TRIPLE DOSE OF HISTORY-MAKING FOR JAMAICAN & HAITIAN BAPTISTS

Jamaican and Haitian Baptists have experienced a new chapter of triple trailblazing feats, since the start of this year. For the first time in living memory, the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU) accepted into its membership, churches located outside of the geographical borders of Jamaica. Three Haitian Churches were officially given the right hand of fellowship by the JBU on Sunday, February 22, during the Union’s 4th Believers’ Convention and 165th General Assembly at the Montego Bay Convention Centre. The three which comprise the Eglise Christianisme Du Calvaire Baptiste Circuit of Churches are: Nouvelle Du Calvaire D’Haiti-Petit Place Cazeau (PPC), Nouvelle Eglise Baptiste Du Calvaire D’Haiti-KaFab, and Nouvelle Eglise Baptiste Du Calvaire D’Haiti-KaMois a.

PIONEERING ACHIEVEMENTS

Another major, pioneering achievement for the JBU is that for the first time in the life of the Union it has conducted an ordination service in a Caribbean country outside of Jamaica, for one of its pastors. Additionally, for the first time, the Union has officially opened a JBU church it built outside of the borders of Jamaica. The KaFab church was dedicated on April 26, after over a year of Jamaican-Haitian Baptist partnership in the construction of the building, which will also house a school. Meanwhile, the record-breaking ordination service was that of Haitian, Rev. Jean Rony Bataille, who has become a minister of the JBU and the pastor of the Eglise Christianisme Du Calvaire Baptiste Circuit of Churches. It took place on April 19 at a school hall close to the PPC church in Haiti’s capital, Port-au-Prince. A 27-member delegation from Jamaica (comprised of 13 pastors and 14 volunteers with the JBU Mission Agency) and scores of Haitian Baptists were in attendance at the ordination. The preacher for the ordination service was Rev. Michael Shim-Hue, President, JBU; who has visited Haiti on several occasions since the Union’s 2006 fact-finding mission in that country.

MEMORABLE ORDINATION

Rev. Bataille reflects on the ordination as a “memorable one” and has expressed the determination and commitment to be diligent in spearheading efforts to reach Haitians with the gospel, and forge closer ties between his church and other member churches of the JBU. Some six years ago, the JBUMA offered a scholarship in theology/pastoral training to Bataille, which was tenable at the United Theological College of the West Indies. During 2014, he completed his studies and period of commissioned internship in Jamaica and returned to Haiti, to serve in pastoral ministry. “My ministerial training and experiences I received in Jamaica have impacted my life in a positive way for they have contributed in shaping me into this person I am today. One that is truly equipped to do the work of God, an agent of change who has the capability to impact human life,” Rev. Bataille recounts. “Most importantly my training and experiences have helped both my theological or spiritual life and my social/political life which facilitate me to become the person the Lord wants me to be.”

BREAKING CULTURAL & LANGUAGE BARRIERS

The acceptance of the three Haitian churches into the JBU, comes in the wake of years of support provided by the Union to them in the areas of ministry, ministerial training, Christian education, development of education and educational infrastructure, building and expansion of church infrastructure, aid in establishing potable water supply, assistance in health and social welfare programmes as well as disaster relief. The partnership was streamlined and strengthened with a Memorandum of Understanding between Haitian and Jamaican Baptists in February 2003 and the renewal of the agreement in April 2012.

Contd on page 5
LIVING BY FAITH: Our Faith, For Faithfulness in the Faith

“Living by faith,” the biennial theme of the Jamaica Baptist Union, for the period 2014-2016, challenges all of us to loyalty in the Faith as we allow our mind and our life to be shaped by the faithfulness of God; in God’s Mission to all of us. It’s a mission to humankind, reflected in Advent, Christmas, Lent, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, Easter, the Ascension and Pentecost.

I believe the JBU theme summons us to live a radical Christian lifestyle of faith, in this world today. In the face of increasing, radical secularism, God requires that our collective and individual faith as Christians displays unshakable allegiance to the God of community, righteousness and holiness. This stance should be expressed in our faithfulness to Him, love for Him and others, peace, patience, tolerance, goodness, gentleness, self-control and forgiveness.

The JBU 165th Annual General Assembly and 4th Believers’ Convention in Montego Bay was most certainly a manifestation of our lifestyle of faith in God. On behalf of the JBU Officers and Executive Committee, I extend heartiest appreciation to the planning committee in Kingston, the local arrangements committee in St. James, the staff at the JBU Centre, Calvary Baptist Church and to our pastors, members and friends, for making the Assembly a wonderful and blessed reality. We are appreciative of and inspired by our fellowship with the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB); who joined us at the Assembly for the Bicentenary celebrations between BUGB and JBU.

Special thanks to all who were in attendance at the Montego Bay Convention Centre for the closing services of the Assembly. Your presence inspired faith and faithfulness in the leaders of the JBU. A tremendous moment in the Assembly, you will agree, was the reception of four more congregations: Spot Valley in Montego Bay and three in the Republic of Haiti. JBU churches in Haiti—what a step of faith! The circuit in Haiti is the, Nouvelle Eglise Baptist Du Calvaire D’Haiti (New Calvary Baptist Church of Haiti) at Petite Place Cazeau, Ka Fab and KaMoinard.

I urge all of us to take another step of faith by embracing and participating in the JBU Mission 2020 programme of Evangelism and Discipleship. Our Union’s wish is that all of us will become passionate about winning souls for the kingdom. Our involvement in evangelism and discipleship is a demonstration of the depth of our faith in God, for the improvement in the spiritual welfare of our sisters and brothers.

We are now in the 2015 Atlantic hurricane season and my hope is that you and your families will take the necessary hurricane preparedness measures. Remember your responsibility to pay keen attention to advisories from the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) and The Jamaica Baptist Union Mission Agency (JBU MA). The 2014 hurricane season had seriously affected Bermuda and Haiti. Let us remember them in our prayers as they try to recover from their past season of natural disasters.

Talking about seasons; the 2014 “season” of camps and conferences convinced me about the bright future of the JBU. I congratulate the leaders of the JBU Youth Department (JBUYD): Rev. Merlyn Hyde-Riley, Ms. Arlene Henry, Ms. Donna-Lee Minot and the JBUYD Executive members, for the leadership they continue to give in our ministry to the youth and young adults. Particular mention must be made of the 30th renewal of the JBU Youth Conference and Rally. It featured life-changing moments of worship and worth instilling activities. On another matter, I was thinking that no other group would have outdone our Women’s Federation on the Open Day of their annual conference. The Brotherhood came close in Falmouth as they renewed their commitment to God. Isn’t life exciting in the Jamaica Baptist Union?

I hope that every member of the JBU family in Jamaica, Haiti, other Caribbean islands and the Caribbean Diaspora will have a blessed 2015 summer of Vacation Bible School (VBS); camps and conferences; including the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) 21st Congress in Durban, South Africa. Please give all those events your prayerful support.

Please also join the Union’s officers in praying that: Jamaica’s economy will continue on the path of recovery; all Christians at the workplace will be diligent workers; Jamaicans will discontinue the high incidence of murders affecting the nation and we will protect our children instead of preying on them. Let us also seek God in our prayers for a great attendance of our members and pastors at the JBU 4th Quadrennial Mission Conference, scheduled for October 22-25 this year, in Montego Bay.

May the blessing of the Triune God be with you and yours in the remaining months of 2015 and always.

Michael Shim-Hue (Rev.)
“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:18 NIV).

It is so easy to miss the presence and intervention of God in our daily life because we are so caught up with the act of living and the chore of surviving. In fact, sadly too often, our awareness of God is heightened only when our rhythm is interrupted and the things, yea, the blessings, we took for granted are no more.

Such is the tendency of us mortals that it behoves us to identify and practise strategies that will assist in sharpening our “God-consciousness”. Taken seriously this path will manifest itself in shaping us “an attitude of gratitude” (a phrase which a now deceased member of the Bogue Hill Baptist church, who lost both arms in a vicious attack while serving in the Jamaica Constabulary Force, used to repeat often).

This call to develop an eye for God is not only to us as individuals but to organizations and institutions, including the church. Oh yes, the church—the gathered community is often guilty of being spiritually myopic!

Unwittingly, tales of woe and cries of impoverishment covered with a thin layer of praise dominate so much of our time. Some of our corporate worship spaces, when unmasked, tell a story of the absence of a real spirit of thanksgiving which ought to accompany those who are living by faith.

Challenged by my own vulnerability in this area and conscious of its reality in many ways among us as a denomination, I invite us to consider the following as ways in which God continued to remind us of God’s presence with us.

Let us give God thanks for:

The 4th Believers Convention & 165th General Assembly
It’s a truism that often-repeated events, can lose their significance quickly and are taken for granted easily. The 2015 Convention & Assembly while encompassing many of the usual logistical elements was set to reflect one major difference—the hosting of the Closing Services. These highly anticipated events on our denominational calendar were held in another venue than the National Arena, for the first time in over quarter century.

At the conclusion of the Closing Services at the Montego Bay Convention Centre (MBCC), the overwhelming emotional response was one of joy! We were unhappy that God had delivered us from some unpleasant memories of the previous time we met for the Closing Services in Montego Bay.

Members, adherents and friends of our denomination descended on the MBCC in impressive numbers. The police and MBCC personnel estimate that there were about ten thousand attendees; thereby making it, reportedly, the largest single event to take place at the MBCC. Unequivocally, there was much more to celebrate than commiserate!

Persons Who Serve
I have many recollections about the closing day, but I crave your indulgence to share two with you, which took place outside of the glare and gaze of many, but which touched me deeply. On the Sunday afternoon when the Convention Hall was almost empty my eyes caught a glimpse of Patrick Smith, the founder and chairman of Krystal Clear Productions, the company that has provided audiovisual services for almost all JBU events especially our General Assembly since about 2004. Patrick was a deacon of the Bethel Baptist Church (Half-way Tree) and our relationship goes much deeper than that of commercial enterprise / business client. He served the Assembly Planning Committee for over a decade and was the “go to” person in many ventures.

Patrick battled cancer for some time and with the disease taking a more debilitating toll on his body we accepted with sadness that he would not be able to be present at the Assembly. Words cannot express what I, and other members of the team, felt when we saw Patrick that Sunday afternoon. Notwithstanding his obvious poor health Patrick asked to be driven to Montego Bay on that Sunday afternoon just to catch “a piece” of the Assembly! I will forever remember the image of him barely able to walk but making his way around just the same. On June 24, Patrick finished his earthly sojourn and we thank God for his ministry.

The other image is that of another Patrick—Patrick Green who has been associated with the JBU for over fifteen years. There is no official title for Patrick, except that he has provided a range of transportation-related services to the denomination over that time. About two years after assuming the ministry of General Secretary, my wife and I realized that we needed help with transportation and we turned to Patrick. Over those years he became not just a close member of the JBU family but of ours as well.

