



# THE JAMAICA BAPTIST REPORTER

MAY 2026

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## NEW JBU PRESIDENT ELECTED

The atmosphere inside the Boulevard Baptist Church was one of quiet anticipation on Friday, 20th February, as members of the Jamaica Baptist Union gathered for a pivotal moment in the life of the organisation. By the end of the business session, that moment had arrived: Rev. Davewin C. Thomas had been affirmed as President at the Union's 176th General Assembly.

For many in attendance, the decision felt less like a surprise and more like a natural continuation. Rev. Thomas, pastor of the Burchell Circuit of Churches, steps into the role with more than four decades of ministry behind him, years marked by steady leadership, quiet dedication, and a deep-rooted commitment to the Baptist community.

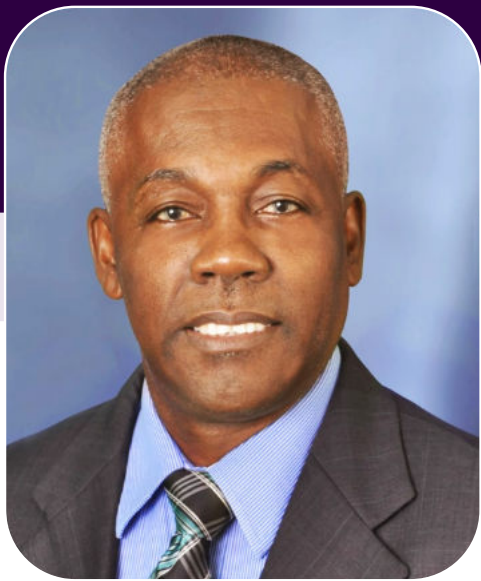
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# The PRESIDENT'S

Rev. Davewin Thomas



# UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Our Jamaica Baptist Union is a potpourri of denominational intrigue. It is where the different languages of worship converge to form a rich tapestry of extraordinary praise. It is where those who respond with clapping, stomping, singing, prayer and weeping (the experientialists) meet those who relish the inner life, opening up to God in the quiet of their own souls (the contemplatives). It is where some find contentment in a church which stresses the preaching and teaching of the Word (the students), while for others it is a place where "God is most present when people are bonded together in fellowship, worship, or mutual support" (the relationalists). We could also add those who are overawed by the majesty of God, and those who find their closeness to God through service.

Our Jamaica Baptist Union is not only a place where different worship languages find expression; it is also a place where different preaching styles find equal expression and accommodation. It is where town and country meet, and where intellectual sophistry and simple, elementary thoughts blend in joyful praise and thanksgiving.

I spent my first college assignment with the late Rev. Dr. Horace Russell at the East Queen Street Baptist Church. He once said something to the effect that a Jamaican Baptist is someone who loves God and takes the Bible seriously. What Russell was saying, in that matter-of-fact way, was that because of the right of individual congregations to determine their modes of operation, it is really hard to identify a monolithic Baptist worship language. Apart from the distinctives of our understanding of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, the priesthood of all believers and the autonomy of the local church, we are indistinguishable on a Sunday morning.

As I have travelled throughout Jamaica for the past forty years preaching, teaching and conducting evangelistic services, I have come to appreciate the reasoning behind Dr. Russell's observation.

As Baptists, some of us "talk in tongues," some of us are repetitious in saying "Praise the Lord," while others can be very quiet and contemplative. Some of us wear white at communion, and women religiously don hats.

On a given Sunday morning, we can observe soft stoicism seated beside spirited praise. It is therefore not unusual to find the different worship languages being expressed in a single service. Sometimes these various expressions are held in both spoken and silent tension.

Cradled and nurtured in this kind of creative tension, we have emerged to gain the respect of both the common man and those in the seats of power and privilege. It is this orientation, together with our lived experiences, that has made us community, national and world leaders.

Our love and desire for the authentic Word have led us into deep exegetical and hermeneutical discourses. It is this quest for deeper understanding and meaning that has made us solid, sincere and surgical, "rightly dividing the word of truth."

As we continue to keep faith with the Word, we find that the challenges of an ever-changing world have not crushed us or driven us into despair. Nowhere has this been more evident than in our response to the devastation caused by Hurricane Melissa.

As we keep faith with the Word, we remain solidly hopeful that our God will make a way in the face of financial, numerical and missional challenges. Even as we contend with a critical shortage of pastors and dwindling congregations, we will remain steadfast and positive, knowing that he who has begun a good work in us will remain faithful, providential and ever-present.

So then, with all of our differences, subtle and obvious, we are a people held together by a common history, by common gatherings and now by a common strategic plan. Most of all, we are held together by our common love for our Lord and our unwavering belief in the message of the Bible. There is mutual respect for our differences, even when strained, and we have successfully carved out a unique unity in our colourful diversity. Nowhere else is this unique unity in diversity more visibly displayed than at our Assembly.

Assembly has come to represent the epitome of the Jamaica Baptist Union's solidarity and togetherness. Assembly joyfully draws the contemplative and the experientialist, the student and the relationalist, to this awesome gathering. Assembly makes us proud and gives us promise.

Yes, Assembly is plenary and breakout groups. It is lectures and sermons, discussions and discourses. But it is much more than these. Assembly is fellowship and friendship. It is connections and camaraderie. It is mystique and music. It is food and fun. It has become a well-defined symmetry of craftsmanship and co-ordination, innovation and inspiration, prayer and praise. Long live our beloved Union.



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We invite you to submit your articles, stories, poems and comments by email, fax or send them to the above address.

## FROM THE DESK OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY

Rev. Merlyn Hyde Riley



# Celebrating the Family



The Jamaica Baptist Union observes Family Month during the month of May each year. Other significant family-related celebrations such as Mother's Day and Child's Month are also celebrated during this period.

We join in these observances because we believe that family is a gift of God and one of the most important institutions in society. It is foundational and the bedrock of society. Without family, life as we know it would be difficult to imagine.

Historically and culturally, the family has been entrusted with tremendous responsibilities for procreation, relationships, love, nurture, companionship, protection, character formation and the cultivation of values necessary for the common good, the transmission of faith, among other things. The apostle Paul, in his dialogue with Timothy, referenced the sincere faith that first lived in Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice, and which now dwells in Timothy himself.

The significance, purpose and design of family as a part of the plan of God has long been an essential component of the

Christian faith, so much so that one of the metaphors used to describe the church is family. There is the expectation that the same unity, hospitality and community that ought to be reflected in human families will find expression through the church, commonly described as the family of God.

Several verses of scripture make reference to how people within families ought to behave. Children are taught to honour their parents: "Honour your father and your mother" (Deut. 5:16). Parents are instructed to train children in Christian discipline and instruction: "Train up a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6). Husbands are encouraged to love their wives (Ephesians 5:25) and wives to reverence their husbands (Ephesians 5:33).

Let us embrace family and build it on godly principles, making every effort to strengthen our families and to be present for others, especially given the obvious disintegration in family life and the resulting impact on societies.

This is our first observance of Family Month since Hurricane Melissa. We are conscious of the wide-ranging impacts,

which included dislocation, homelessness, trauma and other serious psychological and socio-economic realities. The JBU is encouraging all of us to remember these families, especially this month.

Given the wars and conflicts taking place in several places across the world, let us remember families separated and living as refugees, those bereaved, sad and lonely. Acutely aware of the brokenness in many families, we remember those separated, divorced and, yes, those abused, and all those for whom family represents shame, disappointment, pain, regret, anger and hurt. Make a special effort to be present to those who are potentially most vulnerable in our families: children, the elderly, orphans, persons with disabilities, and women, among others. Spare a prayer for caregivers within and outside our family units.

We pray that God heals our families and that the church epitomises God's grace to all those who need to find love, forgiveness, healing, grace, joy and peace. May this Family Month be a source of inspiration and encouragement to you as we observe Family Month in this season.

## Editorial

# JAMAICA'S UNFINISHED EXODUS

Rev. Eron Henry



Sixty-four years after independence, Jamaica still loiters at the foot of the mountain. The image is Exodus 32: a people delivered out of bondage but unwilling to walk into freedom, fashioning a golden calf from the jewellery of their oppressors and bowing before what they had once been forced to serve. "Come," they said to Aaron, "make us a god who will go before us." It is one of Scripture's most uncomfortable passages, and it reads, in 2026, like a mirror held up to our national life.

Israel's deliverance had been spectacular. Plagues had broken Pharaoh's grip, the sea had opened at God's command, bread had fallen from heaven. Yet at the first sustained difficulty, the people pined for Egypt. They remembered the fish and the leeks, and forgot the lash. They mistook the security of slavery for the goodness of God. The wilderness exposed what slavery had concealed: that a people can be taken out of bondage long before bondage is taken out of them.

We know this longing well. Whenever the road grows hard, a familiar refrain rises: when we were a colony, there was less crime; when we were a colony, life was better. The current debate over republicanism has surfaced the deep ambivalence of a people half-converted to their own freedom. Some speak earnestly of severing the last ceremonial ties to the Crown; others quietly wonder whether independence has served us at all. The debate is legitimate, but the underlying question is older than any constitutional reform: are we yet free in the places where freedom matters most?

Hurricane Melissa, which broke across our western parishes in October 2025, asked the same question with unusual force. As roofs were torn away, what stood was not the strength of the state but the faithfulness of the church, the resilience of small farmers and the prayers of the displaced. The storm stripped away illusions. It reminded us that our true wealth lies not in patronage or political affiliation but in covenant: with God, with one another, with the land. Egypt cannot save us. Egypt never could.

What Israel needed, and what we still need, is a correction in thinking. The wilderness was not punishment but pedagogy. It taught a slave people how to be free, how to gather only the manna they needed, how to keep sabbath, how to govern themselves under the law of love. Freedom is painful. The old wineskins of dependency cannot hold the new wine of self-determination.

And what is required, finally, is repentance. Moses did not lecture the people; he made atonement for them. He stood between God and a stiff-necked nation and offered himself. Where are such leaders today? Where are the politicians, pastors, parents and teachers willing to confess the sins that have shaped us, to name the violence we have tolerated, the children we have failed, the tribalism we have indulged? Without atonement there is no future, only the long shuffle of the calf-dance under a borrowed god.

