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A table of contents for *Caribbean Journal of Evangelical Theology* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_caribbean-journal-theology\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_caribbean-journal-theology_01.php)

FORTIFYING THE  
FOUNDATIONS,  
FORGING INTO  
NEW FRONTIERS  
BECAUSE I AM A  
CHRISTIAN

LECTURE GIVEN BY THE  
GOVERNOR-GENERAL  
OF JAMAICA HIS  
EXCELLENCY THE  
MOST HONOURABLE  
SIR PATRICK ALLEN TO  
THE JAMAICA  
THEOLOGICAL  
SEMINARY ON APRIL 10,  
2013

## INTRODUCTION

This is the first time that I am presenting a lecture at the Jamaica Theological Seminary, so I am definitely "forging into new frontiers" today. I am in two minds as to whether to thank the Rev. Dr. Roper for inviting me to speak to you on this very challenging topic: "**Because I am a Christian**" within the broad theme "**Fortifying the Foundations- Forging Into New Frontiers**". I can either thank him, or I can seek your commiseration for what is in effect, the gauntlet which has been thrown down to me.

It seems to me that the basis on which I was invited to give this lecture is much more than the fact that I am a Christian. The central reason for that invitation is that I am the first ordained Minister of Religion who has been called to serve as Governor-General in Jamaica. With that comes the curiosity as to whether service in that Office is impacted by my Christian principles or whether the foundation is being weakened either by compromise or the truism of the corruption which power often wreaks.

It is clear to me that the question is not whether a Christian should occupy the position of Governor-General, as you students of the Bible would know very well how and why God placed Joseph, Esther and Daniel in positions of leadership in even foreign kingdoms where they were captives and whose rulers did not know

God. I believe that in your minds is the echo of Mordecai's words to Esther: "And who knows why you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"

I am sensing that for many of you a prior question is how this Adventist Pastor came to be selected to serve as Governor-General. The answer is very simple: I do not know, but let me disabuse you of the notion that it had anything to do with politics. When I was called to meet with the Prime Minister, nothing was furthest from my mind. Never in my wildest imaginings could I have contemplated being asked to be Governor-General. Surely, there were many others much more qualified than I to serve! I got no explanation, from the P.M. but the discussion was suspended on my commitment to pray about the matter, and that I did, even before consulting my wife! I also sought the wise counsel of several other individuals and even as the concern about "Why me?" resurfaced, the sagacious words of Mordecai to Esther kept echoing in my mind. Like a repeated chorus I was also listening to the words of Ellen G. White:

*The greatest want of the world is the want of men and women who will not be bought or sold, who in their inmost souls are true and honest, who do not fear to call sin by its right name, whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.*

Acceptance of that call to serve was for me more than a positive response to the Prime Minister; it was an act of submission to God. I prayed for the grace to be always the kind of person to call sin by its right name; the person who cannot be bought or sold. God was clearly leading me into "new frontiers" and I knew that I could depend on Him to guide me through the challenges and hurdles of the odyssey of Head of State.

### **THE EXERCISE OF PRIVATE FAITH IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

An 18<sup>th</sup> Century English Jurist, Sir William Blackstone, published in 1765 the *Commentaries on the Law of England* in which he declared that law has two foundations: the law of nature and the revelation through the Scriptures. For Blackstone, God was the source of all laws. His *Commentaries* became the foundation of English common law which influenced the jurisprudence and justice system in most of the western world. Blackstone recognized that God ordained civil government and that wisdom in government could only come from God. He reminded his students that as stated in Romans 13: 1, "there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God". Thus, all human authority is delegated by God. This requires reverence and respect for the public positions in which one serves, because the authority is from God!

Today, moral absolutes derived from God's word no longer form the automatic foundation of legislation. In this post-modern world, traditional Christian values are being eroded and the Church itself is losing its place as the moral compass. There are many who question the relevance of the Church in these times.

In several industrialized countries of the Western world which have a strong history of missionary zeal for the Lord, Christians are now a dwindling minority. Blackstone's *Commentaries* have lost their relevance in this context. Laws which conflict with God's commands and principles are being adopted in many countries defined as "Christian". A Christian leader can be severely tested between the push of public opinion and/or external pressure and the pull of his own convictions. A Christian leader can fall prey to political expediency if he or she yields to the temptation of popular acclaim.

