



THE JAMAICA BAPTIST REPORTER

DECEMBER 2023

Established 1874



The emancipation movement in Jamaica was a long and complex struggle that involved various actors, such as enslaved Africans, free blacks, missionaries, and abolitionists. One of the most important events in this movement was the Baptist War, also known as the Christmas Rebellion or the Great Jamaican Slave Revolt. This was a large-scale uprising of enslaved people that took place between December 1831 and January 1832, mainly in the western parishes of Jamaica.

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The PRESIDENT'S *Message*

The Gospel Truth



The announcement made at the birth of Jesus is that He brings good news. I was surprised to learn that the Greek word euangelion (εὐαγγέλιον), which translates exactly to the words good news or good message, was not originally a “church only” word. I was also disappointed when the word study revealed that the word was originally a military one, used in the context of warfare in ancient Greece. It was part of the Greek lexical arsenal.

Runners called evangelists would return from battle in distant places with the good news that their city was doing well on the frontline. From its military tour of duty, the word was later civilianized as it leaked into everyday usage and later converted (Praise the Lord!) by the gospel writers (or should I say New Testament Christian community) who spoke of the evangel of Jesus, meaning the good news of Jesus.

I found myself reflecting on the good news of the gospel of Jesus as our beloved union enters its 175th year of existence. 1849 was a significant moment in Jamaican church history, as in this year two hitherto independent Baptist church groupings, namely the Eastern Union and the Western Union, came together forming the Jamaica Baptist Union.

They coalesced around the gospel – evangel of Jesus. It should not be forgotten that the church in general and the Jamaica Baptist Union in particular are brought into being by the gospel. They are sustained in their life by the gospel and understand their mission to be that of proclaiming the gospel.

That gospel is Jesus Christ, who is both the proclaimer and the embodiment of God’s good news. He is the gospel and not merely the instrument through which the gospel comes to us. In Jesus Christ, God makes a decisive intervention in the world – that is good news. In and as Jesus, God reconciles all things to Himself and by so doing restores us to freedom and fellowship – good news.

By Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, God makes all things new. Because of the work of God in Jesus Christ, all creation, once condemned to perish, can now be hopeful that it



will attain its true end as it is the beneficiary of the saving governance of God. That is the gospel, the good news. The good news to Jamaica that the JBU proclaimed in 1849, as the churches under the leadership of the first chairman, Rev. Walter Dendy, and secretary, Rev. William Teale, pledged to work together to impact Jamaica with the gospel – Jesus Christ, the good news of God.

The early pronouncements from the union gave content to the gospel. Among the issues they advocated and the reforms for which they agitated were equity in taxation, compulsory education and the registration of births and deaths. It seems the gospel did not fully shed its military background in the understanding of the early Jamaican Baptists. The engagement was now in the battle for human dignity, empowerment of the formerly disfranchised people and justice.

As we enter year 175, we must recommit to the proclamation and embodiment of the gospel. We are concerned that many Christians may be losing confidence in the gospel. We should ensure that we do not. One hundred and seventy-five years later, as we examine the state of our world, we observe some deeply disturbing trends. We are falling deeper and deeper into a climate crisis.

The gap between the rich and the poor is at levels that are unprecedented. We in this world are engaged in senseless wars, causing untold hardships and unimaginable pain for vulnerable peoples, and culture wars, fueled by intolerance, bigotry, and racism. In times like these, the gospel of God in Jesus Christ will need to return to its military roots and once again become militant in the public square, as the gospel is our only hope. As we would say in Jamaica, “that’s the gospel truth.”

Rev. Dr. Glenroy Lalor
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FROM THE DESK OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY

Christmas celebrations cancelled!

*"For to us a child is born,
To us a son is given.
And the government will be upon His shoulder;
and His name will be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Is 9:6)*

This year, Christmas celebrations have been cancelled in Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Jordan. For the first time since modern celebrations began, the birthplace of Jesus will not be celebrated in the Holy Land. Instead of the sound of carols and the presence of lights, there is the sound of sirens, darkness and destruction. The church and local authorities have decided to forgo the usual celebrations in solidarity with the unprecedented suffering in Gaza due to the Israel-Hamas war. The message of Christmas is the proclamation of peace for all people. This is a necessary and urgent reminder considering that the exercise of power through force, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, wars, conflicts, revenge, hate and anger have plagued the lives of many, escalating in some regions over these past months. Many people are facing immense suffering in the face of horrendous acts of violence and retaliation.

During this time, we recall the incarnation, the birth of this child, born into the world as the Prince of Peace who comes to us as an expression of God's love for all people. We believe that the mystery and power of God's love can break through and shine light in the grim circumstances of our lives. The power of this love makes possible justice, harmony, forgiveness and reconciliation, goodness in the face of evil and hope even in the most hopeless circumstances of our lives.

Let us spread this message of peace this Christmas amid the bloodshed and dire humanitarian crisis occasioned by wars and conflicts. May there be peace sufficient to end the war between Ukraine and Russia; the wanton loss of lives among people who are deeply connected to each other but who have been forced to become enemies. May the power of the Prince of Peace break through so that "ploughshares will be turned into pruning hooks".

May the Prince of Peace breathe new life into the peace talks in Colombia and the conflict in Myanmar so that a path to reconciliation and healing can be found. May the peoples of the motherland in places such as Nigeria, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone experience harmony and human flourishing and may the cycle of violence that plagues Jamaica come to an end. We also remember

especially the refugees, exiles, and migrants who, like Jesus, cannot find room but wander from place to place, sometimes under severe and harsh conditions, in search of hospitality and the welcome of strangers. The homeless and the hungry, the isolated and excluded. May the Prince of Peace be with those who lost loved ones during the year, whether through tragic circumstances or natural causes.

With hope and in anticipation, let us commit to transforming the circumstances of the poor and powerless, to embrace the humility of the Christ child, to do justice and love mercy and engage in costly solidarity. Let us press on as we approach 175 years as a Union of Churches committed to the message and work of peace through our work for justice and our commitment to pursuing integrity. We go forward with hope and anticipation that the peace of God will break through in our hearts and in our land as Jesus comes to us this Christmas.

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given..." May the Prince of Peace fill our lives and transform the world this Christmas!

*Mervyn Hyde Riley (Rev.)
General Secretary*

Editorial

The relevance of Advent and Christmas

Rev. Eron Henry

For Christians, Advent and Christmas are not just festive seasons of lights, gifts, and carols. They are seasons of hope, joy, and peace that celebrate the coming of Christ and the fulfillment of God's promises. But these seasons also challenge Christians to engage with the issues of justice and reconciliation in a world marked by conflicts and violence.

The coming of Christ and the fulfillment of God's promises are the common focus of Advent and Christmas. Through Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, the Word made flesh, God has acted decisively in history to save and redeem the world: This is what Advent and Christmas proclaim. God is faithful to the covenant with Israel and the nations, and God will bring God's kingdom of justice, peace, and righteousness to completion: This is what Advent and Christmas affirm. Christians are invited to participate in God's mission of transforming the world according to God's will and purpose: This is what Advent and Christmas call for.

Advent and Christmas are not detached from the issues of peace, justice, and reconciliation in the world. On the contrary, they connect with these issues in profound and relevant ways, as they reflect the social and political context of Jesus' birth, the prophetic vision of God's reign, and the call to be peacemakers and reconcilers in the world.

Jesus was born in a time and place of turmoil and oppression. He was born under the rule of the Roman Empire, which imposed its power and authority through violence and taxation. He was born in Bethlehem, the city of David, the king

who was promised to restore Israel's glory and sovereignty. He was born as a refugee, who had to flee from the threat of Herod, the puppet king who massacred the innocent children in his attempt to eliminate the rival king. He was born as a Jew, who belonged to a people who had a long history of exile, slavery, and resistance. He was born as the fulfillment of the ancient prophecies, which spoke of a savior who would bring liberation and salvation to Israel and the world.

