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# RECRUITING AND SENDING CARIBBEAN MISSIONARIES

by  
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**I**n reflecting on the topic assigned to me for this conference I have been very much aware that there has been little written or spoken on this matter regionally and so I am delivering a very personal reflection as the missionary movement out of the Caribbean begins to emerge.

## Shifting of Paradigms

The first basic step which needs to be taken is a shifting of paradigms. For five centuries we have developed certain self-images. These must be changed if we are to accept the global mandate of Jesus Christ to take the Gospel to every nation.

## From Recipient To Sender

The first of these images that we must change is from recipient to sender. We have been receiving for 500 years. It is now difficult for many of us to grasp the reality that we can be senders. Colonialism, which still exists in several territories, and slavery have left us with a mentality of being directed and supported from without. This paradigm must be broken and we, as Caribbean persons, must begin to recognize that we are able to be self-reliant. We can send as well as receive.

This basic paradigm shift is critical in the thinking of Caribbean Evangelical leaders if we are to send missionaries from the Caribbean to the regions beyond our idyllic shores. Dependency must be changed to self-reliance, and then self-reliance must develop into a willingness to give.

If we have received for five centuries, then surely we have received much. In the context of faithful stewardship Jesus stated unequivocally, "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the

more" (Luke 12:48 NKJV). On another occasion, this time in the context of ministry to others, Jesus clearly stated, "Freely you have received, freely give" (Matt. 10:8 NJKV).

Surely the Master's words speak into our situation. We have received much. We have received freely. We have received thousands of missionaries with their full financial support. We have received millions of dollars for building construction, evangelistic outreach, and social programmes. We have received enormous quantities of Sunday School teaching materials, books, tracts, sponsorship for radio programmes, television outreach, etc.

May I respectfully suggest that if we do not now shift our paradigm from recipients to senders our stewardship will be sadly lacking. We will be in danger of finding ourselves like the man in Jesus' parable who hid his talent in the ground and to whom the master said, "You wicked and lazy servant" (Mt. 26:26-31 NKJV).

## **From Inability to Ability**

A second paradigm shift must come from inability to ability. For too long we have sat back and expressed in conference after conference and meeting after meeting our inability to do the things God justly requires of us. Let us consider some of the resources we have.

## **Human Resources**

There are about 35 million people living in these Caribbean territories from Cuba to Guyana. This includes over 20 million who speak Spanish, over 7 million who speak French, 5-6 million who speak English, and somewhere in the vicinity of 600,000 who speak Dutch. We, therefore, have a human resource with a significant linguistic and cultural base.

Our human resource is also ethnically diverse. Amerindians account for about 0.18%, Afro-Caribbean 35%, Euro-Caribbean 30%, Asian-Caribbean 3.7%, and mixed 31.1%. From this ethnic diversity we can draw persons who will fit into almost any ethnic setting worldwide.

In many Caribbean countries our people also have access to education at a very high level. In several territories primary, secondary, and tertiary level education is free and therefore, accessible. Compared to many other regions we, therefore, have a fairly well-educated human resource.

As Evangelicals we are also well positioned. Approximately four million Caribbean persons are born again believers (Johnstone, 1994, 46-49). We have more than 60 Bible schools and theological training institutions training the leaders of these Evangelicals. We also have more

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than 40 Christian radio stations and half-dozen Christian publishers (Seale 1994).

### **Financial Resources**

We have told ourselves for so long that we are poor that we believe it. Yet let us compare some statistics from the World Population Data Sheet of 1994.

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>PER CAPITA GNP US\$</b>
Antigua & Barbuda	4,870
Bahamas	12,020
Barbados	6,530
Brazil	2,770
Costa Rica	2,000
Dominica	2,520
Dominican Republic	1,040
Grenada	2,310
Guatemala	980
Guyana	330
India	310
Jamaica	1,340
Nigeria	320
Puerto Rico	6,610
St. Kitts Nevis	3,990
St. Lucia	2,900
St. Vincent & Grenadines	1,990
Suriname	3,700
Trinidad & Tobago	3,940

Costa Rica, Guatemala, Brazil, Nigeria, and India are at the forefront of the Third World Missionary Movement which now has, collectively, more than 40,000 missionaries on the mission field. A comparison of the available statistics does seem to suggest that within the region we do have the financial resources to send missionaries. An increased per capita GNP suggests the population has access to greater disposable income. More disposable income suggests the possibility of increased giving.

