

June, 2012

A COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF PEC - EWI PROVINCE

The Information

Then the man said, "**Let me go, for it is daybreak.**" But Jacob replied, "**I will not let you go unless you bless me.**" Genesis 32 vs. 26 [NIV]



SEX IN THE CHURCH

The time has come and now is for Leaders in our Churches to talk about and address the topic of Sex in the Church. There is the perception that if one speaks about sex, that it will encourage persons to experiment to figure out all of the details for themselves. In addition, there is the feeling among some Church Members and Pastors that sex is only to be spoken about in the bedroom or behind closed doors. I believe that sex is a gift, given to us by God. If we believe that we were created by God and He placed in us the desire for sex, then it could not be a bad thing. However, sex ought to be engaged in the right context that is in the context of marriage. If God didn't know that sex was good for us, he would not have given us that desire. The fact is, our people are engaging in sex, but much more, our young people in the Church are having sex.



In this issue of the Information, I am pleased to share with you the result of a survey done by the Evangelical Association of the Caribbean on sex in the Church. We might put our heads in the sand and declare that it is not happening in our Church. Yes, the survey was done among Evangelical Churches in Antigua, St. Lucia and St. Vincent, but like the old saying, "when your neighbour's house is on fire, wet yours". I believe that this study is pertinent to every Church. I therefore share the information on the survey with you.

Eworth Williams, a Guyanese youth pastor and teacher, isn't shocked by the stories he hears. The people who come to his "Sex in the Church" meetings, however, are often stunned. On Sunday afternoons, a few hours after services have wrapped, members from about seven congregations come together for a wake-up call.

"Most parents don't even know what is happening in schools and in the church," Williams says. "There are rainbow parties where the ladies wear lipstick and give the guys oral sex. The guy with the most colours on his penis wins. Even anal sex has crept in. They say they want to keep their virginity for their husbands so they have sex in the butt."

Here he stops to make what must be a routine check in his line of work: "Are you okay with me discussing these things? Some people aren't."

VISION STATEMENT

A Church - Transformed,
United, Victorious in Christ

MISSION STATEMENT

By the grace of God, we seek to be faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ; without distinction, we use all that we possess to call all peoples to the truth of the Gospel through worship, evangelism, discipleship and service

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PROVINCIAL THEME 2012: PURSUING THE BLESSING

Sex in the Church Cont'd from Page 1

In Trinidad, Merle Ali and her husband, Pastor Hasratt Ali, are part of the vocal minority. Throughout the year they conduct HIV sensitisation sessions with willing church communities. In the right context the registered nurse and midwife will even address correct condom use.

"Especially in the 1990s, there was the perception that that doesn't belong in the church, or that HIV is God's judgment on people. Some were in a state of denial and didn't believe the church was affected. There was a lot of resistance and even now there isn't that openness," Ali admits. "I have come across a lot of people living with HIV in Trinidad who are afraid to share that information for fear of being discriminated against."

Williams and the Ali's are part of a growing movement in the Caribbean evangelical community to dialogue honestly about sex and HIV. In some places the opening to have these conversations came from a unique 2009 study.

"Survey of the sexual practices of youth attending Evangelical Churches in Antigua, St Lucia and St Vincent" asked probing questions of more than one thousand young church members—everything from how many sexual partners they've had to whether they use condoms.

Knowledge among the sample on how HIV is transmitted was found to be "surprisingly deficient" with 46.7 per cent of the church youth having been sexually active while 2.6 per cent said that they were HIV positive. (The Caribbean as a whole has an adult HIV prevalence of one per cent while Trinidad and Tobago's is 1.5 per cent.)

Bishop Gerry Seale, the Secretary General of the Evangelical Association of the Caribbean (EAC), piloted the approach in his native Barbados before attracting support from the UNICEF Barbados and Eastern Caribbean Office for the larger study.