Jesus' birth was also a sign and a foretaste of God's reign, which was inaugurated by his life, death, and resurrection. His birth was announced by angels, who declared "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests" (Luke 2:14). His birth was celebrated by shepherds, who were the marginalized and despised of the society, and by magi, who were the foreigners and outsiders of the religion. His birth was attested by the Scriptures, which testified that He was the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, who would establish His government and uphold it with justice and righteousness forever (Isaiah 9:6-7). His birth was the manifestation of God's love, grace, and presence in the world, which transcended the boundaries of race, class, and culture.

Jesus' birth implied a mission and a mandate for His followers, who were called to be His witnesses and disciples in the world, and challenged the status quo and the powers that be, which opposed and resisted His lordship and His message. His birth demanded a response and a commitment from

those who recognized and received Him as the Savior and the Lord. It empowered and equipped His followers to be His agents and instruments of peace, justice, and reconciliation in the world and inspired and motivated His followers to pray and work for the coming of His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Advent and Christmas provide theological and ethical principles that guide Christian responses to conflicts and violence, such as the concepts of just war, pacifism, nonviolence, forgiveness, justice, and love. These concepts are not abstract or theoretical, but rather concrete and practical, as they apply to the specific cases of Israel and Hamas, Sudan, and Russia and Ukraine, and other ongoing and past conflicts. These cases are not isolated or random, but rather interconnected and representative, as they illustrate the complexity and diversity of the situations and the perspectives that Christians face and hold in the world.

As we celebrate Advent and Christmas, let us remember and rejoice in the coming of Christ and the fulfillment of God's promises. But let us also reflect and act on the implications and challenges of His birth for our lives and our world. Let us ask ourselves: How can we be the bearers and the sharers of His peace, justice, and reconciliation in a violent world? How can we be the witnesses and the disciples of His kingdom in a broken world? How can we be the signs and the foretastes of His presence and His love in a hurting world?

St. Luke 2:1-20

Rev. Karl Henlin

Window on the Word

St. Luke's gospel tells a story whose deeper meaning can easily be missed if we simply receive it as entertaining material for a Christmas Cantata. For many, Christmas offers little more than sentimental value, and the real meaning is often missed amidst both the merriment and the tragedies that accompany and molest human existence.

In the region of the world where Jesus was born, a fiery hell is being unleashed, and in the midst of that, Palestinian Christians have now reported that for them, Christmas 2023 is cancelled.

The passage tells of a bunch of shepherds who are startled in the midst of the night. Theirs had been a life living under oppressive, economic, and political systems, which had succeeded in confining their life to a daily hustling in wool and mutton.

Caesar Augustus, whenever he speaks, has bad news for the poor, as he insists on a massive program of taxation, which is enough to transform the colonized masses into a subservient, dependent, dominated people.

In some distant place, Mary and Joseph make a difficult journey to offer their dues to the occupying forces and can find no place for shelter, so much so that they have a child born in circumstances prepared for the nurture of animals for slaughter.

The angels sing

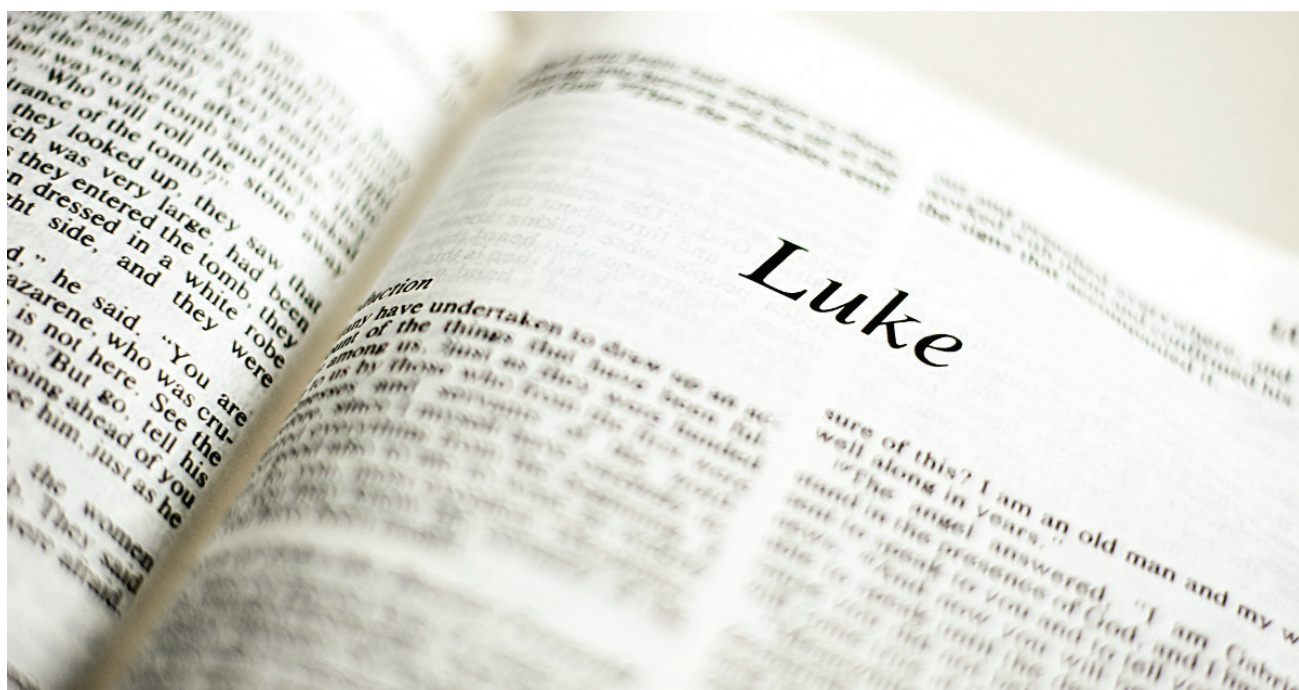
This reality, now aligned with poverty-stricken shepherds, hardly sets the stage for anything positive to emerge. The "angels" carry an odd message, strange to the ears of the shepherds, even if it is accompanied by melodious tones. "Do not fear!" "There is good news!" "A Saviour is born!" and with that, a doxology: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests" (St Luke 2:14)

Is this a promise, a prophecy, or a prayer?

Through this song, we learn that God is intervening or even interfering in the dominant systems of the world – a new world order, a new way of living, a new road map for life – "Peace to those on whom his favor rests."

Peace describes a context in which all human beings in every place, and with them the whole creation, are given space to grow and flourish without intimidation or domination.

Startled, the shepherds take a journey to see if what they heard might possibly be true, or was this another attempt of a dominating, colonial power to deceive the



masses by promising what it could not deliver?

Finding Mary and Joseph and the baby convinced them that God was about doing a new thing, which filled them with joy and radiant energy and had given them new hope.

In Bethlehem today, Palestinian Christians have cancelled Christmas. For them, there is too much happening to contemplate that romantic story. In a world of "cancel culture," many have already cancelled this story as a compilation of puerile fairy tales, applicable only to wide-eyed children, longing for an experience of the incredible.

Mary pondered these things

We are to ponder these things, even as we live in a world surrounded by human depravity, ecological upheaval, war, and conflict between nations and peoples competing for global domination, and where refugees are forced to ride the waves of the ocean in desperation and fear, and find themselves with no room in the inn. Is the message of the angels a prophecy, a promise, or is it simply a prayer? The story echoes the message of the entire scriptures and conveys a portrait of God's intention for the world and God's warrant upon those who have made the choice to embrace the Christ of Christmas.

The empires of the world have determined that the majority poor of every color, class, and geographical location, submit to the visible and invisible hands of those whose insatiable thirst for the wealth of the world remains unquenched. By their programs of domination, they entice or terrorize the poor into programs of subservience and consumption, and all the time ensuring their military might is undergirded by

programs of exploitation.

"No room in the inn" is a stark reminder that millions of persons have inadequate resources to provide basic shelter, while a minority of persons and nations with vast resources remain inhospitable and unmoved. To give birth in a stable is about the sub-human conditions under which too many live, while few live in an economy of precocious luxury. Yet, in the midst of this, life is always possible, and peace on earth becomes a live possibility and reality, because in the midst of the rubble of fallen concrete in the Gaza Strip, children are still being born, as if pushing through the rubble, they scream, "we cannot breathe."