The recent International Monetary Fund policies adopted by major countries in the region is leading to a freeing up of currency. For example, Barbadians used to be limited to BDS\$1,500 per annum for

holiday travel and BDS\$6,000 for business travel. This has now been raised to BDS\$5,000 and BDS\$25,000 respectively. Some countries are also now allowing citizens to hold US dollar accounts. Such changes are making it easier for us to send out currency to support missionary endeavours. Are we preparing ourselves to take advantage of these opportunities?

### **From Isolationism To Partnership**

A third paradigm shift necessary for us to be able to recruit and send missionaries is a shift from isolationism to partnership. As long as we maintain our local churches in splendid isolation from each other all of our God-given resources will be divided, indeed decimated, to such an extent that we will be unable to recruit and send missionaries. However, if the existing Body of Christ can recognise the unity amidst the diversity and begin to harness the resources we have together then the impossible becomes possible, the improbable becomes practical, and the unreal becomes reality. Luis Bush defines partnership as

an association of two or more Christian autonomous bodies who have formed a trusting relationship and fulfill agreed-upon expectations by sharing complementary strengths and resources to reach their mutual goal (1990, 3)

The initiatives must be taken to build trusting relationships throughout the Caribbean among the Evangelical communities of our various linguistic, cultural, geographical, and denominational enclaves in order for us to give birth to missionary sending movements within these islands.

### **Who Is A Missionary**

A fourth urgent paradigm shift needed is in the determination of who is a missionary. Our current paradigm of a missionary is a North American with lots of money and technological resources. But that is not a Biblical definition. Biblically, a missionary is an individual who has been transformed by God's grace through the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ and is then called by God to a specific area of ministry.

As I look at the early church in the Book of Acts, I discover that the original missionaries went out from a minor Roman colony from a base of political powerlessness, of poverty, and of pain and persecution. From such a base the Gospel went around the world and the world was "turned upside down."

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Indeed, the original missionary mandate was not even given to Caucasians! Missions is not "the white man's burden" as it used to be called, but the mandate of every Bible-believing church and every born-again Christian. Our Caribbean people are also called to be missionaries!

These paradigm shifts are essential if we are to begin recruiting and sending Caribbean missionaries. People like ourselves, who have a direct role in shaping attitudes and thinking within the Caribbean Evangelical movement, need to take the necessary steps within our training institutions and denominational hierarchies to facilitate these paradigm shifts as soon as possible.

### **Recruiting Caribbean Missionaries**

Young people in the Caribbean are ready to respond to the global mandate and are willing to commit their lives to serving God in non-Caribbean territories. As paradigms shift in our local churches, more and more young people will step forward to take the Gospel to different cultures.

In November 1993 several denominations in Grenada came together to host the first inter-denominational missionary convention in that country. At the close of the six nights of challenging services more than 20 young people stepped forward to dedicate their lives to the missionary enterprise. In June 1994 Central Assembly of God conducted its second World Missions Conference. During the closing service more than 40 people were at the altar to dedicate themselves for missionary service. Abundant Life Assembly in Barbados proclaims, "The supreme task of this church is world evangelisation." With this constantly before pastors and people the church has grown to over 1,600 members with young people going out to serve in various countries and ministries. Youth With A Mission is also successfully recruiting Caribbean persons, training them in nine bases across the region, and thrusting them out to short-term missionary service in places as diverse as Mexico, Nepal and China. These are some examples of the developing missionary vision and response in the Caribbean.

Dr. Theodore Srinivasagan, General Secretary of the Indian Evangelical Mission, stated,

The local church is the primary area in which potential missionary candidates are found. But there are two other secondary areas from which candidates are also drawn, and they are (a) Bible schools and seminaries and (b) universities, colleges and schools. But even those whose interest in missions has been kindled while studying in these educational institutions should have their base in the local churches (Srinivasagam 1990, 222).

