



# **MENTAL HEALTH AND THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH: A CARIBBEAN CASE STUDY**

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**GLOBALLY,  
WE ARE  
HAVING  
A SERIOUS  
MENTAL  
HEALTH  
PROBLEM!**





**1 out of every 2 people will develop a mental disorder in their lifetime!!!**





**Our young people are in crisis!!!**



# Full-service Mental Health Treatment



DBT Skills



Mental Health  
Education



Process Groups



On-site  
Psychiatric Care



Psychological  
Support



Neuro-Rehabilitative

- **Less than 50 percent of those who need mental health treatment receive it.**
- **The gap is greater in least resourced countries, climbing to over 90 percent.**

# Church Statistics – Kintsugi Hope UK Survey, 2022

- 43 percent of Christians had experienced a mental health issue
- 35 percent of those had a supportive church community
- 91 percent said that mental health / disorder was stigmatized in the church
- 50 percent said their church rarely or never spoke about it.

*□ What would be the statistics for your church?*

*□ What would be the statistics for churches  
in the Caribbean region?*





*All are affected  
Children, Adolescents, Elderly,  
Families, etc.*



*Youth violence  
Self-injury (cutting)  
Suicidal Ideation  
Abandonment  
Insecurity*



**Governments  
are beginning  
to ask the church  
to partner with them  
“to provide  
robust intervention  
that supports  
mental health  
in the population”.**

(Prime minister of Jamaica, 2023).



# CAN THE CHURCH REALLY HELP?

Recent studies show that attending church regularly is good for mental well-being in the long term

Chen, Y. et. Al (2020). JAMA Psychiatry



## Why is this so?

According to John Dickson, persons:

- “find a greater sense of meaning and purpose
- have stronger social support
- have stronger coping mechanisms”

John Dickson, *Undeception* Podcast

# As a Church, let us seize this opportunity to:

- educate our congregations
- clarify our role
- unite and partner with each other and others
- explore how we can work to strengthen the mental health of our nations



"What mental health needs is more sunlight, more candor, more unashamed conversation."

Glenn Close



# Purpose of this presentation

To help church members:

- know what constitutes good mental health vs mental illness
- understand what are the common disorders in the Caribbean
- become aware of our historical risks for diseases and
- regional deficits that we face
- explore how each church, in partnership with others, can work together to strengthen the mental health of our nations.



# Mental Health Concepts

- Good mental health is “not merely the absence of illness or disease”.
- It **focuses on wellness** of the mind.
- This wellness **affords good functioning**

# What is good Mental Health?

**Mental health is defined as “ a**

- **state of well-being** that allows people to
- **cope with the stresses of life,**
- **realise their abilities,**
- **learn well** and
- **work well** and
- **contribute to the community”.**

(WHO)