In June 2012, I had the privilege of officiating at his wedding and knew from then that, with his wife residing in the United States of America, him joining her there was a distinct possibility. He advised me in the latter part of last year (2014) that all was now in place for him to leave Jamaica but decided that he would not go until after the Assembly in February 2015.

That decision touched me deeply but then my sense of gratitude deepened as I observed him on the Sunday afternoon helping to pack the vehicle for the journey back to Kingston. He delayed his departure from Jamaica out of sheer love for the JBU and I feel indebted to God for providing us with him.

I shared those two unforgettable accounts with you because in the euphoria of what many agreed was a meaningful and successful Convention & Assembly, I wanted you to join me in celebrating the extraordinary ways through which we are reminded about our extra-ordinary God! Those two friends helped me to place all the things, which caused concern, including the mishap suffered by the brethren from Lawrence Tavern, into proper perspective. They left me praying that God would enable me to develop a perpetual attitude of gratitude.

Interestingly, while I was reflecting on the Convention/Assembly I received a letter postmarked New York, USA, from a lady who had attended the gathering while she was visiting relatives in Jamaica. She had sensed God’s presence in a special way during the days of the meetings and felt led to make a financial contribution towards defraying the cost of staging the event. What struck me was not so much the gift but that she honoured a commitment she made even after she left the country!

Still on the matter of persons who serve, we thank God for our brother the Rev. Dr Devon Dick who offered himself and was elected as President Elect for 2015 to 2016. Our brother is pastor of the Boulevard Baptist church, St. Andrew, and we urge you to pray for him and the congregation he pastors as they prepare themselves in heart and mind to serve the Union.

Congratulations are in order for our brother, Rev. the Hon. Jeffrey McKenzie, pastor of the Phillipo Baptist church, on his appointment as Custos Rotulorum of St. Catherine. Let us pray for him as he serves in that office that he will embody in clear, discernable and unmistakable ways the essence and spirit of our nation and the people of the parish.

Let us commit to God:

Our Country
We pray for God’s enabling through the hurricane season that we may face with fortitude and resilience; whatever systems might come our way. It is incumbent upon us to live prudent and prepared lives as an expression of our Christian stewardship.

A storm of another kind, which is brewing in the country, is the wage negotiation being conducted between the Government of Jamaica and the Public Sector. The voice of the Church, including ours, has not been heard or sought much amidst the raging rhetoric. I have felt however that with so many of our members gainfully employed in the public sector, we as a community of faith, should encourage them to bring their Christian convictions to bear on the negotiations. It may or may not make them popular; they may or may not be heard but they have a duty to their God to reflect Him in this aspect of being in the world.

Our Campers
Summer time is camp time, which becomes prime time for our premier camping facility the JBU Conference Centre (Nuthsell). We continue to encourage our churches to facilitate the involvement of as many of our children and youth in our camp activities.

Our camp ministry continues to impact scores of lives and we pray that many more will be so influenced this year. In fact you should know by now that this is a very special year for Nuthsell as it is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary. May you be led to make a financial expression to this facility as it continues to be a place for rest, reflection and renewal.

Our Pilgrims
Come July 19 about eighty persons will begin their journey to the 21st Baptist World Congress in Durban, South Africa under the banner of the JBU. We pray for safe journey, good health and a positively memorable experience as we share in this historic event. As one can imagine, a lot of work has gone into the planning and organizing of the team to Durban and I want to pay tribute to Arlene Henry and Yvette Johnson for their ministry in this regard.

Finally, allow me to say thanks to God for calling me to serve Him through the office of General Secretary of the Jamaica Baptist Union for another season. God’s grace continues to be sufficient for each task. God assigns and I am thankful for the tangible support provided through so many of you.

To God be the glory!

Karl B. Johnson (Rev)
JBU Brotherhood Celebrates 80 Years

The Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU) Brotherhood is celebrating 80 years of Christian service to Jamaica and the international Baptist community during the 2014-2015 church year. The activities to commemorate the milestone include:

- **Men’s Week** — June 14 - 21, 2015
- **Men’s March** — June 2015, under the theme, “Men against Violence”
- **Eighthieth Anniversary Awards Banquet** — Saturday October 24, 2015 at Holiday Haven Resort, Runaway Bay, St. Ann

The Brotherhood, which was pioneered by Dr Arthur Stephenson, saw its formal establishment in 1934 when it was called the JBU Laymen’s Association. Since the formal establishment of the Brotherhood it has undergone several changes in name and foci. In the 1930’s, the focus was on co-operating with the JBU and the Missionary Society for the advancement of Baptist work and the propagating of Baptist beliefs, teachings and principles.

The Laymen Association had the largest following among all the groups of Christian Missionary Societies worldwide, and Dr Stephenson thought that the Jamaica Baptist Men should be a part of this great movement. He thought there were enough educated men with the passion for Christ and God-given abilities to take a more active role in the life of the Church and the development of the Baptist denomination. During the period of the Laymen Association several men would commit their lives and purpose to the building of churches and communities, teaching Sunday school, preaching engagements and other missionary activities. The impact on the development of Jamaica and the Baptist community was tremendous and well recognized locally and internationally.

After the passing of Dr Stephenson in 1953 the Laymen Association had a name change to JBU Men’s Movement in 1954. It was thought that in order to have greater involvement of the pastors and other non-laymen a name change was necessary. In 1962 the name was again changed to what we now know it to be — the JBU Brotherhood. At that time, it was believed that a name change was appropriate based on the high level of responsibility and depth of fellowship that were expected of the Baptist men.

Currently, the JBU Brotherhood’s mission is to lead men into the fellowship of the Baptist denomination and instil in them the commitment and loyalty to Christ and His Church. This is further promoted by the Motto: “Finding, Following, Fraternizing.” Additionally, the Brotherhood has established a branch in almost every Baptist church within its four regions:

- **Region 1**: Kingston & St Andrews, St. Thomas and Portland
- **Region 2**: Clarendon, Manchester and St. Elizabeth
- **Region 3**: St. Ann, St. Mary and St. Catherine
- **Region 4**: Hanover, St. James, Trelawny, Westmoreland.

The JBU Brotherhood continues to engage in activities geared towards the furtherance of God’s Kingdom with sustained programmes such as: Evangelism, Community Outreach, Education and Mission. For example, in its community outreach initiatives, the Brotherhood has awarded in excess of 20 scholarships to boys who have been successful in the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT). The scholarship covers the five years of each boy’s high school tenure.

The JBU Brotherhood has become a household name, impacting the lives of individuals, communities and organizations locally and internationally. May God continue to bless, strengthen, inspire, sustain and motivate the Brotherhood and its leadership as they continue His work for His glory and honour.

**GARLAND HALL MEMORIAL HOME RECEIVES ULTRA-MODERN PLAY AREA**

The Garland Hall Memorial Home in St. James is paying tribute to the Yohan Blake Foundation for its vision and philanthropy in transforming the grounds of the Home into a compact, state-of-the-art, all inclusive play area. The project is designed to develop the motor, physical, spatial and competitive skills of each resident. The new playground comprises football and netball fields, tennis court, swings and sliding areas.

When the Yohan Blake Foundation sought to upgrade the facilities of a second Children’s Home, the members of the Foundation, visited Garland Hall and quickly decided to support the facility. It was easy to convince Yohan to endorse the selection, as he is a product of St. James, and has also shared learning space with children of the Home, while he attended the Anchovy Primary School.

Garland Hall Memorial Home is a safe haven for children in need of care and protection and is an outreach initiative of the Jamaica Baptist Women’s Federation. The children are wards of the state. The Rev. Dr. G. V. Simpson, Chairman of the Home Committee, oversees the operations of the facility. Mrs. Sydia Smith and her team work directly with the children; ensuring their physical, emotional, educational and spiritual needs are met.

The children worship at the Mt. Carey Baptist Church. They attend Anchovy Primary, Chester Castle All Age, Knockalva, Anchovy High or St. James High. The government contributes to the upkeep of each child. Over the years, the Garland Hall Memorial Home has attracted many national and international friends whose contributions in cash, labour and kind are immeasurable. The Yohan Blake Foundation is one of the Home’s most recent benefactors.

**PRIME MINISTER URGES PARENTS TO SEND CHILDREN TO CHURCH**

Prime Minister the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller is appealing to parents and guardians to send their children to church in order to preserve positive morals and values in the society. She said such a move would also help the next generation to be upright citizens.

The Prime Minister issued the call while addressing the Jamaica Baptist Women Federation’s (JBWF) Annual Prayer Breakfast on April 18 at Caymanas Golf Club in St. Catherine. “Send your children to church even if you don’t go. We have to go back to being a kinder Jamaica, a gentler society. We have to go back to being a people of strong values, of service, community and peace,” Mrs. Simpson Miller emphasized, noting that too many children are being abused and murdered in recent times.

Mrs. Simpson Miller also called on women of faith to continue to implement social intervention programmes designed to protect and nurture the nation’s children. “I call on the women of faith in the Baptist Federation and in fact all women of faith in Jamaica, to continue your good works and continue to share the light and love of the Master in all your communities and throughout all your various projects,” she said.

Through the Prayer Breakfast and other activities, the JBWF is raising funds to build a halfway house for older children. The JBWF also operates the Garland Hall Memorial Home for children needing care in St. James. “Don’t stop helping families. Now, more than ever, they need your help. Do not stop looking out for the children and the elderly. They need your love and care now more than ever,” the Prime Minister encouraged the Baptist women.

Prime Minister Simpson Miller, who was the patron of the Annual Prayer Breakfast, made a personal donation to the JBWF’s fundraising initiatives.
Both Jamaican and Haitian Baptists have hailed the historic inclusion of the Haitian churches into the JBU as a bold act of faith, which has been inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit. Rev. Bataille declares, “By this act of faith, the Baptist Christians in Jamaica and in Haiti embody and demonstrate the true meaning of the Great Commission by breaking cultural and language barriers in bringing the gospel of Jesus Christ to the World.” Expressing enthusiasm that the brothers and sisters in both countries will experience spiritual and social strengthening and growth as a result of this new bond between both groups, Rev. Bataille informs the Jamaica Baptist Reporter, “This historical step will lay down the foundation of a new understanding of God’s mission for the circuit in Haiti as well open up new horizons that will bring hope not only to the members but also to the communities in which the churches are located.”

APPEAL FOR SUPPORT TO BUILD PETIT PLACE CAZEAU CHURCH & SCHOOL
The recent engagements of the JBU in Haiti include a mission trip spearheaded by the JBU, between April 11 and 29. It involved evangelistic outreach services and a children’s ministry in Port-au-Prince, KaFab and KaMoisa; as well as a training programme for lay preachers and church leaders.