Shepherds hear and they go and tell that when all is dark and dreary, boring and burdensome, a light does shine through. That light only happens when there is a commitment to peace, i.e., the well-being of the whole world, and in which every human being, shepherd or not, is given the space to flourish.

As the New Year 2024 approaches (and has come), we have little sense of the future. This we know: that tyrants and autocrats and the commanders of the world's economies will still declare "everyone is to be taxed" (burdened), but God has not given up on this world and still summons persons like Mary, the shepherds, and the men from the East, to follow the light that still flickers and then will eventually shine brightly across the world.

Peace on earth, good will to all!

It's enough to ponder in our hearts like Mary and then commit to live it out in our lives.

A history of faith and freedom

The Jamaica Baptist Union celebrates its 175th anniversary in 2024, marking a long and rich history of faith and freedom. It is one of the oldest and largest Christian denominations in Jamaica, with more than 300 churches and 40,000 members. The JBU traces its roots to the late 18th century when Baptist missionaries from the United States arrived in Jamaica to preach the gospel.

The first Baptist missionary to Jamaica was George Liele, a former slave from the United States who came to the island in 1783. He established the first Baptist church in Kingston and baptized many converts, including enslaved Africans. Liele and Moses Baker, another former slave from the USA who collaborated closely with Liele – the latter operating mainly in western Jamaica – faced persecution and imprisonment from the colonial authorities, who feared that their preaching would incite rebellion among the enslaved.

In 1814, the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) of England sent John Rowe to Jamaica to support the work started by Liele and Baker. He was soon followed by others, such as William Knibb, James Phillippo, and Samuel Oughton. The Baptist missionaries built churches, schools, and chapels across the island, and ministered to both free and enslaved people.

The Baptist missionaries played a crucial role in the struggle for emancipation in Jamaica. They exposed

the atrocities of slavery and petitioned the British Parliament to end the system. They also encouraged and assisted the enslaved to resist oppression and demand their rights. In 1831, a massive slave revolt known as the Baptist War or the Christmas Rebellion broke out in western Jamaica, led by Samuel Sharpe, a Baptist deacon and preacher. The revolt was brutally suppressed by the colonial forces, and Sharpe and many other rebels were executed. However, the revolt also hastened the passage of the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, which granted freedom to all slaves in the British Empire.

The Baptist missionaries also helped the freed slaves to adjust to their new status and secure their economic and social welfare. They provided land, education, and legal aid to the former slaves, and advocated for their civil and political rights. They also supported the development of indigenous leadership and autonomy within the Baptist churches and trained local pastors and teachers.

Formation of the JBU

In 1849, some of the Baptist churches in Jamaica decided to form an association to foster cooperation and fellowship among themselves. This association was called the Jamaica Baptist Union, and it was the first of its kind in the Caribbean. It adopted a constitution and a confession of faith, elected a leader and a council to oversee its affairs, and established a theological college and various social and educational institutions.

The JBU maintained a close relationship with the BMS, which continued to send missionaries and financial support to Jamaica. However, the JBU also developed its own identity and vision, and sought to address the needs and challenges of the Jamaican society. Baptists participated in various national and regional issues, such as the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865, the Federation of the West Indies of 1958-1962, and the independence of Jamaica in 1962. It has engaged in ecumenical and interfaith dialogue and cooperation and joined the World Council of Churches in 1961. Baptists in Jamaica have made a significant contribution to the religious, cultural, and social development of Jamaica.

Three of the island's National Heroes – Sam Sharpe, Paul Bogle, and George William Gordon – were Baptists. Baptists have nurtured many prominent leaders and personalities in various fields, such as politics, education, law, medicine, arts, and sports. Some examples are Percival James Patterson, Rex Nettleford, and Errol Miller. Jamaican Baptists have influenced the growth and diversity of the Baptist movement in the Caribbean and beyond and has established partnerships and networks with other Baptist bodies around the world.

The JBU continues to uphold its mission of proclaiming the gospel and promoting justice and peace in Jamaica and the world. It celebrates its 175th anniversary in 2024 with gratitude for its past, confidence in its present, and hope for its future.



How Baptists Fought for Freedom

The Baptist War was inspired and led by Samuel Sharpe, a literate and charismatic enslaved Baptist deacon who preached about the equality of all people before God and the injustice of slavery. Sharpe was influenced by the teachings of Baptist missionaries, such as William Knibb, Thomas Burchell, and James Phillippo, who advocated for the rights and education of the enslaved. Sharpe organized a peaceful strike among the enslaved workers, demanding better working conditions and wages. He mobilized thousands of enslaved people across the island, using Baptist churches



and networks as bases of operation. The strike began on December 27, 1831, but soon escalated into a full-scale revolt, as the planters responded with force and violence. The rebels attacked and burned plantations, sugar mills, and crops, and fought against the militia. The rebellion was not completely suppressed by the colonial authorities, but rather by the local militia and the Maroons, who had signed a peace treaty and were allied with the British. The Maroons played a crucial role in capturing many of the rebels, including Sharpe.

The rebellion lasted for 11 days, from December 25, 1831, to January 5, 1832. It was the largest slave revolt in the British Caribbean, involving about 60,000 enslaved people, or about one-fifth of the total enslaved population in Jamaica. It resulted in the death of more than 500 rebels and 14 whites, and the execution of more than 300 rebels, including Sharpe, who was

hanged on May 23, 1832.

The rebellion also caused significant economic damage, estimated at £1,154,589, or about £104 million in today's value. However, this amount does not include the value of the enslaved who died or were executed, nor the indirect costs of the rebellion, such as the loss of trade and production, the increase of taxes and debt, and the decline of confidence and investment.

The Baptist War had a profound impact on the emancipation movement in Jamaica and beyond. It demonstrated the courage and determination of the enslaved people to fight for their freedom, and the brutality and oppression of the slave system.

The rebellion alarmed and angered the British public, who were outraged by the violence and injustice in Jamaica. The rebellion increased the pressure on the British government to enforce the abolition of slavery in the colonies, and to grant full emancipation to the enslaved people. The Baptist War was one of the main factors that led to the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, which abolished slavery throughout the British Empire, and the Emancipation Act of 1838, which granted full freedom to the former enslaved people in Jamaica.

A Force for progress

The emancipation of the enslaved people in Jamaica was not the end of the Baptist involvement in the social and political development of the island. On the contrary, Baptists continued to play a vital role in the education, health, and welfare of the Jamaican people, especially the poor and marginalized. Baptists established schools, churches and other institutions that provided essential services and opportunities for the people.

In later years, Baptists advocated for the civil and political rights of the people, such as the right to vote, the right to land, and the right to self-government. Baptists supported the labor and nationalist movements that challenged the colonial and imperial domination of Jamaica and promoted the cultural and spiritual identity of the Jamaican people.

Some of the most prominent and influential Jamaican leaders and activists were Baptists, such as Paul Bogle and George William Gordon, both National Heroes along with Sam Sharpe. These leaders and activists fought for the dignity and sovereignty of the Jamaican people and contributed to the social and economic transformation of the island. They inspired and influenced other movements and struggles for freedom and justice around the world, such as the Civil Rights movement in the United States, the pan-African movement, and the Rastafari movement.

Baptist faith and heritage are still alive and vibrant in Jamaica. According to the 2021 census, there were about 350,000 Baptists in Jamaica, or about 11 percent of the total population. The Jamaica Baptist Union, founded in 1849, is the largest and oldest Baptist organization in Jamaica, with more than 330 churches and 40,000 members.