As Governor-General, I respond first to God, to whom I am accountable, as are all persons. Indeed, under the Constitution of Jamaica, the Governor-General represents the Head of State of Jamaica, Her Majesty (HM), Queen Elizabeth II. And therefore Her Majesty's authority in Jamaica is delegated to me. However, I am keenly aware that The Queen serves at God's pleasure and recognizes her own accountability to Him.

HM was proclaimed Queen in 1952, "By the Grace of God" and her pledge to serve with devotion ended with the following words: "*I pray that God will help me to discharge worthily this heavy task which has been laid upon me so early in my life*". As titular Head of the Church of England, Her Majesty's private faith is not alienated from her action in public affairs.

One of my predecessors, the Most Hon. Sir Howard Cooke, while not an ordained Minister, was an active lay preacher during his tenure as Governor-General. He was never ashamed to proclaim his Christian beliefs. His biography which was launched at King's House last year is entitled "God is Good", a favourite saying of Sir Howard.

A conversation with Sir Howard immediately elucidates the reasons for his strong conviction of God's goodness. Not only did God lead him from the cane fields to King's House, but God also guided him through challenges as he confronted the role of the Governor-General, for which no manual exists. Sir Howard knew that his accountability to God would be what determined the conduct of his stewardship as Governor-General.

Similarly, my approach to my stewardship is guided by my assurance that the God who mandated that we occupy till He come, is the God who grants wisdom, knowledge and understanding to those whom He calls to serve. I accept that 'because I am a

Christian', there is never a time that I should not function with the consciousness that I am a disciple. My Christian principles should never be sacrificed on the altar of expedience or convenience. This comes easily, because of the values which have been honed in me throughout my Christian journey.

'Because I am a Christian', I know that my actions must reflect the love of which Paul wrote in Romans 13, when he stated that "*love is the fulfillment of the law*". I also know that I come under the scrutiny of even non-Christians, who recognize when there is dualism which weakens one's Christian witness. The Bible provides rich guidance on how a Christian leader should discharge his or her stewardship.

(1) Daniel could be described as the first Governor-General in recorded history. This man of God, an exile in Babylon, not only served four different Kings, but Kings from different nations: Babylon and Medo-Persia. And I have to contemplate my role only under different administrations in the same nation! Daniel remained true to his faith in God, not only fearlessly declaring the word of God as he interpreted the visions, but also as he faced the penalty of being thrown into a den of hungry lions.

(2) In the case of Joseph, Pharaoh recognized his wisdom and discernment and made him Prime Minister. Joseph acknowledged the protecting hand of God throughout all his suffering which led him to that point; also the wisdom and knowledge from God which gave him the interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams. But what strikes me most are the godly love, mercy and forgiveness which Joseph demonstrated to his brothers who had so wickedly treated him. From that experience Joseph proved to them how God can transform the worst situation into something which brings glory to His name the preservation.

(3) I think also of David, the humble shepherd boy whom God chose to be King of Israel. Though he knew he was God's anointed, he did not flaunt it, but served Saul faithfully, until he was forced to flee for his life. David mirrors so much of what we are as fallible humans, yet he was a man after God's own heart. David's mistakes and sins remind me of how easily I can slip, but for God's grace. But David's penitent heart also reminds me of how much God loves to show mercy and forgiveness. I am assured that though I stumble, I will not fall, for the Lord upholds me with His hand. When I am confronted by difficult decisions or situations, David's prayers take on added significance. One which is always relevant is: "Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips".

(4) The lessons from Moses are many, but I shall identify only three of those which impact on my stewardship as Governor-General:

I. Moses knew how to take good advice, as he did from his father-in-law Jethro. He did not consider himself too important to listen and be guided by Jethro. He did not fly on the defensive when Jethro told him bluntly: "What you are doing is not good...The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone". He selected capable persons to support him, in response to Jethro's advice.

II. Moses interceded before God for the people and, "The Lord relented and did not bring on His people the disaster He had threatened".

III. Moses, the man whose face had shone with the radiance of God's physical presence, did not reach the Promised Land, because in a moment of anger and frustration with the rebellious people, he became arrogant. God saw this as a dishonour to Him in the presence of the Israelites. That is a strong lesson also.

I have learned much from these and other great leaders in the Bible. Because I am a Christian, I seek to apply those lessons to my life and my stewardship. I do not always get it right, but I learn daily to lean on God and not on my own understanding.

There is also the other type of scrutiny which I know that I undergo: How will this Seventh Day Adventist comply with requirements of the job? Because there is awareness of the passionate practice of their faith commitment, it begs the question: will the requirements of his faith community take precedence over those of his role as Governor-General? In the perception of many people, what set Adventists apart from other Christians are the Sabbath and health laws and practices.

