

FEB  
2022

Caribbean Baptist Fellowship

# CBF NOTES



**FIRST  
CLASS OF  
GRADUATES**

**MAKING  
DISCIPLES  
TOGETHER**

**SIGNS  
OF THE  
TIMES ...**

**Stephen  
JENNINGS**



## 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



Dorrett R Campbell, Editor-in-Chief

While Saint Lucia offers some of the most beautiful scenery in the world, none can top the majestic Pitons, the island's iconic mountains. These are the two cone-shaped peaks, covered in lush tropical vegetation, that rise abruptly from the Caribbean Sea. The **Piton Mountains** are the symbol of Saint Lucia, and a protected UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Said to be the most photographed site in the Caribbean and most famous mountain pair on earth, the Pitons are a must-see for anyone who visits the island. Located just south of the town of Soufriere on the west coast, Gros Piton rises regally from the blue Caribbean below. The Pitons were created less than a million years ago by volcanic activity, which still can be witnessed at the Sulphur Springs volcano located nearby. Amerindians considered the mountains to have mystical powers and early European explorers noted their unique and splendid beauty. In 2004 the Pitons were awarded World Heritage Site status.

An interesting aspect of the Pitons is how their appearance changes so dramatically when viewed from different directions. As seen from the south the mountains look completely different and much farther apart than they do from the north, which is the classic and most photographed view in which they appear as near identical twins nestled close together.



Bernadette Richards Duncan, Co-editor

### EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Dorrett R Campbell

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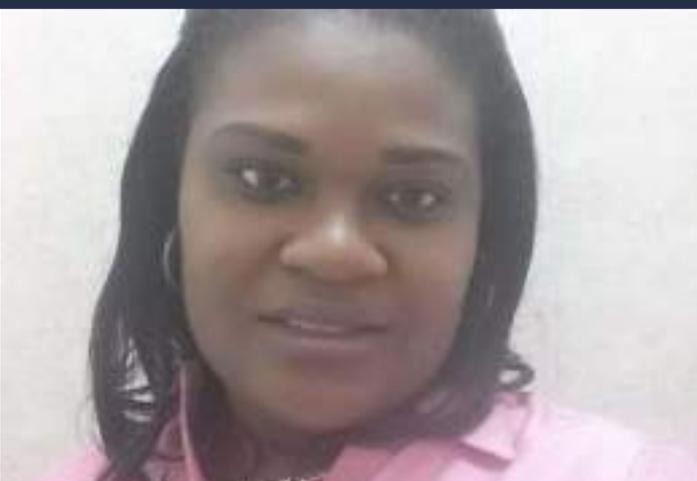
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REV DR STEPHEN JENNINGS

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# GUEST EDITOR'S EDICTS

## Michael Friday, PhD

**Not too long ago, an American president waged war on many Americans' friends and relatives, not with his military, but with his border police, with the corruption and abrogation of international laws protecting asylum-seekers, and with cruel and inhumane treatment of asylum-seekers and their tender children and babies.**

**I** was born in Trinidad and Tobago and lived there all my teen years. The majority of my close relatives and some dear friends are still there. I studied and lived in Barbados for two years and then studied and lived in Jamaica, for a total of almost two decades. I have many friends in Barbados and both friends and family in Jamaica. I have lived in America for over two decades and call here my home. I have friends in Canada, in the United Kingdom, and in three African nations. And, as a lifelong member of a religious entity that has its footprints all over the world, I view its 49 million members in 128 countries, not as an organization, religion, or denomination, but as family.

If Trinidad and Tobago were to invade Barbados, or America were to war against Jamaica, and either country were to require my services in those wars, I shall be faced with the prospect of destroying the national homes of my family, relatives, and friends, and the requirement to kill them.

This prospect of friend and relative going to war against friend and relative is precisely the reality that is unfolding in Ukraine right now. Before Putin's putrid offense against Ukraine began, a Ukrainian military official reported that he had to tell his own aging mother, that if the two separatist regions in Ukraine were to begin fighting against the rest of Ukraine, he would be required to come into her town and quite possibly, have to risk destroying her village and house, or even, be a member of the forces who could kill her!

Russian citizens don't want this war. They're protesting in the streets of St. Petersburg and allowing themselves to be arrested by the thousands. Russian soldiers do not want this war. Some are turning away from groups of Ukrainian civilians who stand in their way; some are abandoning their equipment; some engage in friendly conversations with Ukrainians. They've been lied to about the very nature of the so-called operation.

Four days after Putin began to rape Ukraine, some of Russia's oligarchs began to feel the heat of economic sanctions and begged Putin to end the war. Among them is Mikhail Fridman, who was born in Ukraine and who, like countless Russians, has friends and relatives there.

Among the despicable and deplorable Americans celebrating Putin and calling President Biden weak and Putin strong, are some who show their utter ignorance, lack of education, hypocrisy and stupidity, by disdainfully and cluelessly calling Democrats communists.



They are joined by some white supremacists who deplore America's diversity, citing China and Russia as places they suppose diversity to be absent, as examples of what they would happily engineer America to be. I wonder how they'd do that? Send black people to gas chambers? Even in this moment of crisis, some Ukrainians, forgetting that a substantial portion of their gross domestic product comes from foreign students – colored people – are displaying the ugly truth that racism lurks everywhere, just as some white journalists unwittingly demonstrate their own entrenched implicit bias as they express dismay that white, blue-eyed, "civilized" people – not black and brown people from Iraq, Syria, Somalia, or Cameroon – have found themselves among the 85 million refugees of the world.

Look, I'd like to think that the more frequently countries of the world welcome peoples from everywhere, and the more we begin to have friends and relatives and families across borders, across oceans, and across cultures, maybe – just maybe – the peoples of the world (even if not their male leaders with egos larger than brains and consciences) might become less inclined to war. And then, perhaps, the world might become peaceful at last, where we talk to one another, love one another, and protect one another. Along the way, those who perpetuate xenophobia, racism, territorialism, and white supremacy, shrouded beneath projects like "America First" and "Brexit," might come to ask themselves, while feeling foolish, "How did that work out for you?"

Am I dreaming? You bet I am! And there is *nothing* that has come to reality, that did not begin in a dream. Long live independent Ukraine!  
**And long live peace!**

# EST NOTES

## Anslem Warrick, EST

**We can —through united efforts, acceptance and search for meaning – cultivate an attitude that will enable us to find meaning in the most difficult of life's situations.**

When everyone was looking forward to the end of the war against COVID-19 which the world had been fighting for over two years; when everyone was looking forward to the reopening of borders and the removal of oppressive restrictions, political leaders in Russia were thinking of starting a war of another kind.

In spite of many warnings of very severe sanctions and much diplomatic efforts by the United States of America, Britain, France and other nations, Russia began a military invasion of Ukraine in late February. Since then, the reality of this new war has gripped the world.

