



Senator the Honourable Donna Cox
Minister of Social Development & Family Services

**DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS
CUREPE PENTECOSTAL
EMPOWERMENT MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL**

Sunday September 04, 2022

4:00 p.m.

This is the day that the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it (Psalm 118:24)!

Today, I bring greetings from our Prime Minister, Dr. the Honourable Keith Christopher Rowley who sent his regards and sincerest congratulations to you on the celebration of your Diamond Jubilee, 75th Anniversary. Well done! I know that Dr. Rowley is quite passionate about embracing opportunities to join with the brethren in faith-based celebrations of this nature. Very often and quite vividly, he recalls the early days of his own journey in the faith, growing up in Tobago, using the lessons learnt there as the foundation for his strong ethical and principled moorings. Today, he apologises for his absence, and has deputized me, your humble servant, to stand in his stead.

Ladies and gentlemen, when a Church is able to celebrate 75 unbroken years of service to its congregation, you and I must applaud. The number 75 in the Bible is tied to the concept of coming into a deeper relationship with the Lord and blessings. At 75 years old, the Lord said to Abram, *"Get out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house into a land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation . . . And in you shall all families of the earth be blessed"* (Genesis 12:1 - 3). Abraham must have had a very close relationship with God to immediately obey His command.

So, I think we can all agree that the celebration of your 75th Anniversary today recognizes your long journey in relationship with God and you have come into the land that He has shown you and indeed many families in the earth are blessed because of you.

We applaud the dedication of your founding Pastor Ferdinand Lafleur who, with the support of two (2) Canadian missionaries, acquired the land and turned the sod in 1947 for the building where we are today. We also recognise and hail the other pastors such as Pastor Betty White who assumed leadership from 1958 and the late Reverend Levi Duncan who became Pastor in 1962. We remember his powerful, pioneering deliverance ministry and we know of his sons' continued impact on our nation's landscape today.

We recall, Dr. Torrance Bobb's determination for administrative and operational excellence and the now deceased Rev. Dr. Ethelbert Charles' popular teachings on Sunday mornings as well as his legacy of the Early Childhood Care and Education Centre, which could never be erased.

We also acknowledge the valuable contribution of your current Pastors, Rev. Dr. Melch Pope and Minister Shirlene Pope who are building on the foundation of those who went before and who must be recognized for their outdoor crusades throughout Curepe & environs under the CHOOSE LIFE theme. Surely, the Holy Spirit has overshadowed this Church and its various ministries and done this great work over the past 75 years!

Ladies and gentlemen, the exponential growth you have experienced over the 75 years of your existence, has not only been in terms of your physical assets, but more importantly, in your membership and in the thousands of persons to whom you minister on a daily basis. From the pioneer days of 1947 with approximately 40 members, to a congregation of over fifteen hundred (1,500) today, which represents an approximate 5000% increase; the church has grown phenomenally over the years and has been impacting lives and households, locally, regionally and internationally.

Indeed, the mustard seed planted 75 years ago has undergone tremendous growth, so much so that now many find shade under its spreading branches. This is a proud legacy, which offers many learnings for the work ahead as you fulfil your Church's mission, "*capture Curepe and its environs for Christ.*"

So, as we spend some time today, bringing to mind the accomplishments of the past, I urge you to focus your energies very much on the present and future as well, so as to ensure that you remain on course toward hearing the words, “*Well done, good and faithful servant...*” (Matthew 25:23).

Psalm 127:1 tells us “*Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labour in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain.*” There can be absolutely no doubt in anyone’s mind that the builders of the Curepe Pentecostal Empowerment Ministries International did not labour in vain, and certainly the guards did not stand watch in vain. If, as we believe, brothers and sisters, that by our fruits we shall be known (Matt.7:6), then we are certain that the roots of the Curepe Pentecostal Empowerment Ministries International were planted close to the running streams of faith, fertilized by the sacrifices and grace of your founders, and nurtured by the caring hands of all who have been fortunate to call this place “home.”

The fruits of your labour are there for all to see, and as Minister of Social Development, I was particularly heartened to learn of your continued pastoral outreach during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring that the least amongst us was cared for.

