

General Education

We commend the work being done in the area of General Education in Methodist Schools in Grenada, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago. We are however mindful that much more needs to be done in order to achieve well rounded and highly skilled students. Additionally, the District is committed to having a greater direct presence in general education, through the opening of new Methodist schools in Barbados and St. Vincent. With this in mind, highly qualified persons have been identified and will be asked to propel this movement of advancement.

The Context of Ministry

Our region continues to present us with several recurring challenges which include poverty, unemployment, political tribalism and the increase in crime and violence. What may be more fundamental is the shift in morals and values and the aggressive attempts to reshape what has been labelled as “traditional (Biblical) values”. Over the past year there have been major court battles in our region and the emergence of lobbying groups regarding LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer, Intersex, A-sexual) rights and related legislations.

A pervasive perspective is that governments are pressured and beaten into submission while the wider society is forced to “get on board” reflected in some cases in high profile appointments made and positions articulated. We are conscious that as a church we must respond to these emerging challenges to our fundamental principles and values and the wellbeing of our people. We also must play a role on this and other pertinent national and regional issues holding tension with our gospel of grace and message of redemption and righteousness. The challenge of increases in crime and violence compounded by the difficult economic climate in many jurisdictions, have all contributed to some being cynical and hopeless. They speak with a sense of inevitability that things can only get worse.

We are confident that while the challenges are great and seem to be towering over us, the God of David the Giant slayer is the same God who continues to empower and equip us to accomplish more than we can ever ask or think. We are encouraged never to cease looking back as we look forward. Look back to the Word, look back to the testimonies through centuries and millennia. See that the expectation and hope with which we look to the future with encouragement is not wishful thinking and head in the sand. It is based on the evidence of what God has done and the faith in what God can do. Let us believe God for great things in our church and region. Let us continue in our resolve; **“Renewed in Christ: Committed to a New Caribbean.”**

Rev. Derick A. Richards,
District Bishop/President

Rev. Philbert S. Delaney,
Secretary of the District Conference



DISTRICT PASTORAL LETTER TO THE CONGREGATIONS 5th DISTRICT COUNCIL – JANUARY, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, greetings from the 5th District Council of the South Caribbean District of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas!

Introduction

The District Council was hosted in the Grenada Circuit, under the superintendence of the Rev. Sylbert Prescod. We are grateful for the effort, care and hospitality of that Circuit and for the many persons who opened their homes, hands and hearts to our delegates. We celebrate their efforts to ensuring the Council's successful hosting.

The Rev. Derick Richards, Bishop of the South Caribbean District, chaired his first District Council with the support of Rev. Philbert Delaney as Secretary of the District Conference. The Council was stretched, as every effort was made to ensure the work done was meaningful and consequential to the life and growth of our Church. We continued to be challenged with the transitioning from annual to triennial Conference and ensuring we discern where God is leading our Church and not simply satisfy a set agenda.

The Council also benefitted from the presence of the Connexional Secretary, Rev. Glenna Spencer and Supernumerary Rev. Dr. Lesley Anderson. Both Rev. Spencer and Rev. Dr. Anderson are former District Presidents who brought their wisdom, experience and grace to the reflections and discussion. Rev. Dr. Anderson also represented the Thomas Memorial Wesleyan Circuit.

Bishop's Vision

The Bishop has articulated a Vision for the South Caribbean District and aspects of that vision are reflected in several of the decisions taken by the Council. The Bishop has made an emphatic plea for the District to become a church that embraces and empowers children and young people thus enabling a meaningful engagement of young people and children in strategically positioning the church for the future. His vision is that our Youth will help to create impactful and sustainable solutions to the challenges that we face as a church. His proposal of a District Mission Department was accepted by the Council. It includes the pursuit of youth ambassadors and youth pastors as a means of stimulating growth in our youth ministry and is hoped to contribute to the goal of 50 ministerial candidates from the

South Caribbean District in 10 years. He also envisages a dynamic general education thrust, and refocused women's and men's ministries.