It has dominated every news media and captured our attention. Because of the availability and presence of cell phones and other digital devices, the senselessness and brutality of war has been streamed directly into our homes and daily lives.

We are seeing first hand, an almost minute by minute display of bombs dropping, people fleeing, hiding in subways and shelters and sadly even people dying.

At the time of writing this article, it was reported that approximately 1.5 million people, including students from India, Africa and the Caribbean, have fled Ukraine seeking refuge in friendly neighbouring countries. So even as we witness the senseless brutality and suffering first hand, so too we are seeing an outpouring of hospitality, support and kindness first hand.

The Baptist World Alliance, through its General Secretary Dr Elijah Brown, visited Ukraine just a few days before the war began and gave the Global Baptist family an update about the impact on Baptist in the region as well as how we can stand together in responding at this time.

He reported that Baptists from the region had already sent in a truck load of supplies and Baptists in Ukraine have set up humanitarian centres to help those who have been displaced



by providing food, clothes, places to shower, rest and receive medical and spiritual care.

He also reported that the many Baptist pastors whom he met had asked that we pray for peace and to be united as one family, sharing the gospel and that somehow in the midst of this challenge, God would be glorified.

Brothers and Sisters across the Caribbean let us do our part, let us pray today for peace. Let us pray for all those who are in harm's way.

Let us pray for the many Baptist organisations and agencies and humanitarian groups seeking to provide food, medical care and other forms of assistance.

Let us also give as the churches and pastors seek to provide support counselling and encouragement to pastors and other Christians who are already facing persecution.

You can give by going to the BWA website at - [BaptistWorld.org/prayforpeace](https://BaptistWorld.org/prayforpeace).

Your prayer and your gift will make a difference.

# First Graduates of Northwestern Caribbean Baptist Theological Seminary



## Dorrett R Campbell

**F**ifteen Caribbean Baptist church leaders made history on 14 January, 2022 as the first graduates of the Northwestern Caribbean Baptist Theological Seminary (NCBTS); receiving their certificates in Church Ministry Leadership at a brief yet inspiring virtual commencement service.

The initiative is a partnership between Northwestern Caribbean Baptist Theological Seminary (NCBTS) and the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship (CBF) aimed at training and certifying in-service pastors and other church leaders who had no previous training or certification in theological education.

President of the NCBTS, Rev Dr Randall von Kanel, who gave the welcome and set the context for the ceremony explained that the partnership between CBF and NCBTS evolved out of another partnership with the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, which spawned the headquarters for the NCBTS in the Cayman Islands, which hosted the graduation ceremony. He commended the CBF for the tremendous logistic support, encouragement and promotions to the partnership.

Guest Speaker, the Rev Anselm Warrick, Executive Secretary -Treasurer of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship, applauded the graduates and noted that the program was designed to provide more transformational servant leaders for the churches within the Caribbean. He described the program as biblically sound and affordable.

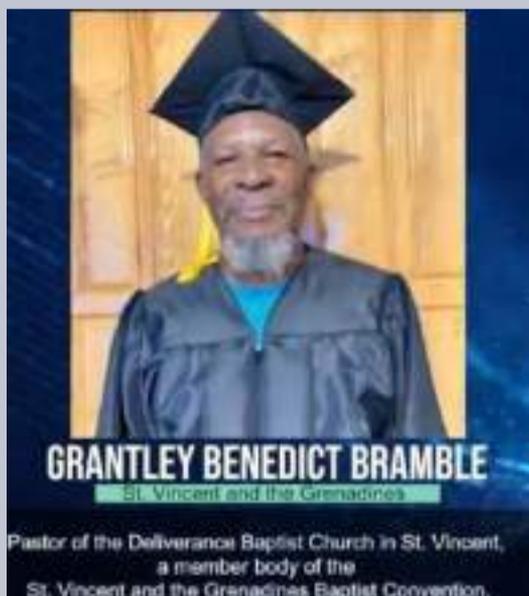
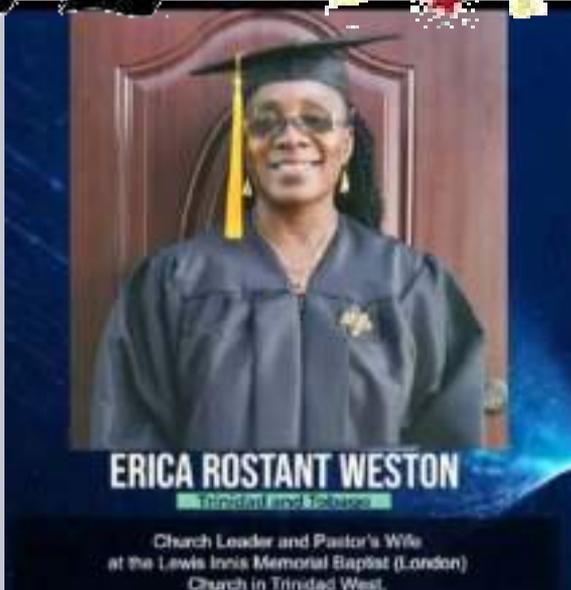
Inspired by Paul's letter to the Philippians, (Chapter 2) the guest speaker, stressed the importance of sacrificial service and urged the graduates to be selfless, trustworthy, dependable, putting others above their own self-interests in a similar manner as Timothy and Epaphroditus did. He told the graduates, "If you want to be great as a minister, then be a people lover; a risk-taker... and open up your hearts to those whom you serve".

"Never shirk responsibility and work hard as a fellow labourer of Jesus Christ. "Never ever let it be said of you that you are lazy..." Warrick charged.

The EST challenged the graduates to be servant leaders who lead by example. He explained that the time in which we live require persons to be servant leaders – men and women who are prepared to be sincere in their speech ...

# CLASS of 2022

# Congratulations!!!



and actions.

“If you’re asking someone to do something, then you must be prepared to do it as well --- If you are challenging people to exercise their faith then you must be a people of faith ... If you’re challenging people to evangelism then you must be evangelists ...If you’re calling people to demonstrate concerns for others then you must show concern for those who are in need,” Warrick said.

He further challenged the graduates to use the resources they have, the education and influence that they have, not to draw people to themselves ... but to build the lives of others and to address their needs; work selflessly for the building up of the Kingdom of God and the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship.

Dr Deron Biles who brought remarks on behalf of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS) told the graduands that they were part of an unprecedented graduating class, which has completed their program in the middle of an unprecedented pandemic; therefore, much was expected of them. He encouraged them to pursue further studies so that God could continue to use them for God’s glory.

Registrar of the NCBTS, Karie Bergstrom presented the graduates to Provost of the Seminary, Dr Harris Lewis who made the conferral. Chairman of the Seminary’s Board of Trustees, Kenneth Osbourne pronounced the benediction.

