

**THE ARCHBISHOP OF THE WEST INDIES, PRIMATE AND METROPOLITAN,
AND THE BISHOP OF JAMAICA & THE CAYMAN ISLANDS**

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TO: ALL CHURCH WORKERS HOLDING THE BISHOP'S LICENCE
RE: CONCERNING THE AFTERMATH OF HURRICANE BERYL JULY 2024

As a nation we can be very divisive at times, but thanks be to God, there are those moments when we come together and lay aside some of the things that may divide us. The coming of Hurricane Beryl by its destructive impact has created a measure of unity as we try to come to terms with its impact on us as individuals, as a nation, and especially those whose life, livelihood, and shelter have been devastated by its passage.

And while we have a common concern or focus arising from the experience of the hurricane, it is also true that we are coming with different experiences of the same hurricane. So some may be coming with a sense of thanksgiving for life and property spared, others with a sense of distress over what has been lost and may be irreplaceable, while others are still in a place which may best be described as numbness, still trying to come to terms with what has happened, what they have gone through, and even if they want to continue residing in places most severely hit by the passage of the hurricane.

It is clear that those of us who live in Kingston and surrounding parishes were too quick in speaking about the impact of the hurricane, forgetting that there were others who were not able to share their experience of devastation and loss because they were without electricity and access to internet but who were truly traumatized by the hurricane.

As a people, we need to give thanks to God that we were spared the passage of the eye of the hurricane over the island, even as we witness the sense of consternation, anxiety and hopelessness of those who look on in disbelief at what was once their home, now without roof or completely destroyed. We acknowledge our colleagues who, not only lost the roof of their rectories, but who have suffered losses of personal property and clerical attire. We may never be able to enter into the depth of their experience but we can try to do all that is possible to offer our support, empathy, and relief material for the immediate, short-terms and long-term future.

While at the time of writing we still have not yet received reports from a number of clergy, congregations, and communities, we are aware of several rectories that were seriously damaged, churches that are now without roof, as well as other diocesan property, such as schools and church halls that have suffered damage. The Insurance Fund Managers have already been mobilized to begin the processing of claims from congregations that have contributed to the Fund and have suffered damage once estimates have been received. It is important that these be received on a timely basis.

As a Diocese, we have in place a strategic response process that will enable us to respond to immediate and long terms needs of members and Clergy, along with vulnerable members of our communities, and will be processing needs as we receive them from those on the ground, through Miss Claudette Marshall, our Director of Mission at Church House. She will be communicating with Clergy and Church Wardens, as is applicable concerning the availability of resources for relief. In this regard funds have already been released to respond to these requests.

In the meanwhile, we encourage all members and congregations to do and/or contribute what you are able to the relief work through your local congregation or through Church House by contacting Miss Marshall. We will assist with the acquisition of basic necessities at this time, but will focus also on helping individuals to re-establish their source of livelihood as an area of priority, with the more costly undertaking of re-building projects as a second level engagement.

In the meanwhile we urge patience as the restoration of some utilities will take some time because of the extent of infrastructural damage. One way in which we can be of help to impacted persons in our community is to allow our church buildings to be points for charging of cellphones for those without electricity.

May God bless our land as together we seek to bring healing and restoration to the lives of those who are living with vulnerabilities of one kind or another in the aftermath of the passage of Hurricane Beryl.

Sincerely yours,

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The Most Rev. Dr. the Honourable Howard K. A. Gregory, O.J
Archbishop of the West Indies, Primate and Metropolitan
and Bishop of Jamaica & The Cayman Islands