



SENATOR THE HONOURABLE DONNA COX
**MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND
FAMILY SERVICES**

**ADDRESS
LAVENTILLE OPEN BIBLE
SENIOR CITIZENS' APPRECIATION DAY
2022**

**LAVENTILLE OPEN BIBLE
103 EASTERN MAIN ROAD
LAVENTILLE**

**SUNDAY NOVEMBER 06, 2022
9:00 A.M.**

Good Morning Brothers and Sisters,

It is indeed an honour to be here with you today, on the occasion of this Senior Citizens Appreciation Day.

As I begin, I must congratulate the Laventille Open Bible Church on reaching this milestone of fifty years of service to its congregation and the community. It is said that the number 50 in the Bible is a number of the Holy Spirit and symbolises deliverance or freedom from a burden. In Leviticus 25, God commanded ancient Israel that every fiftieth year, on the Day of Atonement, that a Jubilee was to be declared with the sound of a trumpet, and further to this, cancellation of debt and re-established harmony. In this regard, it is my prayer that the next 50 years would bring with it new opportunities, expansion and unity as a church.

This Senior Citizens Appreciation Day is indeed welcome and timely, as the international community recently observed the International Day for Older Persons on October 1st.

This annual recognition serves as an opportunity to highlight the important contributions that older persons make to society and raise awareness of the issues and challenges of the world's ageing population.

Thus, today represents a grand demonstration of the value that the Laventille Open Bible Church places on our elderly, who have contributed immensely, not only to building this church, but also to their communities and this nation as a whole. This is a fitting tribute, as the Bible instructs us in 1 Timothy 5:17 to, *“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine”*. In this regard, I extend congratulations to those being honoured and pray that *your latter days will be greater than your former*.

Your Anniversary theme **‘Changing Seasons, Unchanging God’** recognises that in spite of the changing seasons this church has experienced – in leadership, membership and ideas, our Lord, His characteristics and His promises – all remain constant, as proclaimed in Malachi 3:6.

Similarly, as our nation navigates through the socioeconomic challenges brought by changes in the global market and worsened by the pandemic, we know that the Lord will continue to guide us and enable us with all that is necessary, to continue to help, empower and transform the lives of those who are deemed vulnerable and marginalized in our society, among whom sometimes include older persons.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) anticipates that by the year 2050, there will be two billion people in the world over the age of 60, and further adds that the number of people aged 80 and older, will quadruple in the period 2000 to 2050. Hence, it is imperative that we all (Faith-Based Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, Community-Based Organizations, the Private Sector and the Government), must work together to ensure that our older citizens are treated with the respect, dignity and honour they so rightly deserve. This is in keeping with Exodus 20:12 which says, “*Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.*”

In this regard, we at the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services remain resolute in maintaining and enhancing the quality of life of ALL older persons, and recognises the essential role they still play in families, communities and the society. We continue to offer several services and programmes to enhance their standard of living.

As many may be aware, our Senior Citizens' Pension provides financial assistance to persons who have attained the age of 65 years and over who meet the qualifying criteria for the grant. Within recent times, the Ministry launched its Automated Senior Citizens' Pension, which affords senior citizens the option to apply for their Senior Citizens' Pension via an online platform and reduce the need for them to visit the Local offices. Likewise, the Ministry's Direct Deposit facility provides for a direct deposit into one's bank account, so that our seniors may avoid the hassle of long lines at the commercial banks. Therefore, for those who have not yet signed up for direct deposit, I encourage you to do so.

Many of you seniors gathered here have now advanced to the stage of grand and even great-grand parents status, a role which I am sure you enjoy. The Ministry has observed that over the years, and more so during the restrictions enforced during the pandemic, grandparents have taken on multiple roles. With this in mind, it was deemed necessary to develop initiatives to provide support to grandparents, especially considering the ongoing changes in societal norms. In 2021, through the National Family Services Division, the Grand-parenting Programme was launched and this programme seeks to equip grandparents with the necessary knowledge and skills, to make responsible decisions regarding the safety and well-being of grandchildren and other children under their care.

Additionally, through the Division of Ageing, a number of services are available to assist older persons, such as our Community Care Programme and our Older Persons Information Centre, which serves as a referral mechanism connecting older persons to key services available to them through both public and private agencies.

We have also relaunched our National Centenarian Programme, which recognises and honours citizens attaining the age of 100 years and above for their contributions to the development and overall success of our nation. This programme allows for intergenerational knowledge exchange as the wisdom obtained from centenarians on their best practices for living a full, long, healthy life is shared with our youth and the wider public. Furthermore, through partnerships with the Ministry of Health, our centenarians are provided with health check-ups at their homes.

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services has recognized that collaboration is crucial to meeting the needs of those most vulnerable in our society. I therefore encourage the Church to continue to partner with the Ministry, so we can collaborate to provide support to older persons and families in general, when it is most needed.

To this end, the Ministry invites the Open Bible Church to be a part of our Public Information, Education and Sensitization (P.I.E.S) sessions, which are virtual workshops that are provided to enlighten your staff and membership on the various social grants and services available and how these could be accessed. To find out more about PIES, feel free to contact our Communications Unit or send us a message on Facebook.

As a Ministry with oversight for the family and by extension the framing of our society, we are also grateful to the Body of Christ (the Church) for its continued efforts in reaching the poor and indigent. Therefore, through the NGO Unit, the Ministry will continue to pursue initiatives to empower, build capacity and provide to support to faith based organizations.

Please be assured that you have the Ministry's support and that of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in this and other similar endeavours.

As I close, I encourage you to embrace and enjoy the process of ageing for as Lynsay Sands expressed, *“Your face is marked with lines of life, put there by love and laughter, suffering and tears. It’s beautiful”*.

I thank you.

God bless you.