The Church Ministry Leaders training program, hosted by Trinidad and Tobago, offered 12 courses over a three-year period. The graduates, including eight pastors, represent five CARICOM countries: Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago, which boasts eight of the 15 graduates. Regrettably one student, Dennis James died before the graduation ceremony, but his certificate was awarded posthumously.

# Congratulations!!!



**ANDREW PHILMORE BOYCE**

President of the Barbados Baptist Convention and Deacon in the Bethany Baptist Church, Mile & Quarter, St. Peter, Barbados, a member church of the Barbados Baptist Convention.



**CHARLEEN JOYANNE ABERDEEN**

Christian Musical Artist, Church Leader and Member of the World Changers Assembly, Biche, Trinidad, of the Baptist Union of Trinidad and Tobago.



**JOMO JEMMETT**

Deacon serving the Light House Baptist Church in Guayaguayare Villages, Trinidad, a member of the International Baptist Churches of Trinidad and Tobago.



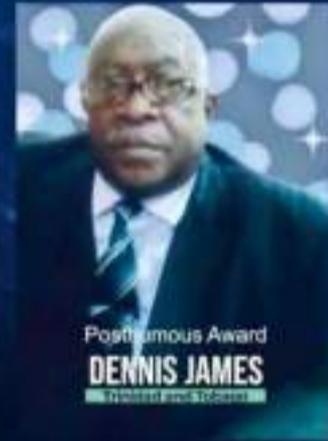
**ELIAS LINDON DICK**

Pastor of the Chaguanas Full Gospel Baptist Church, Port of Spain, a member church of the Barbados Baptist Convention.



**MARCELENE JAMES**

Church Leader and Pastor's wife to the late Rev. Dennis James.



Posthumous Award  
**DENNIS JAMES**



**SHAWN BURKE**

Church Leader in the Emmanuel Baptist Church, Port of Spain.



**MERLE M. CARRINGTON**

Church Leader and Member of the St. John's (London) Baptist Church, Port of Spain, Trinidad, a member church of the Barbados Baptist Convention.



**HARRISON J. GEORGE**

Pastor of the Grand Arise Baptist Church, Grenada, a member church of the Grenada Baptist Convention.



**ENOCH JULIEN**

Pastor of the Grand Bacolet Baptist Church, Grand Bacolet, Grenada, a member church of the Grenada Baptist Convention.



**SPARKLE GEORGE**

Church Leader in the St. John's (London) Baptist Church, a member church of the Barbados Baptist Convention.



**ANTONIO TANNIS**

Senior Pastor of the Glen Baptist Church, St. Vincent, a member body of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Baptist Convention.

# MAKING DISCIPLES TOGETHER ● ● ●

**Dorrett Campbell**

The Caribbean Baptist Fellowship (CBF) has partnered with the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) to host the first in a series of virtual week-end School of Evangelism, in the Caribbean Region.

Under the theme **Making Disciples Together**, the virtual School of Evangelism (SOE) is scheduled for 29 April to 1 May 2022 and aims to affirm the whole church's calling and gifting to bear witness to Jesus Christ; emphasize the whole gospel of Christ that transforms lives and communities; and highlight the whole world as the object of the triune God's redemptive mission.

## Compelled to lead

The BWA says, it was compelled by the Great Commission to lead with a passionate commitment to Gospel witness in every place and among all in partnership with other believers.

"In a world groaning for restoration", the BWA says, "it will require the whole church to communicate the whole gospel to the whole world".

## Evangelism Emphasis

For this reason, the month of May has been declared by the BWA as evangelism emphasis month, guided by the mantra,

"Every Baptist is a witness".

During May, Baptists will be called upon to focus on united prayer and personal evangelism; lead at least one person to Christ; engage in community outreach which will all set the stage for ongoing discipleship.

The school of Evangelism will help to prepare a wide range of target audiences to strengthen their skills and resolve to share the good news of Christ for the sake of salvation of the world and the renewal of creation.

## Presenters

The SOE will organize six main presenters anchored by scripture around the whole church, the whole gospel, and the whole world. The presenters represent the six regions of the BWA and will treat with the following themes:

1. Evangelism as the Fruit of Spiritual Awakening
2. Evangelism as Growing a Community of Witnesses
3. Evangelism as Leading People Not Programs
4. Evangelism as Invitation to the Kingdom of God
5. Evangelism as the Beginning of Discipleship
6. Evangelism as Following the Holy Spirit into the World

