



The Methodist Church

Eddie and Susan Sykes, Mission Partners, Bahamas, April 2008

Greetings in the name of the risen Lord. It is good to greet you during this joyful season of Easter, and to update you on what is going on in the Bahamas/Turks & Caicos Islands District of the MCCA.

196th ANNUAL SESSION OF CONFERENCE

From 9th – 20th January 2008, the BTCI District met in our annual Ministerial and Representative sessions, in Grand Turk, in the '*Beautiful by Nature*' Turks & Caicos Islands. It is a truly peaceful venue for a conference. As ever the hospitality was wonderful, which was much needed as we had a very full agenda to progress through.

CRIME

Much concern is being expressed concerning the number of violent crimes perpetrated in both countries. Already in the Bahamas this year there have been some 18 murders, and 2007 saw the highest number ever. Various groups in the community, including the churches are partnering together under the umbrella of '*Bahamas against Crime*'. As usual there are calls for the death penalty to be enacted, and this has provoked a lively debate, particularly within the Christian churches where there are views both for and against capital punishment.

LENT, HOLY WEEK AND EASTER

In the Nassau Circuit to observe Lent, we have a Circuit Ash Wednesday 'Imposition of Ashes' service. There were mid-day Lenten reflections every Wednesday at Providence Church, and every Tuesday evening a discussion group met to look at the Methodist Church stance on social issues, such as human sexuality, gambling and capital punishment. During Holy Week, services were held every night, Monday to Maundy Thursday with a morning service on Good Friday that was aired live through the national radio station, ZNS 1. Rhodes Memorial Church had a Good Friday recital in the evening, and on the Saturday hosted a seminar for all the Circuit, facilitated by Rev. Dr. Winston Worrell, of the World Methodist Evangelism Institute in Atlanta. He was also the guest preacher at Rhodes, which always celebrates its anniversary on Easter Sunday. On Easter Sunday I had my usual three services: 7am Sunrise Service with Holy Communion at Wesley, 9am Holy Communion at Heritage (I had to miss the Easter basket competition and Easter egg hunt which followed the service) and 11am Holy Communion at Wesley.

WORLD METHODIST EVANGELISM

On Holy Saturday evening Dr Worrell met with leaders of the different Wesleyan/Methodist Churches in Nassau who are members of the World Methodist Council. This included ourselves, MCCA, and persons from the following bodies: the Bahamas Conference of the Methodist Church (BCMC), AME, AME Zion, Church of the Nazarene, Free Methodist, and persons from three individual Methodist Congregations (Epiphany Methodist Church, Nassau Methodist Church, and Zion Methodist Ministries). The aim of the meeting was to explore the possibility of hosting a World Methodist Council Evangelism Seminar in the Bahamas in 2009 or 2010. An organizing committee has been established to begin work on this. Let us hope and pray that these developments may lead to some kind of unity.

ALL SAINTS COMMUNITY

The involvement here is continuing to develop. I am part of process with others in the community that could loosely be called '*Friends of All Saints*', which is now beginning to work with the relevant Government departments to sort out this facility so that better care can be given to the residents. There is still a need for charitable support and that will remain so for a long while yet. One of the Rotary Clubs is paying for the repair of the communal toilet and bathroom facilities; another is paying for the paths to be improved to allow safer and easier wheelchair mobility. Another group, which came about because one of my church members comes regularly with me, is sponsoring the repair of a couple of houses. So as well as being a support by simply visiting and listening, we (the Methodist Church) have provided a facility whereby the community can access \$500 of foodstuffs from a local wholesaler per month, and are looking at ways of bringing overall improvement – infrastructure, management, health, etc.

WEDDINGS

On Saturday 26th April I am officiating at the wedding of two of the residents of All Saints – the parents of Anthonique, the infant whom I baptized last year. It was a longer process than normal to obtain the marriage license as Anthony never had his birth recorded, and neither person had passport, drivers license, voter's card, or any of the usual forms of ID used in this country. Amazing to think that persons today can still fall through the cracks and officialdom literally not having any record of their existence.

Recently I have officiated at two weddings held outdoors: the first in the exotic gardens of a Bahamas National Trust Property called the Retreat, and the second at a very picturesque spot on Paradise Island called the Cloisters – a place where many a celebrity has tied the knot. I have also officiated at a wedding at 8.00am on a Wednesday morning, with the wedding breakfast being a traditional Bahamian menu – so we enjoyed boiled fish and Johnny cake as well as minced crawfish and grits – delicious.

BIBLE STUDIES

In the Nassau Circuit, and throughout the District we continue to use the Disciple family of Bible Studies. In Nassau we are currently looking at 'Invitation to Romans.' We have also endorsed a stewardship study entitled, 'Treasures of the Transformed Life' which has proven very popular. Among others, in the autumn we plan to look at a series entitled "Money Matters" and one on "Faith Sharing".

COMMONWEALTH YOUTH EXCHANGE

In the summer of 2008 a group of some 13 persons from the Liverpool Methodist District, UK will be travelling to the Bahamas for a month. In 2009 a group from the Bahamas/Turks & Caicos Islands will go to Britain. We are looking forward to this programme as they travel between New Providence, North Eleuthera, Andros and Grand Bahama.

FAMILY NEWS

On the morning of Thursday 27th March, Susan's father, Donald Cates died peacefully at home at the age of 83. For the past four years he has been suffering from dementia and since the turn of the year his physical health had deteriorated quite dramatically. His funeral was a simple graveside service at Ebenezer Methodist Church Cemetery. We thank God for him and pray that he may now experience that peace and joy of eternity. The family are doing

well, but please remember in particular Susan's mother, Mrs. Rose Cates, and the rest of the family in your prayers.

Hurricane season officially began on 1st April, and so we pray for another quiet year like 2007. As I write we have experienced quite a dry spell of weather in the Bahamas, and could do with some much needed rain

As ever we continue to thank God for all your prayers and encouragement.

God bless,

Eddie, Susan, Jonathan and Thomas