"The message that's constantly projected is that the at-risk communities are gays, prostitutes and other persons the church feels are not their constituency. Once we saw the stats it helped me say to the evangelical church leaders that HIV is not about 'them' out there in the marginalised communities. It is about us," Seale says.

The study showed that while there was a spike in first sexual activity from ages 15 to 17, almost 200 respondents had sex at younger ages.

Behavioural Surveillance Surveys conducted by the Caribbean Epidemiology Centre (CAREC) and Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) in six Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) countries from 2005 to 2006 revealed that early initiation of sex and age mixing among young people are commonplace. According to the 2010 United Nation General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) Country Progress Report for Antigua there was a threefold increase in reported cases of HIV among young people from 2008 to 2009 as compared to the previous two-year period. St Vincent's UNGASS report stated that HIV prevalence among young people is a high 2.5 per cent.

Seale insists that the church leadership has a moral responsibility to share "scientifically accurate and biblically sound information" about sex.

"The message I strongly give is that the Bible teaches abstinence and faithfulness within marriage. If you are going to step outside of those boundaries, for God's sake use a condom. The message for young people is abstinence. I do not share the pessimism that young people cannot abstain... but if you are going to choose not to abstain you need to use a condom," says Seale. "I don't see anything controversial about that."



Starting this conversation has made a wide range of approaches possible. In March 20 young people from four Caribbean countries were taught life skills like communication and decision-making and given training to share the information with others.

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Sex in the Church Cont'd from Page 2

And Seale sometimes hosts workshops to address stigma in which congregations confront their prejudices during a role play exercise.

"We pick three persons and have a vote about who gets life-saving HIV drugs. One is gay, one works as a maid and the other works in an escort agency. The voting is usually based on stigma so we have a discussion about that," explains Seale.

Part of Williams' outreach is to share food, clothing and the church's message with gays and sex workers in the streets of Georgetown, Berbice and Essequibo.

"The scripture is filled with the language that is needed in this AIDS crisis," Ali says. "The very guiding principles for life that Jesus lived and taught were of love, compassion and no discrimination. He touched the leper. He did not spurn the woman at the well. We too must love unconditionally."

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Caribbean Regional Support team director, Ernest Massiah, says that faith-based organisations are a key constituency in the Caribbean's HIV response.

"Faith-based communities involve large segments of the population. We need to see what opportunities there are to dialogue, where they have been involved and where they feel they can effect change," Massiah says.

In conclusion, all the biblical quotes about premarital sex (fornication) can be summarized by this quote from Ephesians:

Among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No fornicator, no impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. (Eph 5:3-5)

Now these are very strong and clear words. Fornication is a very serious sin which excludes one from the Kingdom of God.

Yet, despite the clarity and gravity of this, I will say, that growing up in the church in the 1970's I cannot recall ever hearing this clearly taught in the church. I think we had some notions that adults might not approve of teenagers having sex, but we simply thought this had to do with the fact that they were old and uptight.

We are all painfully aware that there are many Christians today who are living in cohabitation or shacking up. The Church must make it clear to the faithful that these unions are not in accord with the Gospel, and to help Christians who find themselves in these situations to do whatever they must do to make their lives pleasing to God.

We must be firmly rooted in the Gospel teaching that, when it comes to sexual union, there are only two life-styles acceptable to Jesus Christ for His disciples: a single life of chastity, or the union of man and woman in marriage. There is no third way possible for a Christian in so far as the Bible is concerned. The Bible and the Church teaches that marriage is between one man and one woman.

Sex in the Church is real. As Leaders, we are therefore challenged to work through these issues in the best way possible. I believe that education is the key. In addition, we need to be more open in discussing about sex and allow especially our young people to share their concerns and talk about those things that affect them and how we might help them navigate those issues.

Provincial Prayer and Fast

The Virgin Islands Conference has designated **Wednesday May 30** and **Wednesday June 6** as two days of prayer and fast in preparation for the upcoming 30th Provincial Synod. The entire Provincial family is invited to join in these two days of prayer and fast. Where possible, congregations are asked to have the sanctuaries opened so that our members can gather for corporate or individual prayer.

