

*The Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas
Leeward Islands District Conference*

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PASTORAL LETTER TO THE CONGREGATIONS

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Greetings! Groeten! Kumindentu!

It is indeed a special joy for us to greet you from “Dushi Korsou” (“Sweet Curacao”), one of the Dutch/Papiamentu speaking Circuits of our Leeward Islands District Conference. We assembled in the 6th Meeting of the Leeward Islands District Council under the leadership of our District President, Bishop The Rev’d Charles A. Seaton. We are most grateful to Almighty God, who has guarded, kept, and guided us by His “unerring Spirit” over the past year and has brought us safely to this time and place.

APPRECIATION

The Council records its sincere thanks and appreciation to the Superintendent Minister, the Reverend Damien E. Hughes, officers and members of the Curacao Circuit for their gracious hospitality. Through their labours of love and outpouring of warmth and generosity, we have been made to feel most welcome. We note with interest that the Circuit was hosting, for the first time, a major meeting of the District which coincides with the Circuit’s celebration of its 75th anniversary of Methodist Witness on the island. We highly commend the Curacao Circuit and pray that God will continue to bless its endeavours.

CONNEXIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

In addition to our clergy and lay delegates, the Council was privileged to welcome among us for the second time, our Connexional President, Bishop The Rev’d Everal L. Galbraith who extended greetings on behalf of the other Connexional Officers. He indicated that this welcome is extra special as it is the 260th year of the presence of the Methodist Movement in the Caribbean and the Americas. He noted, “Truly, a special Anniversary gift to the people of this island and from the people of this island to the MCCA.” Bishop Galbraith reminded the District Council that these are difficult days for us as a people and as a People called

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Methodist, but God will never leave us or forsake us. He encouraged us all to make ourselves available and allow God to use us to transform our communities and build the Kingdom of God.

HIGHLIGHTS OF DISTRICT COUNCIL 2020

Ministerial Council

Our District Council, which met 12th – 17th January, was preceded by the Ministerial Council that convened on 10th January, 2020. Our deliberations were guided by the District Council's theme for the triennium, "Grounded in Christ: Loving-Serving- Rejoicing". This theme inspires in us a sense of being anchored in Jesus Christ, the Rock of our Salvation

Welcome Service

The District Council Welcome Service, held on 12th January in the beautiful Barrett Memorial Methodist Church, brought together the Council delegates, members of the clergy of other denominations, Government officials and the general membership of the Curacao Circuit. The Service engendered a refreshing experience reflecting the rich offerings of our faith and the diversity of our District. Bishop Seaton delivered an engaging sermon entitled, "Are You Grounded?", supported by the passage taken from Ephesian 3: 17-19. His main points were centered on the triennium theme, as he made the bold assertion that "Love cannot be measured in height, depth, length and breadth; love is infinite." Bishop Seaton challenged us to love one another as God has loved us, so that, Christ's love may flow through us and our churches, homes, schools and communities to enable them to become better places.

Ordination Service

On Thursday, 16th January, 2020, Rev'd Othniel E. Daly, Local Presbyterian in the Nevis Circuit, was ordained to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament and Rev'd Celina C. Walton-Charles, Deacon, stationed in the British Virgin Islands Circuit, was ordained to the Ministry of Service. The Ordinands each gave an impressive account of their conversion experience, call to preach and commitment to the Ministry of Christ. The Connexional Bishop delivered a thought-provoking charge, not only to the Ordinands, but to all of us present and virtual, under the theme: "Seek Wisdom for Your Ministry", Basing his Charge on a text taken from 1 Kings 3: 7-9, he asked the broad question, "What would you ask God for if you could ask for anything?" In answering that question, he encouraged the Ordinands to adhere to the following steps:

- 1) "Look in: and assess yourself"
- 2) "Look out: at the task before you"
- 3) "Look up: God will provide"

Council Communion Service

As is customary, our Council climaxed on 17th January with the Council Communion Service held at the Barrett Memorial Methodist Church. The preacher at this Service was Rev'd Morna Christmas-Frazer, Superintendent, Dominica Circuit, who challenged her hearers to remember, as we prepared to return to our places of work and leisure, that we are unified and equipped for service in the hand of God.

MINISTERIAL AFFAIRS

We expressed gratitude to Rev'd Dr. Novelle Josiah for the work he has done in The Leeward Islands District, including in his capacity as Candidate's Secretary to the Ministerial Training Committee for the

past four (4) years. He will be leaving the District to take up his new appointment as Ministerial Tutor/Warden at the United Theological College of the West Indies (UTCWI) in Jamaica effective 1st September 2020. Dr. Josiah will be succeeding Rev'd Dr. Oral Thomas, former Senior MTC Tutor/Warden who was installed as the 10th President of the UTCWI in December 2019. We congratulate Dr. Thomas on his induction to this office and pray God's blessings on him as leads the region's premier theological Institute. As "products" of the LI District, we are very proud of the accomplishments of both our brothers. The Council was pleased to appoint Rev Morna S. Christmas-Frazer as the new Candidate's Secretary and Ministerial Training Secretary.