18th century Jamaica Baptist Church Covenant

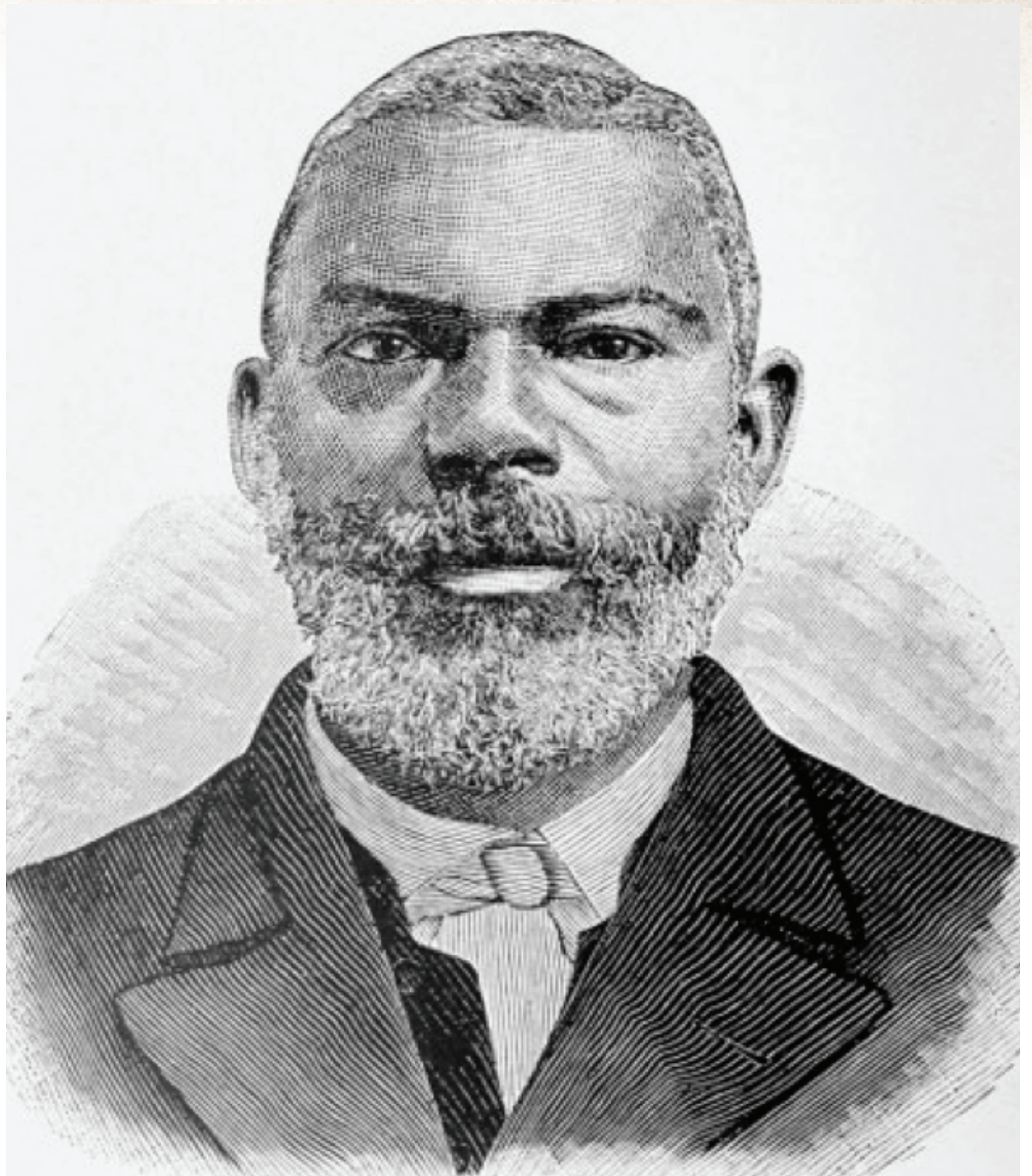
The Jamaica Baptist Church Covenant was written by George Liele in 1792 and may have included contributions from George Gibbs and Moses Baker. It honed closely to the Anabaptist Church tradition. “We are of the Anabaptist persuasion because we believe it agreeable to the Scriptures.”

This covenant, which was recited every month during communion services, helped members to evaluate their adherence to the laws, including not allowing enslaved persons to join membership “without first having a few lines from their owners of their good behaviour.”

It began with a statement of loyalty to the King, Country, and Laws, and a pledge to follow the attached Rules. It had 21 articles, each with a list of Bible verses to support them. The articles dealt with various topics, from keeping the Lord’s Day and Baptism, to taking part in the Lord’s Supper, the practice of washing one another’s feet, and the avoidance of certain actions such as cursing, eating blood, wearing expensive clothes, and suing before the unjust.

The covenant acted as a reference for the community’s conduct and standards and as a means of preserving harmony and order within the community. However, it also caused conflict among African Baptist believers in Jamaica, leading to several church divisions.

The document reveals the community’s views on faith, morality, and social order. It acted as a reference for the community’s conduct, preserved harmony within the community, and revealed the community’s views on faith, morality, and social order.



Rev. George Liele

The Free Village Movement



people, who desired to own their own land and to live independently from the planters, resisted these attempts and sought alternative ways of livelihood. As a solution to this problem, the free village movement emerged. It involved the purchase of large tracts of land by the BMS missionaries, who then subdivided them into smaller lots and sold them to the freed people at affordable prices. The freed people then built their own houses, farms, and businesses, and formed self-reliant and self-governing communities. The free villages also had their own churches, schools, and civic institutions, and provided a space for the free villagers to practice their faith, culture, and politics.

James Phillippo, a Baptist missionary and slavery abolitionist, founded Sligoville in St. Catherine, in 1835. It was the first free village in Jamaica, established on a 25-acre property that he bought with a donation of £1,000 from Howe Peter Browne, the second Marquess of Sligo, who was the governor of Jamaica and a supporter of emancipation. He sold the land to 71 families, who paid an average of £5 per lot. The village had a Baptist church and was one of the Free Villages that Phillippo helped to create for the emancipated enslaved Africans.



The free village movement was a social and economic phenomenon that transformed Jamaica in the 19th century. It involved the establishment of self-governing communities by former enslaved Africans who purchased land from planters after emancipation in 1838. The free villages provided a viable alternative to the oppressive plantation system and enabled the freed people to exercise their civil and religious rights.

The emancipation of the enslaved in Jamaica posed a new challenge for the Baptists and the freed people. The planters, who were reluctant to lose their cheap labor force, tried to impose harsh conditions and low wages on the emancipated workers, and to restrict their access to land and resources. The freed

More free villages were established across Jamaica by the BMS missionaries and other religious groups, such as the Moravians and the Presbyterians, following the success of Sligoville. By 1849, there were more than 50 free villages in Jamaica, with a population of about 20,000 people. These include Kettering, founded in 1844 by William Knibb in Trelawny. Knibb named the village, which had a church and a school, after his hometown in England. Bethel Town, founded in 1840 by Thomas Burchell in Westmoreland. Burchell named the village, which included a Baptist church, after his first church in England and sold the land to 113 families.

The free village movement enabled the freed people to achieve a degree of autonomy and prosperity that was unprecedented in the colonial context. As landowners, farmers, traders, artisans, teachers, preachers, and leaders, the free villagers contributed to the diversification and growth of the Jamaican economy. They also fostered a sense of community, solidarity, and identity among themselves, as they shared a common history, culture, and faith.

Not only did the free villages influence the religious and political landscape of Jamaica, they made the Baptists the largest and most influential Protestant denomination in Jamaica, with more than 40,000 members by 1850. The Baptists, who were the main sponsors and beneficiaries of the free village movement, played a leading role in the development of education, health, and social welfare in the free villages and beyond. They also advocated for the civil and political rights of the freed people, and participated in the campaigns for universal suffrage, self-government, and independence in Jamaica.



From Jamaica to the World



Alfred Saker



Joseph Jackson Fuller - Jamaican missionary to Cameroon in 1850.jpg

Jamaica has had a significant impact on global Baptist mission, such as in fighting for justice, spreading the gospel, promoting education, and founding and establishing Baptist witness in various countries.

Baptist mission in Jamaica was associated with the antislavery movement in the late eighteenth century. George Liele, a former slave from Georgia, in the United States, became the first Baptist missionary in 1783. Liele, along with Moses Baker who led Baptist work and witness in Western Jamaica, preached to the enslaved Africans and baptized many, despite opposition and persecution from plantation owners.

Baptist work gained momentum in the early nineteenth century, when the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) in England sent its first missionaries to the island. These missionaries established churches and schools and supported the emancipation of the enslaved. They became passionate advocates for the antislavery movement, both in Jamaica and in England, using their eyewitness accounts and physical evidence such as slave chains and whips to expose the brutal conditions of slavery.