The School of Evangelism is free and the CBF is urging all

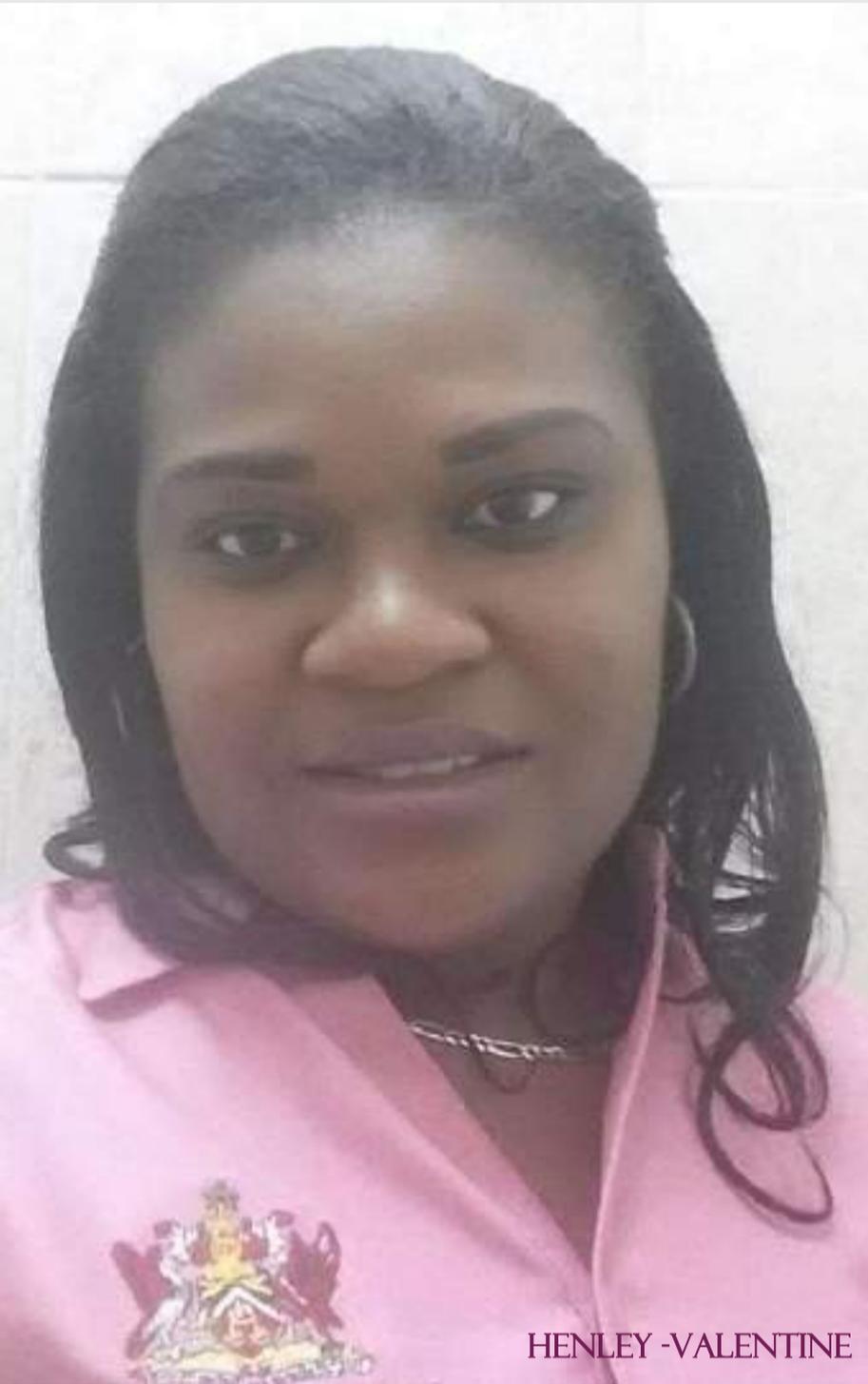


member bodies to identify evangelists, persons who coordinate the evangelism ministry in their local churches and other individuals who are passionate about evangelism, to participate.

## Welcomed Initiative

CBF Executive Secretary Treasurer, the Rev Anslem Warrick has welcomed the initiative and has convened a meeting with the Evangelism Committee of the CBF to commence planning.

The BWA is creating a platform for registration. All persons will be informed when registration for this initiative is open.



HENLEY-VALENTINE

# Welcome aboard JOLENE VALENTINE

New Administrative Services Assistant

experience and knowledge in Logistics, Marketing, Production Planning and Administration.

She was previously employed with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in the Ministry of Local Government as a Computer Technician and Information Technology Assistant.

She holds a Bachelors of Business Administration (BBA) with a Major in Logistics and Supply Chain Management (LSCM) and a Minor in Marketing. She also holds Diplomas in Industrial Relations and Computer Programming with certification in many other disciplines. She is married and the mother of two children.

“Having worked with Jolene over the last four years, I can attest to her diligence, team spirit, excellent customer service abilities, willingness to develop and her desire to build the Kingdom of God through the utilisation of her gifts, talents and abilities”.

“I have every confidence that the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship will be well served through her appointment” Executive Secretary Treasurer who is her new boss, says.

**T**he Caribbean Baptist Fellowship announces the appointment of Jolene Henley-Valentine as the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship Administrative Assistant.

Henley-Valentine began her service in this part-time role on January 1.

Henley-Valentine hails from Princes Town in Trinidad and Tobago and she is an active member of the Mt Hermon London Baptist Church where she manages the church’s virtual ministry. She is also actively involved in the Youth and Women’s ministries.

She has been employed with the Baptist Union of Trinidad and Tobago for the last four years as the Administrative Assistant, providing daily administrative support to the President and General Secretary and managing the daily activities of the office.

Henley-Valentine came to us from the private sector having worked at the world renown iron and steel company, Arcelormittal, Point Lisa’s Limited, Trinidad and Tobago for eight years where she gained valuable

# WILL MODERN DAY ISRAEL BE SAVED?

Clinton Chisholm, Theologian, Journalist and Author

CBF VIEWS

AND MUSE

There is an old popular but unbiblical belief within Evangelical circles that all modern Israelites will be saved before our Lord's return. Ask anyone who holds this view and you will likely hear a quotation of Romans 11:26 "And so all Israel shall be saved..." (KJV)

I have asked a few who hold the view I am countering 'so will modern Israelites get a special way to God's salvation without accepting Jesus as Lord and Saviour?' They fumble and stutter a bit eventually admitting ignorance of how this will happen but still maintain the view that it will happen.

## The ROAD Principles

They need to know and take seriously my R.O.A.D principles of interpretation (check <https://the-chisholmacademy.teachable.com/p/bible-made-simple>) Particularly the R principle which deals with reading in context. As well as the D principle, going deeper by knowledge of Greek then they would get clarity on the verse in the context and language of Paul's argument in chapter 11.

In Rom. 11:11-19 Paul checks the temptation on the part of Gentiles to boast, spiritually, by reminding Gentiles that we were simply grafted in albeit by means of the deliberate act of God in breaking off some of the branches of the olive tree.

Pay close attention to the idea from v. 20 onwards.

The crucial concepts are the opposites unbelief/faith. V. 20 "they were broken off because of unbelief, you stand (=are in place, positionally) by faith."

The line of argument continues and peaks, in a sense, in v.23 "and if they do not continue in unbelief they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again." Verses 24 and 25 are best read as a summary of the main argument advanced re the cruciality of faith as the means of being right with God whether one is a Jew or a Gentile.

Then comes v.26 which has been terribly handled because folks do not pause to explore the Greek text. Perhaps, because of the time expression in 25 "...until the full number..." many think the first words of v. 26 "and so" are terms suggesting time. But they are not! The troublesome word in the English is 'so' which in the Greek is houtōs (sound = who toes). This word is an adverb of manner (= how) meaning 'in this way/manner', not an adverb of time (=when). V. 26 should read "And in this manner, [that is, by faith] all Israel will be saved."

## Ponder these things

A critical point to ponder is this, if Israelis or ethnic descendants of the ancient Israelites are to be specially blessed with salvation in a way different from all other humans then how would we answer the following questions.



What promise has God made to the biblical Israelites that a) God has not kept b) the said Israelites have not forfeited by disobedience and c) that has not been superseded/abrogated by the New Covenant at Calvary?

What in context would/could Paul mean by "the Israel of God" in Galatians 6:16, in a book where he consistently argues about the radical superiority of faith in Jesus above works of the law?

What in context could Paul (an ethnic Jew) possibly mean in Rom. 2:28-29?

Ponder as well, the declaration of Paul (the converted Jew) in Gal 3.27-29. This has nothing at all to do with the ill-named/erroneous 'replacement theology'!

So then, there will be no special salvation of any Jew or Israeli (wherever located globally) except by faith in the finished work of Jesus at Calvary. This I hear is the prayerful mission of Messianic believers in modern Israel.