Jamaica's exodus is not finished. The promised land is still ahead. We will enter it as a people whose minds have been corrected, whose character has been built and whose knees have learned, at last, to bend before the only God who goes before us.

# Window on the Word

By Rev. Robert Daley

## Hope Amidst Hopelessness

*“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” (1 Peter 1:3, NIV)*

Even as these lines are being written, news headlines across the globe are painting a picture of profound hopelessness. The United States and Israel are at war with Iran. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine continues. American troops have been deployed into Venezuela, its leader taken into custody, and economic sanctions threatened against any nation that refuses to support that action. Cuba has been plunged into crisis for declining to comply. Other Caribbean countries are trembling before the threat of sanctions and visa cancellations. Meanwhile, Iran’s blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, through which millions of barrels of oil pass daily, has triggered what reports describe as the largest supply disruption in the history of the global oil market. Crude oil prices in the United States have risen by more than seventy-five per cent since the year began. In Jamaica, petroleum prices have risen sharply in successive weeks.

The consequences extend far beyond the price of fuel. Food supplies are under pressure, food prices are rising, and impoverished countries are being pushed towards insecurity. Regional alliances are strained. Countries across the Middle East and beyond, with whom we are directly or indirectly connected, have sustained infrastructural damage,

economic setback, widespread casualties, and the displacement of civilians. Everything contributes to a global economic shock: slowing activity, forcing energy-saving measures, and intensifying inflationary pressure on the most vulnerable.

It is into this landscape that we ask the Easter question: how do we carry the message of hope, especially to those in our region and across the world who face such acute and pressing hopelessness?

The answer begins with the proclamation itself. The Easter message is the central Christian announcement that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, defeating sin and death to offer humanity eternal life: hope and new life, forgiveness and the opportunity for healing and transformation. It signifies victory over despair. It celebrates the resurrection as a historical turning point that restores humanity’s dignity and its relationship with God. It is not a vague optimism but a living hope grounded in a historical event.

Romans 6:4 reminds us that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. That newness of life is not something we have to earn. It is something Jesus offers freely, even to the most wounded among us. The same power that raised him from the dead is still at work today. Women and men of old found hope in this reality. Can this kind of hope apply to us, and especially to those in abject poverty?

Perhaps you find yourself in what feels like Friday’s heartbreak: the betrayal, the loss, the suffering. Or perhaps you are in the long silence of Saturday, waiting and wondering whether things will ever improve. Hold on. Do not give up. Sunday is coming. Even when everything feels dead, Jesus brings life. Even when the world says it is over, Jesus speaks a better word. He did not stay in the grave, and we do not have to stay in ours. We can declare victory, hope for the hopeless, and healing for the broken heart. As the song writer puts it, “Because he lives, we can face tomorrow, dark though it may seem; because he lives, all fear is gone; and life is worth living, just because he lives.”

This hope, however, is not only a personal possession. As Craig Cuyler has written, it is not just a personal pursuit but a collective journey: a journey of faith, a shared spiritual path along which we grow together within community, sustained by mutual support, accountability, and unity. As we celebrate and embrace the Easter message, let that hope be shared, a collaborative effort to push back against evil and let justice roll down like a mighty stream (Amos 5:24), overcoming oppression together.

The living hope we have through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is not fleeting worldly optimism. It is a confident, active expectation: we shall overcome. Let us live in that hope.

# JBU Gathers for 176th General Assembly

The Jamaica Baptist Union convened its 176th General Assembly on Thursday, 19th February 2026, with delegates gathering under the overarching theme, “Keeping Faith with the Word in an Ever-Changing World.” This year, the Union adopted a new programmatic focus for the 2026 to 2028 period: “Countering Poverty.” The choice of theme was not merely aspirational. It arrived in the long shadow cast by Hurricane Melissa, which struck Jamaica last October and left a trail of destruction that many congregations are still working to overcome.

In recognition of the hurricane’s particular impact on the western and southern regions, the Union departed from its traditional five-day format, which customarily concludes at the National Arena in Kingston. In its place, a two-day gathering was held at the Boulevard Baptist Church, with the closing service conducted at Calvary Baptist Church in Montego Bay. General Secretary Rev. Merlyn Hyde Riley described the decision as a deliberate expression of solidarity with those brothers and sisters still engaged in the arduous work of rebuilding.

The assembly’s brevity did not diminish its substance. Proceedings were opened by a two-part Bible study led by Rev. Stephen Jennings, drawing on passages from Luke 2, Leviticus 4, and Isaiah 61, which together traced Christ’s identification with the poor and his solidarity alongside them. The David Jolleyman Lecture, delivered online by Rev. Doreen Wynter and introduced by Rev. Luke Shaw, offered practical strategies for churches and individuals under the title “Countering Poverty: Envisioning Hope.”

Outgoing President Rev. Dwight Fraser brought his tenure to a close with a sermon drawn from the book of Ruth. Moving beyond the text’s familiar themes of loyalty and love, he offered a searching meditation on poverty, urging the Church to expose its reality, stand in solidarity with those who suffer it, and work deliberately to engender equity. His address set the pastoral tone for the assembly that followed.

In her General Report, Rev. Hyde Riley gave an honest account of the Union’s condition. She noted declining membership in certain areas whilst also celebrating encouraging signs, among them more than 400 baptisms, including in circuits without full-time pastoral leadership. On the hurricane, she reported that more than one hundred Baptist church buildings and properties had sustained serious damage, particularly in the west and

south. The Mission Agency and a network of distribution hubs had coordinated immediate relief, but she was candid that the road ahead would require heightened levels of care, solidarity, and logistical adjustment.

The assembly also attended to its regular business. The Union welcomed newly ordained Rev. Kenroy Wilson of the Salter’s Hill Circuit and recognised Cheesefield Baptist Church in St. Catherine as its newest congregation. Citations were conferred upon retired pastors Rev. Donald Fisher and Rev. Owen Brown, and long-serving lay moderators Mr. Danville Jones and Mr. Myrie Gillings were honoured for twelve and seventeen years of dedicated service respectively. Rev. Taneicia McFarlane, Warden at the United Theological College of the West Indies, issued a passionate appeal for congregations to encourage those who show an aptitude for ministry to answer that call, noting with concern a significant decline in interest. A new executive was elected to serve from 2026 to 2028, with Rev. Davewin Thomas, pastor of the Burchell Circuit of Baptist Churches, assuming the presidency.

The Union’s commitment to countering poverty was given concrete expression through a panel discussion on the second day, in which representatives from the Mandeville, Falmouth, and Phillippo circuits shared how their congregations are already engaging the challenge. More significantly, the assembly marked the launch of the Life Greens Poverty Alleviation Project, an initiative centred on hydroponic farming. Implementation packages were distributed through the Mission Agency, enabling churches and individuals to grow crops such as lettuce in nutrient-rich water rather than soil, promoting what organisers described as a model that allows participants to “earn while eating right.” The project is intended as a scalable, practical contribution to both economic resilience and improved community nutrition.

The closing service at Calvary Baptist Church was brought to life by a sermon from Rev. Judith Johnson-Grant, who drew on Mark 4 to issue three charges to the assembled Church: not to send away the vulnerable, to give what it has, and to trust God to multiply it. She closed by calling the assembly to march forward under the declaration, “No Dismissal. No Retreat. No Distance.” It was a fitting end to a gathering that, in its very format and location, had already embodied that resolve.



*Rev. Dwight Fraser, President of the JBU presents a citation to Rev. Donald Fisher and his wife Hyacinth. Also pictured is General Secretary, Rev. Merlyn Hyde Riley*



*Panelists gather to discuss Stories of Hope on Countering Poverty*



*Mrs. Kira-Lee Pinnock leads the closing ceremony*



*Congregants at the Opening Ceremony of the 176th Assembly*



*JBU representatives Tanesha Thompson and Lance Fisher converse during the 176th Assembly*



*Rev Karl Henlin and Mrs. Georgia Crossman-Small, newly elected vice presidents for 2026 - 2028, while Rev Davewin Thomas, newly elected President of the JBU looks on*



# NEW JBU PRESIDENT ELECTED

His journey within the Union has been one of gradual, faithful ascent. Having served two terms as Vice President and one as President-Elect, Rev. Thomas is no stranger to the responsibilities of national leadership. His pastoral record is equally extensive. From his earlier work with the Stokes Hall Circuit of Churches to his long-standing service with the Burchell Circuit, for which he was recognised in 2025 for twenty years of exemplary ministry, he has built a reputation for consistent and principled pastoral care. He currently serves also as Superintendent Minister for Trelawny and St. James, extending his influence and oversight across multiple regions.

Those who have worked closely with him point not only to his experience but to his character. General Secretary Rev. Merlyn Hyde Riley expressed full confidence in the Assembly's decision. "We believe that the Assembly was led by the Lord in electing Rev. Thomas," she said. "He is a model of spirituality, consistency, and integrity. We pray for God's enabling as he serves the JBU as President, at such a time as this."

Rev. Thomas himself is characteristically measured in how he frames this new chapter. He is clear that he does not regard the presidency as a promotion or an ascent up any social ladder, but rather as a call to ministry at another level. "I feel both honoured and humbled by this call," he said,

"and pray that I will be able to please my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, by faithfully carrying out the duties and responsibilities that have been entrusted to me."

The Assembly also affirmed a new slate of executives to serve alongside the President. Among them are two Vice Presidents: Mrs. Georgia Crossman-Small of the Hanover Street Baptist Church, and Rev. Karl Henlin, pastor of the Gregory Park Circuit of Churches. Rev. Henlin brings more than thirty years of service to the role, including a previous term as President, a depth of experience that reflects the broader ethos of continuity and commitment that characterises the Union's leadership.

# Assembly Opens with a Call to Confront Poverty



Rev. Dwight Fraser addresses the congregation at the Opening Service of the 176th Assembly

In what proved to be his final sermon as President, Rev. Dwight Fraser delivered a message that was both stirring and deeply reflective, drawing from the Book of Ruth to present a compelling framework for addressing poverty.

