing them to feel hopeless, helpless, and afraid to seek help.

Develop new leadership. Support leadership development for women, men, girls, and boys, from underserved and marginalized populations to increase their participation in efforts to end violence against women. As programs develop, increased attention is focused on recognizing and responding to women's diverse interests and concerns. Provide support and leadership while respecting and learning from the women and communities with whom these programs are working.

Protect privacy and confidentiality. Ensure that staff and volunteers of sexual

assault, domestic and gender-based violence programs take all necessary steps to protect the confidentiality and privacy of their communications with victims. These include safeguarding files and records and the informed use of written consents of privacy and confidentiality.

Inform policymakers. Expand efforts to educate local and national policymakers about the impact of proposed policies and legislation on women, men, girls, boys, and other marginalized groups who have been sexually assaulted, battered, or stalked; and involve survivors in these efforts.

Build partnerships with community groups. Collaborate with community groups that are interested in an integrated response to violence against women into their work. Ensure that informal neighborhood networks are adequately informed about GBV; and available community resources.

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#SilenceIsNotSpiritual

“VIOLENCE AGAINST HER IS VIOLENCE AGAINST US.”



Merry Christmas



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