While recognizing and welcoming the improvement in infrastructure with the completion of the KaFab church and school, Rev. Dr. Leary Campbell, Director/Secretary, JBUA points out that PPC and KaMoisa are also in need of permanent buildings to house their sanctuaries and schools. The sanctuary of the PPC was recently relocated to another temporary building, for which the JBUA entered into a 3-year lease agreement. Previously, the JBUA had facilitated the operation of a primary/secondary educational institution by the church, which had some 190 students, enrolled. However, the new church location is unsuitable for a school, and this has dealt a major setback to the educational programme there. Rev. Dr Campbell is making a special appeal to churches to help the JBUA raise approximately US$70,000 to purchase land and build a church and school for PPC. So far, the JBUA has supported the development of schools and educational programmes and assisted with the payment of salaries of teachers at the educational institutions run by PPC, KaMoisa and KaFáb.

PARTNERSHIP NEEDED IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC INITIATIVES
The JBUA Director/Secretary is urging more Jamaican Baptists to partner at the church and individual level with their Haitian peers. Indicating that KaFáb is in a remote section of western Haiti which has no electricity, he is urging Jamaicans to initiate some strategic interventions in KaFáb in at least four main spheres: power-generation, income-generation, agricultural development, improvement in the housing stock and the establishment of a potable water supply system.

“If solar energy is introduced at the new church at KaFáb, the church could expand its role in the community and be the centre of community life. If the church had electricity, it could establish a cold-storage facility for residents, so that when they slaughter their animals, the meat could be stored there, while they seek buyers or until their families are ready to use the meat,” Rev. Dr Campbell explained. Meanwhile, he is expressing the hope that some Jamaican churches can adopt as a major project, the sending of carpenters, tradesmen and painters to specifically help improve the housing stock in KaFáb. Most of the houses of residents in that community are made of wattle and mud/clay. The JBUA Director/Secretary believes such a project would greatly help in inspiring the community.

VISIONS OF AGRICULTURAL COLLABORATION
Agricultural partnerships between Haitian and Jamaican members of the JBU should become a priority, according to the JBUA. The Agency envisages that one way in improving the socio-economic life of that community is to encourage the growth of small businesses and livestock farming. “Most of the residents in KaFáb are peasant farmers who are having a hard time economically,” Rev. Dr. Campbell outlines. “I don’t think the grass there is lush enough for rearing animals. It would be good for us to introduce a type of grass which would be good for pastures, and that would help them get more involved in goat and cattle rearing.” He is of the view that both Jamaican and Haitians Baptists could benefit from a concerted exchange of ideas, expertise and methods in farming.

FACILITATE GREATER INTERACTION
The JBUA recently launched a coin-drive to aid to boost contributions to its projects in Haiti. It is underscoring the need for all JBU churches to be involved in that drive and other mission alliances in Haiti. The JBUA is emphasizing the need for the Union’s departments, ministries and auxiliaries to identify and facilitate ways through which Haitian Baptists can become involved in the programmes of the JBU.

JBU PRESIDENT WELCOMES HAITIAN BAPTISTS TO THE FAMILY

The Rev. Michael Shim-Hue, President, Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU), is welcoming Haitian Baptists to the family of the JBU and is affirming their inclusion in the Union, as a God-ordained partnership. He is expressing optimism and enthusiasm over the closer relationship between Baptists of both countries. “A JBU Circuit of three Congregations in Haiti as of the 165th Annual General Assembly means that God has brought to a ‘consummation’ the centuries-long relationship between Baptists of Haiti and Jamaica,” said the JBU President.

He believes that God wants to make more profound the relations of Haitian and Jamaican Baptists and their collaboration in ministries, missions, worship and fellowship. The President is confident that the JBU inclusion of Haitian Baptists under its auspices is helping to further the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship and the greater unity and integration of the Caribbean peoples. Rev. Shim-Hue acknowledges that other church communions such as the United Church and Anglicans, who are in partnership with their respective denominations in the Cayman Islands, are also helping to integrate Caribbean Christians.

The JBU President expects that the spread of the gospel in the region will be given a boost by the Union’s move to have member churches outside of the geographical borders of Jamaica. “A JBU with congregations in Haiti and Jamaica will be a new era of opportunities for Baptist witness in the Caribbean that we should willingly embrace by faith in our God,” Rev. Shim-Hue asserts. He is predicting that several sectors of life in the region will be positively impacted by the new dynamics in the JBU: “The JBU with congregations in Haiti and Jamaica will affect the lives of Haitians and Jamaicans in education (each of our churches in Haiti operates a school) and religion by causing intentional cross-cultural experiences for the mission of God in education and Caribbean spirituality.”

The Union’s President explains that the worship life of Christians in the denomination will be enriched with the creation of a shared language approach with the proverb, slang and other forms of expression in the worship of God through the usage of the Jamaican Patois, Creole, English and French. Additionally, more JBU pastors will get an opportunity to serve the pastorate in Jamaica and or Haiti.

Rev. Shim-Hue recounts that his participation in the recent mission trip to Haiti was a tremendous experience: “It was a most inspiring and memorable experience of Rev. Bataille’s ordination, church building construction, opening and dedication of the KaFab Baptist sanctuary, evangelistic services, church anniversary celebrations and Vacation Bible School.”

Rev. Shim-Hue has been journeying to Haiti since 2006, when he participated in a fact-finding mission in that country, spearheaded by the JBU Mission Agency.
**JBU YOUTH DEPARTMENT & BROTHERHOOD JOIN HANDS**

A significant highlight of the sectional meetings of the Jamaica Baptist Union 4th Believers’ Convention and 165th General Assembly held from February 18 – 22 in Montego Bay was the collaboration of the Union’s Youth Department and Brotherhood. Both groups joined hands in implementing missional activities to youth, children and adults on Thursday, February 20.

They visited Garland Hall, Blossom Gardens Children Home and the St. James Infirmary. The representatives from the JBUYD and Brotherhood engaged in a time of sharing of God’s Word through Bible reading, dramatization, testimonies, sing-a-long and playing of games which made the residents of the Homes feel appreciated. The combined JBUYD and Brotherhood delegation also treated the residents with refreshment and donations of toiletries.

The JBU Brotherhood is of the view that “the outpouring of the love of Jesus to these children made the occasion very special to all of us and the children to whom we ministered. The tears flowed freely as we interacted with the kids and reminded them that God cares for them regardless of their circumstances.” The Brotherhood also reports that it enjoyed its partnership with the JBUYD on the mission field: “Partnering with the Youth was one of the best things that ever happened to the Brotherhood as this affirms that we are all part of one mission to win the lost at all cost for Jesus. We had a wonderful day together touching the lives of the residents of these institutions.”

**Visit to Blossom Gardens Children’s Home**

The JBUYD also indicates that it enjoyed the camaraderie with the Brotherhood. The JBUYD reports further, “It is important to note that the visit has helped to foster relationship and provided opportunity for partnership with one of the homes. Moreover, an avenue has been created to engage in practical ways in which we can live out the Word of God.”

The Youth Department also participated in over aspects of the 4th Believer’s Convention and 165th General Assembly. Provisions were made for the youth to continue to have a voice in all the activities and they were fully utilized in the workshops under the overarching theme: “Mission Now and Tomorrow.”

Given the fact that youth interact highly with technology and they are more likely to access information via social media, the JBUYD uploaded to social media, information and visuals on the daily activities of the Assembly, so that youth across the world could share in the events.

Stewards who were mostly youth manned the Youth Booth and they gave vital information to those who stopped by. Also, the top three posters from JBU Youth Rally 2014, which captured the essence of the journey of the youth department through the years, were mounted at the Youth Booth at the Assembly.

**It’s not about the shoes—it’s about the gospel of Jesus Christ**

The Caribbean Baptist Fellowship (CBF) Youth Festival is held triennially to help to address the spiritual needs of youth in the region. One of the highlights of the 10th CBF Youth Festival in Roseau, Dominica last year was the outreach programme, ‘Samaritan’s Feet’. This was a special initiative by a group of Americans who joined the festival activities to help spread the gospel by donating shoes to the less fortunate in communities. However, the focus was not about the shoes but about using the exercise to witness to children, youth and adults.

The exercise was quite an unforgettable experience with far reaching effects as conferees all engaged in the process by the washing of the feet of the children, putting on a new pair of sneakers and socks while sharing the gospel with them.

How did it all start? Emmanuel ‘Manny’ Ohonme grew up in Nigeria among the millions of children struggling to survive and due to extreme poverty did not know what it meant to own a pair of shoes until some Americans visited his country and gave him his first pair of shoes at a basket ball camp. This simple spark of encouragement lit a flame that is still spreading around the world with each one of the millions of new shoes that ‘Samaritan’s Feet’ is able to give away.

**FULLY IGNITED: Members of the Jamaica Baptist Union Youth Department delegation to the 10th CBF Youth Festival in Roseau, Dominica, pause from their spirited outreach activities, to pose for the cameras.**

Inspired by the gift he had received when he was a boy, and the power that hope had brought to his own life, Manny set out with his wife Tracie on a campaign to share new shoes and a message of hope with ten million people in ten years. To date they have distributed over 6 million shoes.

What can we learn? What is your circumstance? Like Manny, use your situation/challenges to your advantage and create the change you want to see in your communities, your country and the world. It takes one to reach a thousand and ten to reach ten thousand. Step out in faith and use what you have— your God given potential—to inspire others. Ensure that the have-nots become the have. Let us provide hope for all, as we believe together in reaching others, so we can all rejoice in Jesus Christ.

**National Youth Conference & Rally – Faith Fuel For Youth**

The Jamaica Baptist Union National Youth Conference and Rally 2015 will be held from Thursday, November 19 to Saturday, November 21 under the theme, Living By Faith: Extending our Boundaries, Claiming our Victory. The JBU Nutshell Conference Centre, Duncans, Trelawny and Ocho Rios Baptist Church, St. Ann are the usual venues for the Conference and Rally, respectively.

Among the features of the upcoming three-day event are the Opening Celebration, election of the new JBU Youth Department Executive, workshops on Mission Possibilities and Share Your Faith, as well as competitions in cultural, sporting and biblical activities.

Contd on page 19
The John Austin Baptist Church in the quiet, northern Clarendon community of Pennant came alive, buzzing with excitement on the warm sunny afternoon of Thursday, September 18, 2014. The occasion was the Service of Ordination to the Christian Ministry and Induction into the Pastorate of the John Austin Circuit of Baptist Churches of Rev. Barrington Hood.

It was an historic event for the Circuit, which consists of Chapelton, John Austin and Douce Baptist Churches. This was the first time such an event was being hosted by the Circuit, which was formally a part of the Frankfield Circuit. Importantly, the Ordination Service also marked the first time that a full-time pastor was being inducted into the Circuit.

The United Circuit and Linstead Baptist Choirs, under the able leadership of Sis. Delores Fleming, was a great source of inspiration. Delivering the keynote address, the Rev. Everton Jackson, Pastor of the Calvary Circuit of Baptist Churches explored the theme, “Being the Special Vocation of Pastors”. Focusing on Ezekiel 2:1-3:3, he pointed out that a vocation is special as it does not seek after power, prestige or privilege, but is instead rooted in faithfulness, loyalty and an uncompromising commitment to God. Rev. Jackson said, “A service of this kind serves therefore to (1) legitimize the leader and (2) authenticate the message.” He emphasized that the leader is God’s leader called by God into God’s service, but he does not act alone. He instead acts in partnership with God’s people, ordained to serve at their baptism. He added that the message is God’s message, which entails the threefold ministry of Jesus Christ: solidarity, resistance and liberation.


