



Conference News for 18th July, 2020

REVEREND CARLA CULMER MAKES HISTORIC ADDRESS

The Nassau Guardian, Thursday, 16th July, 2020

By Shavaughn Moss - Lifestyles Editor at The Nassau Guardian

The importance of unity, and everyone doing their part to build The Bahamas, moving forward together, was Reverend Carla Culmer's message during her historic virtual sermon as the first female to deliver the message at the 47th Independence ecumenical service.

"We must all do our part to build our nation," said Culmer, the first female to speak at the Independence ecumenical service. "This will involve pooling our resources, skills and abilities to build our country, and to overcome the hurdles before us, as we move forward together."

In the country's 47th year, Culmer, who is the Bahamas Christian Council's (BCC) third vice president, encouraged people to move forward with faith and courage.

Culmer challenged people who are doing well to assist those who are struggling; and said people should allow this hard time to be their greatest teacher. And challenged people to use their influence to mentor and positively influence others.

She urged people to remember that unity is strength and that there is no place for egos and selfishness moving forward, as COVID-19 and Hurricane Dorian have taught that we need each other. She challenged leaders at every level of society to take the time to develop a godly legacy with integrity that will outlive them and inspire future generations; and teach children and descendants the significance of independence and the uniqueness of the country as well as to have faith in God and Christian values, so that they will treasure The Bahamas and guard their heritage.

Culmer told The Nassau Guardian she felt "blessed and honored" to have been given the opportunity to speak to the nation during the service, but that she was mindful that there are many female ministers who could have been selected.

At the same token, she said she was appreciative that BCC president, Bishop Delton Fernander, offered her the opportunity to address the nation, a space which is usually reserved for the president.

"I also feel honored to have been selected as the first female minister to address the nation during Independence celebrations, but there was pressure to make sure that I was properly prepared, with a message that was relevant for the season in the life of our country," said Culmer.

She delivered her address from the historic pulpit that was used during the country's first celebration in 1973, when the Union Jack was lowered and the aquamarine, gold and black flag was raised.

Culmer, who is also president of the Bahamas Conference of the Methodist Church (BCMC), said standing at the pulpit loaned for the occasion by St. Michael's Methodist Church reminded her of how integrated Bahamians are as a people.

“St. Michael’s Methodist Church is a member church of my Conference, the Bahamas Conference of the Methodist Church. I have preached from this pulpit before, but it was only in recent times that I was aware of the involvement of that pulpit in our initial Independence service,” she said.

NO ONE COULD HAVE IMAGINED

During her address at the physically distanced service on Clifford Park, she said no one dreamt that at the conclusion of last year’s celebrations, all the trauma, challenges and vicissitudes the country would have to endure before the most recent Independence anniversary.

She recalled the devastation of Hurricane Dorian and the loss of lives on Abaco and Grand Bahama, and the fact that many people are still struggling to adjust to their devastating losses and displacement, as they seek healing and new beginnings. She said their continued struggles should not be forgotten. And that in March, confirmation of the country’s first COVID-19 case brought further difficulties and struggles to The Bahamas.

The Bahamas had 119 confirmed COVID-19 cases as of Wednesday – 87 on New Providence, 18 on Grand Bahama, 13 on Bimini and one on Cat Cay.

There have been 11 deaths, two non-COVID-related deaths, 91 recovered cases, one hospitalized case, 15 active cases and 2,552 completed tests.

Worldwide, there were 13,405,694 confirmed cases and 580,388 deaths.

“Who would have thought in our time that an invisible virus would wreak so much havoc in our Bahamas and world and would change our way of being, living and interacting? [And] new words have become a part of our everyday existence – social distancing, masks, emergency orders, lockdowns, layoff and curfews. Funerals and wedding numbers were modified to only accommodate a minimum number of family members. Persons who contracted the virus were isolated and some died alone without family members being able to gather with them in their final hours. We have journeyed through a lot...”

She encouraged people to not give up and to have biblical hope.

“We are a strong and courageous people and, together with the grace of God, we can and we will make it.”

Culmer said if there ever was a time hope was needed in-country, that it’s now, as Hurricane Dorian and the continued effects of COVID-19 continue to negatively impact many.

“It is faith in God that despite what you see presently, we will move forward with the help of God, working and believing for a better day to overcome our present struggles and challenges. This will require great faith and internal struggle, so that we as a people can move forward with fortitude and stamina.”