# What is Mental Illness?

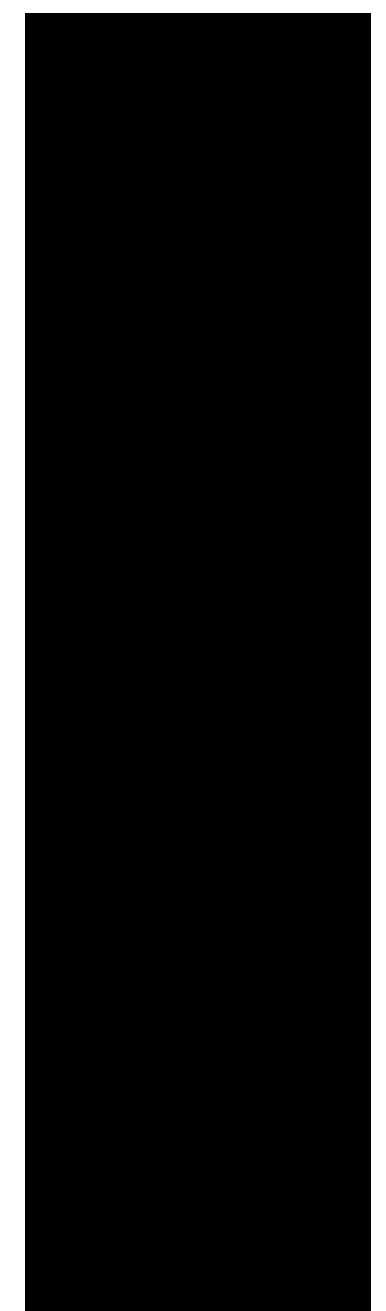
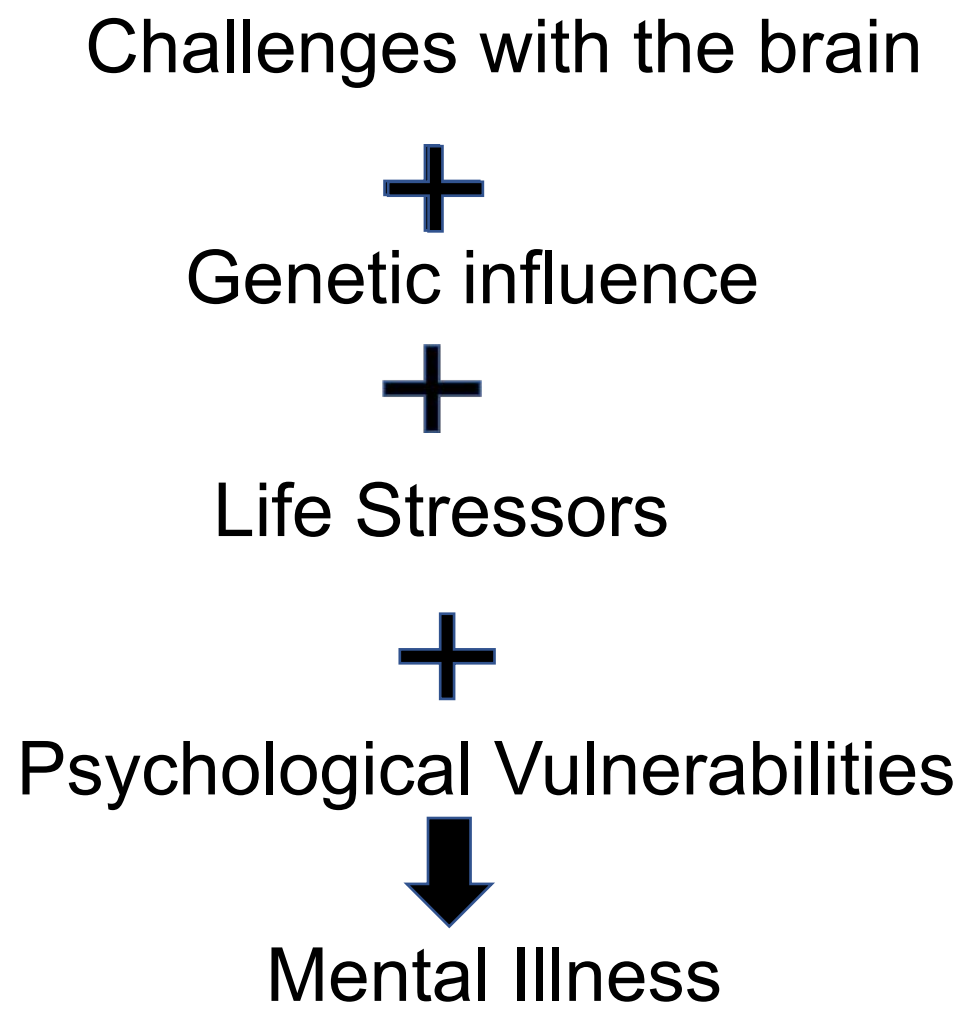
