

## **PASTORAL LETTER TO THE CONGREGATIONS**

**TO:** The Congregations of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas

**FROM:** The Connexional Council 2019

*Oh, that each in the day  
Of His coming may say  
I have fought my way thru;  
I have finished the work Thou didst give me to do*

*Charles Wesley (1707-1788)*

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Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

Greetings in the name of our Risen and Conquering Saviour Jesus Christ who continues to sustain us by His grace!

The 2019 Connexional Council of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas ('MCCA') assembled from May 22-27, 2019 in the picturesque city of Nassau, New Providence, Bahamas which forms part of the Bahamas Turks and Caicos Islands District Conference. Council met under the theme "**Facing the Task Unfinished: Imagine**" with sub-theme "**Let Us Pray,**" which informed our deliberations, discussions and decision making, amidst a rich nexus of worship and fellowship

### **Attendance, Welcome**

Connexional Bishop, the Rev'd Everal L. Galbraith adeptly guided our meetings and was supported by the Connexional Vice-President Mrs. Yonette Greaves, Connexional Secretary, Rev'd Glenna Spencer, A.A., and Mr. Quincy Bourne, Treasurer of the Connexional Funds. Present also were the President and a lay delegate from each of the eight (8) Districts, the Secretary of the Commission on Ministry, Rev'd Patmore Henry and, the Senior Ministerial Tutor/Warden, UTCWI Rev'd Dr. Oral Thomas, along with Journal Secretary Rev'd Morna Christmas-Frazer ably assisted by Rev'd Kelli Jolly.

At the Opening Service at the Rhodes Memorial Methodist Church in the Nassau Circuit, the delegates of the 2019 Connexional Council were welcomed by the Bahamas/TCI District Conference at the Opening Service which included a presentation of the District flags by the Royal Bahamas Police Force Cadets. - The Governor General of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, Her Excellency the Most Hon. Dame Margeurite Pindling as well as the Opposition Leader Hon. Philip Brave Davis, Q.C were in attendance.

From the praise and worship, to the exuberant Bahamian welcome and the powerful word of God delivered by Bishop Rev'd Theophilus Nathan Rolle, the Service was rich in the anointing of the Holy Spirit and indeed set the tone for the week's deliberations. Rev'd Rolle challenged the church to use its imagination to consider three things in light of the text as we face the unfinished task, to: (i) Rethink the Church – in determining what God has called the MCCA to be in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; (2) Relinquish old ways, attitudes, mindsets; and (iii) Rely on a Limitless God.

Letters of greetings were received, inclusive of greetings from the Rev'd Dr. the Hon. Claude L. Cadogan OD,OJ, LLD, a former President who celebrated his 104<sup>th</sup> birthday on May 10, 2019.

### **Commiserations**

The invaluable contributions of those Ministers who have departed, namely, Rev'd Dr. Byron K. Chambers,

Rev'd Dr. Hon. Garnet Brown, Rev'd Sybil Whittle and Rev'd Gilbert Brown was acknowledged. May their families continue to be comforted in God's promise of eternal life.

### **Ministry**

Six (6) persons were accepted as candidates for ministry. To God be the glory that He continues to call His children to serve in full time ministry. It was agreed that ministers in training will now be afforded the opportunity to acquire skills to communicate in a language other than their mother tongue.

As a Connexion, we celebrate the following persons who were received into full connexion: Ann Yarde and Greta St. Hill (Deacons); Othneil E. Daley (LP) and Celina Walton-Charles (Deacon), and Alison Iton (Deacon), and Charlene Burton (LP). Ordination Services will be held in the South Caribbean, Leeward Islands and Jamaica Districts respectively.

The Council also received Major Stanley Reuben Griffin, a retired Salvation Army Officer and Rev'd Emelio Chaviano, a retired minister of Florida Conference, for recognition as Presbyters in the MCCA.

Funding for Ministerial training at the United Theological College of the West Indies (UTCWI) continues to be a major challenge for our Church, straining our Church's ecumenical relationship with UTCWI and affecting the training of our ministers. In light of this, we wish to remind Districts of the decision taken at the Connexional Conference 2018 to identify persons to contribute financially in order to clear the debt owing to UTCWI. We continue to urge you to contribute to this, being assured that '*once you give, it will be given to you, a good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over.*' (Luke 6:38).