It is recognized though that there may be those in our Provincial family who may also feel led to designate the week of **May 30 to June 6** as a week of prayer and fast for synod. That too is to be encouraged. Members may choose to observe a Daniel fast (**Daniel 1: 8 – 16**) or **any other partial fast for that time period.**

Ultimately, it is our desire to have the entire Province be in united prayer as we lift up before God's throne every aspect of the 30th Provincial Synod. Rest assured that God still hears and answers prayers.

Graduation at UTCWI

Congratulations to Sis. Onita Samuel who Graduated from The United Theological College of the West Indies on Wednesday May 9, 2012.



Sis. Onita receiving her Diploma in Ministerial Studies at her Graduation



Sis. Onita receiving a special award at UTCWI Graduation 2012



2012 Graduating Class of UTCWI



Staff and 2012 Graduating Class of the United Theological College of the West Indies

A REFLECTION ON RECENT VISIT TO EAST AFRICA

Rev. Dr. Paul Gardner, Chairman, Unity Board

The Moravian Church has seen tremendous growth in Africa in the latter part of the 20th century and into the 21st century. This growth is more pronounced in the East African countries, particularly, Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and Kenya and of course Tanzania. It is no surprise therefore that the work of the Moravian Church in these countries is largely due to the impact of what can be described as the Tanzanian Missionary Expansion Movement.



Members gathered outside of the church in Kayanza, Burundi

Credit must be given to the missionary zeal of the Tanzanian Moravians, their passion for the spread of the Gospel and their tremendous sense of hospitality and by no small measure the support they have received from Moravian partners in the Unity. Conflicts in some East African countries have resulted in people and families being uprooted and many took refuge in the peaceful and democratically stable Tanzania. The Christian hospitality extended by the Moravian Church in Tanzania has, to a large extent, accounted for the planting of new Moravian congregations by people who have returned to their native countries with the desire to continue to be associated with the Moravian Church. The Tanzanian Missionaries have responded to these needs and have been very proactive in strategically placing missionaries in these countries to work closely with the native leadership.

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Meeting with some of the Leaders of the Moravian Church in Congo

Whereas in the earlier missionary expansion (1700s and 1800s) the leadership of the church for a very long time was vested with the Missionary, the Tanzanian Missionary expansion has seen the leadership from the very beginning being vested in the natives and the Missionaries providing critical support in training, pastoral supervision with Moravian practices and polity.



It is clear that the Tanzanian Moravian Church has been the most actively engaged part of the Unity since the great Moravian evangelical expansion in the seventeen and eighteen hundreds. From this African Country, the Moravian landscape is being radically reshaped as a truly global church with far-reaching impact on the African continent.

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There are requests being made of Tanzania for Missionaries to be sent to Mozambique and South Sudan where there is no Moravian presence and to Kenya and Uganda, where small Moravian congregations exist.

The Moravian Church in Burundi has over 25,000 members with one Missionary from Tanzania bolstered by a cadre of lay leaders. In Rwanda, there are 14 congregations with a total of 5968 members. All the work that they are doing is being supported by a budget of just over USD12, 000 per year which is raised by the congregations. The Moravian Church in the DR Congo began in 1980 and today has over 20 thousand members. The Unity Mission and Development Fund (UMDF) currently provides a grant of USD\$2000 annually to Burundi and USD\$1000 to Rwanda. The UMDF is actively considering how to increase the Unity support to these growing Mission Areas.

The circumstances and conditions under which some of the missionaries are living, the conditions of the places of worship, the economic and social conditions of some of the members are indeed very difficult. The needs of the church in these parts are great. The mission outreach of the church can be bolstered by our collective will and by our contribution directly or indirectly to assist the further development of the Moravian Church on the African continent. The last Unity Synod approved the establishment of a Unity Mission and Development Board (UM&DB). This Board will be critical in strategically helping to realign available funds and resources to impact areas of greatest needs within the Unity.