Rather than approaching Ruth as a simple narrative of loyalty or romance, Rev. Fraser read the text as an incisive commentary on social and economic struggle. Through this lens, he outlined three essential imperatives for confronting poverty: exposing its reality, embracing solidarity, and pursuing equity.

## *Exposing the Reality*

Rev. Fraser began by drawing parallels between the experiences of biblical figures and the realities of modern society. Naomi's migration from Bethlehem, driven by famine, mirrors the displacement many face today in search of survival. Yet, despite relocating, her circumstances worsened: she lost her husband and sons, leaving her vulnerable and without support. This, Rev. Fraser emphasised, is the true

nature of poverty: not merely a lack of financial resources, but the erosion of stability, identity, and hope.

He then turned to Ruth, a widow and foreigner navigating life on the margins. Though hardworking and resilient, she remained constrained by systemic barriers. Fraser likened her struggle to that of many today who, despite diligence and integrity, find themselves unable to advance. Expanding the scope further, he highlighted how entire communities can be devastated by crisis. Just as famine crippled Bethlehem, modern disasters such as Hurricane Melissa have left countless Jamaican families without security or support.

Poverty, he asserted, is not incidental; it is systemic. It reflects deeper issues of power, inequality, and exclusion. The first imperative, therefore, is clear: poverty must be named honestly, neither ignored nor softened, but confronted in its full reality.

## *Solidarity*

The second imperative calls for more than empathy; it demands action. Rev. Fraser invited the congregation to sit with Ruth's words to Naomi: "Where you go, I will go." He was careful to stress that this was not merely poetic loyalty but a life decision backed by deliberate, costly action. Ruth chose to stand with Naomi in uncertainty, risk, and struggle. She worked to provide for them both. She stepped out boldly when opportunities arose. Everything she did was rooted in commitment, not just to survival, but to shared survival.

Boaz, too, provided a model. He did not merely follow the rules; he stretched them. He ensured Ruth was safe. He allowed her to gather more than the minimum. He used his position to create opportunity rather than simply maintain the status quo. That, Fraser suggested, is what genuine solidarity looks like: not charity from a distance but meaningful engagement from within.

He pressed his hearers to imagine what it would mean if solidarity of that quality were to shape contemporary approaches to healthcare, education, employment, and housing; if it guided public policy not merely towards temporary relief but towards long-term, structural support. One-

off help is good, he acknowledged, but sustained solidarity changes lives.

## *Equity*

The final imperative is equity, the goal towards which both awareness and solidarity must ultimately lead. Ruth's story, Fraser observed, is one of boundary-breaking resilience. As a woman, a widow, and a foreigner, she faced compounded disadvantages. Yet she refused invisibility. She acted with courage, spoke with intention, and influenced outcomes within a system that was not designed for her success. In doing so, she carved out space for dignity and recognition. By the end of her journey she was not merely surviving; she had become part of a lineage that would shape a nation's future.

Boaz, operating within a flawed system, made deliberate choices to ensure that Ruth and Naomi were not excluded. It was not perfection, but it was progress. Equity, Fraser emphasised, does not emerge by chance. It must be intentionally built, through challenging unjust systems and creating pathways for all to thrive.

## *A Lasting Challenge*

Rev. Fraser concluded by reflecting on the genealogy at the close of Ruth's story, a lineage that leads to King David and ultimately to Jesus. Ruth's name might easily be overlooked in that roll, he noted, yet her impact resonates across generations. So too, he suggested, the work done today may bear fruit far beyond what is immediately visible.

He left the congregation with three searching questions: Are we willing to name poverty honestly? Will we move beyond sympathy to true solidarity? Can we commit to building equity, even when it is difficult? Faith without action, he warned, is empty, and integrity without engagement is insufficient.

The Book of Ruth, Rev. Fraser concluded, offers the Church another path: expose the reality, engage in solidarity, work towards equity. The seeds planted today, he urged, may well transform generations to come.

# Assembly Bible Study



Rev. Stephen Jennings conducts the Bible study 'Jesus and the Poor'

## JESUS AND THE POOR

By Tamar Henry

I had the privilege of attending the 176th General Assembly and receiving Bible study under the leadership of Rev. Stephen Jennings. His sessions led us through the theme of Jesus and the poor, with the aim of deepening our biblical understanding of Jesus' relationship to poverty: showing that he was himself from the poor, ministered to and for the poor, and actively lived among them.

The study drew on Luke chapters 2, 4, and 6, alongside Leviticus 12 and Isaiah 61. Together, these passages frame poverty not as God's permanent will for humanity, but as a reality that God seeks to counter, heal, and reverse through justice, generosity, and obedience.

That Jesus comes from the poor is reflected in the words of his mother, Mary, who understood that God's protection and judgement fall without partiality, even as she described herself as a lowly servant. The faith and obedience of his family were not diminished by their economic circumstance. His mission, proclaimed at Nazareth

in Luke 4, is framed as good news to the poor: liberation from oppression, restoration of dignity, and the renewal of righteousness and justice. His teachings in Luke 6 press this further, blessing the poor whilst issuing a searching warning to the rich.

Jesus is not merely sympathetic towards the poor; he is actively for them and intentionally sent to them. This conviction is rooted most clearly in Isaiah 61, which Jesus publicly claims as the foundation of his mission when he reads in the synagogue and declares the text fulfilled (Luke 4:14–21). In doing so, he identifies himself as the agent of God's restorative justice for the poor and oppressed. The good news he announces directly addresses material deprivation, social exclusion, captivity, and brokenness. Jesus is therefore for the poor in purpose and to the poor in practice.

The study also offered a corrective to one of the more common misreadings of Scripture on this subject. Jesus' statement that "the poor you always have with you" is sometimes used to justify inaction or fatalism; Rev. Jennings clarified that it affirms ongoing responsibility, not resignation. It is, rather, a call for the people of God to come together around a continuing obligation.

Rev. Jennings drew on Deuteronomy 15 and the early church practices recorded in Acts 2 and 4 to demonstrate that poverty is meant to be addressed through shared resources, open-hearted generosity, and equitable living. Where the community fails to practise economic justice, he argued, poverty within that community will persist. The charge these passages carry is clear: those with abundance are to supply those in need, so that no group carries excess whilst another suffers lack. Giving, as Paul's second letter to the Corinthians reminds us, is a service of love that binds the community together, not a one-sided act of pity.

The study concluded with a call to discipleship. Jesus' followers today are summoned to continue his work, combating poverty through Spirit-led action, justice, love-driven generosity, and practical care, following the model laid down by the earliest Christian communities. It was a challenge that felt especially fitting in the context of the Union's current theme of Countering Poverty, and one that I trust will remain with all who were present long after the Assembly has closed.



(L-R) Bishop the Hon. Conrad Pitkin, CD, JP, Custos Rotulorum for the Parish of St. James, Reverend Davewin Thomas, President of the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU), Guest preacher, Rev. Judith Johnson-Grant and Reverend Merlyn Hyde Riley, General Secretary of the JBU.

## — CLOSING SERMON —

# “NO DISMISSAL, NO RETREAT, NO DISTANCE”



Rev. Judith Johnson-Grant delivers the closing sermon at the 176th General Assembly of the Jamaica Baptist Union

In a compelling address at the closing service of the 176th General Assembly, Rev. Judith Johnson-Grant urged the Church not to retreat from its spiritual responsibility to confront poverty, but to respond in ways that are both meaningful and transformative. Her sermon, shaped by the Assembly’s sub-theme of “Countering Poverty” and focused specifically on the area of advocacy and empowerment, pressed home a conviction she stated plainly from the outset: poverty is not merely a social concern but a spiritual responsibility.

Referencing the impact of Hurricane Melissa, she noted that whilst the storm had exposed the deep poverty embedded in much of Jamaica’s national landscape, it had also created an opportunity for the Church to re-examine its role in alleviating it. Drawing on Mark 4 as her guiding text, Johnson-Grant issued three declarations to those gathered: they will not send away the vulnerable; they will give what they have; and they will trust God to multiply what they have.

On the first declaration, she acknowledged that dismissal is often easier than engagement, but challenged the Church to allow compassion to disrupt comfort. Likening advocacy to shepherding, she recalled a Baptist history marked by men and women who disrupted their own lives to defend the vulnerable, and questioned whether present-day Baptists have grown more concerned with self-preservation than with advocacy. Complacency in shepherding, she warned, is not an option. The banner under which the Assembly was called to march forward was clear: “No Dismissal. No Retreat. No Distance.”

On the second declaration, Johnson-Grant urged the Church to give what it already has rather than rehearsing its limitations. Participation, she

argued, precedes provision, and the Kingdom advances through obedience rather than abundance. The call was practical as well as theological: she underscored the need for organisation and discipline as the Church mobilises what is in hand, however modest it may appear. She also spoke candidly about the broader political landscape. Addressing questions of budgetary mismanagement, she declared that Jamaica has not yet managed to organise itself in such a way that accountability and transparency genuinely benefit the community. Disorganisation, she added, is a breeding ground for corruption, and in its midst it is always the poor who suffer.

The third declaration brought her sermon to its close. She exhorted the Church to trust God with the increase: to organise and distribute what is available, and to believe the Lord for multiplication. Reminding the Assembly that Christ is Lord over every circumstance, she affirmed that exposed lives are not abandoned, and that poverty does not have ultimate authority over Jamaica. It was a fitting close to an Assembly that, from its opening address, to its Bible study series to its final charge, had kept the face of the poor firmly in view.

# THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - 2026-2028



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Rev. Davewin Thomas



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**Clerk**  
Rev. Dayne Grant



**Baptist Warden/Tutor-  
United Theological  
College of the West Indies**  
Rev. Taniecia McFarlane

## TEN ELECTED MEMBERS



**Rev. Neville Callam**



**Rev. Johnathan  
Hemmings**



**Dea. Arlene Henry**



**Rev. Dr. Stephen  
Jennings**



**Dea. Celia McKoy**



**Rev. Dr. Devere Nugent**



**Rev. Kirk Pinnock**



**Rev. Norva Rodney**



**Mrs. Shaniel Service  
-Alleyne**



**Rev. Luke Shaw**

# DEPARTMENTAL REPRESENTATIVES



**Christian Education**  
Rev. Garry Knowles



**Youth**  
Mr. Patrick Williams



**Jamaica Baptist Women's Federation**  
Mrs. Kimberly England



**Jamaica Baptist Union Brotherhood**  
Mr. Milton Anderson

# PARISH ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES



**Portland**  
Dea. Veronica Johnson



**St. Mary**  
Rev. Oral Campbell



**Trelawny**  
Mr. Gregory Brown



**St. James**  
Rev. Conrad Thomas



**Westmoreland**  
Rev. Douglas Fowles



**Hanover**  
Rev. Sheldon Ashman (Exec. Rep.)



**St. Elizabeth/Manchester**  
Rev. Dr. Jacob Powell



**Clarendon**  
Rev. Milton Bailey



**St. Catherine**  
Rev. Oniel Brown



**Kingston & St. Andrew**  
Rev. Doreen Wynter (Exec. Rep.)



**St. Thomas**  
Mr. Robert Bogle



**St. Ann**  
Rev. Lloyd Richards







A volunteer collects information from impacted persons during the distribution exercise



Staff members put together packages at the JBU Centre

# FROM RUIN TO RENEWAL



Passageway covering dormitories at the Nutshell Conference Centre after Hurricane Melissa



When Hurricane Melissa tore across Jamaica on 28 October 2025, few could have anticipated the depth of devastation it would leave in its wake. With winds exceeding 180 miles per hour, the storm stripped roofs from churches, flooded communities, displaced families and took lives. Sanctuaries long regarded as places of refuge and stability stood damaged or in ruins, and entire communities were forced into uncertainty overnight.

Yet almost as quickly as the storm passed, the Jamaica Baptist Union was on the move.

Almost immediately, the JBU mobilised its nationwide network of pastors, volunteers and congregations into action. While roads were still blocked and communication unreliable, churches became co-ordination points, shelters and

distribution hubs. What began as an urgent response soon grew into an organised, island-wide relief effort rooted in compassion, accountability and faith. Churches opened their doors as shelters and distribution centres, offering not only food and water, but prayer, presence and hope.

Major distribution hubs were established at Burchell Baptist Church in Montego Bay and Mandeville Baptist Church, supported by satellite points in Kingston and St Ann. Through these centres, emergency supplies, including food packages, water, hygiene kits, tarpaulins, generators and household items, reached the hardest hit parishes of St James, Westmoreland, Hanover, Trelawny, St Elizabeth and Manchester.

Behind every relief package was a story: a grandmother rebuilding after losing her roof, a

family sleeping under tarpaulins, a church reopening its doors even before repairs were complete, congregations worshipping under tarpaulins or open skies. By early March 2026, more than 6,600 individuals had been reached through the JBU's co-ordinated relief efforts.

## Assessing the loss, strengthening the response

As emergency needs stabilised, the scale of the damage came into clearer focus. More than 100 JBU churches and affiliated buildings sustained damage, with ten declared total losses. Many of these were historic congregations with deep roots in their communities, alongside schools, children's homes and conference facilities that serve the wider public.

To guide the recovery, the JBU established a Hurricane Melissa Advisory Committee, chaired by the General Secretary, and appointed a Project Manager to oversee relief, assessments and rebuilding. Technical evaluations were conducted across parishes, while partnerships with Baptist World Aid (BWAid), Send Relief, the Southern Baptist Convention, World Vision and local congregations enabled repairs and reconstruction to begin.

By March 2026, Send Relief teams had supported repairs and re-roofing for more than twenty churches, manses and schools, ensuring that ministries could resume safely and that vulnerable communities had renewed access to trusted spaces. The Nutshell Conference Centre, Garland Hall Memorial Children's Home and several congregations have begun taking tangible steps towards restoration.

One of the most meaningful outcomes of this recovery journey has been the twinning of affected JBU congregations with partner churches through the HEBA initiative. Through these intentional

**SEE MORE ON PAGE 13**



Distribution of care packages in Parottee, St.Elizabeth

## FROM RUIN TO RENEWAL

relationships, churches such as Springfield, Buckingham, Savanna-la-Mar, Petersfield and Frankfield have been paired with overseas Baptist congregations committed to walking alongside them through recovery and rebuilding.

For historic churches devastated by Hurricane Melissa, twinning has meant more than financial support. It has brought prayerful companionship, encouragement, and the assurance that they are not rebuilding alone. The HEBA partnerships have demonstrated the strength of the global body of Christ, responding not only with resources but with relationship.

As the JBU Disaster Relief and Response Initiative moves forward, attention is now turning from emergency assistance to early recovery and resilience-building. Between April and June 2026, priority efforts will focus on completing critical repairs for identified churches and households, expanding psychosocial support sessions for pastors, families and school communities, and delivering further disaster preparedness training across targeted parishes.

Support for livelihood recovery, particularly among small farmers, will also begin, helping vulnerable households to regain stability, reduce dependence on emergency aid and, in turn, alleviate poverty. Throughout this phase, the JBU remains committed to strong monitoring, accountability and safeguarding practices,

ensuring that every action reflects stewardship, transparency and care.

Months after the storm, Jamaica remains in recovery, but the church stands firm. While most emergency shelters have closed, vulnerability persists, especially among the elderly, low-income families and flood-prone communities. The JBU continues to walk alongside them, transitioning from relief to early recovery, and preparing for what lies ahead.

Hurricane Melissa tested the JBU in unprecedented ways. It also revealed something powerful: a church rooted in service, strengthened by partnership and guided by faith can be a force for healing even in the fiercest storms. As we look ahead, the story is not only one of loss, but of resilience, renewal and hope.

As we look ahead, we do so anchored in faith. While Hurricane Melissa reshaped buildings and landscapes, it did not shake God's presence among God's people. In every repaired roof, every shared meal and every prayer offered amid uncertainty, we are reminded that "those who trust in the Lord will find new strength" (Isaiah 40.31).

With gratitude for how far we have come, and with confidence in the One who goes before us, the JBU continues this journey: rebuilding communities, strengthening resilience and bearing witness to a hope that no storm can destroy.



Volunteers and staff at the JBU Centre assemble packages for distribution

# From Uncertainty to Grace



*Maldon Basic School After*



When Matt and Sue Stickel, volunteers and project co-ordinators from Send Relief, Georgia, USA, arrived in Jamaica in early January, the road ahead was far from clear. Together with Coy Webb, Send Relief's Crisis Response Director, they formed part of a small group that had come quietly in December 2025 to assess the damage left behind by Hurricane Melissa: roofs torn apart, buildings weakened, communities disrupted.

They travelled across several parishes, assessing damage and trying to ascertain what could be done. On seeing the devastation, Matt recalls his first feeling clearly: "Where do you even start?" Driving through the affected communities with Tanesha Thompson, JBU Hurricane Melissa Relief Project Manager, and Lance Fisher, Property Manager, they listened to stories of loss, survival and quiet resilience. The visible damage was immense: broken structures, fallen trees. But beneath it lay something deeper. Emotional wounds. Spiritual fatigue. Grief that could not be repaired with nails and lumber.

"You want to help everyone," Matt reflected, "but you cannot."

That realisation could have discouraged them. Instead, it deepened their purpose. Where should they begin? And, perhaps most pressing of all, how far would their limited resources stretch?

There was a plan, at least on paper. Teams had originally been scheduled to come in November and December. That plan shifted. January came, and only one team, rather than two, was able to commit. Yet, even before the main effort began, God was already at work.

In the closing months of the previous year, teams from Send Relief in Florida, Tennessee and Ohio had arrived independently. They brought tools. They built relationships. They planted seeds of hope in quiet, practical ways. What had seemed like scattered efforts would later prove to be a carefully laid foundation.

By mid-January the work took on a more unified shape. Guided by recommendations from Tanesha Thompson and Lance Fisher, and finalised by the Send Relief team, decisions were made based not only on need but on wisdom: team competency, available accommodation and the safety of each location.

The mission began in Santa Cruz, where the team worked on Elderslie Basic School, the Burnt Savannah Church Hall and two small homes belonging to church members in Burnt Savannah. From there it stretched outward to Grange Hill, Savanna-la-Mar, Springfield, Maldon and eventually John's Hall. Across four parishes, the team moved steadily, never alone. In every place, the JBU ensured they had someone local: a guide, a helper, a connection. The Rev. Douglas Fowles became one such provision, helping to secure materials for two crucial weeks.

During this period, the team worked on Kendall Baptist Church, Mt. Moriah Manse, the Lucea Manse in Hanover and Townhead Baptist Church in Westmoreland. In St James, they worked on the Maldon Baptist Church manse, Maldon Basic School, Maldon Learning Centre, the home of the caretaker of Maldon Baptist Church, Providence Baptist Church, the Providence Church manse, the manse at John's Hall and the bathroom ceiling at Lottery School. In Trelawny, they undertook repairs at the Nutshell Conference Centre, including the boys' and girls' dormitories.

Still, the need was overwhelming. Day by day, roof by roof, the team pressed on. Supplies came, sometimes at the very moment they were needed most. Connections formed without effort. Opportunities opened without planning.

Sue saw it clearly. "There were times I wondered, 'How in the world is this going to happen?'" she admitted. "Even with just one team, it felt impossible. But God... he made a way. Materials showed up exactly when we needed them. The right people came at the right time. These were

things only God could have done."

One moment stood out in particular: tools provided unexpectedly through Samaritan's Purse. The Send Relief team had not gone searching for them. Instead, the provision came to them, a quiet reminder that God was already ahead of every need.

As the project drew to a close at the JBU's Nutshell Conference Centre, there was a mixture of gratitude and longing. "You always wish you could do more," Matt said. "Stay longer. Fix every roof." But the reality remained: resources had been exhausted, and not every need could be met. Yet what was accomplished mattered deeply.

Beyond the physical repairs, something else left a lasting impression: the people. "My biggest takeaway is how kind the Jamaican people are," Matt shared. He spoke of a simple encounter at a car wash, where a stranger offered him a bag of peanuts before he left. A small act, perhaps, but one that spoke volumes. In a world that often feels rushed and guarded, such kindness felt rare, and powerful.

