

REPORT ON CBAC 2017

The first conference organized by the Caribbean Brethren Assemblies Conference Committee (CBACC) was held at Cascadia Hotel, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, from July 17th to 21st, 2017, with the theme, "Moving Forward Together". While CBACC was responsible for the programme content, the on-the-ground support needed for the successful running of the conference was provided by the Local Coordinating Committee (LCC), chaired by Bro. Lawrence Haggard. CBACC sincerely thanks all members of the LCC for their hard work and sacrifice.

There were two hundred and seventy-three participants, representing sixteen territories. Extra-regional participants included one guest from the United Kingdom and one from India, as well as several United States citizens/residents with Caribbean roots. A significant number of the participants were young people.

The main speakers were Loris Heywood (Guyana), David Corbin (Trinidad and Tobago/ Jamaica), Neil Summerton (United Kingdom), and David Henry (Jamaica). The opening address was done by Hadyn Marshall (Chairman, CBACC) and the closing challenge by Clyde Edwards. There were eighteen workshops, addressing topics such as Disaster Management, Leadership, Using Technology in Ministry, Domestic Violence, Sexual Abuse, etc. Speakers' and workshop presenters' notes, and pictures from the conference can be viewed at cbac.wordpress.com.

Participants expressed a high degree of satisfaction with what was offered at the conference. At the end of the first day, one of the participants said to the chairman of the LCC: "I have already gotten my money's worth". The principal areas of satisfaction were the main speakers' messages, the content of the workshops, the fellowship, and the Youth Night, which was considered by many to be the highlight of the conference. On that night, there was a special presentation by Sister Leah Joslyn, a young national of Trinidad and Tobago, serving on the foreign field with Ethnos 360, formerly New Tribes Mission. On the negative side, some concern was expressed about the food, the accommodation, and the late ending of some of the evening sessions.

The conference fees were set at a relatively low level in order to encourage the widest possible participation. Individuals and assemblies in the Caribbean and North America responded very positively to CBACC's appeal for donations to help defray conference expenses. Donations received amounted to TT\$94,157. 00. This enabled CBACC to meet all expenses and emerge with a surplus of TT\$29, 787. 00. CBACC thanks all those who gave generously of their money, time, and expertise.

One of our expectations at CBACC was that the conference would provide the impetus for the setting up of a sustainable mechanism for responding to natural disasters in the region. Accordingly, a workshop on Disaster Management was part of the conference programme, and an interest group meeting was also scheduled for one of the afternoon slots. Regrettably, the attendance at the interest group meeting was disappointing. However, as if to remind us of the need to address disaster management at the regional level, two powerful hurricanes, Irma and Maria, pounded the region in September, leaving behind death and destruction. CBACC was able to make a contribution of TT\$4, 722. 00 to the brethren in Anguilla out of the surplus from CBAC 2017. Much more can be achieved if we work together. It is hoped that our recent experiences in the Caribbean will lead to a more positive response to CBACC's efforts to encourage greater regional cooperation in disaster management.

The next conference to be organized by CBACC is scheduled for July 2021. The host country is yet to be decided. Jamaica has expressed an interest in hosting the event and has promised to forward a proposal to CBACC. In the meantime, CBACC is encouraging persons to plan to attend IBCM 7, scheduled for Rome from June 24th to 28th, 2019. This opportunity to interact with, and learn from, brethren from all over the world should not be missed. CBACC is also looking into the possibility of holding a regional youth event, most likely a camp, in 2019. Let us keep all of these matters before the Lord as we continue to move forward together.