Thursday, September 11, 2014 is a day that will remain etched in the memory of the members and friends of the Spring Garden Circuit of Baptist Churches. This glorious day saw scores of Baptists and other well-wishers gathering in the Spring Garden Baptist Church for the ordination of the Rev. Marvin G. Thomas to the Christian ministry, and induction into the pastorate of the Spring Garden Circuit. Rev. Karl Henlin, Pastor, Gregory Park Circuit of Baptist Churches, reminded all pastors that the leadership, which they offer, must be “distinctive leadership…exceptional, transformational leadership - leadership which empowers, and consecrated leadership.” Citing Mark 10:35-45, Rev. Henlin advised pastors to view Jesus their leadership role model and example.

September 4, 2014 was a historic day in the life of the Cornwall Court Baptist Church. The church which was started in 2004 by the St James Baptist Association saw its first Ordination and Induction Service, when the Rev. Wayne A. Smith was ordained and inducted in the pastorate. The service was held at the Cornwall Court Community Centre under the JBU Tent. It was a wonderful day, a day of tears of joy. Those in attendance included over 50 ministers of the JBU, members and friends of the host church and representatives from other churches. Rev. Karl B. Johnson, JBU General Secretary, led the service and Rev. Michael Shim-Hue, JBU President, presided over the Act of Ordination. Superintendent Minister Rev. Everton Jackson played a key role in the proceedings, while Deacon Marcia Williams extended the right hand of fellowship. The Preacher was Rev. Jacob Powell, pastor of the Santa Cruz Circuit of Baptist Churches. He charged pastors and other Christians to fall in love with Jesus, fire up the ministry with God given resources and feast upon the things that matter in ministry.
September 9, 2014 was a historic day in the life of Elim Baptist Circuit in St. Elizabeth, as representatives of the Jamaica Baptist Union converged at the Junction Baptist Mission for the Public Recognition and Commissioning Service for its first fulltime minister, the Rev. Racquel Sophia Buckley. The function was the first of its kind for the Circuit. The Rev. Zereal Williams, Association Moderator, led the worship while Rev. Karl Henlin, Pastor of the Gregory Park Circuit of Baptist Churches and Superintendent Minister, did the act of commissioning. The preacher, Rev. Dwight Fraser, using Isaiah 56:9-12 implored pastoral leaders to have the discipline of seeing, speaking, serving and sacrificing instead of blindness, muteness, laziness and greediness. Those qualities, he said, coupled with the disposition of dependence on God and a preferential option for the poor, are necessary for pastoral engagement to be effective.

The Public Recognition and Commissioning service for the Rev. Harold White, as pastor of the Annotto Bay Circuit of Baptist Churches was held on Tuesday September 2, 2014 at the Annotto Bay Baptist Church, St. Mary. Officiating ministers included the Rev. Oral Campbell, Moderator for the St. Mary Baptist Association; Rev. Johnathan Hemmings, Superintendent Minister; Rev. Merlyn Hyde-Riley, JBU Associate General Secretary; and the preacher, Rev. Carlton Wilson, pastor of the Savannah-la-mar Circuit of Baptist Churches. Rev. Carlton Wilson challenged the Circuit and the congregation that the priority should be God's Church, which is, seeing to the growth and development of the ministry of Christ.

CELEBRATING 130 YEARS OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

Linstead Baptist Church is celebrating a super-centenary milestone and its church family is thanking God for His faithfulness for over four generations. Aptly themed, “Faithfulness Through Generations: Reflecting, Rejoicing and Rededicating,” the church’s 130th Anniversary celebrations began on October 2014 and will run until the end of September 2015.

For one hundred and thirty years, the church has been a bold witness for God in the busy market town of Linstead, its environs and in many parts of the country. Thousands have been saved through its witness. On Sunday October 12, 2015, Linstead Baptist hosted its Anniversary Launch Service, which focused on thanksgiving to God for empowering it to positively touch the lives of people near and far, over the years. The keynote speaker for that event was Rev. Everton Jackson, pastor, Calvary Baptist Church and former pastor of the Linstead Circuit of Baptist Churches. Citing Exodus 14:10-15, Rev. Jackson noted that similar to how Moses was chosen, called, commissioned and empowered to deliver God’s people; the members of Linstead Baptist should remain grounded in the confidence that God has set them apart and empowered them to carry out His mission to the people of this nation. He charged the congregants to remain faithful to God and His mission, pointing out that “if successive generations were not faithful to God’s mission with sustained integrity, uncompromising faith in the face of severe harassment; we could not be here celebrating 130 years today.”

Rev. Jackson urged the Linstead Baptist Church family to be steadfast in engaging in the various aspects of God’s mission including evangelism, discipleship and Christian social action; while ensuring that its “mission is transformational in the life of individuals and the community”.

Among the church’s activities to mark its 130th Anniversary are: 130 days of prayer (February 18-June 27, 2015) for the church, community, country and world; 130th Anniversary Sports Day on July 18 this year at Dinthill Technical High School, an anniversary theme song written and produced by Delores Flemming, a soon to be published anniversary magazine and a new members’ drive seeking to reach at least 130 persons.

The church will also host its Homecoming during August this year, with “Old Time Sining” Exhibition and Concert on Emancipation Day, Saturday August 1 and Home Coming Worship Service on Sunday, August 2.

Rev. Luke Shaw, pastor, Linstead Circuit of Baptist Churches and Deacon Dr Cynthia Anderson moderated the Launch Service. The bumper-crowd in attendance was also ministered to through selections in the performing arts from the church’s combined choir; the singing group, Gospel Bliss; saxophonist Ian Hird and dub poet Lance Douglas.
"The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. Then he said to the tree, ‘May no one ever eat fruit from you again.’ And his disciples heard him say it.

On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, ‘Is it not written: My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations? But you have made it a den of robbers.’

The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching. When evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. Peter remembered and said to Jesus, ‘Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!’” (Mark 11: 12-14, 20-26).

It is oftentimes said that a hungry man is an angry man!

Those words aptly describe Jesus’ experience during the final week of His physical sojourn on earth. According to verse 12, He was hungry. The Greek word is “peinao”, which means more than “feeling peckish”. Rather it speaks of an “intense craving”. And within the context of this passage, it speaks more so of an intense craving for food!

It was against this background that Jesus saw a fig tree from a distance. He quite likely knew it was a fig tree just by looking at the leaves.

So Jesus went to that fig tree, expecting to see figs that He could eat. However, when He came to the fig tree He discovered that it had produced nothing but leaves. The reason given by the Gospel writer was that it was not the season for figs.

**KICKING A DOG**

Now, one would have expected Jesus to just leave the poor tree alone and find a tree that was bearing fruit. Instead, He cursed the fig tree by saying, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again!” Then, the next morning the disciples observed that the fig tree had not only dried up but it dried up from its roots. Wow!

Not surprisingly, the words and works of Jesus in this passage have generated some amount of concern and consternation over the years. In this regard the following are some of the major questions that have oftentimes been asked:

- How does one justify the fact that a loving Jesus would destroy a harmless tree, simply because He was hungry and it was fruitless?
- If Jesus could curse the fig tree and make it further fruitless, why didn’t He just bless it and make it finally fruitful?
- Why would Jesus curse a tree for being fruitless if it was not in its fruit-bearing season?

Indeed, Bible sceptic Louis Cable once argued, “Now to curse a fig tree for not bearing fruit in March is not unlike kicking a dog because it cannot speak English thereby punishing it for the inability to do the impossible.”

There are of course no easy answers to questions about Jesus’ actions with regard to the fig tree. Be that as it may, the following are worthy of consideration:

- For most fruit trees the leaves grow first and then the fruits. But not so for the common fig trees that were prevalent in Bible days, whose fruit usually grew before or synonymously with the leaves. Hence, if the fig tree that Jesus encountered had leaves, it ought also to have had fruit on it!
- Furthermore, if that fig tree had leaves but no fruit (figs), it would no longer be expected to bear fruit for the rest of the fruit-bearing season.

These facts are confirmed by R.K. Harrison who, in the ‘International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia’, notes that the tiny figs, known to the Arabs as taksh, “appear simultaneously in the leaf axils...This taksh is edible and is often gathered for sale in the markets...When the young leaves are appearing in spring, every fertile fig will have some taksh on it...But if a tree with leaves has no fruit, it will be barren for the entire season.”

**PRETENTIOUS RELIGION**

Thus, when Jesus approached the leafy fig tree, He had every reason to suspect and expect that something edible would be on it.

However, after inspecting the tree, no figs were present as they should have been if the tree was going to produce edible figs that year. The tree appeared to be fruitful, but it only had outward signs of bearing fruit (leaves) and in truth offered nothing of value to weary and hungry travellers.

So, is there a message that Jesus was trying to convey in light of his stern and swift response to the fruitless fig tree that day? The simple answer is yes!

**When one examines the context of the event, Jesus’ intention seems threefold:**

Firstly, in its immediate context, the barren fig tree seemed to apply to the pretentious religion of the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. Following Jesus’ curse upon the fig tree, the text says that Jesus went to Jerusalem and began to drive the moneychangers out of the temple (Mark 11:15-19). The activities in the temple that once had been fruitful and wholesome had become empty of value and useless.

As Allen Black, author of the 1995 publication, The Book of Mark, states, “The cursing of the fig tree symbolizes God’s judgment on Israel for not bearing the fruit he wanted from the temple. It foreshadows the cleansing of the temple and ultimately the prophecy of its destruction in chapter 13.”

Secondly, in a general sense, Jesus often insisted that trees, which do not bear good fruit, would be cut down (Matthew 7:19; Luke 13:6-9). The fig tree in this story did not bear fruit and by the look of things, it would not bear fruit. It was therefore useless, and deserved to be destroyed.

Thirdly, from a spiritual perspective, the incident serves as a timely yet timeless reminder that any human who does not bear fruit for God (Galatians 5: 22-23) will ultimately be destroyed for his or her failure to produce.

Therefore, we all should diligently endeavour not to be like that fruitless fig tree! Shalom.
Workshop Presentations

- Dr. Barry Davidson - Mission to Families and Social Institutions
- Professor Michael Taylor - Mission to the Environment and Created Order
- Gail Richards - Mission to Children and Youth
- Mavis Fuller shares in session on Mission to Children & Youth
- Rev. Jonathan Hemmings

Workshop Presentations

- Rev. David Kerrigan of BMS World Mission
- Rev. Dr. Burchell Taylor
- Rev. Dr. Sam Green
- Rev. Douglas Fowles
- Kevin Downswell
- Burchell Baptist
- Hands in Praise Ministry - Montego Bay/Mt Ward Methodist
- Divine Ecstasy Gospel Band

Friday Night Concert

- Section of the audience
- Praise in Worship Team
- Section of the audience
- Hands in Praise Ministry - Montego Bay/Mt Ward Methodist

Womens Federation March

- Women’s Federation presents a plaque to Sylvester Tulloch for contribution to the Garland Hall Children’s Home
- Bus donated to Garland Hall Home by Women’s Federation
- Women’s Federation March
- Divine Ecstasy Gospel Band
- Some members of the audience lift hands in worship.