The missionaries played a key role in the Jamaican Slave Revolt of 1831-32, led by Samuel Sharpe, a slave and Baptist deacon, who organized a peaceful strike for wages and better working conditions.

When slavery officially ended on August 1, 1838, the newly freed Jamaicans and the missionaries celebrated in their churches. Baptist churches in Jamaica grew rapidly after emancipation and became self-supporting, thanks to the establishment of Calabar College, a theological institution that trained local ministers. By 1849, there were 25 BMS missionaries and 44 organized churches with 18,000 registered members in Jamaica.

Back to Africa

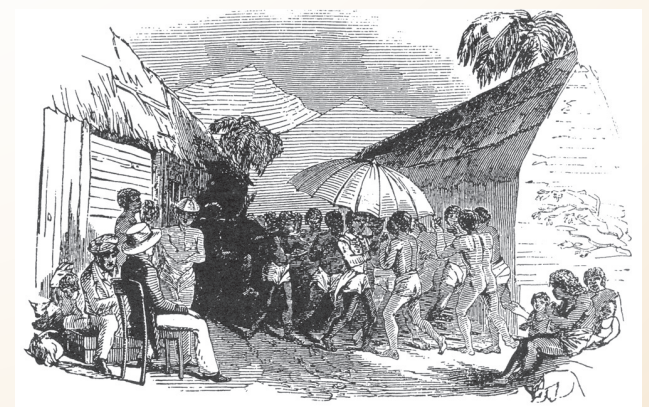
Jamaicans extended the Baptist mission to other parts of the world, especially to Africa, where many of the formerly enslaved had originated. In 1842, the Jamaica Baptist Missionary Society (JBMS) was formed to send Jamaican missionaries to Africa. The first JBMS missionaries arrived in Cameroon in 1843. They were Joseph Merrick, a Jamaican Baptist pastor, and Alfred Saker, a white BMS missionary. Joseph Jackson Fuller, another Jamaican Baptist pastor and a former slave, joined them in 1845. He later became the leader of the mission after Merrick's death in 1849. They established the first Baptist church in Cameroon in Bimbia in 1844, called Bethel Baptist Church. In 1858, Saker founded Victoria, now known as Limbe, as a settlement for freed slaves from Fernando Po. He also established a church and a school there. In 1862, Saker founded another Baptist church and school in Akwa Town, now part of Douala, called Ebenezer Baptist Church. Other locations where Baptist churches and schools were established include Douala, Bonjongo, Buea, Kumba, Ndu, and Bamenda.

They promoted literacy and education and supported social and economic development. They adapted and transformed Baptist faith and practice, and empowered indigenous leadership, creating a vibrant and diverse Baptist community in Cameroon.

Baptist missionaries from Jamaica went to other regions. John Duhaney served in Haiti from 1924 to 1964 and was instrumental in founding the Baptist Missionary Society of Haiti, which later became the Association of Evangelical Baptist Churches of Haiti. He estab-



Joseph Jackson Fuller - Jamaican missionary to Cameroon in 1850



Joseph Merrick at an Isubu funeral in Bimbia, 1845

lished churches, schools, hospitals, and orphanages in various parts of the country. Other locations, such as Panama, Turks and Caicos, and Grenada, received Baptist missionaries from Jamaica throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

Baptist schools shaped Jamaica's history and culture



Jamaica boasts a rich and diverse culture, and one of the factors that influenced its development is the role of Baptist schools. These schools have a long history, starting from the late 1700s, when African American and Jamaican Baptists started schools in their churches to educate their children and

missionaries to Jamaica, to help them deal with the hostile environment and to strengthen their churches. The first English Baptist missionary, Rev. John Rowe, arrived in 1814, and was followed by others, such as Rev. James Phillippo, Rev. Thomas Burchell, and Rev. William Knibb. These missionaries worked with the

unite and strengthen the Baptist churches and schools in Jamaica. The JBU and the Baptist Missionary Society in England worked together to create an education system that integrated all levels of schooling, from elementary to secondary to tertiary.

The first collaboration was in the founding of the Jamaica Normal School in September 1857 at Rio Bueno, which trained male teachers irrespective of denomination. The second collaboration was in 1868, when the education complex was relocated from rural Rio Bueno to the premises of the East Queen Street Baptist Church in Kingston, and named Calabar, after the Nigerian town where many enslaved Jamaicans originated from. The Calabar complex included the Calabar Elementary School, the Calabar Normal School, the Calabar Theological College, and the first attempt at the Calabar High School, which did not survive.

The third collaboration was the founding of Calabar High School in 1912 on the Chetolah Park premises by Rev. George Price from England, and Rev. David Davis, an Australian. The Calabar High School became one of the leading secondary schools in Jamaica. In 1952, both institutions were relocated to Red Hills Road, where the Calabar High School remains, and the Calabar Theological College became part of the United Theological College of the West Indies in the 1960s.

Baptists also founded other schools and institutions in Jamaica, such as the Westwood High School for Girls in 1882 by Rev. William Webb. William Knibb Memorial High School in Falmouth, founded in 1961 by Rev. Stephen James, was named after the famous English Baptist missionary and abolitionist. The William Knibb School was supported by JBU and many stalwart Baptists and was grant aided by the Ministry of Education in 1975.

Baptist schools in Jamaica have made a significant contribution to the country's history and development. They have provided education and empowerment for generations of Jamaicans, especially those who were marginalized and oppressed by the colonial system. They have also produced many leaders and luminaries, who have shaped the nation's political, social, and cultural landscape.

The schools have faced many challenges and changes over the years. They have had to adapt to the changing needs and demands of society, and to the shifting policies and regulations of the government. The schools have had to deal with the issues of quality, relevance, and sustainability, and to balance their religious and academic missions, cope with the competition and collaboration from other schools and sectors and respond to the opportunities and threats of globalization and technology.



The ruins of the original Calabar College in Rio Bueno, Trelawny

communities. These schools taught not only reading and writing, but also identity, dignity, and resistance to the enslaved and the free people of color.

George Liele, the African American who started the Baptist movement in Jamaica, founded the first Baptist church in Kingston. Liele was a visionary leader who valued education for his followers. He hired a school master, Thomas Swiegle, to teach at his church schools in Windward Road and East Queen Street. These schools attracted students who paid church dues or fees for their education. Liele also wrote to the English Baptists in Bristol, seeking their help and partnership. Liele faced fierce opposition from the colonial authorities and the planters, who feared that his preaching and teaching would spark rebellion among the enslaved.

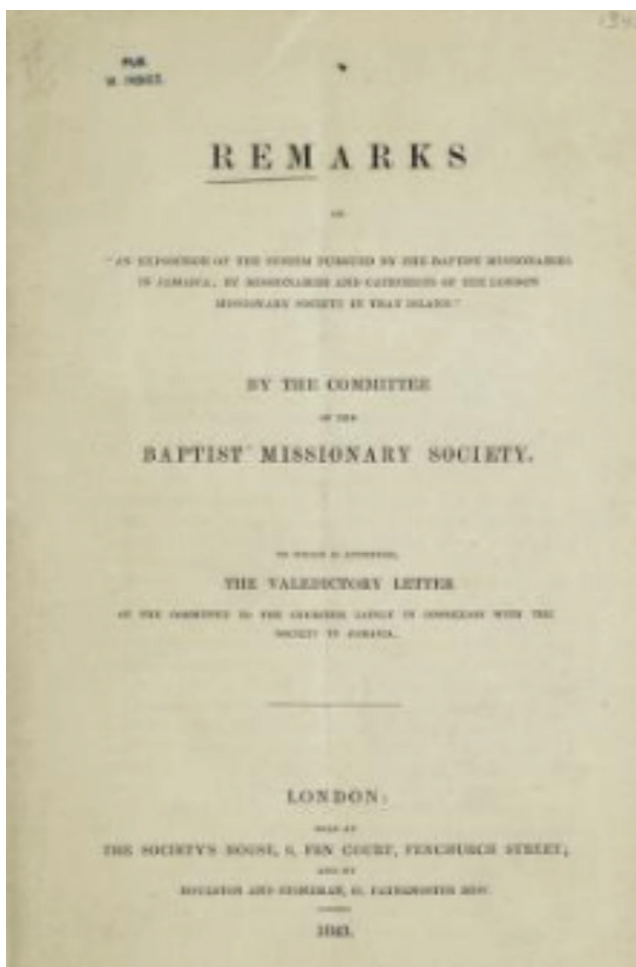
Jamaican Baptists invited the English Baptists to send

local Baptists and founded new churches and schools across the island.