Matt, Sue and the entire team also spoke highly of the staff at the Nutshell Centre, who even as they made every effort to complete the re-roofing of the boys' and girls' dormitory before the team's departure, worked tirelessly alongside them.

In the end, what began in uncertainty did not end in doubt. It ended in testimony. Testimony of provision when there seemed to be lack. Of direction when there was confusion. Of community rising in the face of hardship. And above all, of a God who was present in every detail, from the largest roof to the smallest gesture of kindness.

The work may be finished for now, but the impact continues, quietly and steadily, in hearts and homes across the devastated parishes. And perhaps that is the greatest reminder of all: even when we cannot do everything, God is still doing more than we can see.



## “Melissa Took Everything”



Jessica grew up in the small fishing community of Parottee in St Elizabeth, nestled along the south-western coast of the island. Like many residents in the area, she was no stranger to storms and rough weather. Hurricanes were a familiar part of life, and over the years she had learned how to prepare for them. However, nothing could have prepared her for the devastation brought by Hurricane Melissa.

As Jessica reflected on the experience, the fear and trauma of that day were still evident in her voice. She recalled the terrifying moment when the roof of the house in which she was sheltering was violently torn away by the powerful winds. With debris flying dangerously around her, survival

instincts took over. She described dropping to the ground and crawling on her stomach, trying to escape the destruction unfolding around her. “At one point I was really scared, to be honest. I cried.”

At the time of the hurricane, Jessica’s children had been staying with her mother in another part of the community. Once the storm subsided, her immediate concern was getting to them safely. The journey, however, was anything but easy.

Floodwaters covered the area, and debris from damaged homes and broken structures littered the roads. As she carefully made her way through the wreckage, Jessica said she repeatedly stepped on nails hidden beneath the muddy water.

When she finally arrived at her mother’s home, she was met with another heartbreaking sight. The sea had surged inland with tremendous force, rising to the level of the house and ripping away the roof. Entire sections of the community had been devastated.

“Everything that was in its path, it destroyed completely,” she said. “What it couldn’t break, it flooded. It took everything out of the houses and it didn’t leave anything.”

Jessica described returning home as bittersweet. While she was overwhelmed with relief that her loved ones had survived, she was also forced to face the reality that nearly everything they owned had been lost.

“One day, not even a full day, Melissa took to wipe out everything that I had,” she said resignedly.

In the days following the hurricane, survival became a daily struggle. Jessica explained that the lack of food, water and shelter made an already traumatic situation even more difficult for residents who had lost so much.

“The hardest part for me was when we had to sleep on a tarpaulin in a chair and there was no water or food.”

She explained that roads leading into the community had cracked and become impassable, leaving residents isolated for days. Because of the severe damage, reaching affected families proved difficult, and many of the first people to arrive with assistance were volunteers rather than government workers.

Through a collaborative effort involving the Jamaica Baptist Union, Baptist World Aid and Mandeville Baptist Church, residents began receiving much-needed relief supplies. Amid the uncertainty and hardship, Jessica said that the support eventually provided to the community became a source of encouragement and renewed faith.

“I was reminded that there is a God, because I was beginning to lose faith. I was reminded that there is a God, that there is help and hope and peace and prosperity.”

Jessica explained that families received water, food, buckets, tarpaulins and baby supplies to help them cope in the aftermath of the disaster. According to her, the majority of residents in the community benefited from the care packages and remain deeply appreciative of the kindness shown to them during such a difficult period.

Despite the immense loss and emotional toll left behind by Hurricane Melissa, Jessica says the generosity and compassion extended to the people of Parottee reminded them that they were not alone.

“I want to thank each and every one who has donated, assisted or aided in one way or another towards the Hurricane Melissa Recovery. We are grateful. Thank you!”

# HOLDING ON IN TOWNHEAD



Nestled in the rural parish of Westmoreland, the farming community of Townhead is home to hardworking residents who often depend on varied sources of income to make ends meet. While agriculture remains the primary livelihood for many families, economic stability can fluctuate from season to season, creating periods of both hardship and relief.

Among the residents is Kenneth Graham, a tailor by profession who also engages in farming to supplement his income. Like many others in the community, Kenneth works tirelessly to provide for himself despite the challenges that rural life can sometimes bring.

Those challenges intensified significantly when Hurricane Melissa swept through the area, leaving destruction in its wake. Kenneth recalled that the storm caused severe damage to his home, ripping every sheet of zinc from his roof, destroying the ceiling and damaging his television.

In the aftermath of the hurricane, government representatives visited the community and carried out assessments of the damage. Kenneth said he had remained hopeful that assistance would follow, but months later he is still waiting for help.

While official support has yet to materialise, relief eventually came through the efforts of the Townhead Baptist Church, working alongside the Jamaica Baptist Union and Baptist World Aid. Together, they provided care packages filled with

groceries and other essential supplies to residents affected by the hurricane.

Kenneth explained that clothing had also been distributed among community members, though he admitted that it was the food assistance that meant the most to him.

“I didn’t need any clothes, but I got something to eat!”

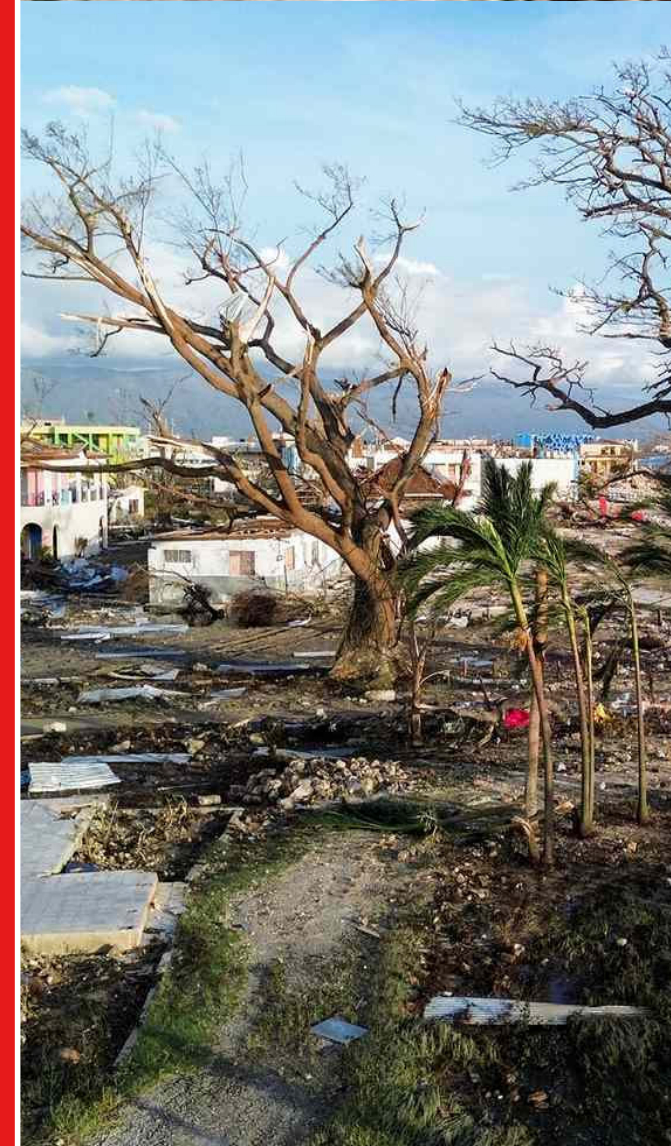
As a tailor, Kenneth said he is capable of making his own clothing, but having access to food during such a difficult period brought much-needed relief and comfort.

“It was very helpful. Very helpful,” he said emphatically.

Despite the assistance already provided, Kenneth believes that continued food support would make a meaningful difference for many residents who are still struggling to recover from the storm’s impact.

“Many of the people in Townhead really need it. Some need it more than others, but there are those who would really benefit.”

For Kenneth and many others in Townhead, recovery remains an ongoing process. Yet amid the uncertainty, acts of generosity and community support have offered hope to families working to rebuild both their homes and their lives after Hurricane Melissa.





*Mrs. Donnett Wynter engages in a psycho-social activity with community members in Elderslie, St. Elizabeth.*

# PROVIDING LAUGHTER IN A TIME OF CRISIS

Mandeville is a unique rural-metropolitan parish, widely regarded for its clean air and access to nutritious food. The Rev. Kirk Pinnock, who oversees the Jamaica Baptist Union's distribution centre in the Mandeville area, recently led a community intervention in Elderslie in St. Elizabeth, a quiet rural district characterised by its slow pace of life.

Among those who participated in the mission was Mrs. Donnett Wynter, a registered nurse and naturopathic practitioner with a deep passion for holistic health and wellness. Donnett has an extensive background in education and counselling. She previously taught nursing students at Northern Caribbean University, later pursued counsellor training at the United Theological College of the West Indies, and completed a course in laughter therapy, an approach designed to support individuals coping with trauma.

Communities affected by the hurricane have suffered not only physical loss but also a profound erosion of their sense of security. Public spaces that once served as gathering points, such as clinics and community centres, have been destroyed, and many residents have lost their

homes entirely. As a result, there is a critical need for spiritual and emotional care alongside physical and material support. Children, in particular, are often overlooked because they are not breadwinners; yet they too carry the weight of stress thrust upon their parents, disrupted routines and uncertainty.

Donnett shared that witnessing the devastation wrought by Hurricane Melissa left her heartbroken. She described seeing individuals who were once industrious now sitting silently among the ruins of their homes, overwhelmed by despair. In some areas, residents were simply waiting for a passing caravan to receive food. "I was in a daze," she recalled. "It was traumatic for me to see what the people went through." The experience also prompted deep personal reflection. The magnitude of need revealed how little is truly necessary, and it changed her approach to consumption and spending. Donnett was determined to put her skills to use in assisting those affected by the hurricane. "I believe that as Jamaicans we can help make things better for devastated communities," she said. "I thank God for what I am able to do."

Donnett now provides laughter therapy, counselling, and spiritual and psychological care to hurricane survivors. Many of those who have received counselling have expressed how valued and encouraged they feel, grateful that others have chosen to invest time, compassion and resources in their healing journey.