REDISCOVER FAITH

Culmer said she firmly believes that as a country, Bahamians must rediscover the faith of their foreparents that sustained them through the challenges of the Great Depression in the 1930s, the hurricanes of the 1920s and 1930s, the struggle for independence, political victimization and the regular hardships of their everyday life.

“In spite of everything, they made huge sacrifices, so that we, their descendants and children, can become the leaders and shapers of a modern Bahamas and global citizens impacting our world. We must press forward in hope, believing that with grounded faith in God as individuals, families and leaders, we can find our way through this dark time and we can be victorious and receive the breakthroughs, blessings and victories that we need as a country and individuals. This is the time to keep hope alive, grounded with faith in God. He is with us and can bring us through this time.”

With the nation at a crossroads and obstacles that must be overcome, she said unity is vital as a country to move forward. And that it's not the time for political grandstanding and making personal mileage at the expense of the people, as too many have it rough and are suffering.

"Leaders must uplift and empower each citizen, so that they can benefit from the bounty and blessings of our nation."

She encouraged leaders – political, spiritual, civic and parents – to continue to work for justice and the reduction of crime and collectively find ways to help young men to see their God-given potential and recognize the value of human life.

Culmer encouraged church leaders to continue to address the moral decay in the nation. She said overcoming adversity means looking through the eyes of faith and knowing that, by the grace of God, they will come through layoffs, economic downturns and the difficult season as a nation.

Triumph, she said, comes when people remember that they are stronger together, and pool resources, skills and abilities. And that unity is strength.

"Each person must be committed to not give up," said Culmer. "It may be hard, and you may need to lean on someone and ask for help because it is bleak, but you must hold faith and do not give up on life."

The BCC vice president shared that when she got discouraged, her father always told her, "The darkest part of the night is just before the breaking of the dawn." She encourages people to ask for help if they need it, and to call on God to make a way for them. She also urged people to adopt a person, family or charity to be part of helping The Bahamas to go forward, upward, onward together.

Culmer said she was hopelessly optimistic that The Bahamas will make it.

"I do not know why storms come, but I have discovered that sometimes we do not know how strong we are until we have weathered the storm."

Culmer said people may not recognize it, but COVID-19 and its aftereffects, are transforming the nation and its people. She said that just as Joshua challenged the people to get their lives in order for the change that was coming their way, Bahamians must prepare for this new world that is emerging and get the nation and their lives in order.

"We may be tempted to complain or hope that things will return to normal, but that will never be, because we are entering a new normal – a new day."

BCC PRESIDENT ON CULMER

Fernander said he decided to bestow the honor of delivering this year's message to Culmer, because it was important to think outside the box.

"I believe in leading by example and not by merely being in front at all times. I thought it was important, in a time when we need to think outside of the box, to tackle the extreme challenges that we face to demonstrate to the Bahamian people that we have highly qualified female and male denominational leaders. I also thought it important as a leader to demonstrate that one does not always have to hold the spotlight in order to lead effectively. A part of good leadership is being secure in your team's abilities and showcasing them when appropriate."

Fernander said he had every confidence in Culmer's ability to deliver a timely and impactful message for a nation in need of inspiration.

"I sincerely hope that Bahamians received Reverend Culmer's message and that they understood the significance of her delivering the message at the 47th Independence celebration."

He also hopes that women were inspired to see one of their own in a position where, before her, no female had ever been.

“I hope that leaders in other sectors of our society realize that we cannot be apprehensive about bringing new voices to the forefront [so] that they may prove their worthiness of leadership and be guided as they ascend. I believe that God has placed everything that we need to advance and prosper right here. Now is as good a time as any to blaze new trails and to do so with as much participation from those Bahamians with the abilities to carry them out as possible. The reason that we can celebrate independence is because Bahamians who preceded us successfully did their part. We cannot fail on our leg of the journey.”

Fernander said it was even more special that Culmer stood at the podium that has such historical significance as she became a significant part of Bahamian history.

“I think that it is important that we mark and preserve places and things of historical value for the edification of present and future generations of Bahamians. It is vitally important that more Bahamians know the Bahamian story. I think that it will provide us with greater perspective of where we should be going as a nation.”