With regard to the Sabbath, my constitutional and ceremonial duties are discharged during the work week and so only my community roles might extend to the weekend. If a matter of national concern requires my intervention or attention on the Sabbath, then it becomes an essential service. The duty and response are therefore the same as with all professionals in the essential services. The discernment with which God blesses a Christian is key to the ability to understand the times and respond to situations which at face value would seem to run counter to my belief system as an Adventist.

### **THE ROLE OF THE CHRISTIAN IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

God has used and continues to use Christians in the growth and development of Jamaica, as He has in many other countries. We think of our National Heroes who were professed Christians and the contribution they made to Jamaica. Sam Sharpe, Paul Bogle and George William Gordon, who paid the ultimate sacrifice in defence of the rights of the oppressed majority, were strong Baptist leaders. Marcus Garvey recognized the indispensable action of God in public affairs as affirmed by his statement that "*It is only the belief and*

*confidence we have in God why man is able to understand his own social institutions and move and live like a rational human being."*

We constantly need to recognize the role that Christians often played in our nation; for example, our National Anthem was written by a Methodist Pastor. We think, too, of the role that the Church has played from the days of slavery through to emancipation and independence up till now.

- It was the Church which gave the organizational preparation and opportunity for Sam Sharpe's Christmas Rebellion.
- It was the Church which began the settlement of the newly freed black population in the Free Villages.
- It was the Church which introduced cooperatives and building societies.
- It was the Church which laid the foundation of what would become our public education system.

Today, the Church in Jamaica continues to invest in the education, health, housing and the social welfare of our country as important vehicles for its Christian service. This demonstrates the love which Jesus commands that we have for God and for our neighbour. The Church acknowledges the value of these ministries and strives to maintain them in the face of financial constraints, since the Church is comprised of members who are themselves subject to the economic vicissitudes of our country.

Yet from time to time one hears the criticism that the Church is not doing enough to ameliorate conditions in Jamaica. There is enough evidence to prove the Church's impact. Without blowing its trumpet, the Church needs to highlight its ministries not only to the world, but also to glorify God and to encourage those who faithfully support or serve in those ministries. Let me also say I firmly believe that but for the intercession of the Church, Jamaica could not have

survived the many serious problems, natural disasters and setbacks which we continue to face.

In the field of politics and parliamentary representation, Jamaica has benefitted from the service of many Christians, among them Ministers of religion. The present Parliament includes several active Christians of whom the Minister of Education and the Speaker of the Senate are ordained Ministers. Christians in Parliament and most specifically, Christians in the Cabinet, have a duty to seek God's guidance not only for their respective portfolio responsibilities, but also for the adoption of policies and legislation which are in accordance with the will of God.

They also must understand the times. There is a heavy weight of responsibility on the shoulders of the Christian Public Leaders who must recognize the first Authority to whom they are accountable. Their voice might very well be in the minority on a range of policies which have negative moral implications. The pressure to submit to the majority must cause tension and much soul searching. Here Asaph uncompromisingly declares God's imperative to the nations and their leaders:

*How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked (Psalm 82).*

This is a conscience call to all leaders. Further, it is a call to qualified Christians, especially in the Public Service, to seize the opportunities available for the defence and rescue of the poor and the vulnerable in our land. This requires that Christians be in positions of influence, forging into new frontiers where necessary. Guided by the Holy Spirit, their involvement in the affairs of State or in the pinnacles of industry can be the catalyst for Jamaica's

advancement. We cannot participate in the progress of our country when we are locked into the enclaves of the churches, in the belief that this is the *summum bonum* of our duty. We must be active participants in its development.

As Christians, we are commanded to pray for those in leadership. I know that many Jamaicans are praying for me and that is a strong source of encouragement and blessing. I do pray regularly for the Most Honourable Prime Minister, her Cabinet and members of Parliament, as well as for leaders of the Church, business, the public sector and of the society in general. There are times, though, when we are called to do more than pray. God has given gifts and talents to His servants and He calls on us to use them in defence of truth and justice in our nation.

Christians must let their voice be heard on matters which affect the nation. The "Vox Populi" must also express the position of those who are in the faith, not as the peculiarity of a denomination, but as the united voice of Christians all across Jamaica. This strengthens the support which Christian parliamentarians will receive in the decision-making process. It is much wiser to seek to influence that process than to protest after its completion.