Donnett firmly believes that this support must be sustained. "If we stop giving support, then we would not have learned," she explained. "This is God's work in our hearts and his mission for us to go into all the world and teach. For the first time in my life in Jamaica, that mission is truly coming alive." She emphasised that while the storm had exposed the depth of need, such vulnerability had always existed; it was simply magnified and made visible by the hurricane.

Reflecting further, Donnett noted that the disaster had also inspired greater engagement among Baptists. "This experience has moved Baptists to become more involved in mission work," she observed. "It has shown how God can use trauma to bring light, joy and comfort to those who are hurting."

# Strengthening Churches for Disaster Response



Rev. Marsha Scipio, Director, Baptist World Aid addresses the audience at the Disaster and Risk Management Training held in Mandeville



Training 4

from beyond the Baptist community. Representatives from Ridgemont United Church in Mandeville and Lima Church of God of Prophecy in St. James attended, an encouraging sign of growing ecumenical engagement around the shared challenge of disaster preparedness.

The content of the sessions ranged from foundational knowledge to applied practice. Participants worked through the different categories and characteristics of disasters and their community impact, explored practical tools for assessing need in affected areas, and examined strategies for coordinated and accountable response. Particular attention was given to safeguarding: ensuring that the most vulnerable members of any community, whether elderly, disabled, or otherwise marginalised, receive appropriate care and protection in times of crisis. This dimension of the training gave it a moral and theological depth that resonated with the faith communities represented.

Participant feedback was consistently positive. Attendees described the sessions as eye-opening, timely, and much needed, with many noting that the training expanded their understanding not only of practical logistics but also of the principles of transparency and accountability that ought to govern a church's disaster response. Several expressed a desire for advanced training, a response that suggests the sessions succeeded in building appetite for ongoing capacity development rather than offering a once-off intervention.

The initiative sits within the broader context of the JBU's current thematic focus on "Countering Poverty," which the Union adopted at its 176th General Assembly earlier this year. Disaster vulnerability and poverty are deeply intertwined: communities with the fewest resources suffer the greatest losses when storms strike, and recovery



Rev Marsha Scipio, Director, Baptist World Aid & Tanesha Thompson, Hurricane Melissa Relief Project Manager, JBU take a break from a training session to smile for the camera

is slowest where structural inequities are most pronounced. By investing in local church capacity, the Union is working to ensure that Baptist congregations are not merely recipients of outside aid but active, organised participants in their own communities' resilience.

With another hurricane season on the horizon, the churches that participated in these sessions are now better placed to plan, assess, and respond in a manner that is both effective and compassionate. The training represents a meaningful investment in what endures long after any single disaster has passed: the capacity of local faith communities to stand alongside their neighbours when it matters most.



Persons conducting an exercise - sharing with each other what individual churches do during disaster response

The Jamaica Baptist Union recently concluded a two-part training series designed to equip churches across the island for the realities of disaster response. Entitled "Introduction to Disaster Preparedness and Management," the sessions were held on 26th March in Montego Bay and 28th March in Mandeville, bringing together pastors, lay leaders, and frontline responders for a focused day of learning at each location. The timing was deliberate: with the hurricane season drawing near, and with many congregations still navigating the aftermath of Hurricane Melissa, the need for structured preparation has rarely felt more urgent.

The training was facilitated by Rev. Marsh Scipio, Director of Baptist World Aid (BWAid), and Mrs. Tanesha Thompson, JBU Project Manager for the Hurricane Melissa Response. Both brought considerable field experience to the sessions, lending the discussions a practical grounding that participants found immediately relevant to their own contexts.

Across the two venues, forty-nine individuals participated, with attendance almost evenly distributed between Montego Bay, which hosted twenty-five, and Mandeville, which hosted twenty-four. Women made up sixty-seven per cent of attendees and men thirty-three per cent, a reflection of the significant role women play in the pastoral and community work of Baptist congregations. Notably, the training drew interest



# Countering Poverty One House at a Time

**By: Rev. Wayne Smith**

On Sunday 10 November 2024, the congregation gathered at Granville Baptist Church for worship as usual. Hymns rose, prayers ascended, and hearts were lifted towards heaven. But at 10.50 a.m. the ground beneath us trembled, windows rattled and doors creaked. For a moment we thought it was the coming of the Lord. Instead, it was a 5.6 magnitude earthquake, a reminder of how fragile life and shelter can be.

That same week I received a call about an elderly member who had slipped and fallen at her home. She was briefly hospitalised, and when I visited her I discovered the deeper tragedy: the earthquake had damaged her already fragile house. The step to her veranda had broken, and it was from that broken step that she fell in the night while going to the bathroom.

Her home was wattle and daub, patched and rotting. The floor was collapsing, the kitchen and toilet were outside, and the earthquake had left cracks that threatened to bring the whole structure down. It was not a place of peace or safety; it was a daily risk. My heart broke as I remembered the words of Isaiah 32.18: “My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest.”

A home is more than shelter. It is dignity. It is security. It is rest. When someone lacks a proper home, they are deprived of this basic human need that God desires for God’s people.

When I spoke with the couple, they shared how they had sought help from government agencies, but promises had faded into silence. I asked whether they would be open to the church stepping in, and they agreed. With their permission, I documented the state of their home and shared the vision with the congregation.

The congregation rallied together, offering prayers, labour and materials. The couple’s relatives provided temporary shelter and joined the work crews. Praying Pelican Mission (PPM), our mission partner, sent teams with volunteers and funding. I also reached out personally to family and friends, who responded generously with materials and manpower.

Together we became a living testimony of unity. By March 2025 we had begun to lay the foundation, having gathered the cement, lumber, zinc, blocks, drywall and electrical supplies that were needed. Volunteers worked side by side, their laughter and songs echoing across the construction site. Day by day the skeleton of a new home rose, bringing renewed hope to this couple.

When Hurricane Melissa struck, the house was incomplete; it had no windows, doors or flooring. I feared it would be destroyed. But by God’s mercy it stood firm. Today the house is ninety per cent complete, a beacon of what happens when God’s people unite to meet human need.

Yet the story does not end here. During the passage of Hurricane Melissa, six persons and families in our Circuit lost their homes entirely; this does not include community members beyond our membership. Their shelters were swept away, leaving them vulnerable and displaced. As a church, it is our desire to help them rebuild, not just structures but lives. We are not certain how we are going to do it, but we know that with God all things are possible.

We believe that each house we raise is a testimony that poverty can be countered, dignity can be restored, and God’s vision of secure homes can be realised.

This story is not just about one couple. It is about poverty, dignity and the church’s mission. Poverty strips people of security, peace and rest. But when we build a house we are not merely laying blocks; we are restoring dignity, creating safety, and fulfilling God’s vision of God’s people living in secure homes.

Countering poverty one house at a time is not simply construction; it is Kingdom work. It is Isaiah’s vision made real. It is the gospel in action.

Every nail hammered, every block laid and every roof secured is a declaration that God’s people deserve peaceful dwelling places. Together, we can counter poverty, one house, one family, one testimony at a time.

# EDEN STREET LEGACY PROJECT

What began as a conversation about community needs has grown into a bold vision for transformation in New Green, Mandeville. The Eden Street Legacy Project, launched by the Mandeville Circuit of Baptist Churches in partnership with churches across the community, is using poultry farming as a pathway to economic empowerment, food security and spiritual renewal.

The idea was born after the church conducted a community asset mapping exercise in 2013, which identified challenges such as unemployment and illiteracy. Rather than imposing solutions, church leaders listened to the community and recognised that many residents were already engaged in small-scale chicken farming. From there, the vision for a sustainable development project began to take shape.

Now celebrating 25 years of ministry in the community, the church chose the Eden Street Legacy Project as a meaningful way to leave a lasting impact. The initiative brings together four churches in New Green: New Green Baptist Church, the Church of God of Prophecy, the United Brethren Church and the Open Bible Church, all working collaboratively to support local farmers.

The pilot programme has identified five farmers who will receive training, mentorship, upgraded poultry houses and guaranteed market access for their chickens. The long-term goal is for each farmer to become financially sustainable within three years, producing enough income to support a family of four.

What makes the project especially distinctive is its holistic approach. Participants are trained not only in poultry production, but also in entrepreneurship, conflict management and other soft skills designed to move them from a mindset of survival to one of business ownership and independence.

Technical adviser Dr. Tanika O'Connor-Dennie explained that the project is also “re-imagining” small poultry farming in Jamaica through specially designed hurricane-resistant chicken houses, improved sanitation practices and comprehensive training manuals tailored to local conditions.

For many participants, the initiative represents answered prayer. Farmer Sandrea Beckford, who has raised chickens for more than twenty years, described the ups and downs of farming and shared her gratitude for the support, training and market opportunities the programme now provides.

Church leaders believe the impact will go far beyond economics. Pastor Kirk Pinnock described the project through three pillars: engage, empower and example. By walking closely with families, helping them to become economically stable, and demonstrating God’s love in practical ways, the churches hope to create lasting transformation throughout the community.

As the project moves forward, its leaders remain focused on three simple goals: the glory of God, the good of the community and the growth of the church.



# Fighting Poverty with Purpose

The 176th General Assembly signalled a decisive step from conviction to action in addressing one of the most pressing realities facing our communities: poverty. Anchored in the Union's guiding theme, "Keeping Faith with the Word in an Ever-Changing World," and sharpened by the sub-theme "Countering Poverty," the Jamaica Baptist Union reaffirmed that faithful witness must be expressed through tangible, life-giving interventions.

This commitment came to life with the launch of the Life Greens Poverty Alleviation Project, an innovative and scalable initiative rooted in hydroponic agriculture. By cultivating crops such as lettuce, kale and cabbage in nutrient-rich water rather than soil, Life Greens introduces a sustainable model that uses fewer resources while yielding faster, more consistent harvests, well suited to Jamaica's context. More than a method of farming, it is a pathway to dignity, equipping churches and individuals to "earn while eating right," strengthening both household nutrition and economic resilience.

