

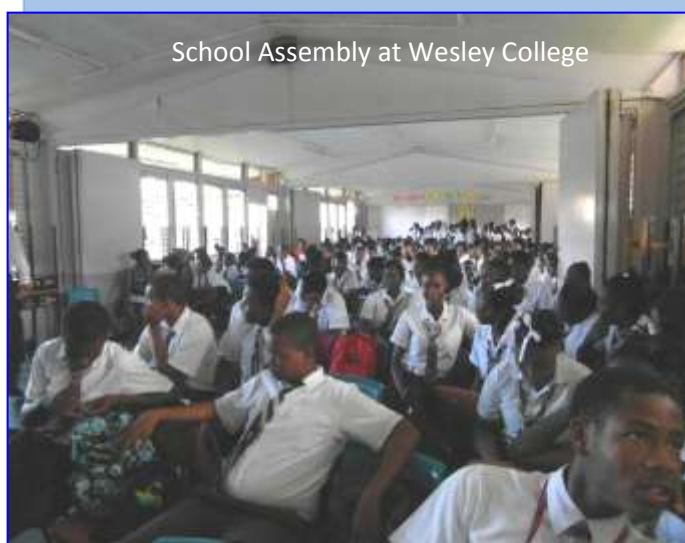


Partnership visit to Grenada, 29 January to 4 February 2015



Grenada is a stunning island with a well developed tourist industry. Most Grenadians are Catholic and there are a growing number of Pentecostal churches on the island. The Grenada Circuit of the South Caribbean District of the MCCA has approximately 700 members among a population of just over 100,000. Life for people on the island is still quite conservative and the 'old ways' continue to be adhered to. However drug culture, hip hop culture and the influence of the US on the island seems to be changing the old traditions, and some adults fear how this is beginning to affect the younger generations. There are a lot of young people on the island involved in drug use and trafficking. There is also a lack of employment, particularly for young men, compounding this situation. The only prison on the island is full to overflowing, with most prisoners reoffending after serving their time in jail. Poverty is very real for many in Grenada, but it is more hidden than in other places. If you look closely at some of the large, colourful houses built there, you can often spot a small shack built close by. Poverty and riches are living side by side on the island.

METHODIST WORK IN GRENADA



EDUCATION: Although there are a small number of Methodists on the island, they are doing important work in reaching out to young Grenadians. The circuit runs four Methodist schools, including one primary school and three secondary schools. Andy Dye, our mission partner in Grenada since 2010, is a science teacher at Wesley College. It offers vital education to disadvantaged students, many of whom have few literacy skills and pose behavioural challenges to staff. The schools have a shortage of teachers because the Grenadian government does not have the funds to employ a sufficient number of staff, so teachers often find themselves taking classes that do not directly fall under their remit. Andy for example is also one of the

RE teachers! Despite these difficulties, I was impressed by the way in which the school is helping its students tackle the realities of some of the issues they face as youth and raises awareness of how to overcome these. The school assembly I attended hosted a



representative from the Ministry of Health who gave a presentation on drug use in Grenada, how it is affecting its young people and how they can avoid making the wrong choices in this area. It was interesting to see the hall of students go from being boisterous and noisy to quiet and attentive during the talk. Helping young people is very much at the heart of what the Methodist churches in Grenada want to do, so it was also good to see churches opening their doors on a Friday night to local young people and help them explore their faith in a safe and loving environment.



WOMEN'S MINISTRY, NMA SEWING CLASS COORDINATOR

A lot of women on the island find themselves as the sole bread winners of their family and as the main carers of their children, so the circuit sees women's outreach as essential. Our National in Mission Appointments programmes (NMA) is currently enabling Jackie Emmasseau, sewing coordinator and tutor, to support local women by teaching them skills that will help their families, increasing their confidence and giving them a safe space for fellowship and support. It takes place almost every night of the week and is an important part of the church's women's outreach programmes.

Sewing tutor Jackie helping one of her students

CHILDREN AND YOUTH WORK

The Grenada Methodist Circuit also works extensively with children and youth through their local churches, and I visited two such projects with Andy Dye who is involved in both. One was a music workshop for local children, where Andy and an elderly gentleman who used to be Grenada's representative for the Pan Caribbean Steel Drum association taught the children to play the guitar and the steel drums. Through these classes, the children not only learnt a new skill but they were also learning about the perseverance needed when learning a new instrument, lessons on personal discipline and about not hogging the instruments! These are all transferable skills that will stand the children in good stead later on in life.



We also visited a youth club which attracted youth from a relatively modest neighbourhood to the local Methodist Church, where a young youth leader led a question and answer session, with Andy and I being the ones answering their challenging questions! It was good to see the church providing a safe space for these precious young ones, where they could explore their faith and feel loved and accepted by God.



CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

During my time in Grenada the nation was gearing up to celebrate 41 years of independence. National pride in Grenada is very much linked to God, exemplified by the words on a celebration banner I photographed: 'Ever Conscious of God, we are proud of our heritage'. Methodism, although not the largest Christian movement there, has played a key role in shaping this heritage in terms of presence and ministry on the island and culture. It is fascinating to note that the Grenadian national anthem's music and lyrics were both written by Methodists, for example.



The Grenada Methodist Circuit is small but is doing vital work among children, youth and women, who are the most affected by some of the issues Grenadians face on this beautiful island. It is so good to see how the Circuit has welcomed Andy Dye into their midst and embraced all the gifts he has to offer the church, allowing him to play a role in the church's mission. I am grateful to Andy that he has been flexible and willing to adapt and get 'stuck' into the work of the circuit, as well as fulfilling his primary role at Wesley College. Following my visit I will be having conversations with Revd Cuthbert Edwards, the District President of the South Caribbean District, on how the MCB can continue supporting the Grenada Circuit and help strengthen its existing ministries.



Andy Dye preaching on Independence
Sunday