



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Dear friends and companions in ministry,

Easter, 2022

“Let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are now being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to perfection by Him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord”

(The Church in the Province of the West Indies, *The Book of Common Prayer*, reprint edition, 2007, page 242).



The good news above was part of a worship service that I attended on Good Friday at the chapel of the University of the West Indies (UWI), where I often worship with the Anglican community. In the photo to the left you can see that the chapel's arched entrance echoes the arches in the background, which are the remains of an aqueduct that supplied water to the sugarcane plantation that used to be where the university is now.

In a sense, it was sugar that made the Caribbean. This past semester I have been co-teaching a course on Caribbean Church History with a veteran teacher of the subject, colleague Rev. Dr. Glenroy Lalor, from whom I have learned a lot. On day one of the course, we tried to define “the Caribbean”, and by process of elimination we got to this definition: It is the ethnically diverse coasts and islands of the western Atlantic that share a history of sugar plantations worked by enslaved Africans. Most Jamaicans today are descendants of the Africans who were captured, enslaved, transported, and made to work on the sugar plantations until they died. It is an extremely painful legacy and the trauma of it has not yet healed.

It was Roger Copeland, one of the students at the United Theological College of the West Indies (UTCWI), where I teach, who shared with me the plantation history of the university when he joined me in worship at the UWI chapel once. Then he said something unforgettable. He turned to me and said, “It’s good that they put this chapel here so that what happens in it can begin to heal the wounds of the past; there is still so much pain.” That chapel, where we celebrate the life of Jesus, his healing ministry, his teaching about the reign of God, his suffering and death, his resurrection and his sharing with us of his body, blood and Spirit, is placed directly on the wound of the past, in the middle of the place of slavery. What a witness to the God who is with us to give us life where we need it most!

This Easter message is what students at UTCWI are being trained to share with the communities where they will serve so that, through them, God can heal the people and raise the downcast. Those who are in Christ have a new life that is not defined only by the pain of the past but also by the freedom of the present and the perfection of the future. Caribbeans who are in Christ embrace a definition of themselves that includes what is good, beautiful, creative and joyful as Christ heals them, his own people whom he has made and rescued. One fun example of this celebration of life in the Caribbean took place on campus in February, “Reggae month” in Jamaica. The staff of the Registrar’s office hosted a “Crazy Hat Day” and invited everyone to wear a hat with a Jamaican theme. My favorite was the one made by Kimberley Walker, the registry assistant. She models it in the photo, and she gave me this explanation of all its features:

“On my hat made of thatch are:

- Jamaica's national fruit- Ackee [The pulp inside is usually eaten for breakfast, fried up with thyme, scallions and saltfish.]
- Jamaica's Coat of Arms
- Jamaica's national flower - Lignum Vitae
- Jamaican flag
- and there is a fern at the back (not visible in the picture).”



It is a priceless gift to be able to share new life in Christ with the community at UTCWI and with you.

Carolyn

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P.S. In addition to prayer, here are ways to support me financially.

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