Christians have a duty to properly research and present their views on public policy. A knee-jerk reaction will not convince anyone and could well be used to ridicule the Church and accuse Christians of wanting to slow progress. In this post-modern world, it is no longer enough to say "Thus saith the Lord!" Our Master commends that we be as wise as serpents yet harmless as doves. Christians must seek to understand the arguments and issues of the day and propose the response which either brings peace and reconciliation, or leads to resolution by influencing policy direction.

Christians must be visibly involved in the process. Our churches' umbrella groups should charge specially designated teams with the responsibility of monitoring various issues in our Parliament, researching all angles--including the international aspects--where necessary. Their timely report, with recommendations, would then form the basis for well-grounded proposals or responses from the Church.

For example, in the current economic crisis, where is the voice of the Christian business persons? I know there are many. Have they come together to pray for guidance and then to come up with workable proposals for consideration by the Government or have they left it solely to the PSOJ? Or are they worried only about their bottom line? Fragmented in their respective denominational groups they will not achieve much.

I believe that the time is ripe for Christian business persons and professionals to come together to seek God's leadership for the resolution of our economic woes. They are well-placed to understand and act on the word of God through Isaiah: "Should not a people enquire of their God?" Their combined God-given wisdom and experience can be used to forge and implement strategies which could help to transform this country into a productive hub. God will bless Jamaica through their faithful stewardship, in the same way that God blessed Laban's business, because of Jacob; Pharaoh's kingdom, because of Joseph; and Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon, because of Daniel.

God has placed many Christians in our law enforcement and justice systems, including in their upper echelons. I have met many lawyers who are devout Christians serving in the public sector. I know many judges who are committed Christians. Outside of the courtroom these Judges have the possibility of using their well-honed skills to help restore peace, love and respect in the way we respond to each

other within our communities. I also know police persons from the rank and file as well as within the leadership of the Constabulary Forces who faithfully serve God and country.

I believe that Christians in the law enforcement and justice systems seek to influence positive changes where they serve, some at personal and professional cost. Among them there are active prayer groups and other forms of Christian support and encouragement. Members of the Constabulary serve as mentors to youth in various volatile communities. Lawyers give voluntary services in their church or community outreach programmes.

Why then are we having so many challenges in both national security and justice systems? I agree that inadequate resources are a part of the problem, but that is not the major concern. It begins with the erosion of traditional Christian values. As Marcus Garvey said, *"Take away the highest ideal -- FAITH and CONFIDENCE IN GOD --and mankind at large is reduced to savagery and the race is destroyed"*.

Despite the recognition of Jamaica as the country with the largest number of churches per square kilometre, many of our people are either nominal Christians or unbelievers. There is also anecdotal evidence that criminals strategically seek membership in a church to disguise their motives and actions. Within the Church too are members who benefit, some knowingly, from the proceeds of crime committed by family members or friends. This undermines the very witness of the Church and violates the laws of the land. Church Leaders and the faithful congregants must have the wisdom to deal effectively with such situations.

In our National and other Prayer Breakfasts, we always seek God's intervention to break the back of crime and deliver Jamaica from its poisonous tentacles. We must remember that we are the hands and

feet, the hearts and minds that God uses for His purpose. As Christians, individually and corporately through our church and community groups, we need to find ways to do more to rescue our people from the grip of crime. We all know that no Government can resolve this problem on their own. We all know that laws will never change the heart of mankind, otherwise there would have been no need for the Cross. Rehabilitation and restorative justice cannot succeed unless there is an internal conviction of truth.

Prayer must propel Christians to love *in* action, through sustained mentoring programmes as well as through assistance as far as is possible with training and other tangible forms of support. We must act to restore hope, self-esteem and confidence in our people, particularly the youth. Consequently, Lady Allen and I gladly mentor or support individuals and organizations which provide services to our youth.

Christians are to serve as salt and light in the world. Unlike the hermits of old who sought to reach higher levels of communion with God by isolating themselves from the corrupting influences of the world, our role is to reach people, whatever their social standing or moral status. Our lives must preach the sermon which will convince and convict even more effectively than our words!

This is the soft but essential side of Christian involvement in public affairs. It results in work in the trenches which often proceeds without fanfare and public recognition, but it is work in which Jamaica urgently needs more committed men and women. This is not to say that non-Christians are not working to bring about social change, or that they cannot become successful agents for change. However, I am convinced that the only lasting change is that which comes when Christ enters the equation. Non-Christian mentorship rehabilitates. Christian mentorship transforms mentees into new persons. I am convinced that we cannot successfully solve the crime

problem without the full involvement of the Church as God's agent for the transformation we seek.