I am advised that notwithstanding the pandemic, you ensured that the hungry was fed, the naked was clothed, the sick was visited, and even those in prison benefitted from your Ministry. You also continued your radio and television programmes to reach people during the pandemic.

Mindful of its own limitations, the Government seeks to encourage and facilitate the participation of Curepe Pentecostal Empowerment Ministries International and other faith-based organizations, in the growth and development of the people of our beloved Republic. Ladies and gentlemen, the state sector and faith-based organizations have been partners long before we gained political Independence 60 years ago, and we continue to collaborate to the present day, pouring resources into schools, residential care facilities for children and young adults, half-way houses, and even homes for the aged – all operated by faith-based organizations.

The evidence suggests that there is much we can learn from each other, and I give the assurance today that this Government will continue to assist faith-based social programmes, with full awareness of our national anthem, which calls for respect of every creed and race. We are always careful to ensure that any support we offer is provided in a non-discriminatory manner.

The Curepe Pentecostal Empowerment Ministries International has been and continues to be a beacon and landmark in this area, providing comfort to many weary travellers; physical and spiritual nourishment to those who are hungry, and there can be no better vocation than that.

But your work is incomplete. As long as there are souls that need to be fed with the Word of God, there will be need for the Curepe Pentecostal Empowerment Ministries International. As long as the streets of Curepe and its environs are lined with the poor and destitute, there will be need for the Curepe Pentecostal Empowerment Ministries International. As long as the enemy seeks to establish and maintain strongholds in Trinidad and Tobago, and his agents seek to usurp the name of God, there is need for the Curepe Pentecostal Empowerment Ministries International.

There is need for Churches in the Body of Christ to enhance their partnership with the public sector to help, empower and transform the lives of the poor and vulnerable in our society. Psalm 41:1-2 says, *“Blessed is he who considers the poor; The LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. The LORD will preserve him and keep him alive, And he will be blessed on the earth.”* This scripture is clear: if we only consider the poor there is a blessing reserved for us. If we have pity upon the poor, we lend to the LORD according to Proverbs 19:17. We know God is no man’s debtor.

Today I encourage every Church, indeed every place of worship, to take a more proactive role in creating programmes and services that will empower persons to get out of poverty, heal the broken-hearted, deliver the captives, and give direction to those who have lost their way. Our heartbeat should be where the people are in the communities. Let us emulate our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He did not stay within the walls of the synagogue but was in the marketplace, the streets, by the sea, in the mountain and while He was going from place to place, He preached the gospel. The people of this country waits earnestly for us to manifest. It is time for God's people to arise, seek the Lord and transform our Nation for the honour and glory of God.

The challenges facing our nation and the world today are not one-dimensional, they are complex and intractable and cannot be resolved by a single approach or by only one segment of society working towards a solution. The challenges require that we as individuals and groups, pray, help, empower and intervene in meaningful ways whenever and wherever we have the opportunity to so do.

I therefore implore you, Curepe Pentecostal Empowerment Ministries, and other Faith-based Organisations, Non-Government Organisations, and Community-based Organisations to continue to partner with the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services to assist persons during their most critical time of need. The need is great, but if we do not become weary in well doing, “*in due season we shall reap, if we faint not*” (Galatians 6:9).

Today, I extend the warmest congratulations of the Honourable Prime Minister and the entire Government on this accomplishment of your Diamond Jubilee. We know that diamonds are the end result of intense pressure and challenge. You have fought the good fight, and you have run the race under extremely onerous conditions at times. You have succeeded despite the odds, and today you set your face like flint, looking toward your own Jerusalem where the agony of the cross always gives way to the victory of the resurrection.

It is my prayer that your Church will continue to grow “*from glory to glory*,” according to 2 Corinthians 3:18. May the next 75 years bring you even greater joy than the first. On behalf of the Honourable Prime Minister, I say to the leaders and membership of the Curepe Pentecostal Empowerment Ministries International today: “*May the Lord bless and keep you. May He make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.*”

May He lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His peace”
(Numbers 6:24). May you continue to “*capture Curepe and its environs
for Christ*”, for the honour and glory of God.

I thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for the courtesy of your attention.

May God bless you and may God bless our Nation.