We place on record our profound gratitude and sincere congratulations to Rev'd Franklyn E. Manners on his superannuation from active ministry. At the end of this church year Rev'd Manners would have completed forty- four years (44) of ministry.

This year, the Council was pleased to recommend two Local Presbyters, Rev. Caren Richards-St. Rose and Rev Wilmoth O. Hodge for reception into Full Connexion. We wish them well as they prepare for Ordination.

Council also advanced three Presbyters in their probation studies, namely:

Rev'd Wendell Samuel – Nevis Circuit, advanced to his 2nd year of Probation

Rev'd Verel Medina – Guadeloupe Mission, advanced to his 2nd year of Probation

Rev'd Steadroy Pemberton, Local Presbyterian – Nevis Circuit, advanced to his 5th year of Probation

We wish them well as they continue in their studies.

STATE OF THE WORK

Mission and Evangelism

Mission, Evangelism and Church Growth is the "engine" of our Church. Mindful of the efforts within various Circuits, we continue to encourage commitment to "Operation Andrew", where each member, through prayer and fasting, brings other persons to God in Christ each year as a part of his/her Christian duty.

We use this medium to notify of the hosting of a Seminar for the Laity to be held in Antigua from 7th -14th August, 2020. The Seminar is specifically for preachers and others who feel a sense of Call to Preach, or have an interest in Full Time Ministry, or some other form of ministry. Each Circuit, where possible, should try to send at least two (2) persons who fit these criteria. Some focus will be given to exploring various forms of ministry.

The Council was pleased to welcome Sis Tiffany Liburd, the Leeward Islands District MCCA Youth Representative/District Youth Representative to the Connexional Youth Commission. She was able to share some insight on the importance of building a website and the benefits to be derived from this website.

Resources and Development

The District Council recognized that work in affected Circuits continues to be centered on the recovery efforts from the passage of Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017. Several projects have begun but many have been delayed or have stalled due to the overwhelming costs of restoration. Some congregations continued to meet in makeshift premises and some ministers in rented accommodations. Yet, we were pleased to hear reports from the Circuits that many Manses and Chapels have been restored. Some of these were redesigned and extended to better meet the needs of the congregations and circuits. Dominica must be highly commended for having completed the replacement of roofs on six chapels, some of which are ready for rededication in January 2020.

Council approved the construction of the St. Peter's Chapel in the St. Maarten Circuit.

Our work on these edifices is an important element of our stewardship and our service to the glory of God. As stewards in the various Circuits throughout the District we must continue to strive to be a part of this noble legacy and to prove ourselves worthy of what we have inherited. While thankful for the assistance, it was recommended that all volunteer work teams be properly supervised by local builders to ensure that they adhere to local building codes and traditional experience.

Circuits that are in arrears are reminded of their obligations to submit outstanding payments for general assessments and superannuation to the District Treasurer by 31st January, 2020. Additionally, Circuits where there are Methodist Schools are also reminded to submit their portion of 23% of Missions and, where there are no Schools, their 28%, 5% of which goes to the assistance of Schools.

Christian Education

Circuits are encouraged to ensure attendance and participation at the LID District Men's Commission Seminar to be held in the Curacao Circuit, July 6 – 13, 2020, as well as the MCCA Women's 7th Quinquennial Assembly, to be held in Port of Spain, Trinidad, July 22-27, 2020.

The District Youth Commission has undertaken to link circuit websites throughout the District, and will also collate the histories of our different circuits as we celebrate the 260th anniversary of Methodism in the Caribbean this year. Council has given approval for the launch this year of a Musical Exposé among our youth and young adults. More details regarding this venture will be communicated by the General Secretary, Christian Education.

We thank God for the work that continues throughout the District. We recognise the challenges facing the church in this time and acknowledge the faithful witness and service of the laity and clergy.

The District Council expressed thanks to Rev'd Andrine Joseph for the seven years that she has served as General Secretary of this area of the work. We pray God's richest blessings upon her as she continues to serve at Circuit and District level in various capacities. District Council appointed Rev'd Helen Mallalieu-Maurose as the new Christian Education General Secretary.

General Education

The District Council was pleased to note that there was a general increase in the number of students and teachers at all levels in our schools. We applaud the efforts of all stakeholders of these ministries and pray God's blessings on them.

CONCLUSION

We encourage Circuits to be deliberate in their observance of the 260th Anniversary of Methodism in the Caribbean as we can collectively affirm the faithfulness of God through the generations. God our Father is faithful and every morning we have experienced anew God's love, mercy, grace and favor. Christ our Redeemer continues to call us to a closer walk with Him and to a deeper commitment to service. We are eternally grateful for the presence of the Holy Spirit, our Guide, Guard, Comforter and Friend. Empowered by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, may we pursue that abundant life that Christ came to bring and, commit ourselves to fuller service. May God grant us grace "to serve the present age" to fulfill God's Mission, thereby advancing the Kingdom of God.

In Christ's Service,



Bishop, The Reverend Charles A. Seaton
District President



Rev'd Dr. Joan Delsol Meade
District Secretary