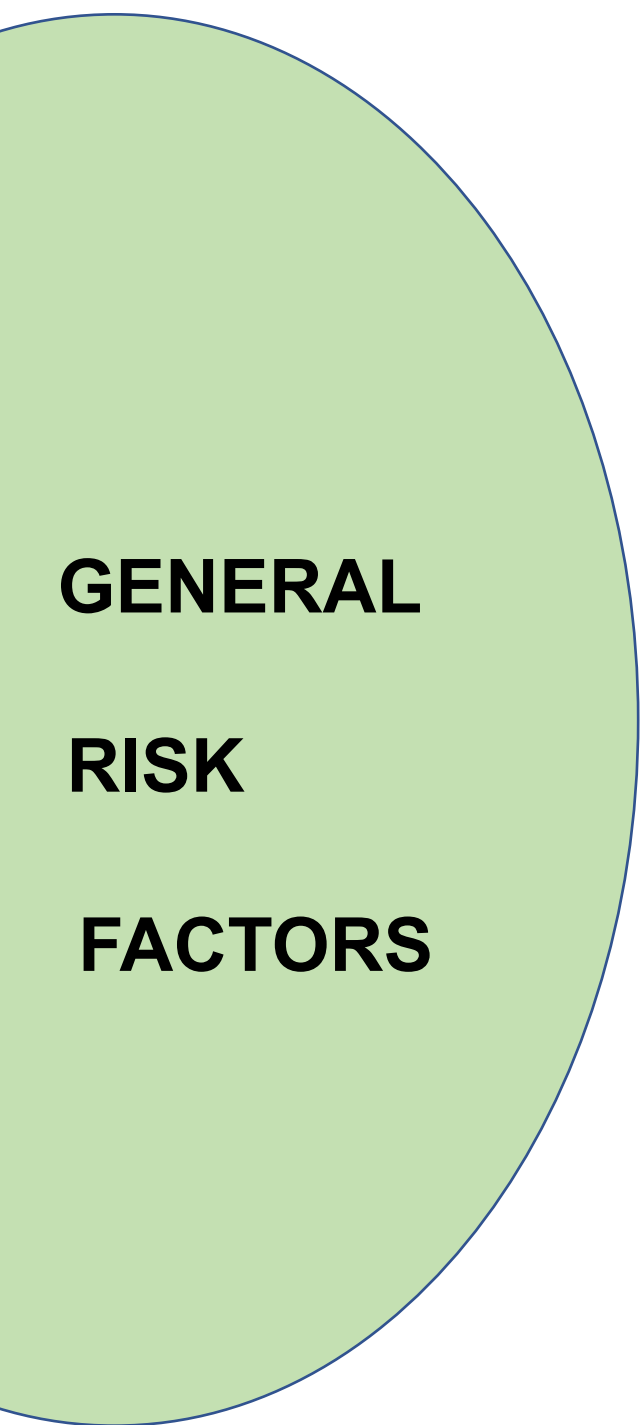
“Significant disruption in mental health  
that affects one’s level of functioning”