Baptists created the Jamaica Baptist Education Society in 1837, led by Rev. Joshua Tinson, to organize and fund their church schools. They also rejected money from the Negro Education Grant and followed the Liele pattern of self-reliance and community support. By 1840, the Jamaica Baptist Education Society had 56 day schools, with 6,901 students, 11 evening schools with 407 students, and 54 Sunday schools with 11,875 students. They hired 90 teachers, many of whom were former enslaved or free people of color. They also tried to start a technical school in Spanish Town in 1839, but it failed due to lack of resources and interest.

The various Baptist groups collaborated and formed the Jamaica Baptist Union in 1849, which aimed to

A controversy over church governance



The Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) from out of England was one of the earliest Protestant missionary organizations that sent missionaries to Jamaica in the early 19th century. The BMS aimed to evangelize the enslaved African population and to promote their emancipation and education.

However, not all BMS missionaries were equally committed to these causes, and some of them had

reservations or objections to the social and political changes that emancipation would bring. BMS missionaries established several Baptist churches and schools in Jamaica and supported the leadership of Jamaican pastors and deacons. BMS missionaries and Baptist churches in Jamaica also advocated for the practice of baptism by immersion, which they regarded as the biblical and apostolic mode of baptism.

The London Missionary Society (LMS) was another Protestant missionary organization that arrived in Jamaica in 1835, after the abolition of slavery and the start of the system of apprenticeship which was to end in 1838 and lead to full freedom. LMS missionaries focused on the spiritual and social welfare of the freed Africans, and established churches and schools.

However, the LMS missionaries adopted a different approach to church governance than the BMS missionaries. These missionaries favored a centralized and hierarchical system of church administration, where the missionaries had the authority to appoint and dismiss Jamaican pastors and deacons, and to control the church finances and properties. They also preferred baptism by sprinkling or pouring, although some of them did practice and accept baptism by immersion. The LMS missionaries offered their system of church governance as an alternative option to the Baptist churches, and some of them voluntarily adopted it.

The controversy between the BMS and the LMS missionaries in Jamaica reached its peak in 1842,

when the LMS missionaries published an exposition of their system of church governance and criticized the Baptist missionaries and the Jamaican Baptist churches for their alleged errors and irregularities. Baptist missionaries responded by publishing a pamphlet titled "Remarks on an exposition of the system pursued by the Baptist missionaries in Jamaica, by missionaries and catechists of the London Missionary Society of that island," in which they refuted the charges of the LMS missionaries and exposed the flaws and abuses of their system of church governance.

The BMS missionaries also appended to their pamphlet the valedictory letter of the committee to the churches lately in connection with the society in Jamaica, in which they announced their withdrawal from the LMS, and expressed their hope and prayer for the unity and prosperity of the Baptist churches in Jamaica.

The controversy between the BMS and the LMS missionaries in Jamaica was not only a theological and ecclesiastical dispute, but also a reflection of the social and political tensions that existed in the post-emancipation era.

The BMS missionaries and the Jamaican Baptist churches represented the aspirations and struggles of the freed Africans for equality and justice, while the LMS missionaries represented the interests and prejudices of the colonial and planter class. The controversy revealed the diversity and complexity of the Protestant missionary movement in the Caribbean in the context of slavery and emancipation.

COMMITTED TO ECCLESIAL RELATIONSHIPS

The Jamaica Baptist Union has contributed to the regional and global Baptist movements, through its involvement in the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship (CBF), the Baptist World Alliance (BWA); and in ecumenism, primarily through the Jamaica Council of Churches (JCC), and the World Council of Churches (WCC).

Fraternal relations

In 1970, the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship was founded as a regional body of Baptist conventions and unions. The CBF sought to foster the fellowship, solidarity, and mission of Caribbean Baptists, as well as to address the issues and challenges facing the region, such as poverty, injustice, and violence.

Baptists have played prominent roles in the regional body. Rev. Azariah McKenzie, a former longstanding JBU general secretary, was the first executive secretary/treasurer of the CBF and regional secretary for the BWA. Rev. McKenzie was a respected administrator, who oversaw the development and expansion of CBF's programs and projects.

Another CBF founding father was Rev. C. Sam Reid, who also was elected president of the JBU and vice president of the BWA. Rev. Reid was a visionary leader, who advocated for the autonomy and identity of Caribbean Baptists, as well as for their ecumenical and interfaith dialogue. Rev. Dr. Burchell Taylor, one of the eminent leaders among Jamaican Baptists, is a former CBF president.

Caribbean Christian Publications (CCP), a ministry of CBF, prepares and distributes Sunday School and other Christian education materials throughout the Caribbean. Two former heads of CCP are Jamaicans, Rev. Arthur Edgar, and Mrs. Gillian Francis. Rev. Karl Henlin has chaired the CCP Board for many years. While CCP originally operated out of South Florida in the United States, its current headquarters are in Kingston, Jamaica. The JBU is connected to the wider Baptist through its membership in the Baptist World Alliance. The BWA is a global organization of Baptist conventions and unions, founded in 1905, with the aim of promoting the fellowship, unity, and witness of Baptists worldwide. The BWA engages in humanitarian, advocacy, and theological work, in collaboration with other Christian organizations.

Jamaican Baptists have been active participants and leaders in the BWA, serving in various positions and committees. The most prominent Jamaican Baptist in the BWA is Rev. Neville Callam, who was general secretary from 2007 to 2017. Rev. Callam, who served in all the major positions of the JBU, including president, acting general secretary and general treasurer, and is a

past BWA vice president, was the first person from the global south and the first person of African descent to hold this position. Rev. Callam was a visionary and charismatic leader, who led the BWA with wisdom, courage, and grace. He strengthened the BWA's relations with other Christian bodies, such as the Vatican, the WCC, and the Pentecostal World Fellowship.

Rev. Eron Henry, a trained writer, journalist and editor who pastored churches in Clarendon and Trelawny, was head of communications for the BWA from 2006 to 2018. Rev. Everton Jackson, who is a former JBU president and head of the JBU Mission Agency, is the director of integral mission for the BWA, and a former general secretary of the CBF. Other notable Jamaican Baptists who have served the BWA were Rev. Reid and Dr. Taylor, former vice presidents. Rev. Karl Johnson, former JBU general secretary, is the first Jamaican to be elected as the first vice president of the BWA.

Ecumenical relations

Jamaican Baptists have also been involved in the ecumenical movement, through their participation in the JCC and the WCC. Rev. Joslyn Leo Rhynie, Rev. Menzie Sawyers, Rev. Dr. Roy Henry, Rev. Johnson, and Rev. Merlyn Hyde-Riley are former JCC presidents, the latter the first woman to be elected to the post. Rev. Johnson is credited with bringing the more conservative church groups and the traditional churches in Jamaica around a common table, strengthening the common voice of the church on national issues. Mrs. Rubye Gayle, Rev. Harris Cunningham, and Rev. Norman Mills, are past JCC general secretaries.

The WCC is a global fellowship of churches from various Christian traditions, founded in 1948, with the goal of promoting the unity, cooperation, and witness of the churches in the service of God and humanity. The WCC also engages in various activities and initiatives related to justice, peace, and reconciliation, in response to the needs and challenges of the world. The JBU has been a member of the WCC since 1961 and has contributed to its work and mission in various ways. One of the most notable Jamaican Baptists in the WCC was Rev. Dr. Horace Russell, who was the president of the United Theological College of the West Indies from 1972 to 1976, the first black person to hold that position. Dr. Russell sat on the WCC's theological think tank, the Faith and Order Commission, from 1968 to 1990. He was a respected scholar and ecumenist, who made significant contributions to the fields of Caribbean theology, Baptist identity, and interreligious dialogue. Other persons to serve in that WCC forum were Rev. Callam and Rev. Dr. Glenroy Lalor, JBU president.