It is from within the local church that recruitment of missionaries will be the most successful. Those of us who train the future pastors of Caribbean churches have an incredibly unique opportunity to plant the seeds of missions in the hearts of pastors so that the local church may be a fruitful recruitment ground.

Dr. Srinivasagam went on to outline various means that we can use to successfully recruit missionaries:

- Missionary conventions, conferences, camps, house parties, prayer meetings
- Missionary videos, films, filmstrips and slides, charts and graphs, etc.
- Missionary magazines, books
- Visits to mission fields
- IFES, Campus Crusade, Navigators, SU, CEF, YFC related student groups in universities, colleges, schools, Bible schools and seminaries
- Missions minded local churches (Srinivasagan 1990, 222).

Dr. Srinivagas sees the role of the local church in preparing missionary candidates as:

- Discovering potential missionary candidates
- Developing the interest of potential missionary candidates
- Building their spiritual life and discipling them
- Training them by giving varied experience in ministry
- Guiding them by wise counsel
- Sending them and sustaining them by prayer and financial support (Srinivasagam 1990, 228-231)

If we are to see these things become increasingly a part of normal church life in the Caribbean then future pastoral leaders must be introduced to these concepts during their formative years in training.

Speaking of the recruitment and selection of candidates for Indian missions, Mr. Jeya Kumar stresses the critical need of manpower planning.

**Manpower planning is the process by which an organization moves from its current manpower position to its desired manpower**

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position, striving to have the right number and the right kind of people at the right places at the right time to do the right things which results in both organization and the individual receiving the maximum long range benefit (Kumar 1992,40).

As part of our recruitment process we must understand the needs of the mission field, the resources we have, and then find ways to bring the two together in order that the Kingdom of God is extended, the local church is built up and the individual is strengthened and empowered to be as effective as possible.

Critical steps in the recruitment process would be:

(a) Written job descriptions/specifications

Each position to be filled needs to be clearly outlined on paper so that prospective missionary candidates can clearly understand that for which they are applying. There is nothing more frustrating than inadequate job descriptions that engender confusion and tension between personnel. This will require careful planning and the involvement of management expertise in the process. Theological thinkers are not necessarily management experts and sometimes need to elicit the help of the experts to ensure that the systems put in place are workable, effective and practical.

(b) Advertising

This perhaps sounds a little more intimidating than it really is. Already there are well-developed Christian electronic media in the region. EAC's Communications Commission has already identified more than 40 Christian radio stations and a dozen television channels in these islands (Seale 1994). These can carry advertising to the Christian constituency in all four language groups. Such publications as Caribbean Challenge of Jamaica and El Tiempo Final of the Dominican Republic can take the message in print. EAC's own developing news linkage, EAC News, can also be a tool in disseminating advertising in the future.

(c) Processing of applications

This is a critical stage in the whole process. Not everyone who applies will be a suitable candidate. The processing of the applications needs to be God-directed in a real and practical way taking all the relevant factors into consideration. As part of the process candidates would have to be personally interviewed and such interviews need to be set up to be as objective and impartial as is

humanly possible. According to Jeya Kumar such areas as education, work experience, marital status, habits and attitudes, health, human relations, recreation, hobbies, preference of work, church life, Bible knowledge, prayer life, professional skills, leadership abilities, and speaking abilities are to be seriously reviewed during the personal interview (Kumar 1992, 41-42).

**(d) Confirming call and commitment to ministry**

Above every other consideration must be the call of God upon the life of the candidate. Confirming such a call cannot be taken lightly. The wrong person in the wrong post can be a fruitful area for the enemy's attack. A person not clear about God's call can be discouraged and join the casualty list early, doing much damage to the cause in the process. In selecting married candidates the spouses' call to service must also be a factor in recruitment. A missionary not fully supported by his/her spouse is a missionary destined for serious problems.

**(e) Appointment**

Issuing the appointment orders is a necessary part of the recruitment process. Such orders need to be clear as to the appointment. At this stage the missionary candidate would need to work on such areas as obtaining the required visas and work permits.

