

Statement on Crime and Violence

By the Bahamas/Turks & Caicos Islands
Conference of The Methodist Church

“Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” Proverbs 14:34

We, the Ministerial and Lay Delegates to the 196th Annual Session of the Bahamas/Turks and Caicos Island Conference of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas, in session at Grand Turk, hereby, express our grave concern at the high rate of crime and violence evident in our nations at this time.

We are deeply disturbed at the number of crimes of a violent nature which have occurred in these islands during the past year which included robbery, desecration of places of worship, crimes against children, rape, attempted murder, and murder. We are particularly saddened as a result of the murder of Mr. Vincent Pedican, who was an active member of our church and community, and by the fact that several of our members have close relatives who have perished under tragic circumstances.

Realizing that such a high rate of violent crime is incompatible with the concept of the Bahamas/Turks & Caicos Islands as Christian Nations, we believe that it is incumbent upon us “to speak out” on this most disturbing situation.

First, we would like to take this opportunity, in a spirit of Christian charity, to extend our sympathy to all members of the family and friends of the victims of the violent crimes. We pray that they may be comforted and strengthened by the assurance of the presence of the Living Christ with them in this their hour of bereavement. “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” (Matt.5:4)

Turning to the contemporary situation in our nations, we would like to urge that every possible effort be made by all parties concerned (State, Church, Commerce etc.) to reduce significantly

the rate of crime and violence in the Bahamas and Turk and Caicos Island Conference Area.

The following measures are hereby recommended:

00. Stiffer penalties for the illegal possession of fire arms.
00. Every effort must be made by the relevant agencies of Government to prevent the entry of illegal firearms into the Bahamas and Turks & Caicos Islands.
0. Roadblocks should continue to be conducted by the Police in order to prevent criminals from using vehicles for the transport for illegal weapons.
- . Under no circumstances whatsoever should bail be granted to persons who commit a crime while on bail!

Since it is often the case that “Justice delayed is justice denied” we urge the powers that be, to ensure that the administration of justice is executed at expeditiously as possible.

We take this opportunity to state our position on the matter of the death penalty which we, as a church, do not support as we feel it is not in keeping with the New Testament’s teachings of Jesus Christ and does not provide any lasting solution. We support stiffer penalties and a greater focus on prevention and rehabilitation.

We are painfully aware that many of these acts of violence are committed by young people, in particular, “young males who have fallen between the cracks” in our competitive society. It is reasonable to assume then, that the engagement of these dysfunctional young people in constructive pursuits would result in a reduction of crime: for those who are busily employed simply “do not have time for the devil.”

We are convinced that the immediate implementation of the above “short term measures,” along with “long term” programmes for the rehabilitation of home, family life, greater concentration on discipline in our schools by both government and church, and moral instruction for young people in the sound principles of Christian Education would go a long way to bring about a significant reduction in the rate of crime and violence in our

nations.

As a church, we have already embarked upon programmes especially designed to equip our young men with social tools to cope with life in The Bahamas and in the Turks and Caicos Islands today. We have decided to extend these efforts to make a positive impact upon the boys and young men of our congregations so that they may become law abiding, disciplined citizens of our nations. Moreover, it is our firm resolve to place high priority upon the restoration of home and family life throughout the length and breadth of the Bahamas/Turks & Caicos Islands Conference. For we take seriously our responsibility to abide by the high moral principles of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) and the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7) and in this regard will make very effort to be available to provide counseling to all ages.

We stand pledged to cooperate with “the powers that be”, as well as with our brethren of other branches of Christ’s Church in seeking to banish the scourge of crime from our midst and the restoration and promotion of justice, peace, tranquility and prosperity to these islands.

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