Preachers & Presenters

- Convention lecturer, Rev. Dr. Burchell Taylor
- Womens Federation Street March Preacher, Rev. Devere Nugent
- Bible Study Presenter, Rev. Dr. Sam Green
- Preacher - Thursday Night, Rev. David Kerrigan of BMS World Mission
- Retiree Rev. Stivel Crossman & Mrs. Crossman being honoured
- Retiree Rev. Dr. Roy Henry & Mrs. Henry being honoured

Delegates

- Delegates
- Youth Delegates
- Delegates

Bus donated to Garland Hall Home by Women’s Federation

Women’s Federation March
JBU extends the right hand of fellowship to new churches, as well as recently ordained and commissioned pastors:

- Newly ordained
  - Rev. Michael I. Barnett
  - Rev. Marvin Thomas
  - Rev. Wayne Smith
  - Rev. Barrington Hood

- Newly commissioned
  - Rev. Racquel Buckley
  - Rev. Clinton Chisholm
  - Rev. Harold White
  - Rev. Michael Shim-Hue

Sunday School Prizes

Persons stream into the Montego Bay Convention Centre

Sunday Closing Ceremony

Sunday Morning Preacher, Rev. Michael Shim-Hue

Rev. Dr. Glenroy Lalor

Scripture passage, Angela Giddarie

Children’s Choir

Musicians

Bible Reader, Jeffery James

Sunday Afternoon Preacher, Rev. Dr. Glenroy Lalor

Special Selection...

Rema Oakley

Guests...BMS Action Team - Zoe, Jessica, Lydia and Judith

Guests... BUGB - Carol Moore, Gail Richards, Wale Hudson-Roberts

Rev. Dr. Marjorie Lewis, President, UTCWI

Guests...Roger Redman and team from London Baptist Association

Presentation of 50th anniversary book of sermons on Christ For Today
BICENTENARY CONVERSATIONS

British Missionary, Rev. John Rowe, came to Jamaica in 1814; thus beginning a long history of partnership between Jamaican and British Baptists. Following in Rowe’s footsteps, were the well-known trio of British missionaries to Jamaica who helped in the anti-slavery movement — Thomas Burchell, James Phillippo and William Knibb. Existing churches in the Jamaica Baptist Union have been named in tribute to the work and legacy of those three missionaries. Over the years the lives of Jamaican and British Baptists have become intricately inter-dependent and interrelated. The Jamaica Baptist Union and the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) celebrated the bicentenary of their relationship at the JBU’s 4th Believers Convention and 165th General Assembly in February. A 12-member delegation from BUGB attended the Assembly.

One highlight of the celebration was a roundtable discussion involving both Unions, which was dubbed, The Bicentenary Conversations. Among those engaged in the bicentenary discussions were: David Kerrigan, General Director of BMS World Mission; Rev. Lynn Green, BUGB General Secretary; Wale Hudson-Roberts, BUGB Racial Justice Coordinator; Gail Richards, Project Development Officer, Heart of England Baptist Association; Rev. Michael Shim-Hue, JBU President; Rev. Karl B. Johnson, JBU General Secretary; Rev. Karl Henlin, Pastor, Gregory Park Circuit of Baptist Churches and Rev. Jonathan Hemmings, Pastor, Ocho Rios Circuit of Baptist Churches.

During the discussions, the JBU General Secretary pointed to the 2008 Apology for slavery by the British Baptists, as triggering resuscitation of the relationship between members of the denomination in Jamaica and Britain. Rev. Johnson acknowledged that Baptists from both countries have “much more to celebrate than commemorate about how God has led us over these two centuries. Indeed the BUGB/BMS is interwoven into much of our JBU story as a faith community”. He appealed to Baptists in both countries to learn from the past so that we can embrace the future with confidence, and with a passion for extending God’s kingdom on earth. “Maluma God a God—who would have thought that 201 years later we would be celebrating this relationship! Whether we like it or not our story, as Jamaican Baptists; are interwoven with your (British Baptists’) story… Let us live by faith and not fate in building bridges of hope between both our organizations.”

David Kerrigan emphasized the need for both Unions to have a strong advocacy and prophetic voice in the affairs of their respective nations. Rev. Lynn Green shared that the 2008 Apology for slavery by BUGB was a turning point in the relationship between that Union and JBU. “When I heard about the Apology, it was an incredible Holy Spirit moment. It was a moving occasion for me personally and those in England.” Indicating that the partnership has allowed and continued to allow both Unions to share experiences on migration, Rev. Green declared that the mutual sharing of experiences will be a platform for helping British and Jamaican Baptists to advance spiritually. “We need help in being more of what God has called us to be.”

He is of the belief that the JBU has helped BUGB develop into a more balanced multi-cultural organization. “My concern is—how do we develop genuinely multi-cultural Baptist churches, where people are empowered to meet their full potential. These people of colour (in Britain) live and breathe in what some would call a ‘white space’”, argued Hudson-Roberts. “How do we help the ministries so that their values are reflected in their theology and practice? To this extent JBU has been particularly helpful. JBU has helped BUGB develop a healthy multi-cultural Union.”

In her contribution to the roundtable discussions, Gail Richards, pointed out that the collaborative efforts between JBU and BUGB must seek to motivate the youth and young adults to deeper spirituality. “There is much to celebrate about this bicentennial, but the partnership is also about how we can inspire a new generation to go where God has called them. She is calling both Unions to strategize on how we can “support each other in finding new ways of making church relevant.”

The Bicentennial conversations ended on a note of enthusiasm in having BUGB-JBU explore additional ways of working together for the spiritual upliftment of Jamaican and British Baptists.

In two years, the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) will observe the tenth anniversary of its apology to Black people for the Transatlantic Slave Trade. The 2007 Apology was unexpected; few people saw it coming. It came about as a result of debate over three days, by the Council of BUGB. The first day was peppered with anxiety. On the second day a number of outstanding presentations challenged the Council’s insouciance. On the third and final day, tears of lament replaced anxiety - an apology was given by Council, which accepted and apologised for Britain’s responsibility in the slave trade. In 2008, the Apology was delivered in person to members of the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU) in Jamaica, on behalf of the representatives of BUGB and BMS World Mission.

In an attempt to prevent yet another apology from being necessary in the future, the Racial Justice Group, on behalf of BUGB, actively developed a range of initiatives to challenge racism within our ‘institution’ to help create a culture soaked in equality and justice. Thus, the Journey, a long-term strategy to convert the Apology resolution from mere words into action, and the Bicentenary, are two strands of work that have the potential to contribute to a change of culture.

Although the Apology, Journey and Sam Sharpe project (prompted by Dr Karl Henlin in the UK) has been widely supported, the project seeking to strike at the heart of racial injustice, more recently the bicentenary celebrations have been marked by various initiatives, which have been widely lauded. The bicentenary celebrations have been marked by various initiatives, which have been widely lauded.

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JU CELEBRATES LIFE & LEGACY OF THE LEGENDARY REV. C.S. REID

Leaders and members of the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU) and representatives from a wide cross section of the society turned out on Saturday, May 2 at the Calvary Baptist Church in Montego Bay to celebrate the life and legacy of a JBU trailblazer and stalwart of the faith, the Rev. Clarence Sam Reid. While mourning his passing, the funeral thanksgiving service acclaimed Rev. C.S. Reid's phenomenal role as pastor, theologian, mentor, visionary, senator and statesman.

Rev. Reid felt the call to go into fulltime ministry of the gospel, while he was a child and the JBU accepted Reid to prepare for the Ministry, while he was in his teen years. On behalf of the denomination, Rev. Karl B. Johnson, JBU General Secretary, eulogised Rev. CS Reid as “a leader of leaders in the JBU and an influential shaper of thought nationally, regionally and internationally, for some three decades”. Pointing out that Rev. Reid spent 41 years in active pastoral service; Rev. Johnson noted that Rev. Reid was admired for having “a dedicated pastor's heart, keen intellect, clear thinking, outstanding communication skills.” Rev. Johnson's tribute on behalf of the JBU was delivered by Rev. Merlyn Hyde-Riley, Assistant General Secretary, JBU; as Rev Johnson was on business overseas for the Union.

Rev. Reid is renowned as the pastor of the Calvary Circuit of Baptist Churches in St. James where he spent thirty-four of his forty-one years of active service. During his stint in that Circuit, he oversaw the relocation of the historic Calvary Baptist Church from Market Street to its present location. The JBU General Secretary describes this move as “one of the most enterprising ventures any pastor could undertake in any generation”. The move allowed for the church to expand its educational, vocational, healthcare and legal aid and other social outreach programmes. Prior to taking over the leadership of the Calvary Circuit of Baptist Churches, Rev. Reid served the Bethany Circuit of Baptist Churches in St. Ann (1965-67) and Tarrant Baptist Church in St. Andrew (1967-69).

Rev. Reid served as JBU President on two separate occasions: 1971-1974 and 1983-1985. Indeed, he was one of the youngest presidents of the Union. He was also a co-founder of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship. Rev. Everton Jackson, Executive Secretary/Treasurer, Caribbean Baptist Fellowship and Pastor of the Calvary Circuit of Baptist Churches has hailed Rev. Reid as a cleric who was passionate about ecumenism and a “phenomenal man who was revered for his intellect and wisdom, which was marked by his ability to articulate matters of religious and social significance.” Jackson believes Rev Reid swerved others with unwavering commitment and uncompromised faith, because of his love for God and others.

The Jamaica Council of Churches benefited from Rev. Reid’s leadership acumen in the position of President. He also won the admiration and respect of several persons on the regional and international stage as one of Jamaica's most brilliant Christian ‘ambassadors’ and staunchest advocates. It is little wonder then that he was in the leadership team of the global umbrella group for the denomination, the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) - he gave diligent service as a BWA Vice President.

Outside of his responsibilities as a member of the clergy, Jamaicans also benefited from Reid’s wisdom and insight through his contribution as a member of the Upper House of the Parliament, a regular columnist with The Gleaner and a talk show host on RJRS hotline. He was an Independent member of the Senate on two occasions: 1972-1976, under the Michael Manley regime and 1983-1988, under the Edward Seaga administration. His social activism on behalf of the downtrodden was noted by the JBU in its tribute to Reid: “Many are the memories of him as a civic leader and social advocate standing-up and speaking out for those on the margins and articulating a vision for the kind of Jamaica we should aspire to build. Indeed, he was ‘speaking truth to power’ long before that became a hackneyed phrase! The mettle of the man was evident, in many instances, in this regard as he bore the brunt of criticism, sometimes mixed with venom, with Christian grace.”