Rev. Hyde Riley, who was appointed as the first fe-



Rev. Neville Callam, General Secretary Emeritus, Baptist World Alliance



Rev. Azariah McKenzie, First Executive Secretary/Treasurer of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship



Rev. Merlyn Hyde Riley, Vice Moderator, Central Committee, World Council of Churches

male general secretary of the JBU in 2023, is a part of the core WCC leadership team as its vice moderator. Rev. Johnson served several years on the Central Committee and other critical committees of the WCC, including the Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration, one of the most important in the life and work of the WCC. Baptist lay persons such as Dr. Anthony Allen advanced the work of the WCC on Health and Healing, and Mrs. Sarah Newland Martin, who advocated for the disabled community, gave notable service to the WCC.

Jamaican Baptists are influential and faithful partners in the regional and global Baptist movements, as well as in national and global ecumenism.



British Baptists apologize for slavery

In November 2007, the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) made a historic and unprecedented move: they issued a formal apology for their part in the transatlantic slave trade, and the hurt and harm slavery caused the black community.

The apology was prompted by a sermon from the president of the Jamaica Baptist Union, Rev. Karl Henlin, who visited the UK in 2006 and urged the British Baptists to offer a full apology for their involvement in slavery. He said: “We are not asking for reparations; we are asking for repentance. We are asking for a recognition of the wrong that was done, and a commitment to put things right.”

The JBU had a special relationship with the BUGB. In the 19th century, the JBU was founded by former slaves in collaboration with British Baptist missionaries on the island. However, some missionaries also had links with the slave owners. Prior to this, some British Baptists participated in and profited from the transatlantic slave trade that was officially abolished in 1807. The JBU felt that this history had created

a legacy of mistrust, resentment, and inequality that needed to be addressed and healed.

In response, the BUGB made the transatlantic slave trade and slavery the focus of their Council meeting in November 2007. They invited JBU General Secretary Rev. Karl Johnson and other representatives from the JBU to join them in a process of listening, learning, and discerning.

After many hours of worship, prayer, and careful conversation, the BUGB council unanimously agreed on a statement that acknowledged their share in and benefit from the slave trade, and offered their apology to God and to their brothers and sisters for all that had created and still perpetuates the hurt and racism. They also expressed their repentance and their commitment to take concrete actions and contribute to the prophetic work of God’s coming Kingdom.

The apology was not the end. It was a catalyst within the BUGB for a deeper and wider engagement with the racial justice agenda, which aimed to create a multicultural community that respects diversity, challenges inequality, and embraces cultural tension. The

BUGB formed a Racial Justice Task Group, which later became the National Racial Justice Hub, to oversee and coordinate the racial justice work within the union. They also appointed a full-time Racial Justice Coordinator, who was responsible for developing and implementing policies, strategies, and resources for racial justice.

The racial justice work of the BUGB has faced challenges and difficulties, including the lack of awareness and understanding of the history and impact of slavery and racism, the resistance and hostility from some sections of the Baptist community, and the limited resources and capacity to address the complex and systemic issues of racial justice.

But there were some achievements, such as increased participation and representation of black and ethnic minority Baptists in the leadership and governance of the BUGB, the development and delivery of training and education programs on racial justice, and the establishment and strengthening of relationships and networks with other Baptists.

Jamaica Baptist Union
174th General Assembly
Boulevard Baptist Church & National Arena
February 21-25, 2024

“Keeping Faith with the Word in an Ever-changing World – Pursuing Integrity”

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21 – Pursuing Integrity		THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22 – Defending Dignity	
08:30 am – Noon	REGISTRATION Ministers, Delegates, Executive & Personal Members	09:00 am – 10:00 am	Worship/Bible Study Speaker: Rev. Taniecia McFarlane
9:30 am – 10:45 am	Delegates' Orientation	10:00 am – 10:15 am	BREAK
11:00 am – 12:00 pm	Assembly Talk 1 (Plenary)	10:15 am – 01:00 pm	Assembly Talk 2 (Reports)
12:00 pm – 01:00 pm	LUNCH	01:00 pm – 2:00 pm	LUNCH
01:30 pm – 02:30 pm	175th Anniversary Launch	02:00 pm – 04:00 pm	Focus Groups/Sectional Meetings
02:30 pm – 04:00 pm	The David Jelleyman Lecture	05:00 pm	DINNER
04:00 pm	DINNER	07:00 pm – 08:30 pm	Conversation & Worship (Integrity in Mission) Moderator: Mr. Andre Earle
7:00 pm – 09:00 pm	OPENING SERVICE Leader: Rev. Merlyn Hyde Riley, General Secretary Speaker: Rev. Dr. Glenroy Lalor, President		
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23 – Discovering Authenticity		SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24 – Deepening Accountability	
09:00 am – 10:00 am	Worship/Bible Study Speaker: Rev. Taniecia McFarlane	09:00 am – 10:30 am	Memorial Service & Bible Study
10:15 am – 10:30 am	BREAK	10:30 am – 10:45 am	BREAK
10:30 am – 12:30 pm	Assembly Talk 3 - Reports	10:45 am – 01:00 pm	Assembly Talk 3 (Plenary)
12:30 pm – 02:00 pm	LUNCH	01:00 pm	LUNCH
02:30 pm – 04:00 pm	Workshops		END OF DAY
04:00 pm – 07:00 pm	DINNER		
07:00 pm – 08:30 pm	Drama/Musical Celebrating 175 years		
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25 (Morning) – Demanding Equity		SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25 (Afternoon) – Daring Advocacy	
10:00 am – 12:30 pm	Worship Service Leader: The Hon. Lincoln Thaxter Speaker: Rev. Marvia Lawes Installation of New President & Executive Committee Reception of New Ministers Reception of New Church The Lord's Supper	2:00 pm – 3:30 pm	Service of Commitment Leader: Mrs. Shaneil Service-Alleyne Speaker: Rev. Dr. Glenroy Lalor