# DAVID JELLEYMAN LECTURE

Dorrett R Campbell

**Whenever some people in the country quarrel or argue about corruption, their only complaint is who is more corrupt than the other... #Jennings**

**T**he David Jelleyman Lecture Series has been around for the last thirty years and is hosted every two years by the Jamaica Baptist Union.

The lecture is hosted biennially at the JBU General Assembly and Believers' Convention. It is named in honour of a British Baptist missionary, David Jelleyman, who served the JBU as Baptist Theological Tutor from 1948 to 1984. He taught generations of Baptist ministers in their student years, and was guide and inspiration to many. In fact, in the year he retired from the United Theological College of the West Indies (UTCWI), Jelleyman had actually taught every faculty member who was teaching at that college in that year as well. Yes, his former students were now his colleagues!

Rev. Jelleyman taught Biblical studies, especially Biblical languages, along with other subjects. As a person, he exhibited characteristics of humility, discipline and compassion, and was an outstanding servant of the Lord.

The presenter for the 2022 Lecture was privileged to have been taught by Rev Jelleyman in 1984, during his final year at the College.

Jelleyman's wife Christine was also the Religious Studies teacher and Inter-School Christian Fellowship sponsor at Calabar High School. Both were founding members of the Mona Baptist Church.

This year one of his students and some may say a protégé, the Reverend Dr Stephen Jennings presented the Lecture at the JBU 172nd General Assembly under the timely topic, **Reading the Signs of the Times**.

Reverend Jennings is a former president of the Jamaica Baptist Union who now pastors the Mona Circuit of Baptist Churches. He has earned his PhD in Cultural Studies from the University of the West Indies. His scholarship is evidenced in the several seminars and conferences at which he has presented and the publications he has authored.

While Jennings used Jamaica as his case study, the Lecture is most applicable to Member States of the Caribbean Community as we share similar socio-historical and socio-cultural experiences. It is against this background that we share it with you so you can read the signs of the time in the way it is applicable to the realities of your own specific member state as well as to the Caribbean Culture.

Given its length and because we do not want to paraphrase we have divided the offering into two segments: **Describing the Times**, is the first segment that we share in this edition of CBF Notes and in our April / Easter Edition we will share the conclusion on how to respond to the signs of the time.

The first part of the Lecture is contained on pages 13 – 19 of this publication.

# THE DAVID JELLEYMAN LECTURE

## READING THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Dad died last year, a few days after celebrating his 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as an ordained minister of the Jamaica Baptist Union; while Mom passed a few years ago. This year, they would have celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary, a few days before Jamaica would be celebrating its 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence. I dedicate this lecture then, not just to memory of the Jelleymans, but to memory

of my parents. I hope that they would be proud of it, and I pray that you would have been helped by it. God bless you all and thank you.

*Stephen Jennings, PhD  
Presented to the  
172nd General Assembly  
of the Jamaica Baptist Union  
24 February 2022*



JENNINGS

**T**he phrase “*reading the signs of the times*” comes from passages of scripture from Jesus, God’s Messiah from Nazareth, that are recorded in three of the four Gospels. Particularly it comes from the Gospel of Matthew Chapter 16; 1-4. I am using the Good News Translation:

<sup>1</sup> Some Pharisees and Sadducees who came to Jesus wanted to trap him, so they asked him to perform a miracle for them, to show that God approved of him.

<sup>2</sup> But Jesus answered, “When the sun is setting, you say, ‘We are going to have fine weather, because the sky is red.’

<sup>3</sup> And early in the morning you say, ‘It is going to rain, because the sky is red and dark.’ You can predict the weather by looking at the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs concerning these times

<sup>4</sup> How evil and godless are the people of this day! You ask me for a miracle? No! The only miracle you will be given is the miracle of Jonah.”

So he left them and went away.

In effect, Jesus was saying to the Pharisees and Sadducees, you are asking for a sign, yet you can tell what’s going on around you. Jesus says imagine you can read -and even predict- the weather, but you can’t read the signs of the times. The only signs you are going to get is the sign of Jonah, the fact that I’m going to be raised from the dead after three days. And he leaves them.

Luke -in Ch. 12: 54-57- says Jesus was not only speaking to the Pharisees and the Sadducees, which is what Matthew and Mark highlight, but He also spoke these words to the people out there in general.

<sup>54</sup> Jesus said also to the people, “When you see a cloud coming up in the west, at once you say that it is going to rain—and it does.

<sup>55</sup> And when you feel the south wind blowing, you say that it is going to get hot—and it does.

<sup>56</sup> Hypocrites! You can look at the

*earth and the sky and predict the weather; why, then, don’t you know the meaning of this present time?*

<sup>57</sup> “Why do you not judge for yourselves the right thing to do? (GNT)

Jesus was saying: “You who are looking for signs and wonders and all kinds of miracles; there’s a place for that, but you are focusing so much on the spectacular, you’re missing the ordinary everyday things that are going on around you.

You can tell what is going to happen with the weather when there is a change when it’s going to be hot or hotter than it was before; when it’s going to rain more than before; you can tell if it’s going to be hot because you don’t feel the wind and you can tell if it’s going to rain because the wind is coming from another direction; **and yet you can’t tell what is going on now in the present time. And you can’t even do what is right.**

Why don't you do what is right? Why don't you figure out things to make sure you put your life in order so that when things begin to happen you are not caught off guard? That's what Jesus meant by reading the signs of the times.

While Jesus was talking with His people about understanding what was happening in their time, I believe that the Scriptures are laying down advice as to the need for its hearers/readers of every era to seek to 'read the signs' of their times. I believe, then, that we in the world today, need to seek to 'read the signs' of our time, to understand what is going on now and to seek to do what is right in relation to what's going on.

We read these signs through the prism of the Scriptures, with Jesus as our Teacher and the Holy Spirit as our Enabler. I wish in this lecture to pay particular attention to 'reading the signs of these times' in relation to Jamaica, as a representative member state of the Caribbean to understand what is going on now and to seek to do what is right in relation to what's going on, with the help of the Holy Spirit of Jesus.

Having seen the meaning of Jesus's phrase of "reading the signs of the times", I want us now to look at the Jamaican setting as we try to read the signs of the times, much as we would 'read' the weather and/or read a game of dominoes. To do that we need to do three things; first to describe the times, i.e. to figure out what is happening; secondly to discern the times, i.e. to figure out why what is happening is happening and thirdly to do something about the times, i.e. to act on what we know about the times and more precisely to act in light of the time



### **Describing the times: Concrete Development and Cultural Confidence**

Jamaica is currently a place of concrete development and cultural confidence; that is to say all across Jamaica there is evidence of building and construction. From apartments and housing solutions, to highways and roads to businesses and Information and Computer Technologies, such as tablets, cell phones and the internet; there is evidence of change and growth. We thus have to compare this to what was present in the country 60 years ago, when Jamaica was newly independent.