Rev. Reid died on Saturday, April 18, 2015 at 78 years of age. He is survived by children Susan and David, grandchildren and other family and friends.

“Many are the memories of him as a civic leader and social advocate standing-up and speaking out for those on the margins”- JBU.

VOX POP:

How has the 201-year old partnership between the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU) and the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) impacted your life and that of other members of the denomination?

Rev. Karl Henlin, Pastor, Gregory Park Circuit of Baptist Churches, Jamaica:

THE JBU-BUGB 201-year old relationship is one created by God. Along the pathway there have been times of misunderstanding but both BUGB and JBU have a lot in common in terms of our theological education. It has been an historical relationship with renewed partnerships. We remember the joint struggle towards freedom and the continued partnership we share today through the work of Calabar High School and the United Theological College of the West Indies (UTCWI). We have celebrated together mission work done from the time of slavery and emancipation. We are committed to working together on contemporary challenges, which face both church groups, today. Personally, I have been privileged to visit with BUGB on three or four occasions since 2007. I had the opportunity to visit many congregations and to listen to persons struggling with challenges related to multiculturalism in the congregations. It is true that when black people and people of other ethnicity became part of the church in England, they faced challenges of settling in and feeling accommodated, and we from the JBU were in invited by BUGB to participate in helping them work through those issues. The JBU leadership is still exploring what forms its cooperation with the British Baptists might take, as the future unfolds.

Mr Keith Andrews, Deacon, Yeovil Baptist Church, England:

I grew up in a Church with ‘Rowe’ and ‘Knibb’ painted on the wall with the names of other Baptist Greats, so from an early age we enquired why they were there and were told of their stories. Following a complete refurbishment of our Church the names will be reinstated in later in 2015 during a Jamaica Celebration weekend. A fair understanding of the special relationship has come as we have recently delved into the history of John Rowe who came from our Church and led us to visit Jamaica and share in your celebrations and hopefully make longer lasting connections through the Girls’ Brigade.

Mrs Chris Redman, Deacon, Yeovil Baptist Church, England:

It has been a joy to be part of the bicentenary celebrations between the Jamaican and British Baptist Unions both in the UK and at the JBU Assembly. It has been good to follow in John Rowe's footsteps from his home church in Yeovil in England to Montego Bay and Falmouth in Jamaica, discovering more of his life, faith and commitment to serve God in a very different culture and country with its joys and disappointments. I admire his courage and determination to reach out to people, even when obstacles seemed to hinder his mission. There is a lot to be learnt from John Rowe's short life.

Mr Roger Redman, member, Yeovil Baptist Church, England:

The 200-year celebrations have given me a greater understanding of the relationship between British and Jamaican Baptists. At the final celebration in London last year, I heard the story of Jamaicans who travelled to Britain in the 1950’s. This gave me an insight into the courage they needed to leave their families and move to a new country, much as John Rowe had done 200 years previously. During my time in Jamaica I have discovered more about George Lisle, Moses Baker and Sam Sharpe and their contribution to the Baptist missionary story.

Mr Kevin Redman, Yeovil Baptist Church, England:

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Rev. Michael Shim-Hue, President, Jamaica Baptist Union, has appealed to Jamaicans to break the stronghold of divisiveness and political tribalism by putting faith in God and living out Godly faith in their daily life. He said the time has come for us to put God and Jamaica first, instead of giving top priority to our party and religious denominations. The JBU President spoke on the sub-theme, “Our Faith: God’s Subversive Mission”, during the morning Closing Service of the Union’s 4th Believers’ Convention and 165th General Assembly which ran from Ash Wednesday, February 18 to Sunday, February 22 in Montego Bay. The five-day event was held under the theme, “Being God’s People In God’s World – Living By Faith”.

“It is one people, one God’s world, one church and we must stand together. Down with denominationalism, down with tradition… (It should be) one Jamaica, one people, One God, One Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!” declared Rev. Shim-Hue. “Down with JLP, down with PNP as strongholds! Up with Jamaica, up with God, up with the Church and let us get rid of the strongholds in our life today.”

He issued a call for Jamaica’s political parties and civic organizations to address the factors that are causing divisions within their ranks, and instead be a source and channel of unity.

**GOD REQUIRES OUR FAITH & FAITHFULNESS**

The JBU President listed the following strongholds which are preventing people from living their God-given potential: health challenges including cancer, disunity, fear of death, violence against women and other forms of abuse, material and mental poverty, homelessness, child labour and human trafficking. He pointed out that some people are also acting as strongholds holding back others from worshipping God, in our role as parents, children, employers, employees or political activists/advocates. Taking as his central text, Mark 9:14-29, the JBU President reiterated that just as Jesus drove out the demon out of the possessed man, only Jesus can break the strongholds in our life. Rev. Shim-Hue insisted that if we put our complete trust in God, live a life of faith in God and faithfulness to God; then God will break strongholds in our life. He appealed, “Live for God sacrificially, live for God selflessly, live for God seriously and live for God sensibly; so that the strongholds will come down.”

**JESUS - THE REMEDY FOR STRONGHOLDS**

Articulating that Christians must have a faith in God that never wavers, Rev. Shim-Hue prescribed the following ways of dealing with strongholds in our life:

1) Our faith in Jesus will allow us to discern strongholds and distinguish between those that are with us and those, which are against us.
2) Faith defies strongholds to render them defective.
3) Faith defies and defuses strongholds to make them defunct.

The JBU President emphasized that only the power of God can break strongholds and we must surrender to God in conquering those hurdles: “Go back to God and let Him drive out that demon of a stronghold within you.”

**NEW BAPTIST CHURCH IN MONTEGO BAY**

A local church, the Spot Valley Baptist in Montego Bay, which has grown from a new mission and which meets weekly at Spot Valley High, was given the right hand of fellowship by JBU during the morning service. Its inclusion in the denomination brings to 336, the number of churches, which fall under the umbrella of the JBU.

Over 8,000 Baptists and representatives of other denominations participated in the morning Service. Governor-General His Excellency Sir Patrick Allen who delivered Greetings, urged the Church to live as salt and light, by being exemplary in love, decency, responsibility, integrity and other godly attributes. Among the other specially invited guests were: Hon. Ewen Corrodotus, Custos of St. James; Justice Georgia Frazer, representing Hon. Justice Zaila McCalla, Chief Justice; Rev. Everald Galbraith, President, Jamaica Council of Churches and Rev. Lynn Green, General Secretary, Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB).

**MISSION THAT BOLDLY SERVES**

Meanwhile, Rev. Dr Glenroy Lalor, Baptist Warden, United Theological College of the West Indies (UTCWI) is challenging Christians to see mission as an imperative, instead of an option. He made the appeal while delivering the sermon at the afternoon Closing Service of the JBU General Assembly, under the sub-theme, “Mission That Boldly Serves”. Cautioning fellow Baptists and Christians in general, Rev. Dr. Lalor noted that faith is not merely having a conviction that God will act on our behalf, but is a conviction that is seen in the behaviour of the believer. Citing Hebrews 11: 23-28 as his central text, he explained that faith is intricately linked to mission; as a Christian who is living by faith will be committed to doing mission. “Mission is not an option. It is the manifestation of the faith we possess. Mission is faith made visible. Mission is the expression of our faith,” Rev. Dr. Lalor advised the congregation.

Indicating that “faith is something we live out and not something we live in,” the Baptist Warden warned, “we cannot say we are living by faith, if mission is not central to our operations.” He further reasoned that if mission is weak in the life of our church, it is a reflection that our faith is also weak. During the afternoon Closing Service the ministries of the Sunday School and JBU Youth Department were acknowledged and celebrated. The service featured the JBU Combined Children’s Choir, as well as worship through dance and choral singing by the youth.

**FIVE SOUL-INSPIRING DAYS**

The afternoon Closing Service brought the curtains down on the soul-inspiring, five-day JBU 4th Believers’ Convention and 165th General Assembly, which saw the participation of JBU member churches islandwide, as well as a delegation from the Haitian Baptist Churches, BUGB and Baptist Missionary Society (BMS). Holiday Inn Sunspree Resort, Calvary Baptist Church, Sam Sharpe Square (the famous city-square named after Baptist deacon and freedom martyr, Samuel “Sam” Sharpe) and the Montego Bay Convention Centre were the venues for the event. In celebration of the two hundredth anniversary of the partnership between BUGB/BMS and JBU, one of the highlights of the Convention was the bicentenary discussion between the groups. The Convention/General Assembly also included bible studies, panel discussions, lectures, workshops, worship services, community mission, a street march and street-meeting/gospel concert in Sam Sharpe Square.

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**REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL**

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**LIVE FOR GOD & THE STRONGHOLDS WILL BE BROKEN**

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**JBU PRESIDENT-ELECT IS REV. DR DEVON DICK**

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The Rev. Dr Devon Dick, pastor of the Boulevard Baptist Church, is the president-elect of the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU). He received the nod of approval at the 165th General Assembly in Montego Bay. Rev. Dr Dick has been in the pastoral ministry for almost 30 years. He was commissioned at the Fletcher’s Grove Circuit of Baptist Churches in 1985 and has been serving at the Boulevard Baptist Church since 1990.

He currently Chairs the JBU Media Commission. The President-elect is a Gleaner columnist and author of the books, From Rebellion to Riot, the Jamaican Church in Nation Building and The Cross and the Machete: The Native Baptists of Jamaica-Identity, Ministry and Legacy.
THANK YOU, CFT TRAILBLAZERS!

During its 4th Believers’ Convention and 165th General Assembly, the Jamaica Baptist Union recognized and awarded the brothers and sisters who gave dedicated service to the media ministry of Christ For Today. The following are excerpts of a Citation in tribute to those pacesetters who made a bold difference in Christ For Today, over the half-century of its existence:

“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’ “

The Prophet Isaiah celebrated the ministry of those who would bring the message of the good news, liberation and hope - and so, today, at this time when this family of Baptists celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of our flagship radio programme, Christ for Today, we echo similar themes of praise and honour. Gathered as we are in this the 165th General Assembly and Believers Convention being held at the Holiday Inn Hotel in Montego Bay, Jamaica, we salute all those who have made significant contributions to our media ministry over all these years. It is, indeed, a feat to be celebrated that the programme has proceeded without interruption on Radio Jamaica at 6 o’clock on Sunday mornings over all these years.

Today we honour: Luther Gibbs, A.B. Lewis, William Edwards, Mickey Searcy, Gerry Gallimore, James Kerr, Maurice Anderson, Roderick James, Trevor Edwards, Jeffrey McKenzie and Peter Harding; and In Memoriam: Al Hall, Lloyd Brown, Dotson Mills and Ruby Gayle.

