



## **Jamaica Council of Churches**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **The Jamaica Council of Churches Commends a Spirit of Hope in the Midst of the Novel Corona Virus (COVID-19)**

Now that the Corona Virus has arrived on our shores it is time to face the reality of prevention, mitigation, care and support. Face to face pastoral care, though not recommended at this time, is the longstanding practice of the church in interfacing with persons at all stages of life and remains an asset at all times, especially in situations of crises. The presence of COVID-19 is an occasion to reinforce the meaning of hope as espoused in scripture and the tradition of the church (Romans 5:5).

Driven by the legacy of the scripture, hope as confidence in God focuses on prevention of the virus in light of the God who shelters and guides people of faith and all peoples on the path to wholeness. Indeed as Psalm 91 so ably reminds us,

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.” Surely he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday” (Psalm 91:1-6 NIV).*

Acts of prevention, driven by the affirmation that people are made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27) and worthy of dignity and respect, preserves life and mitigate the deadly impact of the virus.

This is a time to work with all partners, including healthcare and other essential workers to mitigate the impact of what the World Health Organization has described as a pandemic. Now that infection is taking place in multiple countries at the same time we are reminded that we live in a global village and are our sisters and brothers keepers. Taking serious steps to observe all protocols is no understatement as to do so is to reinforce Jesus’ injunction to love our neighbours as ourselves (Mark 12:31). In doing so we provide support, care and love for each other and thereby help to realize and experience the hope Jesus promises (Matthew 25).



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Now is the time to care for each other. This is well expressed in the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Care for the most vulnerable takes precedence in the story despite the inherent risk of being overrun by the same forces of evil which was the case of the man who fell among thieves. Despite the risk, the Samaritan put fear aside and undertook a humanitarian task to demonstrate that at all times the welfare of the human being; especially the most vulnerable must be a priority. The elderly, children, and those whose immune systems are already compromised must be given pride of place in our prayers and community action. In cases where gatherings for worship and prayer may be suspended and face to face pastoral care must of necessity be curtailed, every effort must be made to support each other and keep in touch via social and other types of media.

Now is the time for support. The time honoured prayer attributed to St. Francis of Assisi has a line which is pregnant with meaning for the present time: “where there is despair, hope.” This is not a magical formula but a statement of faith born out of trust in the Triune God, Father Son and Holy Spirit, who not only promises to be present with us now but will also be with us at all times (Matthew 28:20). Moreover, in Isaiah 40:31 God’s support is described in metaphorical terms as undergirded like eagle’s wings. This means even when there is loss, grief, pain and even death God will not abandon God’s people and God will be present to support and strengthen us (Psalm 46).

Now is therefore the time to be the people of faith, hope and love (I Corinthians 13). It is the time to draw on the theological and spiritual heritage of the Christian tradition to reinforce that we are a people of hope even in the midst of crises. It is this hope, born out of trust in God, that the Council encourages member churches to bring to the reality of COVID-19 as we work with all stakeholders in the prevention of the spread of the virus, the mitigation of its impact and care and support of our fellow Jamaicans. This comprehensive intervention is undergirded by our prayer in and through the name of the God of peace, justice, healing and abundant life which the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, gives as a blessed assurance both now and forever.

**End**

### **Contact**

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