Many changes have taken place over the years, and this means that Jamaicans have greater access to one another and to the world at large.

Accompanying that is a greater cultural confidence on the whole. Jamaicans are less ashamed of who they are and how they look. More Jamaicans, for instance, would speak the Jamaican language, so-called Patois, more easily unrestrained in public than they would in the late 60s to the early 70s. More people wear Afrocentric hairstyles such as braids, twists, and locks than they would have prior to the 70s.

As for the music and arts, these have become the face of Jamaica to the world.

Where there was always folk music, such as Mento, now since the Reggae revolution of the 70s, Jamaica is known and recognized for its contribution to World music via Ska, Rock Steady, Reggae and Dancehall, which in turn has given birth to other Black music, such as Hip Hop, Rap, Reggaeton and Afrobeats.

Jamaica's contribution to sports, particularly in the areas of Track and Field, has established us as a world power house and has made our sense of global significance even more substantial. We could argue truthfully that Jamaica and Jamaicans have come a long way culturally particularly when one compares our present to our early years.

### **Crime and Corruption**

With that said, Jamaica at present is in a contradictory space, for while there is much to celebrate there is also much to remonstrate. Jamaica is marked by crime and corruption.



With regard to crime, while some level perhaps is inevitable because of human beings and their sinful tendencies, crime in Jamaica, especially homicides and white collar crime, as it is called, are on the increase. This is not merely anecdotal, but can be seen from the latest crime statistics. (See Charts 1 & 2).

As far as corruption is concerned, this seems to be endemic in the system, whether one is dealing with governmental apparatuses, or private sector entities or even in religious bodies such as the Church. It has become so much a part of Jamaican life that it is seen by many as normal to steal, curry favour, bribe or to take a cut.

Whenever some people in the country quarrel or argue about corruption, their only complaint is who is more corrupt than the other. Not whether corruption is a problem or not; indeed, one person's corruption is another person's favour.

### **Capital-Driven Society**

But what is driving this crime and corruption? There are many reasons that could be given, but one of them is that Jamaica, like other places in the world, has become a Capital-Driven Society.



This is to say that the major engine of growth, as it is called, is money and the making of more money, not only at the expense of other people's labour, but of the land, waterways, seas and the atmosphere. Because of this people are driven to try to get more money for themselves and for their family.

### **Community and Character Fragmentation**

Consequently, there are several other things that are taking place. All this has led to what I call Community and Character Fragmentation. Communities are breaking down physically and socially because of the injection, or the desire for the injection of capital, so villages that were at the heart of Jamaica are being penetrated, for instance, by the need for mining so that they can help produce income for investors. And, to some extent, those who once occupied these communities, what this has done, is that it has caused hitherto gathered community members to become scattered across the country and across the world with little or no social cohesion. Thus, people who were once close together-physically and psychologically- are now further apart.



This in turn has caused greater pressure on the minds and spirits of all persons who now feel more greatly their individuality. Such persons feel anxious, worried and depressed, because they lack certainty about the future. They are misplaced and are without certain kinds of support in the present. No wonder many people are struggling with mental challenges and some have actually become mentally ill, sometimes without even knowing it.

### **Climate Crisis**

Capital-driven societies have contributed to the climate crisis facing the world in general and Jamaica in particular.

With the removal of the trees and the topsoil for agricultural purposes, building, and mining, and with the blockage of drains, run-offs and waterways in the name of construction, natural occurrences such as rain fall can become hazards resulting in flooding loss of life and property.

Furthermore, such practices are contributing to droughts as it disturbs the water cycle and thereby are affecting agriculture, food security and general well-being, as water is life.



Remembering those who have gone on before us. 172nd General Assembly, Kingston, Feb 2022

In addition, there is the overharvesting of the seas as more people seek to eat healthily, but again at the expense of the sea creatures, and of the sea itself.

But it is not only the sea that is being affected or on the line, for that matter, but the air also. In the name of production, pollution of the atmosphere is taking place, whether through factories or due to the exhaust of motor vehicles or other machines. In short, the entire country—and planet—is being affected adversely, by the activities of Capital-driven societies.

### COVID-19

The activities of Capital-driven societies may even be seen in the advent of COVID-19 and its handling by governments across the world. The origins of COVID are debatable, and the debate centres around particularly those who point to it being made in a lab. From the early days, it was stated that the possibility of it starting was through transmission of viruses from animals to humans in wet markets in particular places. Those animals that were there, were being for the diets of some of the elites and were seen as status-food. If that was the case, then it means that it was because of the tastes of these wealthy Chinese

that inadvertently led to these animals passing on the virus to human. Simply put, COVID-19 could have been a rich person-started disease. But it is in its handling globally that revealed the ways in which wealth often determines health. The truth is that the richer countries of the world often bought and hoarded vaccines for themselves, while poorer countries were not to be able either to afford them or even to have access to them. Even within those richer countries, many of the poorer persons were initially unable to access basic health care including masks, oxygen and vaccines. Such strategies have backfired in the end, because these countries discovered the hard way in a world such as this, persons are always interacting with other persons and that *viruses have no nationality*. Keeping one's country safe from other countries and other peoples of other countries, is a global impossibility, currently.

### Fragmented Jamaica

Here in Jamaica our problem was not so much accessibility of vaccines but rather what COVID-19 revealed about our country. COVID revealed even further how fragmented Jamaica is at the present time. It revealed clear and

many differences between persons living in the same country. It revealed, for instance, gaps and differences in income: economic differences which showed that some were able to access income whether or not they were able to come out for their jobs or not, while others had to hustle and even break the COVID-19 generated restrictions in order to survive.

Differences were also seen in terms of opportunities as some people were able to have access to technology—tablets, computers, Wi-Fi—while others did not have access to these things at all. This further opened up gaps educationally and revealed the real differences between people in terms of education and opportunities for learning. Some were able to be online and go to school continually, while others were not able to go to school at all. Some remained in school, while others dropped out of school. Some were able to use the technologies, other lacked the know-how.

This also revealed real differences in terms of people's social standing as well: for it was clear that some people had access to resources while others were unable to access what seemed like basic resources to those who already had them.

However, COVID-19 revealed a more fundamental difference, namely the difference in understandings between people. This difference is not so much about persons' intelligence or knowledge, but rather outlook and worldview.



To cite the basic one: what we have seen in Jamaica -as well as elsewhere- is the difference that people had with regards to science and religion, and their relationship to each other.

For some persons, religion and science are partners, and so religion ought to support the science. For others, religion and science are adversaries, so science is against religion and religion is therefore to be against the science.

Furthermore, the differences among the Jamaican -and global- population as to who to trust with what information continues to reveal fundamental differences among individuals. "Whose report will we believe?" people ask, even as the debate about "to be vaccinated or not to-be vaccinated" rages.