Evangelistic Thrust

Our District's theme, "***Renewed in Christ: Committed to a New Caribbean***" was our overarching theme, and we reflected in our worship on the sub theme: "*Advancing our Denomination through Saved Lives.*" This sub theme called us to develop a more evangelistic approach to our work. The program therefore included an Evangelistic Service titled "Jericho Hour" and a March of Witness which ended with an Open-air Service, with the District Bishop as the preacher. This Open-air Service served as the official Council worship. We give God glory for the several persons who committed and recommitted their lives to Christ at these Services.

Ministry

Our District accepted Sisters Joelle Alfred, Olyvya O'Connor, Cheryse Martin, Gillian Murray and Bro. Jerand Phills as candidates for the ordained ministry. Revs. Greta St. Hill and Ann Yarde were received into full connexion and will be ordained at a date to be identified. Revs. Peter Lubsey, Carol Jean Richardson and Hassan Matthews-Wickham will continue their training and ministerial formation.

We deliberately reflected on ways to improve the processing of persons for ministry and the quality of ministry offered by our ministers. Consequently, we will be exposing future candidates and prospective candidates to evangelistic engagements and other spiritual development opportunities. We also discussed ways to stimulate greater reflection by our ministers on the work and where God is leading.

As you may be aware, stations are now made triennially. The Council makes changes only as is necessary, as such most stations remain the same. Of note however is Rev. Dr. Janis Jack-Watson who would have taken up her appointment in the Ebenezer Circuit as Superintendent and Rev. Elton Watson, minister in the Bethel Circuit as of September 01, 2018. Rev. Marcelle Braithwaite is stationed to the Georgetown-Mt. Coke Circuit and the Rev. Tanya Conliffe to the Bethel Circuit. Both return to full work having received a year special leave. Revs. Tui Nuku Smith and Waisea Tavabulabula, ministers from the Fiji Conference are expected to take up appointments in the Kingstown-Chateaubelair and Tobago Circuits respectively. Rev. Smith by February 01, and Rev. Tavabulabula soonest.

Faith and Order Statements

The District received from the Connexion, statements that have been affirmed and adopted for our reflection and contribution. The affirmed statements were on Baptism, Forgiveness and Common Law Unions, while the adopted statement was on Episcopacy. We have reflected on these statements and are submitting our

observations and contributions as we anticipate the final publication of these statements which seek to advise the Church on what we believe. With regards to the statement on Episcopacy, our position as formulated is, having accepted the introduction of the title Bishop, we need only to clarify how this title is inserted into our practice as a Church and leave all other theological, liturgical and functional issues until we have adequately conceptualized the nature and scope of the MCCA Bishop. We are also concerned that this matter does not continue to engage an inordinate amount of time which ought to be spent reflecting on and working actively towards saving lives and growing the Kingdom of God.

Conferences and Seminars

Excitedly, our District agreed to the hosting of a District Youth Conference before District Conference 2021. At this innovative Conference, the young delegates will be drawn from all Circuits across our District and, under guidance from the District Officers, they will deliberate and make recommendations to District Conference 2021.

Additionally, the District will host its first Proclamation Conference from June 8-10, 2019 for Preachers, Congregational Stewards and all who are involved in our pulpit ministry, along with others who are interested in learning about proclaiming the Word. Youth and Youth Adults are especially encouraged to participate. This conference will take place in three campuses St. Vincent, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago. We were also reminded of the upcoming Women's Assembly and the 2020 Men's Conference. Details will be forwarded to Circuits.

Plans are in train for the MCCA Youth Encuentro 2019 in Belize. The first payment ought to have been made in December with the second tranche due in February. While we are mindful that the cost is onerous, we trust that Circuits and Congregations will ensure that we would have a strong representation from our District, and we pray for the experience to be a transformative one for our youth. Rev. Afesha Millette-Clarke is the District Chaperone and Rev. Al Walcott chaplain.

Children and Youth

We are particularly concerned for our children and youth. This is an area of great interest and focus, especially as we pay attention to the large numbers of shut-ins in many Circuits, demanding that we take note of our aging population and the need to ensure we are replenishing our membership. Our concern however, isn't simply for children to become a part of our community, as in the case of a club, rather our passion is for our children and youth to know the Lord as their personal Saviour. We are resolved that the church we will leave behind for the next generation must be, by the grace of God, better than what we received; one where the vast majority of our membership have an authentic relationship with Christ and are passionately seeking to spread the good news of salvation.