Each of you and all of you together have made lasting and significant contributions, serving the cause of the kingdom by offering and employing your gifts, your time and your resources in the propagation of the gospel of Jesus Christ by way of radio. You should be satisfied to know that through your efforts countless numbers of persons in their homes, in hospitals, in the prisons, at work and in their motor vehicles have listened to messages of hope, challenge, comfort and liberation. May the name of our Lord be blessed forever!

And how have you served? Working long hours even into the night, editing, recording, preparing the programmes, transporting the recordings to the radio station, sometimes just in the nick of time, or ensuring that speakers were alerted and invited in time, developing themes, preparing suitable prayers and songs, or serving as announcers with a voice as sweet as a bird, voices which awakened us with these words: “Good morning and welcome to Christ for Today, the weekly broadcast of the Jamaica Baptist Union.” You all, and each of you, have served your Lord and the church with excellence.

Receive from a grateful union of Baptist churches our most sincere thanks for your labour of love and service. May the Lord bless you in your continued spheres of service and may you hear on that day: “Well done, good and faithful servant!”

We salute you and say thanks.
MT CAREY TRIUMPHS AGAINST THE ODDS

For almost two centuries, the Mount Carey Baptist Church in southern St James has had a very distinguished history of witnessing to the saving and sustaining grace of God in the community and beyond. It has also been victorious against man-made and natural disasters.

The community of Mount Carey dates back to the arrival of Thomas Burchell, a Baptist missionary to Jamaica, who spearheaded the early erection of a place of worship which would accommodate the freed slaves who did not find a welcoming atmosphere at the then, Church of England, in Montpelier. The community of Mount Carey was one of the Free Villages and it was named in honour of Reverend William Carey, the first Baptist Missionary to India. Work to erect the Mt Carey Baptist Church started in a Blacksmith’s shop in 1829 after some initial outreach work, which had begun in 1825. Disaster struck in 1831 when the building was destroyed by the Colonial Church Union after the slaves’ revolts of 1831.

Rebuilding of the church got going in 1839 and was completed in 1840. Not only did the Church served as a place of worship, and an incubator for the free-village but also it was a catalyst for education in St. James and offered schooling to the children of slaves and ex-slaves. With the completion of the church in 1840, the son in law of Rev Thomas Burchell, Rev. Edward Hewitt, assumed the pastoral duties. Some time later, his son the Rev. Edward Jessie Hewitt succeeded him. In 1912, a hurricane badly damaged the roof and structure. Under the leadership of the Rev. H.L. Webster, the church was re-roofed and the walls repaired.

In 1943 Rev. E.H. Greaves, assumed pastoral responsibilities and shepherded the flock for the next thirty-five years. Under his leadership much work was done in the area of reconstruction. All went well until an earthquake struck on March 1, 1957. The chapel and mission house were destroyed. The manse was renovated and dedicated in 1958. Great effort was made to complete the rebuilding of the Church and in April of 1965 it was re-opened and dedicated. The Rev. Greaves continued to serve until in 1978 when he retired.

On August 01, 1980 Rev. Dr. George V. Simpson came to the pastorate at Mt Carey, having been invited to lead the Circuit. To facilitate some of the church’s outreach programmes the need for an Education Centre was identified and work went in full gear and by 1982, the Edmund Greaves Memorial Centre became a reality. The church embraced an intensive programme of ‘shared ministry’ in the parish. Four worship centres referred to as Classes were upgraded to church status and received into the Jamaica Baptist Union, namely: Roehampton, Bickersteth, Comfort Hall and Belmont. Three churches became the Roehampton Circuit and a new manse was constructed to facilitate the accommodation of Burchell, Hewitt and Greaves, is the same God who is leading them today. Therefore, they acknowledge that the God of Abraham, Jacob and Daniel; the God of Mt Carey members are acknowledging that the God of Mt Carey as at 1pm the Service of Thanksgiving and Rededication for the re-constructed church and education centre was held. The event marked a period of celebration acknowledging that good does triumph over evil, as the Lord Jesus Himself is the Victor. Among some of the specially invited guests were Hon. Ewan Corroodus, Custos Rotulorum of St James; Hon. Derrick Kellier, Member of Parliament for South St. James and Minister of Social Security; Rev. Michael Shim-Hue, JBU President; Rev. Carl Johnson, JBU General Secretary; Rev. Lloyd Richards, Moderator of the St James Baptist Association; Rev. Glendon Powell, Chairman of the St James Ministers’ Fraternal, Rev. William Hild of Sarasota, and Rev. Dr Devon Dick, keynote speaker and pastor, Boulevard Baptist. Two visiting choirs William Knibb Memorial Baptist of Trelawny and the Boulevard Baptist of St Andrew provided excellent musical renditions. Other musical selections included: an instrumental presentation by Corporal Leroy Newell of the Jamaica Defence Force and worship in dance by Shorthwood Church Youth Fellowship.

Using as his reference text, Matthew 16: 18, Rev. Dr Dick, reminded the large congregation that the Church is under attack, as the gates of Hades stalk the land creating “mayhem, madness and murder.” He assured that we must remain faithful as not even the gates of Hades can prevail against God’s Church. He charged Christians to “hold fast to the faith” in every situation, for despite past failures and current trial, they will overcome.

This was to be followed by several other attacks on members and officers of the church, and on the church's property and the manse. During the early morning of May 26, 2008, the pastor, Rev. Dr George Simpson, became the target of gun and knife attacks. In the wake of that attack, the church and the Edmund Greaves Education Building were set ablaze by unscrupulous persons. Everything was lost to the fire.

The church praises God for the recovery of its pastor, from the life-threatening injuries he sustained during the attack. Members of the church family got together and decided that the chapel and education centre would be rebuilt for out of the ashes would rise an edifice worthy to be ascribed a place of “worship and prayer”. Rev. Simpson and Deacon Charles Hall both expressed their faith in God and rallied everyone to rise to support the reconstruction efforts. Deacon Evelyn Tugwell was selected to chair a Rebuilding Fund-Raising Committee, while Deacon Charles Hall, chaired the Rebuilding Committee. Numerous fund-raising activities were undertaken, including a concert with presenters being the Boulevard Baptist Church Choir, the Jamaica Military Band (on two occasions) and the Jamaica Constabulary Force Band and Choir. The Boulevard Church however accelerated the project when with the Calvary Baptist Church it further hosted a Radio-thon in conjunction with Power 106 FM to raise an additional one million dollars. Much support was also provided in the area of finances and manpower through the numerous workday efforts made by the brethren of First Baptist Church of Sarasota, Florida, USA under the guidance of Rev. William Hild and Bros. Ron Wooten.

November 20, 2014 was certainly a red-letter day in the history of Mt Carey as at 1pm the Service of Thanksgiving and Rededication of the church and education centre would be held. The service marked a period of celebration acknowledging that good does triumph over evil, as the Lord Jesus Himself is the Victor. Among some of the specially invited guests were Hon. Ewan Corroodus, Custos Rotulorum of St James; Hon. Derrick Kellier, Member of Parliament for South St. James and Minister of Social Security; Rev. Michael Shim-Hue, JBU President; Rev. Carl Johnson, JBU General Secretary; Rev. Lloyd Richards, Moderator of the St James Baptist Association; Rev. Glendon Powell, Chairman of the St James Ministers’ Fraternal, Rev. William Hild of Sarasota, and Rev. Dr Devon Dick, keynote speaker and pastor, Boulevard Baptist. Two visiting choirs William Knibb Memorial Baptist of Trelawny and the Boulevard Baptist of St Andrew provided excellent musical renditions. Other musical selections included: an instrumental presentation by Corporal Leroy Newell of the Jamaica Defence Force and worship in dance by Shorthwood Church Youth Fellowship.

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Mt Carey members are acknowledging that the God of Abraham, Jacob and Daniel; the God of Burchell, Hewitt and Greaves, is the same God who is leading them today. Therefore, they need not fear or worry; as He will both provide the protection for His people and the resources needed to clear their over six million dollar debt still owing on the rebuilding project. Mt Carey continues to crave the prayers of members and friends of the JBU, as it goes forward in carrying out the ministries to which God has entrusted them.
**NEWS FROM AROUND THE CHURCHES**

**½ CENTURY OF GOD’S AMAZING GRACE**

“A Jubilee of God’s Amazing Grace: Reflecting on the Past, Driving into the Future,” is the declaration of the Grace Baptist Church, May Pen, Clarendon as the church family observes its 50th anniversary. The yearlong celebrations began with a Thanksgiving Church Service on August 10, 2014 and will culminate with a Closing Thanksgiving Service on August 9, 2015.

The 50th anniversary celebrations include believers’ enrichment focus, ministry strengthening, special community outreach initiatives and homecoming activities for members in the Diaspora.

The tone was set for the future work of the church at the launch Thanksgiving Service, when Rev. Dr. Neville Callam, General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance charged congregants, community leaders and well-wishers to “complete the work for which you have been called by God to do!” This, he urged, was especially crucial as “the need is great for Christians to be persistent in witness and stand against the forces which seek to consign God to the periphery of society.”

He asked the church, which he pastored for 13 years, to ponder the question, “What is God saying to you about the nature of the ministry, which He is calling you to at a time like this?” Rev. Dr Callam urged members of Grace Baptist to respond faithfully to the urgings of the Holy Spirit in moulding the young and living God’s love.

From humble beginnings in a classroom at the late Eli Whiteman’s school in May Pen, Clarendon, Grace Baptist Church was officially founded in 1964 and has had four resident pastors, including Reverends Joseph Anderson, Dr Learoy Campbell and Brenard McDonald.

Some of the targets set by the Bethel family for its Anniversary year are:
- Adding no fewer than 60 new members to the church’s membership
- Family Life Expo, in May 2015 (Family Month)
- Assisting 60 young persons to be gainfully employed during July/August 2015, through the Church’s Summer Employment Programme.
- Production of a Film/Documentary highlighting the life of the Church over the years
- Homecoming event – July/August 2015
- Musical Presentation – featuring talents within the church
- Launch of a church community and outreach programme in Kingston Gardens.

**60 YEARS – STILL LIVING BY FAITH**

Bethel Baptist Church, Hope Road, St Andrew, is observing its 60th Anniversary of Ministry and Mission under the theme, 60 Years – Still Living by Faith. A special dedicatory and celebratory service was held on Sunday, 9th November 2014, with Rev Michael Shim-Hue, President of the Jamaica Baptist Union, as the Guest Speaker.

The highlights of the activities include the re-launch of the church’s website, www.bethelbaptistjw.com, in December 2014 and the publication of pastor Rev Dr Burchell Taylor’s latest book, LIVING WISELY – Reflections on the Wisdom Books: Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes-from the Margins; in February 2015. A monthly newsletter, Bethel News, was launched in November 2014, in commemoration of the 60th anniversary and will be in circulation until October 2015. Bethel also continues to support the Jamaica Baptist Union Mission Agency with its church/school building programme in KaFah, Haiti.