What makes all of this worse is that the differences that people naturally have in our society became divisions as there are few attempts for persons to have civil discussions in attempt to see each other's point of view, and to meet each other part way, to try to meet in the middle. So instead of decent debate, what we have is acrimonious discussion, hostile condemnation and dismissive argumentation, with elements of

the Church community sadly leading in the charge on one side or the other. All this is yet another sign of just how fragmented current Jamaican Community is.

### Church Ineffectiveness

To me the biggest challenge that we find in Jamaica today is the relative ineffectiveness of the church to deal with the challenges. It is not that the church is not doing anything, it is that what it is doing is not really dealing with some of these fundamental things that are present currently in Jamaican society. For instance, the church is not really a part of the concrete development of the society.

It is not building roads, nor apartments other than church buildings. It is a beneficiary of Information and Computer Technologies rather than the originator of these products, and has used these products, especially in these COVID-19 times to good effects. But it is not dealing either with the shadowy usage of these things, nor is the Church making a dent in engaging with issues of Community and Character Fragmentation, Climate Crisis or Crime and Corruption, as described earlier.

The Church's involvement in society does try to assist in the meeting of the material well-being of the people in Jamaican society. However, its engagement is -more often than not- stuck in the mode of charity, that is, giving specific goods and services to the poor and needy, and sometimes a few development projects, such as skills training rather than in any fundamental liberating operations, that would enable the poor and needy the freedom to set free

themselves from the shackles of poverty. Worse yet, the church is not involved in the radical transformation of society that would create a more just and life-giving place where people can indeed live, work and raise their families.

The Church is not making the impact that is needed to transform the family, nation and people of Jamaica at this time.

What can be done by the Church in particular to deal with these fundamental problems? In order to answer that we have to do a little more digging, or more precisely discerning, as to what are the reasons for these issues and specifically for the Capital-driven society and its malfeasant symptoms.

We now turn to the second section of today's lecture; namely '*Discerning the Reasons for the Signs of the Times*'.

### International Colonial Legacies

Societies such as Jamaica are the way they are because of the legacies of international colonialism. It ought to be remembered that Jamaica was occupied for over fifteen hundred years by First Nation peoples, such as the Tainos, also known as Arawak. When Europeans, led by the Spanish, came in 1494, they introduced a system of colonialism in order that these territories might serve as a source of extraction, exploitation and extortion. The aim was to get as much from these territories as was possible in order to increase riches in the conquering colonizing countries.



So a place like Jamaica, for instance, was seen as a means of making wealth, whether by providing gold, as was first thought by the Spaniards, or tobacco, sugar, coffee and bananas. So even after slavery was abolished in 1838, colonisation continuing until 1962.

And after Independence there were and are treaties made to ensure that preferential treatment is given to the former colonizing countries so as to ensure that they would have the advantage in the international trade for partners of their country.

What we have today then are the legacies of that colonial arrangement, which determine the number of the things that we do or have to do, including trade and monetary arrangements.

### **Interconnected Imperialism**

These Legacies have morphed into what I call interconnected imperialism; that is to say the technologies that have connected us to one another have also connected us to the world around us. While this would be good in itself, the deeper motive for it is not as good. This is namely to connect and to give access to those who are the drivers of Capital, whose aim it is to make more and more money at the expense of the majority of the planet's inhabitants and of the planet itself. So not only are there former colonial actors and agents seeking to enrich themselves but they are also newer players, some of whom are local, who are seeking to do the same thing.

### **Inequality and Inequity**

This has resulted in a great amount of inequity and an increasing inequality within the country and across the world. The true statistics are hard to find, but one can look at the country's minimum wage; at \$7,500 per week which is \$30,000 a month, and at what many business owners and managers get in a comparison and see that the gap is wide. In fact, many years ago in the late mid90s, a survey was carried out, and it was discovered that Jamaica had one of the biggest income gaps in the entire Caribbean, where the bottom part of the social pyramid was earning 200% less than the top part. One can only imagine where it is now 30 years later.

Inequality, by the way, refers to the fact that people do not have the same income levels, no purchasing power in numerical terms, while inequity refers to the unfair, preventable practices, which affect persons'/life chances, expectations and relationships, the hidden factors behind the inequality that is seen numerically.

### **Injustice and Iniquity**

This leads us, therefore, to recognize that in Jamaica today like elsewhere there is much injustice and inequality. Injustice because people are treated unfairly as they do not have the same opportunities as others even though they have the same needs and perhaps more. Iniquity has to do with the fact that people react to this injustice that is meted out on them perhaps by turning to crime or corruption, or perhaps by becoming depressed and distressed and acting out of

that in anti-social and immoral ways.

### **Indifference and Idolatry**

What is the reaction to all this? For the average person, even for the average Christian, one gets the sense that unless people are personally affected that there is a measure of indifference to the plight of others. Yes, there is some amount of charity given to others and even prayers for such persons but there does not seem to be the Passion to help change the situations that make the lives of individuals and groups persistently poor.

When people pray, praise and testify what seems to be at the heart of many forms of worship is the need for them to acquire this world's goods and services, and when they do, or in an effort to make it happen, they make demands of God or claims in His name.

When it is carefully examined, such behaviours are actually forms of idolatry. For we end up making gods of ourselves and our demands, and make as our chief goal the worship of material things.

We entreat the Living God as an object who is there to supply our needs rather than a person we need to respond to in discipleship and obedience.



### Identity Crisis

believe then that the Church in Jamaica and perhaps Jamaica itself, given its spiritual and theological history, is facing an identity crisis. I believe the Church has forgotten who it is and whose it is. That we were meant to be called people of God, chosen as signs and agents of the Kingdom of God among earth's people. That we are meant to be followers of Jesus Christ, who in word, attitude, and deed show the glory of God by making differences that can be measured in practical, tangible ways in the lives of real people facing real situations. Instead, we are caught up in a mode of survival of a sense, trying to maintain Church which is really religiosity, rather than being effective in the lives of the many who need it. The country on a whole has been losing its way for a while because it is slowly but surely moving away from the spiritual roots that gave it its greatness.

### Imminent Judgement

And for these and other reasons, therefore I believe the world on a whole, the whole country in general and the Church in particular are facing imminent judgement. By that I mean, that the Lord God is examining, placing the planet and its component parts, including this country, under scrutiny. I believe that through the various



This lecture was also presented in memory of the late Reverend and Ms Jennings, beloved parents of Rev Dr Stephen Jennings

symptoms and situations; crime and violence, crime and corruption, community fragmentation, and COVID-19, that the Lord is examining fearfully the practices and the principles that characterize human societies to see whether they are treating their citizens and strangers well and fairly or whether they are doing the opposite.