**(f) Terms and conditions of service**

These need to be clearly spelt out during the recruitment process. These need to be clearly documented so that everyone can understand them and the embarrassment sometimes caused in dealing with these critical areas can be minimised.

**(g) Discipline**

Disciplinary procedures need to be outlined carefully to all candidates during the recruitment process. Every missionary should be clear about these procedures before entering into an agreement to serve. In the unpleasant event of having to impose disciplinary procedures against anyone the process is facilitated by having clear procedures laid out and agreed to beforehand.

**(h) Evaluation**

Performance appraisal is vital to the continued development of the missionary organization as well as the missionary. We all find performance appraisal somewhat intimidating. It is therefore very

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helpful to have the procedures for performance appraisal clearly spelt out towards the end of the recruitment process so that everyone involved can understand and accept these procedures in making a commitment as a missionary.

(i) Orientation

Orientation is a vital step in concluding the recruitment process. Orientation will vary depending on the type of missionary service required but should never be minimized. The more comprehensive the orientation the better.

### **Sending Caribbean Missionaries**

For centuries missionaries have been sent largely from a base of affluence and political power, especially during the colonial era. This has quite naturally led to the development of sending models based on affluence and political power. A serious analysis of these models may find them inappropriate for those of us operating from a completely different base in the Two-Thirds World. This is not intended to be criticism of those models but simply the realization that we operate from a different base and therefore different models may be necessary in order for us to succeed.

In taking a holistic approach to the concept of sending missionaries from the Caribbean to the rest of the world the following points are critical.

### **Build A Denominational Base**

We are still very much within the paradigm that our denominational linkages are far more important than our relationships within the body of Christ. This being the reality, the denominational programme must supply the prayer, financial, and emotional support base needed by missionaries being sent out.

The Evangelical Church of the West Indies (ECWI) has already launched its missions agency and is beginning to send missionaries to places like French Guiana where a St. Lucian is currently serving under ECWI's banner. The Pentecostal Assemblies of the West Indies (PAWI) initiated a programme in the 1970's when Dr. Winston Broomes and his family were sent to Africa, first to Zaire and then to Kenya. However, for various reasons PAWI has retreated from the international to the regional scene with the latest missionary family being sent from Tobago to St. Kitts.

The stronger the denominational commitment to and involvement in

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the missionary sending force, the stronger that missionary sending force will be. Reality dictates, however, that denominational hierarchies must see the benefits that are derived from their commitment. Unless these benefits are clear and tangible the commitment will wane and, in some cases, dwindle away into nothingness.

### **Build A Partnership Base**

As we look at the whole concept of sending missionaries from the Caribbean it must be apparent to all of us that we need strong partnerships in order to carry out God's mandate to the church. Not many of us will be able to do it alone.

The Evangelism and Mission Commission of the Evangelical Association of the Caribbean (EAC) is currently struggling with the development of a Caribbean Global Missions Association (CGMA) to provide a network of support for agencies wishing to build the Caribbean missions force. The process of development of CGMA has been painful and long. It began at the Caribbean Consultation on Global Missions held in Jamaica during November, 1990. From there a committee drafted the initial document which was affirmed at CONECAR '92 in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. EAC's Executive has accepted ownership of the document with the understanding that it will be revised to develop an arm of EAC which will serve as a catalyst and motivator for the Caribbean church while networking the missionary resources. The revised document will then go to EAC's next General Assembly for ownership and implementation by the EAC family.

Other Partnership bases are critical. One example can be found in the partnership of PAWI with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) in sending the Broomes family of Africa. PAWI provided salary support while PAOC provided orientation, field supervision, and ministry opportunities.

Youth With A Mission (YWAM), EAC's newest member-body, is already providing partnership opportunities for local churches willing to cooperate in sending Caribbean missionaries, long and short-term, across the world. YWAM links a training base with a missionary centre and vision to the local church, enabling Caribbean persons to take up the global mandate in obedience to Jesus Christ.

The AD 2000 and Beyond Movement, represented regionally by EAC, is building effective networks across the world that will enable us to tap into information and other resources needed to place missionaries strategically where they can be the most effective in the long-term development of God's Kingdom.