...

(WHO)

“...by impairing

- an individual’s cognition,
- emotional regulation ... and
- behaviour”.



# BE OPTIMISTIC

Scientific Knowledge



Best Practices



Recovery or  
Effective Rehabilitation

Early treatment brings best results.



# MORE FREQUENT DISORDERS IN THE CARIBBEAN

DEPRESSION

PSYCHOTIC  
DISORDERS

ANXIETY

PERSONALITY  
DISORDER



DEMENTIA

BIPOLAR  
DISORDERS



SUICIDE

# COVID-19

More depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress among adolescents and young people, ages 13-29 in Latin America and the Caribbean

Some children in Jamaica not coping with online learning and separation from peers. Have dropped out of the school system and vulnerable to behaviour disorders and gang recruitment

# The Caribbean

A map of the Caribbean region, showing the Caribbean Sea and surrounding landmasses. The map is titled "The Caribbean" in the top right corner. It shows the outlines of North America, Central America, and the Caribbean islands. Various islands and countries are labeled, including Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands (US), Anguilla, Barbados, Grenada, and Trinidad & Tobago. The map also shows the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean. A compass rose is visible in the bottom left corner.

## Who are we?

- Over 30 countries making contact with the Caribbean Sea
- 44.1 million people with only 9.9% of the population living in 21 Small Island Developing States (SIDS)
- Multiethnic – with a variety of languages, cultures and traditions

# Dark historical legacy of slavery and colonialism

- \* Mass relocation by force
- \* Oppressed
- \* Hostile environment

\* “Monstrous distortion of human society”  
Prof. Orlando Patterson







A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots.

Marcus Garvey



# MENTAL HEALTH RISKS IN THE CARIBBEAN

- \*Persistent Poverty
- \*Chronic Underdevelopment
- \*Disrupted Family Systems
- \*Colour-Class Stratification
- \*Social disintegration
- \*Cultural undermining
- \*Geography – vulnerable to natural disasters



# Mental Illness can be treated

## Variety of standard treatments

- Psychotherapy
- Medication
- Psycho-Education
- Suicide Risk Management
- Etc.

*Need family and  
community-based support*

**Consequences  
of Inaction!!!**

# Social and Economic Costs for the Individual and Society

For example:

- Low productivity
- Poverty
- Homelessness
- Vulnerability to abuse
- Etc.

Prof. Roger Gibson, UWI

# The state of mental health services in the Caribbean

## Analysis: 6 SIDs

- Social Inequalities
- Limited implementation of mental health policies/plans
- Lack of resources
- Uncoordinated/sporadic health promotion
- Low levels of mental health literacy
- Low awareness of mental health services
- Stigma towards people with mental illness

## All Caribbean Countries similar challenges in addition to:

- Being under-funded
- Poor integration into primary care clinics
- Scant cross-sector collaboration
- Over-emphasis on mental hospitals vs community mental health care
- Mental illness often attributed to supernatural forces

Gibson

# HOW SHOULD THE CHURCH RESPOND?



□ Recognize that a mental health ministry needs to be a part of a wider ministry of healing with the Church as a healing congregation