Remember that Jesus did say, The Lord will judge people whether they treated the naked stranger, the hungry well or not in Matthew 25. What Jesus was speaking about, the Last Judgement, is not confined to it but rather whenever judgement is and we believe it is not time for judgement and that judgement is beginning with and from the house of God. 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:17.

Because of that then the Church itself is not exempt from the judgement and I believe that in this year we need to open ourselves to the light of God's examination. Remember judgment is not condemnation, not punishment first. In fact, condemnation and judgement and punishment are only warranted, only needed, only applied when they are worth it, when they are warranted. The first order of business is to test and examine to see whether we are who we say we are or whether we are fraudulent or are found wanting.

Join us in the April edition of CBF Notes for the riveting conclusion of this lecture: **Having read the signs of the time, what are we doing about it?**



**NETWORKING THE BAPTIST FAMILY TO IMPACT THE WORLD FOR CHRIST**

## **BWA RESPONDS TO THE CRISIS IN UKRAINE**

**T**he Baptist World Alliance (BWA) decries the violence in Eastern Europe and supports the Baptist efforts there to be the light of Christ.

In response to the rising tension along the Ukrainian and Russian border, the BWA hosted Igor Bandura, Vice President of the All-Ukrainian Union of Associations of Evangelical Christians-Baptists and a BWA General Council Member, at the organization's headquarters in Falls Church, VA, USA, earlier this month. BWA General Secretary Elijah Brown also joined Bandura in a series of key meetings and roundtables hosted in Washington D.C. on February 10 that brought together representatives from human rights and religious freedom organizations in the United States.

### **SOLIDARITY VISIT**

With more than 130,000 troops amassed on three sides of Ukraine, Brown traveled to Kyiv the following week to participate in a national prayer gathering on Wednesday, February 16, at St. Sophia Cathedral – the oldest church in Ukraine. Brown was able to pray alongside other faith community leaders, including Catholics, Orthodox, and Pentecostals. Departing less than 100 hours before commercial aviation to Ukraine was suspended,

Brown also gathered with the national council of the Baptist Union as they prayed and prepared to help Baptist churches serve as communities of hope.

### **RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION AND ONGOING MINISTRY**

Since 2014, portions of eastern Ukraine have been ravaged by political and military conflict, and the already occupied territories have faced increasing persecution and hardship.

"In the Luhansk Occupied Territory, the Ukrainian Baptist churches were officially declared a terrorist organization, therefore requiring all of the churches to close," said Brown. "The Baptist hymnal and the Gospel of John were outlawed as 'extremist material.' The churches that have tried to remain open do so at great risk and in secret."

In September 2018, the BWA and the European Baptist Federation (EBF) – one of the six regional fellowships of the BWA – participated in a joint solidarity visit to the border of the occupied territories in a region called the "Gray Zone." Participants included Brown, Paul Msiza, Tony Peck, Jenni Entrican, and Helle Liht.

Despite persecution and the daily hardship of life in an area of conflict, 25 Baptist churches have been established in the Gray Zone in the last five years. Over the last six years, the Baptist union in Ukraine has invested more than \$54,350,000 Ukrainian Hryvnia (equates to over \$2 million USD) into the Gray Zone for aid, relief, and community development. Pastors who have fled from the occupied territories and resettled elsewhere in Ukraine, including in Kyiv and Lviv, have started ten new churches.

Today the All-Ukrainian Union of Associations of Evangelical Christians-Baptists is the second largest Baptist community in Europe and the Middle East and is also the largest Protestant group in Ukraine with over 100,000 members across more than 2,100 churches. They have been a member body of the BWA for 30 years as has the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists.

### **RESPONDING TO THE CRISIS**

On February 24, the challenges that have been the daily reality of those in the gray zone became the reality of all Ukrainians when they woke to the sounds of sirens and falling artillery as Russian military launched a full-scale invasion by land, air, and sea.



**NETWORKING THE BAPTIST FAMILY TO IMPACT THE WORLD FOR CHRIST**

**BAPTISTS UNITE TO  
PROVIDE AID AND  
SUPPORT IN UKRAINE**

Within hours, EBF organized a global solidarity call to hear directly from Baptist leaders in Ukraine. Attended by more than 75 Baptist leaders around the world, the global Baptist community pledged support and prayers as Bandura emotionally described the short-term and anticipated long-term impact of the attacks.

Baptist World Aid Director Marsha Scipio convened a BFAD (Baptist World Alliance Forum for Aid and Development) coordination call on Friday with representatives from more than 25 Baptist unions and aid organizations, resulting in more than \$200,000 raised within 48 hours of the first airstrike. Attendees pledged to raise additional support over the coming weeks.

A video update from General Secretary Brown was distributed to the BWA's network of Global Impact Churches, calling for prayer and support, as well as a call to action to its 245 member bodies in 128 countries and territories. BWA President Tomas Mackey issued a statement in both English and Spanish (linked in its entirety in the resources below).

"We regret that the humanitarian,

economic, political, and other consequences of these actions are serious and painful," said Mackey. "We have hope in the knowledge that God is at work in the world he loves and in which he has placed us as his disciples who learn from Jesus how to live with integrity the values of his kingdom and how to reflect the fruit of the Holy Spirit."

BWA leaders across various departments - including BWAid, BWA Women, Integral Mission, and Global Partnerships - connected with Baptist leaders in Ukraine, Russia, and neighboring countries to express support and mobilize responses.

Baptist churches in the westernmost region of Ukraine have established their buildings as "Centers of Hope" to provide food and shelter for the displaced. Hungarian Baptists have set up a humanitarian aid center from which they are distributing food and hygiene kits and providing basic medical care. Baptists in Poland are already welcoming refugees into their homes and churches as well as the Warsaw Baptist Theological Seminary.

**PRAYER**

Throughout the month of March, EBF will host an international prayer gathering on Zoom every Wednesday, rooted in the belief that "prayers are more powerful than anything else." Visit [ebf.org/prayforpeace](http://ebf.org/prayforpeace) to register.

The BWA is also the lead partner in organizing a multi-faith prayer meeting to be held at the United Nations Church Center Chapel in New York City on Thursday, March 3, at 12:00 pm EST. The service is titled, **Global Prayers for Ukraine, A Multi-Faith Service for Peace and Freedom in a Hurting World.**

In addition, BWA Women and European Baptist Women United are praying with women's leaders in both Ukraine and Russia. Brown is also working with Baptist leaders in Russia to plan an upcoming visit to join them in prayer, worship, and ongoing ministry.

Many of the BWA's Global Impact Churches will be designating a portion of their services on Sunday to a time of prayer for the people of Ukraine. A prayer guide and additional resources have been made available at [BaptistWorld.org/prayforpeace](http://BaptistWorld.org/prayforpeace).

Churches and individuals are also planning additional donations to support and respond together as one Baptist family. Join this response at [BaptistWorld.org/give](http://BaptistWorld.org/give).



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