Rev. Marvia Lawes
Preacher, Sunday Morning



Rev. Taniecia McFarlane
Bible Study Presenter



Rev. Dr. Glenroy Lalor
President & Preacher



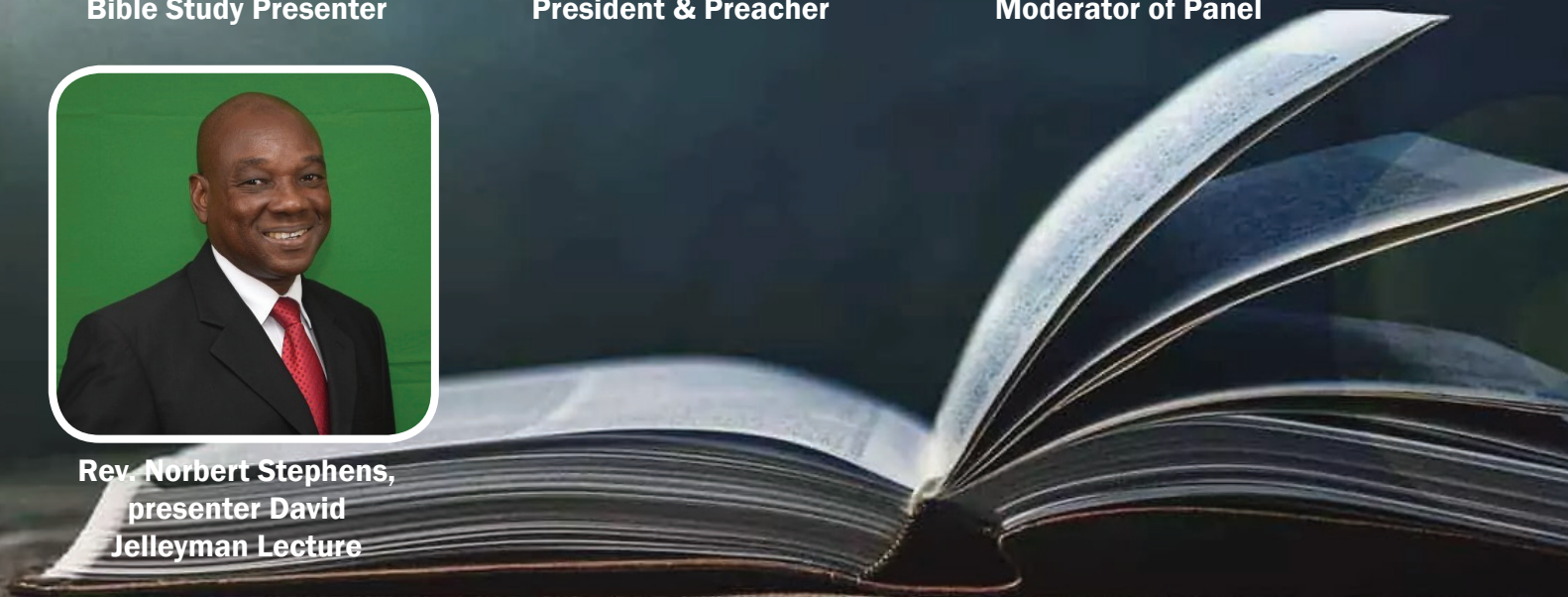
Mr Andre Earle
Moderator of Panel



Rev. Newton Dixon,
Workshop Presenter



Rev. Norbert Stephens,
presenter David
Jelleyman Lecture



ASSEMBLY WORKSHOP OPTIONS

174TH General Assembly February 21-25

1. The Shape of Christian Integrity/What does Christian Integrity Look Like?

In many aspects of life in the society Christianity has a less than admirable reputation. To say you are a Christian often invites suspicion and scrutiny. This stems from the fact that often we do not live up to the expectation that the announcement of our Christianity conjures for persons. It is true that many harbour unreasonable expectation of Christians, but it is undeniable that this raises the question of Christian integrity. Is there such a thing as Christian integrity? How should being Christian impact our integrity? How should our integrity as Christians be reflected in our lifestyle and life choices? Does Christian integrity have personal as well as institutional and wider societal demands and implications?

2. Finding Justice in Jamaica's Justice System

"We want justice!" This and its cognates are the frequent cry of everyday Jamaicans. The regularity and ubiquity of the cry seems to stem not only from the prevalence of the experience of injustice, but also from the difficulty of securing redress. There is therefore a need to explore the nature of the Jamaican Justice System so as to figure out how to navigate the complexities and conundrums that stand in the way of achieving equity, equality and Shalom, while considering the contribution that can be made towards its integrity from the perspective of gospel, faith and the Church.

3. Workers' Rights: Fostering Integrity in Employer/Employee Relations

In both public or private sectors, labour disputes or negotiations, whether about compensation, working conditions or disciplinary situations, employers seem almost always to have the ascendancy and employees the short end of the stick. On the other hand, labour leaders, sometimes driven by self-interest and often out of touch with the realities of those they represent, can be guilty of overreach.

4. Integrity, Politics and Economy

Perhaps it is the impact of new media that projects the news in our faces and as such invites us to be more inquisitorial, but it seems that matters of integrity in public life are increasingly being raised in the last several years. Politics and Economy are two areas in which discussion of integrity garners vociferous interest in the society. This is especially so when they are seen as arenas of injustice. Should we reasonably expect that our politics and economy operate as spheres requiring the exercise of the highest levels of integrity so as to ensure the equitable facilitation of the wellbeing of all? Should our political and economic leaders be held to the highest standards of integrity? What would this look like? And what role do we play as gospel people?

5. Advocacy and Ensuring Integrity in our Witness to the Gospel

Often after the occurrence of egregious social ills, especially when perpetrated by powerful forces in the society, there is clamouring from some quarters as to what is the position or opinion of the Church. The fact that the question has to be asked might indicate that there is a reticence in our social engagement. And yet what is really required is not so much making statements to signal our outlook on such matters, rather we should be actively taking a stand with victims and advocating for their relief and wellbeing as crucial to our witness to the gospel. How can we create tools and systems of advocacy that facilitate our gospel engagement with those who are made to suffer by the powers that be in our society?





Sydenham Baptist Church dedicates sanctuary and celebrates 20 years

Sydenham Baptist Church officially opened and dedicated its sanctuary, the “Miracle Cathedral,” on November 12, 2023. It is also the 20th anniversary of the church’s founding.

This journey began with a small band of dedicated, mission-minded Christians, supported by the Gregory Park Baptist Church. It’s a story that affirms, “Hitherto hath the Lord led us,” as God has guided this flock from the initial vision to this glorious day.

Recognizing the growing numbers of communities outside of Spanish Town, the Jamaica Baptist Union Mission Agency sought to establish a new mission. Gregory Park Baptist Church stepped forward to lead this challenge, with the pastor leading a small group of members and others to form the first gathering for worship.

The first worship service was held on Sunday, March 2, 2003, at Innswood High School. The journey has been a testament to the faithfulness of God, with weekly gatherings for worship and en-





richment in the presence of each other. Over time, the congregation grew in number and maturity, leading to the Sydenham Baptist Mission being accepted as a member church of the Jamaica Baptist Union at its 156th General Assembly at the National Arena, on February 6, 2006.

The story of Sydenham Baptist Church is not just about growth and acceptance, but also about the challenges faced along the way. The journey to build a new sanctuary was long and arduous, marked by challenges such as funding, contractors, and land acquisition. Yet, the faith of the congregation remained unwavering, and the dedication of those involved was unparalleled.

Full payment of the property was completed in September 2011, with the assistance of Gregory Park Church, the Jamaica Baptist Union, and the St. Catherine Baptist Association. Construction of the sanctuary began in January 2018, under the leadership of Mr. Clive Wint of C&D Construction Limited. The construction was completed with the help of loans from members, financing from the Gregory Park Church, and a mortgage from Victoria Mutual Building Society.

Sydenham Baptist Church moved into its new Sanctuary with its first worship service on Sunday, October 6, 2019. Although the building was

incomplete, the congregation was determined to move on to a new phase in their ministry, offering a visible witness for Christ in these communities. On Sunday, November 12, the pastor, Rev. Karl Henlin, conducted the opening and dedication service. The dedication litany was led by Superintendent Minister Rev. Dr. Devon Dick, while JBU President Elect Rev. Dwight Fraser delivered the sermon and opened the front door. Vice President Mrs. Sylvia Henry, representing the JBU, gave the greetings. The ribbon-cutting ceremony was done by Mrs. Lisa Henlin and Master Micah Robinson, a child from the church.



Members of the Sydenham Baptist Church



Rev. Karl Henlin,
Founding Pastor,
Sydenham Baptist
Church.



Rev. Karl and Lisa Henlin and family

A call for assistance to rebuild the Fellowship Baptist Church in Portland



The Fellowship Baptist Church in Portland, a place of worship and a community hub, was severely damaged by the October 30, 2023, earthquake.

The land on which the Fellowship Baptist Church is located was gifted by deed to the Jamaica Baptist Union in 1865. It is the lead church in a circuit of three churches and has been a home to several community-based activities, including hosting health fairs, skills training, literacy training, community and JBU parish meetings, and organizing and distributing welfare packages to the needy. It has also been used as a shelter during disaster events.

The October 30, 2023, earthquake event caused severe damage to the church building. In its current state, it is not safe and needs to

be demolished. The church's importance to the community is undeniable, and while consideration is being given to its rebuilding, temporary accommodation is necessary to facilitate its continued service to the spiritual and social life of the community.

Estimated cost to rebuild the church is at least J\$15M. This will require engaging construction professionals, including an architect, an engineer, and a contractor.

We urge the community, local and international donors, and all those who value the spiritual and social life of the community, to come together and support the rebuilding of the Fellowship Baptist Church. Your contribution, no matter how small, can make a significant difference in helping to rebuild this beloved community hub.



“Assistance to rebuild the Fellowship Baptist Church in Portland cont’d”



Rev. Michael Barnett, Moderator, Fellowship Circuit



 **@jbaptistunion**
 **@jamaicabaptistunion**
 **@TheJBU**

Website: www.jbu.church