Meeting with the Leaders in Malawi

As we travelled in the Eastern African countries of Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania, Burundi and DR Congo, it is clear that the Moravian Church is experiencing phenomenal growth and that this growth must be nurtured by the Unity. God, who called our Missionaries in the seventeen and eighteen hundreds to step away from their comfort zones of Europe into far off lands of the Americas, Caribbean and Africa is calling us today to be as equally bold and courageous in stepping out in faith as we respond to the mandate of the Gospel.

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Speaking with the Leaders of the Moravian Church in Zambia

GOSPEL On Steel

The Montgomery Moravian Steel Ensemble, will be LIVE in concert, as they present GOSPEL ON STEEL on Saturday, June 23, 2012. The Concert takes place at the



The Montgomery Moravian Steel Ensemble, presented a powerful concert in October 2011 at the Montgomery Moravian Church in Tobago.



Sharon Moravian Church in Barbados. A Choir from the Moravian Church in Barbados will also perform at the concert.



This is a concert, the Barbados community should not miss. It begins at 6:00p.m.

TRIAL HYMNAL

The Provincial Hymnal Committee has completed the draft of the trial hymnal. Two hard copies of the same will be distributed to each Conference for all members of staff and congregations to review. Upon completion, you are to add your signature and the date. The copy for the congregation is to be reviewed by the organist or other key musicians within the congregation. Each congregation should designate one musical leader who will sign and date the trial hymnal on behalf of the congregation. All comments, whether from the staff or congregations should be emailed to moravianhymnal@gmail.com by June 30, 2012.

The members of the Provincial Hymnal Committee thank you for your support and prayers as they have sought to fulfill resolutions of past synods which called for the compilation of a Caribbean Moravian Hymnal.



The Hymn of the Month

Rev. Mikie Roberts,
Chair, Provincial Hymnal Committee

As we continue observing within the Province our hymn of the month, we will give attention to two (2) canticles. One dictionary defines a canticle as “*one of the nonmetrical hymns or chants, chiefly from the Bible, used in church services.*”

They are mainly drawn from the Psalms though in some cases the texts are non-Biblical but date back to early Christian worship. Not having a regular metre is the one feature that makes the chanting of canticles sometimes challenging as opposed to hymns which have a consistent metre with each verse. However, the canticles have always been a part of Christian worship and serves as a bridge connecting us to the Hebrew/Jewish heritage as expressed in the Psalms.

Mindful that the correct chanting of canticles can be a challenge to some of our congregations, we are reminded to carefully read the note on chanting that is given on pages 145–147 at the front of the hymnal we now use.



Contained within those pages are some very important guidelines that need to be followed to aid in the correct execution of chanting the canticles.

The Provincial Hymnal Committee has not included all of the canticles for use in the new hymnal. A few have been removed. Of those that have been retained the following is being recommended to be used as the hymn of the month for the month of **June, 2012.**

Canticle # 22 Psalm 84 is the hymn of the month for **June**. It is a biblical text and draws attention to the blessings that are to be received as God’s people gather together to worship. In its original context, the Psalm encourages God’s people in the Old Testament to recognize that these blessings come as they go to the temple to worship. Today we sing this Psalm too to be reminded of how our lives are strengthened as we gather with other saints to worship the God who is “our defender...a sun and shield” and that we can celebrate the truth that “no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” This chant is a double chant meaning that in singing through the entire tune, we would have completed two verses.

As a reminder, it is recommended that where feasible the canticles be introduced to the congregation first by the choirs and that thereafter they be used as often as possible during the designated month.

This is an option that could be considered during the performance of the canticle. As stated above it allows the congregation to have a better appreciation for the canticle and not become overly discouraged as they attempt to chant all of the verses. This is a single chant, meaning that when we sing through the entire tune, we would have completed one verse.

It is our intention to have a midi file of these canticles circulated by then so that congregations can hear them being performed. As a reminder, it is recommended that where feasible the canticles be introduced to the congregation first by the choirs and that thereafter they be used as often as possible during the designated month.