NOMINATIONS FOR BCMC EXECUTIVE POSITIONS

Nominations have been received for vacant Executive Committee positions and forwarded to the Nominations Committee.

BCMC'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE 7th AUGUST, 2020

As a reminder, the deadline for receipt of names of delegates is 27th July, 2020. We are already in receipt of the names of elected delegates from one church. Others will be holding their elections between now and 26th July, 2020.

Because the Conference will be held for only one day, with social distancing being enforced, delegates are encouraged to come in to New Providence for the one day. Please be sure to wear your masks.

Members are reminded, with respect to the elections, to review Article 14 of the BCMC Constitution which indicates numbers of voting delegates per church and Articles 25 and 26 regarding the election/nomination process and term.

We are most grateful for the opportunity to still hold this abbreviated General Conference and we pray for God's guiding hand in our endeavours.

RADIO PROGRAMMES

Global Village

Moments with Global

<https://tunein>.

BCMC

Renewal airs every Sunday at 10:30 a.m. on ZNS FM 104.5

Methodist Moments airs daily at 6:55 a.m. on ZNS 107.9 FM. and ZNS TV Channel 420.

REMINDER

The BCMC urges members and adherents and persons in general not to relax the implementation of the Emergency Orders and protocols as we continue to open up.

Stay safe, stay healthy and be happy!

CLET'S VIRTUAL CHAPEL

CLET'S Virtual Chapel comes alive each Tuesday evening with the manifestations of God's holy presence. For the zoom weekly link please contact the Dean of CLET at cashdonald00@gmail.com.

INTERCESSORY PRAYERS

We continue to intercede, personally now due to COVI-19, for our country, our members and our churches. For the time we are in, we must continue to pray unceasingly that we would emerge from these dark days with a bright tomorrow.

During this period of unprecedented shutdown of the country, and until the economy rebounds, so many persons will be without work and income. Please pray earnestly for our country and especially for those adversely affected.

UPCOMING EVENTS/DATES

7th August, 2020 – BCMC General Conference

PRAYERS



Our students are in the process of sitting BJC and BGCSE Examinations beginning Monday, 13th July. Please keep them, their teachers and invigilators, their parents and the Administrators of the exams, their families in prayer as they go through this period.

Please also remember to keep the following persons and/or their families in prayer:

Sick:

Mr. Klaus Sobeich, Grant's Town Wesley

Mrs. Lorraine Phillpot, Ebenezer, wife of Assistant Treasurer, Mr. John Phillpot

Ms. Alicia Munroe, Zion Methodist Church

Rev. Charles Sweeting
Mrs. Sheran Sweeting, Trinity, wife of Rev. Charles Sweeting
Mr. Hubert Albury, Ebenezer
Mr. Clifford Cates, Ebenezer
Mr. Franklyn Bethel, Lay Preacher, Grant's Town Wesley
Mr. Dennis, Seymour, Wesley, Inagua
Mrs. Corella Sands, Epworth, Cherokee Sound
Mrs. Olevia Bowles – Great Bethel, Cat Island
Mr. Fred Neely – St. Michael's
Mrs. Otain Lightbourne - mother of Ms. Meggan Lightbourne

Funerals:

Thursday 16th July, 2020 – Mrs. Eula Hepburn of Great Bethel, Cat Island at Grant's Town Wesley
Friday, 17th July 2020 – Mr. William McDonald at Grant's Town Wesley
Saturday 18th July, 2020 - Mr. Alfred Paul at Grant's Town Wesley
Saturday 18th July, 2020 - Mr. Henry Allen at Wesley, Tarpum Bay



Celebration:

Our President became the first female Minister to preach at the Bahamas' Independence celebration.

PRESIDENT'S ACTIVITIES

Thursday, 16th July, 2020 – Preached at the funeral of Mrs. Eula Hepburn of Great Bethel, Cat Island at Grant's Town Wesley
Friday, 17th July 2020 – Officiated at the funeral of Mr. William McDonald at Grant's Town Wesley

Should you have information that you would wish to share among the congregations, please send it to bcmc@bahamasmethodist.org.

**PLEASE SHARE CONFERENCE NEWS WITH PERSONS WHO ARE NOT ON THE EMAIL LIST.
YOU MAY ALSO SEND NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF PERSONS WHO WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE CONFERENCE NEWS.**