

The United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands has embarked on a Peace Promotion Initiative in response to the prevalence of conflict in our national life, and the pervasive use of violence as a way of settling our differences. This is intended to promote peace on a personal level and in the broader community.



There is great need for such an initiative. For example, the Constabulary Force reports that 471 murders have already been committed in the first 118 days of the year – *that's 4 murders a day!* And so, the UCJCI Peace Promotion Initiative is intended to prompt us to action in our various spheres of influence, towards building harmonious relationships. We are all called to be more than just *peace-lovers*. We must be *peace-makers*.

Let's be peace-makers and not just peace- lovers.

In other words, having experienced God's peace for ourselves, we must now become *mediators* of that peace. This means we cannot afford to remain in our comfort zone while conflict rages all around us and our nation crumbles! It's probably a fair guess to say that every one of us is a peace-lover. However, while everyone is a peace-lover, very few of us are peace-makers. We all want peace, yet by our attitudes and actions, we often create the very conditions that

lead to the escalation of conflict and violence in our nation. For example, individuals who are aware that conflict is brewing in their family, workplace, church, institution of learning, or some other grouping know that something needs to be done about this problem, but may be fearful, because an attempt to resolve the issue may result in further difficulties. In such a situation they may well decide to do and say nothing, "for peace's sake." They will allow the situation to drag on uncomfortably, because their love for a certain kind of peace makes them avoid trouble. Now such individuals may be described as *peace-lovers*, but certainly not *peace-makers*. In the end, they are rather *trouble-makers*, for the longer the situation continues, the more serious its consequences and the harder its cure.

It is not enough to be mere *peace-lovers*, we must strive to be *peace-makers*. British statesman Edmund Burke once wrote: "All that is required for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." I say "Amen" to that! Too many of us sit on the sidelines instead of actively participating and working for the good. If good wins, we join in the celebration though we did nothing to produce the victory. If evil wins, we will complain long and loud, even though our own indifference helped to produce the undesirable outcome.

A military officer once said that leadership "means running toward the gunfire." The simple fact is that most persons will instead run for cover and silently watch as someone *else* runs toward the gunfire. They may applaud the bravery of those who do so; they may say, "I agree with you, go ahead," but they risk *nothing*. What are we willing to risk? Will we take the challenge and be a part of the UCJCI Peace Promotion Initiative? Our answer to these questions will determine whether we are peace-makers or just peace-lovers.