



# Jamaica Methodist District

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## **NEW YEAR (2022) MESSAGE FROM DISTRICT PRESIDENT:**

### **BISHOP THE REV'D CHRISTINE GOODEN BENGUCHE**

My sisters and brothers in Christ, happy 2022 to you! It's a pleasure to greet you, on behalf of the Officers of the District, including the Rev'd Dr. Wayneford McFarlane (our Secretary of Conference) and our brother, Dr. Hopeton Morrison (our District Treasurer).

What a joy it is, to enter yet another year! 2021 was a challenging one, but GOD remained faithful and today we give thanks and praise for His faithfulness in our lives and landing us safely in another year!

This year, we will continue to observe the main District theme": ***"Spreading Scriptural Holiness to Reform the Nation: Beginning with Me"*** and particularly focus on our new **District Sub-Theme - *"Building a People of Resilience: Church, Community and Nation"***; this, underpinned by Paul's Letter to the Church in Corinth, as recorded in **2 Corinthians 4:8-9 - *"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed"***.

This thematic focus is occasioned by the current afflictions that we have been made to endure over the last two years, as people across the world have struggled to treat with the realities of the COVID-19 global pandemic; and how it had and continues to ravish the lives and livelihoods of our people. Of course, last year, we spent ~~some~~ time focusing on some of the practical ways in which we can preserve the mental wellbeing of our people, even as we catered to the other physical, social, emotional and most certainly the spiritual needs – as we serve the present age. Those efforts will by no means cease, but I call on us to elevate our focus in this year and become more intentional in responding to the needs around us.

While we continue to be challenged, as the church of Jesus Christ and as a people called Methodist, we must embrace our role in advancing the cause of combatting these obstacles. We must become the voice and the living evidence of one fostering a people who are equipped with the multiplicity of resources and mindset that will enable all to become **resilient** – being able to withstand the various

shocks, distresses, perplexities, persecutions even, **embracing confidence in God to keep us grounded and fortified to get through these times successfully, together.**

I challenge us, and in particular, our leaders in congregations (clergy and laity alike), to join in prayerful reflection and active engagement in fostering this resilience, first, within the church community, **but** to truly become the **'church without walls'** and effectively work to nurture a resilient spirit, mentality and lifestyle among the people in our surrounding communities, so we may impact the **nation positively**. This, we can do through a variety of activities within our schools and other organisations, as well as becoming more strategic and intentional in our other outreach activities and becoming relevant amidst the cries of a people in despair and whose spirits are crushed. As the State and civil society seek to play their part in advancing the cause of 'resilience' in various ways, the Church must get on board and not only be God's mouthpiece but become hands and feet at work, to cause peoples' realities to be transformed for the better.

While there still exist differences of opinions regarding vaccination as a response to the pandemic, I use this opportunity to encourage us to recognise that, as a major part of our building of a people of resilience, we need to be mindful of Science, and be guided accordingly. For me, I can say I am fully vaccinated, and I am still doing fine. Let us not be distracted by "fake news", but recognise that God is at work through scientists of today, as He has been for many years; and from which many, if not all of us, have benefited over time; as we visit the doctor, get medications, injections, etc. This is not to say that there aren't legitimate concerns which may arise, but I encourage us to visit our doctors and other health care providers get the proper guidance. My sisters and brothers, if we are to be resilient in these times, and get back to some semblance of normalcy in the near future, many of us will need to get vaccinated and encourage our households and our neighbours, to do likewise. With that of course, we must become key examples of those who regard and follow the protocols which are in place from time to time; chief among them, the wearing of masks, regular hand washing and sanitisation, physical distancing and the observation of gathering limits. The Church must lead the charge and when we become resilient – our communities will adapt accordingly.

In this year, 2022, I call on us, to also recognise that there are many other ills that our people are grappling with; including, but not confined to poverty, homelessness, limited access to health care, educational devices and other tools; and of the grave crime problem which plagues our island, causing so many to be living in fear. The state of affairs is not okay, and the Church must, in our small spaces, engage the various stakeholders and play a greater role in intervening in the affairs of the broken homes and families that we walk pass each day. It is not okay for us to join the voice of complainers, while we are yet to forge partnerships with our very schools and begin to avail ourselves to mentor our young minds. While I call on the general church community, I challenge particularly our young

people and our men, to see where there are voids that we may have the capacity to quickly respond and seek to make a real difference...one child at a time.

So my friends, as we make those **New Year's Resolutions**, and create our **2022 Vision Boards**, I urge us to consider how each of us can build resilience in ONE person's life...whichever area the need may exist. I urge us to take this personally, even as we take it as a collective mission, and ensure that our 'vision' or plans for this year, are ordered by our Lord, our God – who calls us in this challenging time, to realise that notwithstanding all that is happening around us, we are not forsaken by God and even if we fall, we are 'struck down' but certainly not destroyed.

I pray the Holy Spirit may fortify us in this year, to truly build a people of resilience in all areas, and daily fill our lives and our hearts with this hymn of assurance:

*'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus,  
Just to take Him at His Word  
Just to rest upon His promise,  
Just to know, "Thus saith the Lord!"*

**HAPPY AND BLESSED NEW YEAR, MY BROTHERS, MY SISTERS...We pray for you and yours a successful 2022, characterised by resilience and effectively transforming lives in the church, the community and the nation, so that Jamaica may, under God, increase in beauty, fellowship and prosperity and play her part in advancing the welfare of the whole human race.**

**THANK YOU, AND GOD BLESS YOU, AND BLESS JAMAICA - LAND WE LOVE!**