Through the JBU Mission Agency, comprehensive starter packages have already been distributed, positioning participating churches as hubs of production, training and community impact. With the potential to generate meaningful income across multiple growth cycles each year, and even greater returns as systems expand and replicate, Life Greens embodies a vision of ministry that is both practical and transformative. Structured markets, shared branding and the establishment of the Acts 4 Fund, which will see each participating site contributing twenty per cent of net surplus to a central fund, will further ensure that growth is collective, sustainable and rooted in accountability.

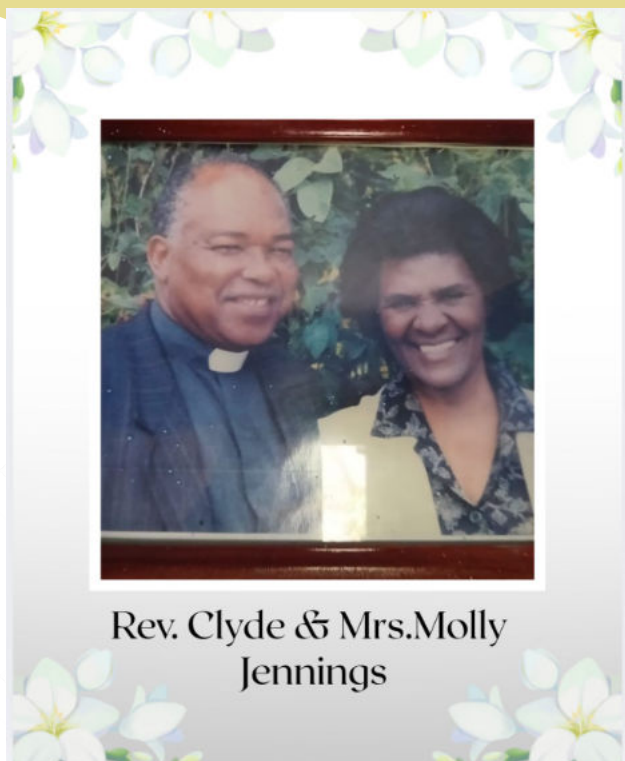
Inspired by the biblical witness of Acts 4.34, that there were "no needy persons among them," this initiative reflects a holistic understanding of abundant life, one in which faith, work and provision intersect. The Life Greens Poverty Alleviation Project is the planting of a seed, one that promises to bear fruit in livelihoods restored, communities strengthened and hope renewed across the island.



Rev. Milton Gager demonstrates the operation of the newly installed hydroponics unit to Nurse Angella Mullings at the Horizon Home Centre



# CLARENDON BAPTIST ASSOCIATION CELEBRATES 60 YEARS



*By Sylvia Henry*

The Clarendon Baptist Association (CBA) held its 60th Anniversary Legacy Awards Ceremony and the launch of the Rev. Clyde and Molly Jennings Scholarship on 26 April 2026 at the Grace Baptist Church, May Pen. The first service of its kind, the occasion was both historic and joyful, with much praise and thanksgiving filling the sanctuary.

Approximately three hundred Baptists from across the parish, as well as representatives from St Catherine, Manchester, St Elizabeth and Kingston, were present to mark this milestone.

Rev. Milton Bailey, Moderator of the Clarendon Baptist Association, led the service of celebration. Greetings were extended by the Rev. Robert Campbell on behalf of the JBU General Secretary, the Rev. Nichola Barrett-Glasgow from the Ministers' Fraternal, and Mr.

Clifton Morris, JP, on behalf of the Hon. Edith Chin, Custos of Clarendon.

The Hon. Edith Chin congratulated the Association for a "visionary and sacrificial journey that guided many lives, strengthened families, and uplifted communities." The JBU General Secretary noted that the Association had "not only endured but flourished, as the seed planted six decades ago has grown into a flourishing tree." The Legacy Awards service, she added, "is not only a celebration of the past but of those who helped to shape it."

Drawing from Psalm 126, the Rev. Kevin Stewart of the Mount Carey Circuit of Baptist Churches invited the congregation to "Reflect, Rejoice, Renew." A son of the soil, the Rev. Stewart explained that reflection summons believers to recall past struggles and victories, while rejoicing celebrates what God has done and continues to do among them. He stressed

the urgent and ongoing need for renewal, noting that congregations sometimes lose sight of the vision, and members' commitment and passion wane.

One of the highlights of the service was the presentation of awards honouring centenarians, couples celebrating sixty years of marriage, intergenerational families, past moderators, and circuits and churches that have represented the Association at the national level. Another special feature of the service was the official launch of the Rev. Clyde and Molly Jennings Scholarship for students entering high school. A photograph of the Rev. Clyde and Mrs. Molly Jennings was unveiled by two of their children, Lois and Mark Jennings. A third child, Rev. Dr Stephen Jennings, expressed heartfelt gratitude on behalf of the Jennings family for honouring their parents' legacy by ensuring that their names and values live on through the scholarship.



— **TRIBUTE** —

# CAWLEY BOLT

*A Quiet  
Giant*

When the Jamaica Baptist Union gathered at Boulevard Baptist Church on 29 January 2026 to commit the Rev. Cawley St. Clair Bolt to his eternal rest, it gave thanks for forty years of unbroken ministry and for a life that bore quiet witness to the gospel. He was, by every account, a man whose strength lay not in volume but in depth: a pastor, scholar, administrator and mentor whose influence shaped both pulpit and classroom across more than five decades.

Born on 10 April, Cawley Bolt was trained for ministry at Calabar Theological College and the United Theological College of the West Indies (UTCWI), graduating in 1969. He was ordained on 26 June of that year and took up pastoral charge of circuits in Hanover, Trelawny and St Catherine: Lucea, Falmouth, Sligoville and Ebony Vale, with periods of temporary oversight in others. Across these congregations, his ministry was marked by a steady, contemplative engagement with Scripture rather than by grand gestures. Members from each charge speak of a minister who was accessible, available, compassionate and calm, but never to be mistaken for soft. He was decisive and firm when the moment called for it, and he carried his quiet authority with grace.

Twenty-two of his forty years of service were given directly to the Union. He served as Assistant General Secretary, Acting General Secretary and General Secretary, and as Baptist Warden and tutor at UTCWI. In voluntary

capacities he was Clerk to the General Assembly, Vice-President and President-Elect, before serving as President of the JBU from March 2010 to February 2012. During those presidential years he gave himself to the work of accountability, renewal and unity, never imposing his vision but coaxing the body forward through gentle persuasion. Colleagues found in him a confidant, an encourager and a mentor, one who modelled servant leadership through every challenge the ministry placed before him.

Bolt's scholarship was no less significant than his pastoral work. From 1991 he taught Historical Studies at UTCWI, where his classroom became a place of careful inquiry and shared discovery. His seminal monograph, *Reluctant or Radical Revolutionaries? Evangelical Missionaries and Afro-Jamaican Character, 1834–1870*, published by Regnum in 2013, re-examined the role of evangelical missionaries in post-emancipation Jamaica and recovered the agency of Afro-Jamaican believers within colonial structures. The work has been welcomed by historians of mission as a model of patient, primary-source scholarship, and it has secured his place in the wider conversation about Caribbean religion and identity. His participation in the 2010 Oxford international conference on Sam Sharpe, and in the Anglican-Baptist dialogues of 2000 to 2005,

brought his thoughtful voice to bear on global ecumenical and historical concerns.

Yet his achievements did not define him. In a letter dated 1 September 2006 to the General Secretary of the JBU, he reported the completion of his PhD and asked, characteristically, that he not be addressed as “Doctor”. The request was of a piece with the man. He was an avid student of the literary classics of Christian spirituality, both traditional and contemporary, and a practitioner of the disciplines they commend. His serenity of spirit, sincerity of devoutness and simplicity of lifestyle told the story more eloquently than any title could.

Beyond the offices and the books was the household that sustained him: his wife and partner in ministry, Helen Sheila, herself a faithful servant of God in her own right; his daughters Carolyn and Kristine; and his grandson Cameron. They made his ministry possible, and they share now in the gratitude of the Union that loved him.

The Rev. Dr. Cawley Bolt has left a legacy of love, faith and hope that will not soon fade. He fought a good fight, finished his course and kept the faith, and the JBU remembers him with gratitude to God for loaning him to her over so many years. Henceforth there is laid up for him a crown of righteousness.

# REV. CARLTON WILSON



— TRIBUTE —

## Faithful to the End

church to provide food, clothing and shelter for affected families. Where there was need, the Rev. Wilson was already there.

His preaching, too, bore the marks of a man deeply attentive to his moment. In one of his last public sermons, delivered at the Burchell Baptist Church in Montego Bay in late September 2025, he urged Jamaican Christians to stand up for God at a time when, as he put it, chaos was reigning. Citing Isaiah 43.18–19, he warned that the culture was emptying itself of God and called the church into a new paradigm of holiness. “God is saying, ‘I am going to do a new thing in this country, with my people, and I am going to make a path in the wilderness of adversity and chaos,’” he declared. The sermon was vintage Wilson: prophetic, scripturally rooted, pastoral and unflinching.

Those who knew him describe a man whose gifts were matched by his humility. He possessed an enormous capacity to remain calm under pressure, a quality tested across the varied challenges of a long ministry. He was a man of prayer, of evangelism and of deep pastoral instinct, who cared for his congregation and extended his hand readily to the wider community. His ministry at Savanna-la-Mar was marked by renewal: fresh initiatives that revitalised the churches, restored hope where it had dimmed and quickened the spirit of those under his leadership.

Approachable and gracious, disciplined in his personal life and serious in his stewardship of the pastoral office, he modelled honesty, integrity and trustworthiness as lived virtues. The Union extends its deepest condolences to his wife, Kathleen, whose steadfast support sustained more than four decades of ministry, and to the congregations of the Savanna-la-Mar Circuit, his colleagues and friends across the island.

He died as he had lived: faithful to the end. The JBU gives thanks to God for his life and ministry, and prays that the Lord will grant comfort and peace to all who navigate the void of his sudden passing.

The Jamaica Baptist Union mourns the sudden passing of the Rev. Carlton Albert Wilson, who served until the moment of his death as pastor of the Savanna-la-Mar Circuit of Baptist Churches in Westmoreland. His death closes more than four decades of unbroken ministry that reached from the hills of Portland in the east to the western parishes he came to call home, and that touched countless lives along the way.