We are eternally grateful to God, who continues to equip us for this journey by providing us with partners in ministry. At the Connexional Conference, we were fortunate to have a presentation done by Director Uma Jones from the Board of Global Ministries. This presentation primarily focused on the upcoming Volunteers-in-Mission training to be held in the Region in August 2019 where each District will have two representatives.

The Connexion has recommended to the Board of UTCWI that Rev'd Dr. Oral Thomas, who has served for the past 3 years as Acting President and most recently as Interim President, be appointed as the President of the Institution. The Methodist Church places on record our support and recognize the invaluable contributions he has made to the College.

### **Resources and Development**

We continue to give God thanks for His Spirit's enablement that allowed Districts to make some amount of payments to both the District Assessments and Superannuation Funds. However, Districts are encouraged to rigorously work towards honoring their financial commitments to the Connexion. Though, the several challenges of Districts continue to plague our Connexion, we urge each of you to take seriously the call of our Lord Jesus Christ to be faithful stewards in our tithing and giving as we continue to lift you up in prayers.

A Connexional Committee was established to review, assess and provide a comprehensive strategic plan on the sustainability of the MCCA especially with regard to our financial situation. In the interim, we wish to urge all Districts to stay current in your payments, make strides to clear your debts, find creative ways to grow financially and be viable in this changing economy.

### **Gilbert Centre**

The Gilbert Centre, situated in Antigua which is the birthplace of Methodism within the Caribbean region

,once boasted a multi-purpose facility. Among other things, it was used to host conferences, camps as well as contained many historical information on Methodism. Sadly, this Centre has fallen into disuse. Upon extensive discussion, the 2019 Connexional Council agreed that ownership of the Centre is the business of the MCCA and therefore, the restoration of the Centre should be a concerted effort among the Districts.

### **Mission, Evangelism & Education**

The Council commends you brothers and sisters of the Methodist Church for fulfilling your calling in '*making disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*' (Matthew 28:19). May we persevere in reaching out to children, youth, young adults, men and women across our Connexion.

Over two hundred (200) Methodist youths across the Connexion will meet July 22-29, 2019 in Belize, Belize/Honduras District for the 6<sup>th</sup> Youth Encuentro under the theme '***Methodission: Forever Fired Up for Christ***'. We enlist your prayers for those who will be in attendance that the Holy Spirit will do a new and refining work in the lives of the youths at this meeting.

Districts are reminded to incorporate the Youth Strategic objectives and Guidance Documents formulated by the Executive Body of the MCCA Youth and approved by the Connexional Conference 2018.

Throughout the week of Council, the Presidents of the Districts constantly shared their recent pilgrimage experience in South Korea. From this experience, what continued to resound was our call to be a more prayerful church. Let us continue to lift each other up on prayer, establish prayer altars in our families and undergird everything we do in prayer.

We pray for God's continued enabling and perfecting of this our Church as we seek to fulfil our mandate to spread scriptural holiness for the reformation of our Connexion. Our challenges are many, however, we are called to look beyond our present situations and see the Lord urging us forward.

### **Official Council Service and Conclusion**

The official Council service was held on Sunday, May 26, 2019 at the Rhodes Memorial Methodist Church as well. The Connexional President, Bishop Everal Galbraith preached, on the text as recorded in Zechariah 4:1-6, with topic being "Enabled by the Spirit of God". He urged the church to recognize that, as we seek to pursue the unfinished task, it requires us having : (i) A Meaningful Relationship with God; (ii) A Spirit-led life; and (iii) Facing our Unique Mission.

The year 2020 will mark 260 years of Methodist witness in our region. Ours was the first region outside England to which Methodism was spread. How can we observe such a momentous witness? You are asked to observe this moment not in nostalgia and mere memorabilia, but in a vigorous embrace of the opportunity to be relevant in serving this present age. To this end we will have number of activities to engage our youth and young adult across the connexion in purposeful/ creative dialogue.

To God's gracious love we commend you as together we Face the Task Unfinished.

Yours in Christ,

*Everal Galbraith*  
Everal Galbraith

*Glenna Spencer*  
Glenna Spencer