### **FAITH IN PRACTICE**

Earlier I spoke about Biblical leaders whose examples have formed my perspective on the conduct of my mandate as Governor-General. I shall now give some examples of how the lessons I have learned from their experiences have helped me. Those lessons are equally relevant to each believer in every walk of life.

Moses' constant communion with God has imbued me with a conscious awareness of God's presence. Even though I begin and end my days with prayer and meditation on the Word, throughout the day I remain aware of my dependence on Him. Before I take a decision, swear-in Leaders of Government and other high officials of State, address an audience or undertake any other function, be it constitutional, ceremonial or otherwise, I seek God's leadership and enabling. This practice began in my first days in Office especially as I recognized how little I knew of the role and functions of the Governor-General.

As I have stated before, there is no manual for this Office. The incumbent is guided by the Constitution which he is sworn to uphold and by the good advice and traditions of his predecessors. The position of Governor-General removes the incumbent from the possibility of activism, but it does not constrain him from being truthful and direct in privately stating his views to those in authority. The Governor-General, however, must remain alert to how changes at the national and external levels can impact on his role and how he performs that role. Even Protocol which was once considered sacrosanct is changing to become more relevant to these times. It steadies me on my feet to know that God does not change and that underneath are His everlasting arms.

There have been times when I am specially led to pray with persons who come to me at King's House. Whenever that happens, I follow the Spirit's urging regardless of the status or function of those persons. Meetings with King's House Staff or with various bodies and groups often begin with prayer. It is not a routine. Prayer not only affirms my belief that "*dominion belongs to the Lord and He rules over the nations*" (Ps. 22:28), but it is a witness that "*as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*".

When bills are brought before me for signature into law, I seek to understand them from God's perspective. I reflect before I sign. Often this reflection leads me to consultation about the principle and intent of certain laws. Section 32 of the Constitution is clear on the mandate which I have in this regard. I have no authority to make, amend or repeal laws. On such matters I respond to the recommendation of the Head of Government. My only authority, apart from affixing my signature, is to discuss with the Prime Minister any concern I might have.

In my view, though, bills which might not accord with Christian principles should not be allowed to reach the level of even adoption of the policy which would instruct the legal drafting. Bills are never adopted overnight. Christians should be aware and lobby consistently and in a unified manner to prevent decisions in Parliament which could violate God's laws. It should not come to the point where a Governor-General becomes the last possible impediment to the passage of any law which goes against Christian morals.

The fact is, should there be such a situation, the Governor-General has no way to change that bill and discussion with the Prime Minister of the day might not engender more than a cosmetic change. Any Governor-General, who is a Christian and will not forget his accountability to God, has one option, and I am sure you

realize what that is. I do not dwell on such hypotheses; as for me, my faith in God has always been my armour in conflicts of conscience, and He always works things out.

Have you ever wondered how David, the shepherd boy, who became a mighty and victorious warrior King managed that enormous transition? As I think of my humble beginnings in Fruitful Vale, Portland, I can also enter into the experience of Sir Howard, who also had very humble beginnings. David knew that he could not lead the people without God's gracious enabling. The Psalms are replete with his prayers, thanksgiving and praise to God. David suffered criticism and opposition. He poured out his heart to the Lord and allowed Him to deal with those situations. My own response to such situations is guided by David. Like him as with all human beings, I do feel the hurt which can come from such opposition. Like David, I always seek to anchor my response in the word of the Lord. I know that, as the Scripture says, "*anyone who trusts in Him will never be put to shame*".

While I was a Pastor, I immersed myself in discipleship and in other aspects of Christian ministry. The Office of Governor-General is not focused on evangelization. I have had to make that distinction and remind myself that while I must effusively practise my faith, there is a line which must be drawn. I should tell you that people who know of my pastoral vocation have invited me to preach both locally and overseas. I have been requested to conduct weddings, which I easily decline. The invitations to preach are a bit more difficult and I am careful to seek the Lord's guidance before responding. At times, the Lord helps me to discern that it is not the message they are after, but it is the messenger who will add some prestige to the programme. The crucifixion of the ego is necessary in such situations.