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Other organizations such as Operation Mobilisation (OM) and Wycliffe Bible Translators already have ongoing partnerships with Caribbean Churches in the mobilisation of Caribbean missionaries to serve across the world. Barbadians are currently serving with OM in Europe and have served on OM ship M.V. Logos. Wycliffe is building a strong Caribbean chapter which can make a definite input in the development of our missions force.

The potential for partnerships on the basis of "trusting relationships" is unlimited! There are excellent agencies within the developed countries with the expertise and experience we need to be effective. There are emerging agencies within Latin America, Africa and Asia with whom we have much in common as Two-Thirds World Christians responding to the command of Christ. Through partnership we can maximize limited resources, minimise failure potential, and increase the successes and benefits of our Caribbean missions force.

### **Build A Financial Support Base**

As mentioned earlier in this paper, we cannot send missionaries from a base of affluence and power. We are sending missionaries from a base of limited financial resources and no political or military power. We, therefore, need to carefully examine the financial support base we build for missionaries to ensure that our missionaries are adequately cared for on the mission field. Towards this end we need to consider:

### **Tentmaking Missionaries**

Tentmaking missionaries are persons who support themselves by their professional skills while they engage in cross-cultural ministry on the job and during their spare time off the job. It is time for Caribbean professionals to volunteer for service within their fields of expertise in order to bring Christ into situations where He might not otherwise be known. For example, a young Barbadian woman is serving as a teacher in Anguilla in order to serve within the church there. She has launched a Christian movement among secondary school students in Anguilla, is active in Christian radio, and serves with great commitment within the local church. Her desire is to be accepted for diplomatic service at the United Nations in order to build the opportunity to serve God in the countries of the former Soviet Union. She is a tentmaking missionary.

A young doctor from Costa Rica gave up his lucrative family practice and took his family to Francophone Africa to serve within a government medical facility in a Muslim country so as to be able to live Christ in the midst of Muslim culture. He is a tentmaking missionary.

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Countries closed to North Americans and to the traditional type of missionary are wide open to Caribbean professionals. Christians who are willing to live the life of Christ within the host culture so that people may see and understand the difference Christ makes in the individual's life can reach these countries for Christ. Such tentmaking missionaries demand far less financial resources from us to support them. This is an area in which we can respond now if we are prepared to make this option realistically available to our people.

### **Incarnational Missionaries**

These are personnel trained to live within a foreign culture, adapting to that culture, living like the people they serve in order to serve effectively. This was modelled most effectively by our Lord Jesus.

This methodology is being used very successfully in some African contexts. Persons from a different tribe are trained to live within another tribe, accepting its cultural patterns and norms, in order to become like the people they serve. In this way they can present a relevant Saviour in a culturally relevant manner. Such cultural adaptation is not easy. However, there is far less cost than in developing mission stations, maintaining lifestyles far removed from the people being served, and a cumbersome support system.

From within the Caribbean we could profitably explore and adapt the incarnational methodology in serving some nations of the world with missionaries. We do it very successfully in sending the cream of our Evangelical leadership to North America and to a lesser extent to the United Kingdom. We need to explore the means of using similar systems in sending key workers into other Two-Thirds World countries.

### **Building Financial Support within the Community Being Served**

In retrospect many of us have come to believe that the missionaries who came to us may have made a mistake in bringing all their financial resources from outside the region. Now that leadership of the Evangelical movement has passed to nationals, people already accustomed to everything being paid for them are refusing to adequately support the church financially. This has caused some serious problems in building a truly Caribbean church and has left the powerful church of Jesus Christ hampered in some of our Caribbean countries.

If this can be avoided when we build a missions force, we might be able to contribute to the planting of strong national churches in the countries where we serve. It might be useful to determine appropriate time limits for full financial support of a missionary family. Thereafter

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the local community where the missionary family serves would be required over a period of months or years to take on increasing financial responsibility for the couple's care. This will build strong local churches, clearly establish the principle of God and self-reliance rather than mission board paternalism, and free up our limited financial resources to send another missionary couple to another community to plant a new church among the unreached.