Let me again encourage all of our congregations to continue partnering with us as together we move ahead with the compilation of our Provincial Hymnal. The main purpose of having the hymn of the month is to bring to our attention aspects of our hymnal that are either unknown or underused. But this activity is also to keep in the forefront of your mind, the ongoing work of the Provincial Hymnal Committee. We continue to crave your prayers that we will be guided by the Holy Spirit as we endeavour to produce our own hymnal.

CALLS

- ♦ The Rev. Belinda Manswell –Daniel has accepted a call to serve as Pastor of the Gracebay and Urlings Moravian congregations in Antigua, with effect from May 6, 2012.
- ♦ The Rev. Nevin T. Lewis has accepted a call to serve as Pastor of the Montgomery and Buccoo Moravian congregations in Tobago, with effect from June 08, 2012.
- ♦ Pastor Onita Kareen Samuel has accepted a call to serve as Pastor of the Bon Accord and Black Rock Moravian congregations in Tobago, with effect from July 01, 2012.

Let us remember our Brother and Sisters in prayer at this time.



To Sis. Gloria Barker who celebrated her Birthday on May 11.



Birthday Greetings for the month of June is extended to:

Sis. Sharon McCardy Joseph	05
Bro. Nigel Daniel	05
Sis. Bernadine Chase	07
Bro. Calvin Isaac	13
Sis. Joycelyn Connor	17
Bro. Selvin McMillan	25
Sis. Lexs Forrester	25
Sis. Jasmin Crooks	26
Sis. Roslyn Hamblin	29

Anniversary Greetings for the month of June is extended to:

Bro. Reuben & Sis. Ivy Vessup	01
Bro. Kirk and Sis. Nicole Barker	24



LEAVE OF ABSENCE

- The Rev. Georgette John requested and was granted six (6) months leave of absence, with effect from April 30, 2012 to October 20, 2012.
- The Rev. Cherice Job-Lewis requested and was granted two (2) years Leave of absence, with effect from June 07, 2012 - June 06, 2014 for personal reasons.

The PEC wishes Sis. John and Sis. Job-Lewis every Blessing as they take time off for this period of Leave of Absence.

THE 30TH PROVINCIAL SYNOD

The 30th Provincial Synod convenes in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands on July 13, 2012 at the Sugar Bay Hotel at 8p.m. and will conclude on July 18, 2012, with The Synod Communion Service and Installation of the new PEC. Delegates will leave the Synod venue on July 19th, 2012.

Locked Car Door

A woman was at work when she received a phone call that her daughter was very sick with a fever. She left her work and stopped by the pharmacy to get some medication. She got back to her car and found that she had locked her keys in the car. She didn't know what to do, so she called home and told the baby sitter what had happened. The baby sitter told her that her the fever was getting worse. She said, "You might find a coat hanger and use that to open the door." The woman looked around and found an old rusty coat hanger that had been thrown down on the ground, possibly by someone else who at some time or other had locked their keys in their car. Then she looked at the hanger and said, "I don't know how to use this." So she bowed her head and asked God to send her some help. Within five minutes an old rusty car pulled up, with a dirty, greasy, bearded man who was wearing an old biker skull rag on his head. The woman thought, "This is what you sent to help me?" But, she was desperate, so she was also very thankful. The man got out of his car and asked her if he could help. She said, "Yes, my daughter is very sick. I stopped to get her some medication and I locked my keys in my car. I must get home to her. Please, can you use this hanger to unlock my car?"

He said, "Sure". He walked over to the car, and in less than a minute the car was opened. She hugged the man and through her tears she said, "Thank You So Much! You are a very nice man."

The man replied, "Lady, I am not a nice man. I just got out of prison today. I was in prison for car theft and have only been out for about an hour." The woman hugged the man again and with sobbing tears cried out loud, "Oh, Thank you God! You even sent me a Professional!"



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