I recognize, though, that the Office opens to me an invaluable opportunity to make a worthwhile contribution to my country. As a Christian who lives by the "I Can" of Philippians 4 verse 13, I am impelled to share with our people this recipe for a satisfying, productive life. I believe that Christians ought to be peddlers of hope in this nation which is on the brink of being overcome by anxiety, despair and fear. The Office has facilitated my introduction to a network of fine Christians in the public and private sectors, in the media, academia and civil society who share my concern for the renewal of hope in our country.

We are concerned that:

1. the negative messages which are being poured into the hearts and minds of our people,
2. the impact of crime and violence and the
3. insidious effect of corruption on the national psyche will jettison every plan for Jamaica's development.

We know that the large majority of Jamaicans are hard-working, law-abiding citizens and some means must be found to make them the visible, vocal majority whose profile is what defines Jamaica.

During my inauguration speech in February, 2009, I stated a series of beliefs in Jamaica and Jamaicans and declared my conviction that "there is nothing wrong with Jamaica that cannot be fixed by what is right with Jamaica." That speech moved a group of private sector leaders to urge me to validate my speech with action. In their view Jamaica needed a non-partisan leader who could attract and motivate Jamaicans from all walks of life. This led me into wide-ranging consultations across the country as I sought to probe our citizens' interests in the matter. From that extended period of consultations, the "I Believe" Initiative was born and then launched in May 2011.

This Initiative is charting new frontiers for the interaction of the Office of the Governor-General with the people of Jamaica. It responds to my own passion to use the opportunities which God gives to me to help to address the problems in our country. The programmes pursued under the IBI require care and discretion to ensure that no policy lines are crossed and that relevant officials are aware of the synergies between programmes in their portfolio and action we pursue under the IBI. Our activities are often pursued without fanfare. The fact is that the IBI does not grab media attention and that is perhaps one of our challenges, since media attention also helps to fuel sponsorship.

The IBI is intended to inspire citizens to use their God given potential to realize their goal; it targets people between the ages of fifteen and thirty five and is tri-focal, with Youth, Education and the Family being the pillars for its programme of action. We want to see youth believing in themselves and in Jamaica. Our young people must accept that there is no field of endeavour in which Jamaicans cannot excel. The "I Can" principle in the "I Believe" Initiative underlines that fact.

In this Initiative we have enjoyed the support of young business persons and professionals who began as conference presenters and facilitators for the IBI. They are now totally committed to doing their part to diffuse the positive, transformative messages through mentorship and other outreach activities to youth. They are our first batch of "I Believe Ambassadors".

Parenting skills are what the IBI is focusing on as we seek to impact on the institution of the family. In the consultations with young people which preceded the launch, we heard their concern that many youth are adrift because of poor parenting and the lack of role models. The IBI now partners with Family Life Ministries and the Jamaica Parenting School in an effort to address the concerns

identified. As this programme develops, we want to link with Church and community groups which are already involved in imparting parenting skills and also to foster the formation of such groups in regions of need.

Our work with schools under the IBI has moved beyond the traditional visit and motivational talks. The I Believe Ambassadors have already met with staff of a High School in a volatile community in preparation for a mentorship programme in that school.

For further information, I encourage you to visit the "I Believe" Initiative website; like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. Keep in touch with what we are doing and lend your support, by becoming more than a fan--an IBI Ambassador.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this discourse, I have sought to share with you how my values were shaped by the Holy Scriptures and how they influence the way I discharge my duties as Governor-General. I have also shown how similar values have guided the role and actions of individuals and the Church as a whole in the building of our nation. The fact is that they are the same values which influenced my service as an educator, as a pastor and as an Administrator in the leadership of the then West Indies Union Conference of Seventh Day Adventists. The different scenarios and audiences in which they were exercised do not cause me to compromise. In fact, with greater faith and maturity, it is easier for me to discern the voice of God in all the cacophony of human words whether they be of advice, affirmation, encouragement, opposition, or negative criticism.

When I reflect on how the Lord has brought me to this point in my life and contemplate His goodness to me and the mercy and grace I

have received, I can assuredly acknowledge, in the words of Ellen G. White: "*We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.*" We can move forward with confidence and humility. With the assurance of God's faithfulness, I am not unnerved by complex and difficult matters of state. I can meet Royalty and world leaders and can act appropriately in any given situation only because God grants me the necessary wisdom, knowledge and understanding.

Because I am a Christian, being Governor-General is a faith walk, in the same way that it was for me previously. This is something I share with all Christians: utter dependence on God and joyful acceptance of His divine leadership, knowing that He upholds me with His hand. I also share with Christians the understanding of that which the Lord requires of me: "to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with my God."

Thank you!