Luis Bush makes this point strongly in *Funding Third World Mission: The Pursuit of True Christian Partnership*.

Once an edifice is built, the scaffolding should come down. Pioneer missionary effort needs support; but once the pastoral ministry has been established, it could be wise to discontinue support. When we hear that over 90% of the world's missionary force serves where the church has already been established -- and less than 10% of the world's mission force today works among the one-half of the world's population mostly made up of Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists—it is not hard to see that something must be wrong. In many countries, the scaffolding needs to come down; we need to redeploy our resources to focus on pioneer work among the unreached peoples on the planet (Bush n.d., n.p.).

There are strong arguments to suggest that this methodology will break the pattern of dependence in missions planted churches, end the accompanying paternalism, and establish the dignity and integrity of the local churches established through missions.

### **Strong Financial Systems and Accountability**

These are a pre-requisite of a successful missions programme. As many as 35% of missionaries from the Two-Thirds World do not receive the full financial support promised. Strong financial systems, including budgets and proper financial planning, need to be put in place.

We also need to rid ourselves of the fear of proper and adequate accountability to donor agencies, churches, and individuals. Accountability before God includes accountability before His people. With proper financial accountability we build trust. With the building of trust comes the release of more finances to be utilised in the reaching of the unreached. Without proper financial systems and accountability we are wide open to manipulation, the misuse of funds, and the unwise allocation of limited resources.

## **Other Methodologies**

Other methodologies need to be developed as we wait on God and seek to determine His agenda for our region. In the final analysis, God's agenda must be the overriding consideration in responding to the global mandate. We are building God's kingdom for His glory. He has an agenda. He has methodologies which will succeed beyond our wildest dreams because they are His methodologies.

Let us free our minds from the restrictions of past experience, the limitations of "We have always done it this way!" Let us open ourselves to the direction and guidance of God, the Holy Spirit, in the certain knowledge that He desires that we should be "filled with the knowledge of His will" (Col. 1:9 KJV). Perhaps there are new, cost-effective, resource-building methodologies that God can give us so that we can obey His command and disciple people of every nation.

Throughout the process of building the Caribbean missionary force let us remain flexible before God, realising that the only thing not subject to change is the very nature of God Himself and the message we preach.

## **Concluding Thoughts**

It is useful to note as we approach the conclusion of this paper, that there has been a fairly high failure rate among missionaries from the Two-Thirds World. This has engendered deep concern at all levels of the missionary movement. The Missions Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship has commissioned a study to determine the causes of this failure rate, and then to begin dealing with the problems that surface as a result of the study.

One accepted problem is inadequate preparation. That problem will need to be dealt with by CETA within the context of the Caribbean. A theological training programme produces theologically knowledgeable persons. It does not necessarily produce pastors and missionaries.

From EAC may I take the liberty of urging CETA members to reflect carefully and prayerfully on the product to come out of the training programmes? If we are training pastors and missionaries then what does a pastor or missionary look like? Can we design training programmes to specifically produce such individuals?

How will we deal with cultural adaptation overall? Since we are seeing the results of cultural insensitivity and the unwillingness of some missionaries to divest themselves of their own culture and adopt ours, will we insist on making the same mistakes ourselves?

The Korean Church has accepted the goal of commissioning 100,000 Korean missionaries by May this year. Realising that there are just over

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40,000 Third World missionaries on the mission field now, we must understand the enormity of this event. Given the unwillingness of many Korean brethren to culturally adapt are we on the threshold of the Koreanization of the evangelical church worldwide? During the next decade will we exchange an Americanized gospel for a Koreanized one?

If that causes amusement or even concern, how will we ensure that our missionaries are culturally sensitive and plant relevant churches within the context of unreached people groups? Perhaps that is the subject of another paper!

As we move into the latter half of the final decade of the second millenium since Jesus came, are we willing to take the Caribbean, the last region to respond, into the era of building, equipping, and sending forth missionaries? I believe God is calling forth Caribbean persons as missionaries and as players on the world stage. We have a contribution to make. Those of us at this conference will have a major part in responding to God's direction and enabling Caribbean people to respond to develop our own missionary force.

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