The Rev. Dr. Davewin Thomas, Vice-President of the Jamaica Baptist Union, Deputy Moderator of the St James Baptist Association and Pastor of the Burchell Circuit of Baptist Churches was the Guest Speaker at the Official Launch of the 100th Anniversary celebrations. Also participating in the event were Rev. Rudolph A. Brooks, Rev. Joseph Anderson and Rev. Godfrey Francis, pastors of the Bethphilep, Springfield and Webster Memorial Circuit of Baptist Churches respectively. Pastors of other denominations were also in attendance.

Additionally, to honour this significant milestone in the life of the Church, several memorabilia have been available for sale at the church office, including magazines, mugs, bags, pens and key chains.

The Sudbury Baptist Church in Orange District, St James, is celebrating its one-hundredth year of existence. The celebratory activities comprise:
- Official launch of the centenary anniversary on October 19, 2014
- Prayer Breakfast on Saturday, November 22, 2014
- Memorial Service on Sunday, January 18, 2015
- Public Lecture
- Anniversary Banquet
- Open Day

SUDBURY BAPTIST HITS A CENTURY!

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In just over two months, Iris Jacques, the oldest member of the Trinityville Baptist Church in St. Thomas, will be 103. She celebrated her one hundred and second birthday on October 5, 2014. The milestone birthday celebration for this centenarian took place at the church hall. The celebrants sang the happy birthday song and some of Mrs. Jacques’ favourite hymns. They also gave valuable tributes and feasted with her.

Mrs. Jacques loves to read and tells stories about life and lifestyles. If you are ever in doubt about a decision or situation, then perhaps you need to have a word with Mrs. Jacques. She is an expert in explaining the do’s and the don’ts of almost any situation you bring to her. Many persons within the community and her church family have testified about the instructions, lessons and advice that she gives them. Even at 102 years old Mrs. Jacques is still encouraging and giving sound instructions, using her favourite Psalms 27 and 35 as a guide.

She loves children dearly and would always care for them. She is a prayer warrior and chorister. She is also a survivor of the dreaded illness, Chikungunya.

While declaring, “mi nuh strong again,” Mrs. Iris Jacques gave a memorable response to the many tributes paid to her during the celebration. She charged the celebrants to “hold on to Jesus because He never fails.”

The celebration came to an end with the singing of Mrs. Jacques’s favourite hymn, “I must have the Saviour with me” and her exhortation: “When we are calling on Jesus’ name, we must do so… with all our might.”

“Jesus is the One who is keeping me. Jesus is not partial and He is here for everyone so we must remain faithful and true to Him,” Mrs. Jacques explained.

The Springfield Circuit of Baptist Churches hosted an appreciation service for Rev. and Mrs Joseph Anderson on Thursday, February 26, 2015 in observance of their 40-year-leadership milestone in the Christian Ministry. The duo spent 25 of those years providing faithful service at the helm of the Springfield Circuit, which comprises: Springfield, Buckingham and Bassgrove Baptist Churches and the Spring Garden Mission.

Rev. and Mrs Anderson were lauded for their various contributions to the Christian growth and nurture of young people in the Grace Baptist Circuit in Clarendon, Port Maria Circuit in St. Mary and Springfield Circuit in St. James. Under their leadership, people from a wide-cross section of age categories accepted the Lord. Some went further by accepting the call to fulltime ministry. Among those who responded to the call to pastoral service were: Reverends Luke Shaw, Douglas Fowles, Gareth Irvin and Robert Campbell who now serve in the Linstead, Fullersfield, Balaclava and Old Harbour Circuit of Baptist Churches, respectively. Reverends Devon Linton (now Independent Baptist) and Learoy Ritchie (now New Testament Church of God) also received their call to ministry under the guidance of Rev. Joseph Anderson.

Rev. and Mrs Anderson have started and or revived many ministries in the churches in which they have served, including, the 4-Plus Ministry, youth chorale, children’s church, the benevolent fund—members of the fund who are beneficiaries are guaranteed financial assistance far in excess of their contribution to assist in their funeral expenses, renovation of the Springfield church, manse, school and teacher’s cottage.

Rev. Anderson was presented with a Citation in which he was referred to as an “obedient, committed, dedicated and determined person who believes that hope and faith in God can bring about a change to hard hearted men and women of this land to work together, pray together, be persecuted together, stand up for God together and in the end will hear ‘Well done together.’” He was commended as a kind-hearted person who was ready to assist others not just spiritually, but financially. The pastor for the Springfield Circuit was recognised as an avid sportsman who distinguished himself as an excellent domino player, and also mastered the art of football, cricket and table tennis.

Rev. Davewin Thomas, Vice President of the Jamaica Baptist Union moderated the service and Rev. Anderson’s batch mate, Rev. Dr Vincent Fletcher from the Kettering Circuit of Baptist Churches in Trelawny, delivered the main address. Focusing on the theme, Raise Your Ebenezer, as he made reference to 1 Sam 7:5-12, Rev. Dr Fletcher charged that in order to be victorious one should thank God for the victory and thank God for His hope. Declaring, “Hitherto as the Lord help us,” he reminded the congregation that the recipe for victory is to get rid of the things that prevent us from accepting Christ as our Lord and live a life dedicated to God, whose promises are true.

Over 350 persons were in attendance, including His Worship The Mayor Councillor Glendon Harris; Hon. Derrick Kellier, Minister of Labour and Member of Parliament for South St James; Rev Lloyd Richards, moderator of the St James Baptist Association who represented the President of the Jamaica Baptist Union; Rev Godfrey Francis who represented the St James Baptist Association; Rev Jeffery McKenzie of Philippo Baptist; Rev Luke Shaw and several retired Baptist ministers. Among the attendees were several educators, retired Baptist ministers, representatives from the St James Ministers Fraternal, Father Joseph from the Anglican Church, community representatives and the family of Rev. and Mrs. Anderson.

In his reply, Rev. Anderson thanked God for His protection and enabling over the years. He also expressed appreciation to His wife, Esmine, and children; as well as to the churches and communities in which he served, for their support, love and respect.
National Youth Conference cont’d from page 6

Last year, the National Youth Conference and Rally which celebrated the 30th anniversary of the JBU Department (JBUYD) ran from November 20 to 22 and was guided by the theme: Living By Faith: Believing, Reaching, Rejoicing. Seventy-seven youth from various circuits across the island and Deno Cartwright from the Bahamas, one of the northern Caribbean representative on the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship Executive, participated in the milestone Conference and Rally. Greetings were received from the Baptist World Alliance Youth Department Director Emmett Dunn and Caribbean Baptist Fellowship Youth President Jody McKenna. In observance of the Anniversary, the usual Opening Service was replaced by an Opening Celebration at the Conference Centre, which comprised a time of singspiration, testimonies and prayer focusing on various aspects of life. Rev Hyde-Riley gave an exhortation, which challenged youth to grow deeper in their faith and Christian lifestyle at the conference and beyond.

Friday’s activities included a morning Prayer Walk led by Rev. Racquel Buckley and afternoon workshops aimed at developing the skills of conferees and their local churches. The seminars were entitled, When Faith does not make sense, which was led by JBU Vice President Rev. Robert Campbell; Succession Leadership led by Celia McKoy of Bethel Half Way Tree and Under-utilized Career Path facilitated by Keresha Lamond of UWI Career Services (Western Campus). The conference closed on Friday night with the Anniversary Celebration and Evening of Excellence, which saw the Salem Baptist Steel Band, Mona Baptist Male Group and two female representatives from the Baptist Missionary Society in England ministering to the conferees. Rev Karl Henlin delivered the message.

On Saturday the JBUYD closed the milestone celebration with the Rally at the Ocho Rios Baptist Church, St. Ann. After devotions, the youth competed in the performing and visual arts such as Dub Poetry, Chorale singing (mixed), dance (mixed), poster making and Bible Quiz based on the Book of Esther. The Quiz also tested the awareness of the competitors on Baptist History. All zones participated in most activities and zone 2, which was comprised of St Catherine, Kingston and St Andrew, won most categories and the first place. The adjudicators deemed the performances to be of a high standard. Jamaican Baptist youth left the Conference and Rally more energized to believe, reach and rejoice in the Lord.

The Bicentennial Partnership cont’d from page 12

a body of intellectual information that needs to be acquired. While no theology can help being, in one way or another; making explicit the centrality of the contextual issues does represent a departure from the current Western mainstream.

This incremental shift is in part due to the influence of our partnership with the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU). Thanks to the JBU, we are learning that theology needs to be worked out in the UK's urban conurbations, among oppressed and disengaged communities - the recognition and appreciation that liberation theology has its origins in the reality of the ‘premature and unjust death of many people.’

Thanks also to JBU and the Sam Sharpe project, many Black British Baptists are being emboldened to articulate their history and stories through their cultural prism. The Great Jamaican Revival, Morant Bay Riot, Slaughter of the Innocents, Native Baptists—including George Liele, Moses Baker, George Gibbs, George Lewis and Parson Kellick—are just a few of the names that form part of our history, identity and theology. My sense is that the stories of these Black ennobled radicals are not only being written about in books such as Text and Story, but are also proudly asserted by Black and some White Baptists from the pulpit and elsewhere. The Rev. Karl Johnson’s clarion call to a packed Edmonton Baptist church in London was, “tell your stories”. A challenge that is slowly being embraced and assisted by the likes of the Reverends Dr Kate Coleman, Kumar Rajagopalan, Israel Olofinjana, Michele Mahon as well as Gale Richards and Dr Anthony Reddie.

It is no wonder then that some in the UK have described our partnership as ‘a special relationship’. It is indeed a rich and reciprocal relationship. Against all the odds, the bond between the two remains strong - tested through slavery, the migration story and obvious racism, history and present realities. The genius of the Apology, The Journey, the Sam Sharpe project and, more recently, the Bicentenary is that they have helped British and Jamaican Baptists reignite our partnership, reclaim some of the greatest accomplishments of Baptist history and rediscover the cast of heroes that have brought us to this moment in our 201 year history.

Let us hope that those of us responsible for leading the next chapters of this relationship will place equality and healthy collaboration at its very heart.

Editorial note: Wale Hudson-Roberts is Racial Justice Coordinator of the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

ISSUES & COMMENTARIES

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Mr Jamiko Yap, member, Calvary Baptist Church, Jamaica & beneficiary of the bicentennial visitor-exchange programme:

If only people like George Liele, John Rowe, Moses Baker and others who paved the way for this two hundred and one year partnership between British and Jamaican Baptists could see the fruits of their labour. Before going on this mission trip, I sensed a call to ministry. I thought that I was going to see the work that George Liele and others had done in the past. However, what I experienced was far beyond that.

Let us hope that those of us responsible for leading the next chapters of this relationship will place equality and healthy collaboration at its very heart.

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MISSION CONFERENCE
2015

Theme:
“Mission Now: Nurturing Our Witness”

October 22-25, 2015
SunSpree Holiday Inn Resort
Montego Bay, St. James

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