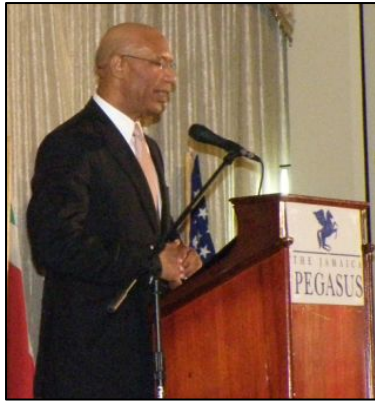


CONECAR 2009: Life Transforming

Gathered around the theme *The Church: Disciples in Transformation*, 125 Evangelical Christian leaders from twenty Caribbean countries and several countries from outside the region assembled for the Congress of Evangelicals in the Caribbean (CONECAR 2009) at the Pegasus Hotel in Kingston, Jamaica October 26-29.



In the opening ceremony the Governor General of Jamaica, His Excellency Sir Patrick Allen, challenged the delegates to emulate the sons of Issachar and be people who understand the times and know what the Church should do.

In ten plenaries and twenty-four workshops delegates did just that as they grappled with the implications of discipleship in lifestyle, ministry and impact in the community.

The first plenary speaker, Rev. Dr. Israel Brito of the Dominican Republic, emphasised that he did not understand how the Caribbean was experiencing sustained Evangelical Christian numerical growth while simultaneously seeing increased structures and manifestations of evil. Each plenary then built on that foundation calling the Caribbean Church to a position where it would impact society and change the region.

Her Honour Senator Joan Purcell, President of the Senate of the Government of Grenada, in a powerful plenary presentation called the Church to much greater involvement in the societies they serve. In closing her challenge to delegates Senator Purcell declared, "I know that my Redeemer lives! I know that our Sovereign Lord reigns! I know that our God is active in the affairs of men, that history is in His Hand – that He calls us as faithful witnesses, true worshippers and bold warriors to join Him in His redemptive work – to disciple the nations, to offer salvation, to feed the hungry, to be makers of peace and builders of culture, to be proponents of justice and agents of change, bearers of salvation and instruments of spiritual deliverance – to bring to this sick and sorry world the only transformation possible through the Mighty, Power and Presence of His Holy Spirit working through His disciples in His Church."



Rev. Joel Edwards, International Director of Micah Challenge and former General Director of the Evangelical Alliance in the UK, challenged delegates each morning using Jesus as his model of discipler and transformer. In other plenaries Pastor Eworth Williams (EAC's new Executive Director of its Caribbean Youth Network) and Rachel Stakel (Suriname) – the youngest plenary speakers in CONECAR's history – emphasised being a disciple. Apostle Eliseus Joseph (Barbados) sought to outline the disciple's engagement of society rather than escapism or withdrawal. Rev. Dr. Peter Garth (Jamaica) contrasted individualism and community and provided the bones of a model.



As this was the twenty-fifth anniversary of CONECAR an awards banquet was held during the congress to honour those who had pioneered the event and sacrificially sustained it in its early years. A special tribute was paid to the late Dave Ho who was the first congress director and the person largely responsible for the launch of CONECAR in 1984 and its subsequent development through to 1992.

Several Christian organisations took advantage of the opportunity the congress provided to interact with Caribbean leaders and share how they can

serve the Church in the region.

In the closing plenary Bishop Gerry Seale, General Secretary and CEO of the Evangelical Association of the Caribbean which is the parent-body of CONECAR, called the Church to empower Jesus' disciples in the twenty-first century to be salt, light and a royal priesthood when distributed through the community seven days a week.

Many of those who attended CONECAR 2009 stated that the experience was life and ministry transforming. It certainly was a seminal moment in the life of the Evangelical Association of the Caribbean.



It is expected that CONECAR 2011 will take place in Guyana and options are being explored for CONECAR 2013 to be held in St. Maarten.

(Photo captions: 1 – His Excellency Sir Patrick Allen; 2 – Her Honour Senator Joan Purcell; 3 – CONECAR Honourees; 4 – Bishop Gerry Seale. All photos were taken by Bishop Seale and his grandson Zechariah Naitram).