The Rev. Wilson gave forty-three years of continuous service to the Union, a tenure marked by steadiness and faithfulness rather than ambition or self-promotion. He began as a probationer in the Belle Castle Circuit in Portland, where he was ordained on Thursday 25 October 1984. The seven years he spent at Belle Castle laid the foundations of a ministerial life that would prove both fruitful and enduring.

In 1989 he accepted a call to the Yallahs Circuit in St. Thomas, where he ministered for a further seven years before moving westward in 1996 to take up the pastorate of the Savanna-la-Mar Circuit. It was there, in the west, that his

ministry found its fullest expression. He remained at Savanna-la-Mar for just under thirty years, leaving an indelible mark on the circuit, the wider Union and the many lives he touched.

Beyond his pastoral duties, the Rev. Wilson contributed generously to the wider denomination. He served as Vice-President of the JBU, as Superintendent Minister and as Chair of Area Council 1. He acted as Moderator for the Portland Baptist Association and provided pastoral oversight to the Hebron Circuit. He gave himself wholeheartedly to deputation work and denominational activities, and as recently as the 2025 General Assembly, he was asked to lead the early morning prayer meetings and agreed without hesitation, a gesture entirely in keeping with his character.

His pastoral instinct extended well beyond his own circuit. In 2022 he baptised the veteran broadcaster Barry G, an act that drew quiet attention to the breadth of his ministry. After Hurricane Melissa devastated the western parishes in late 2025, he was at the centre of the Savanna-la-Mar relief response, mobilising his



A section of the church at Rev. Futtremann White's funeral service



A tribute is delivered during Rev. Futtremann White's funeral service

— TRIBUTE —

# Rev. Futtremann White

## A Life of Quiet Conviction

At Boulevard Baptist Church on 7 May 2026, the Jamaica Baptist Union gave thanks for the life of the Rev. Futtremann Anthony White, paying tribute to a man whose faithfulness to God had been measured not in titles, prominence or material gain, but in the steady, unspectacular work of pastoral service. His was a ministry shaped by humility and rooted in the soil of long obedience.

His journey to the altar began in his youth. One Sunday night, at the Baptist class house in Connors, St. Catherine, the young Futtremann walked forward to surrender his life to Christ. It would be forty-nine years before he was ordained to the gospel ministry, but those decades were anything but idle. They were a long apprenticeship in faithfulness.

Trained professionally as an agronomist, Brother White built a career attending to the soil and the harvest, work that perhaps shaped his later instinct for patient, painstaking ministry. Within the church, he served as a deacon at Frankfield in Clarendon and later at Kitson Town in St. Catherine, where his outstanding testimony of faithful leadership marked him out long before he offered himself for full-time pastoral ministry. By the time he answered that deeper call, he had already amassed a wealth of experience in the

work of the local church and in the disciplines of professional life.

His decision was not a search for upward social mobility, human recognition or affirmation. He had earned his standing in the world long before. What gripped him was a deep conviction that God was calling him to give himself fully in his service, a conviction that he found irresistible. After two years as a probationer minister, he was ordained on 16 September 2010 in the Point Hill Circuit of Baptist Churches.

Point Hill is no easy charge. The circuit comprises five congregations spread across difficult terrain in the rural heart of St Catherine, and its pastor must climb hills, navigate poor roads and meet the needs of communities that often lie at the edges of the country's attention. The Rev. White did not flinch. He poured himself into the work without complaint and without any notion of entitlement, and he gave the Point Hill Circuit the whole of his pastoral life. His then superintendent minister, the late Rev. Cawley Bolt, captured him in a single sentence: "The pastoral commitment within the circuit he serves comes first in everything he does." Some might have judged such sacrificial commitment excessive, even foolish. To the JBU, it was a testimony of faithfulness to God and a life worthy of reflection, study and emulation, a quiet rebuke to a culture that measures lives chiefly by what they accumulate. The Rev. White retired

from active pastoral ministry on 31 October 2018, leaving behind a legacy that will long serve as a reference point for those who follow.

Those who knew him remember a man of remarkable consistency: respectful of everyone he met, quick to apologise, disciplined in both ministry and personal life, and possessed of a generosity of spirit that undergirded all his service. He embodied the fruit of the Spirit, and he lived out the biblical admonition not to think too highly of himself. His was a strength of character formed quietly, over years, in places where no audience watched.

He is survived by his dear wife, Adassa, who walked with him throughout his ministry and brought her own gifts to the service of the church; by his daughter Vanessa and her husband; by his granddaughter; and by the wider White family and his church family at Point Hill. They share now in the gratitude of the Union that loved him, and in the assurance that he has found rest in the eternal arms of Jesus.

The Rev. Futtremann Anthony White will be remembered as a humble servant of God, a man of integrity and discipline, and a pastor whose life bore steady witness to the gospel he preached. The JBU gives thanks to God for his life and ministry, and commits him into the hands of the Lord he so faithfully served.

# Ecumenical Relationship



## JBU Gen Sec Joins WCC Leaders in Historic Audience with Pope Leo XIV

The Rev. Merlyn Hyde Riley, General Secretary of the Jamaica Baptist Union and vice-moderator of the World Council of Churches (WCC) central committee, was among the senior ecumenical leaders received by His Holiness Pope Leo XIV at the Vatican on 28 February 2026. The meeting, which gathered representatives of churches from across the global Christian family, focussed on the shared call to peace, visible unity and environmental justice.

Reflecting on the encounter, Hyde Riley described it as “a wonderful opportunity for us as leaders of the World Council of Churches to meet with Pope Leo.” She underscored the significance of the gathering against the backdrop of a fractured world. “In a world where there is so much fragmentation, polarisation, division, it is so important when we are able to come together though from different communions to be able to discuss issues concerning the witness of the church,” she said.

The conversation, she noted, centred on three pressing concerns. “Today we spoke about issues of peace, unity and the environment, all very, very relevant issues in the times in which we live.” She added that the discussion was open and engaging, and that Pope Leo demonstrated firm commitment to causes that the WCC also champions.

The visit carried particular weight given world events unfolding that very morning. “Coincidentally it’s the same morning, just before the meeting, that we heard the news of the Israel-US attack on Iran,” Hyde Riley observed. The timing lent fresh urgency to the delegation’s appeal for peace and lifted the conversation beyond protocol.



A highlight of the visit was a journey to Castel Gandolfo, where the new Laudato Si’ Centre sits as a living example of ecological education and transformation. Hyde Riley described this excursion as “a practical outworking of the environmental piece” of the dialogue, embodying the values that Pope Francis championed and that Pope Leo continues to uphold.

Hyde Riley pointed to the long-standing partnerships between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC, including joint work through the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey and the Faith and Order Commission. “There are many ways in which the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches work together,” she said, expressing confidence that the audience with Pope Leo had laid further groundwork for collaboration.

While acknowledging that theological differences remain between the communions, she insisted that these must not stand in the way of common witness. “We have theological differences, but we have to be able to move beyond those differences to be able to address the very pressing issues of today. And we believe that in our conversations today we agreed to that.”



# Bible Trivia Challenge



## A Thoughtful Mix of Scripture Knowledge & Easter Reflection

Take a few moments to test your biblical knowledge with this month's trivia challenge. These questions are designed to encourage reflection, spark conversation, and deepen appreciation for the richness of Scripture.

### ✦ General Bible Trivia

**1. Which prophet confronted King David after his sin involving Bathsheba?**

- a) Elijah
- b) Samuel
- c) Nathan
- d) Amos

**2. What was the name of the servant whose ear was cut off during Jesus' arrest?**

- a) Bartholomew
- b) Malchus
- c) Matthias
- d) Jairus

**3. In the Book of Exodus, what was used to sweeten the bitter waters at Marah?**

- a) Salt
- b) Oil
- c) A branch/tree
- d) Honey

**4. Which king of Judah rediscovered the Book of the Law during repairs to the Temple?**

- a) Hezekiah
- b) Solomon
- c) Josiah
- d) Jehoshaphat

**5. Who said, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve"?**

- a) Moses
- b) Joshua
- c) Caleb
- d) Samuel

### ✦ Easter Reflection Trivia

**6. Which Gospel records the conversation between Jesus and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus?**

- a) Matthew
- b) Mark
- c) Luke
- d) John

**7. What was the name of the man who helped carry Jesus' cross?**

- a) Joseph of Arimathea
- b) Nicodemus
- c) Simon of Cyrene
- d) Zacchaeus

**8. According to Scripture, what was torn in two at the moment of Jesus' death?**

- a) The Temple curtain
- b) The High Priest's robe
- c) The city gate
- d) The altar covering

### ✦ Deeper Into Scripture

**9. Which woman in the Bible served as both judge and prophetess over Israel?**

- a) Miriam
- b) Esther
- c) Deborah
- d) Huldah

**10. In Paul's description of the Armour of God, what piece is described as "the word of God"?**

- a) Breastplate of righteousness
- b) Shield of faith
- c) Helmet of salvation
- d) Sword of the Spirit

**11. Which New Testament book was written to "the twelve tribes scattered abroad"?**

- a) Hebrews
- b) James
- c) Galatians
- d) Jude

### 12. BONUS QUESTION ✨

After Jesus' resurrection, how many days did He remain with His disciples before His ascension?

- a) 7 days
- b) 12 days
- c) 40 days
- d) 50 days

### ● Easter Insight

Easter is more than a seasonal observance—it stands at the very heart of the Christian faith. The resurrection of Jesus Christ represents victory over death, the fulfillment of prophecy, and the promise of eternal life for believers. Early Christians greeted one another during Easter with the declaration: *"He is risen!"* followed by the joyful response: *"He is risen indeed!"*

### 📖 Scripture Reflection

"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." — 1 Corinthians 15:57

- 1. c) Nathan
- 2. b) Malchus
- 3. c) A branch/tree
- 4. c) Josiah
- 5. b) Joshua
- 6. c) Luke
- 7. c) Simon of Cyrene
- 8. a) The Temple curtain
- 9. c) Deborah
- 10. d) Sword of the Spirit
- 11. b) James
- 12. c) 40 days

### Answers

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