□ Have a theology of Health and Healing along with a relevant ecclesiology



OUR **“PARADIGM”** OR **VIEW**  
ABOUT THE WORLD AND LIFE

- affects our



**THEOLOGICAL**  
**UNDERSTANDING**

- This affects our



**VISION and MODELS of action**

**IN OUR CHURCH MINISTRY**

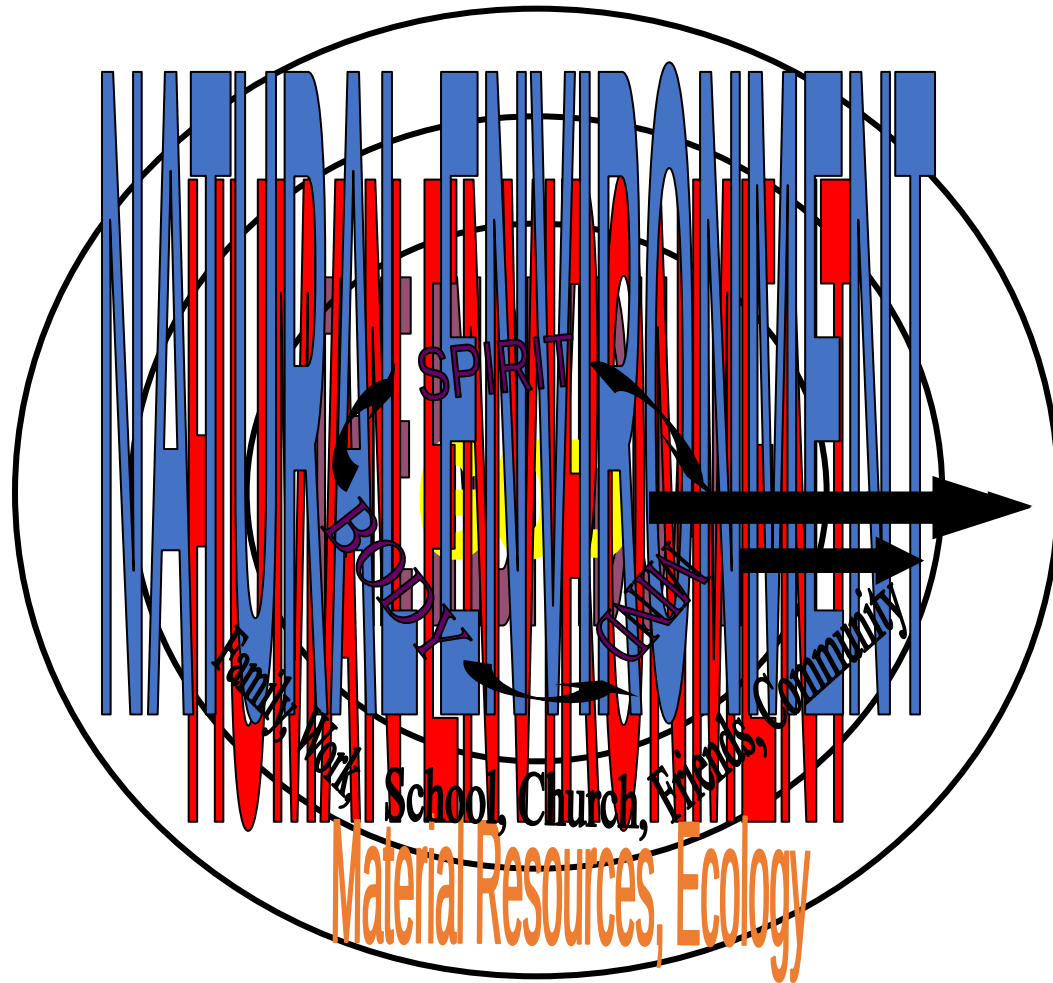
# OUR BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

## St. Luke 9:1-6

“When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority

- to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out
- to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.
- Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town
- So they set out ... proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere.”

# THE BIBLICAL PARADIGM: HEALERS OF THE WHOLE PERSON



**Health** is wholeness or harmony between:

- aspects of the self (mind, body and spirit)
- self and others
- self and the natural environment
- self and God (as our centre)

**Mutual interaction  
between all dimensions**

# Our Motto Should Be:

“There can be  
no mental health without physical health  
and  
There can be  
no good physical health without mental health”

# THE BIBLICAL PARADIGM: HEALERS WHO PROCLAIM AN INTEGRATED GOSPEL OF SALVATION AND HEALING

## WHAT IS SALVATION?

### FORENSIC VIEW

Sin = Amorality

Salvation

=

Moral  
Transformation  
Only

### INTEGRATED VIEW

Sin = Rebellion



Alienation



Amorality + Disintegration  
(Disease)



### INTEGRATED VIEW

Salvation

=

Forgiveness



Reconciliation



Moral Transformation



Re-integration (Healing)  
between

- Persons and God
- Persons and each other



THE BIBLICAL PARADIGM:  
HEALERS WHO PROCLAIM AN INTEGRATED GOSPEL OF  
SALVATION AND HEALING

WHAT IS SALVATION?

“A TOTAL VISION”


SALVATION = HEALING  
in Christ Jesus

FOR WHOLENESS

Thus, healing is inseparable from salvation or salvation is healing  
and they are one and the same.

# THE BIBLICAL PARADIGM: HEALERS IN A HEALING COMMUNITY

- Build **organic communities** where each person is as important as the other and each has a helping friend.

-  is the greatest commandment as it motivates concern for others and will enable us to care for others.

(Matthew 22:36-40)



# **Practical Possibilities**

**A model for best  
practices  
in being the  
Church as a  
Healing Community**



# A COMPREHENSIVE MODEL FOR BEING THE CHURCH AS A HEALING COMMUNITY

1. **SPONSORSHIP:** Congregation-Sponsored

2. **APPROACH:** Whole Person Oriented

- Medical
- Counselling
- Social and Economic Development
- Prayer and Spiritual Direction

3. **SCOPE:** Comprehensive Service

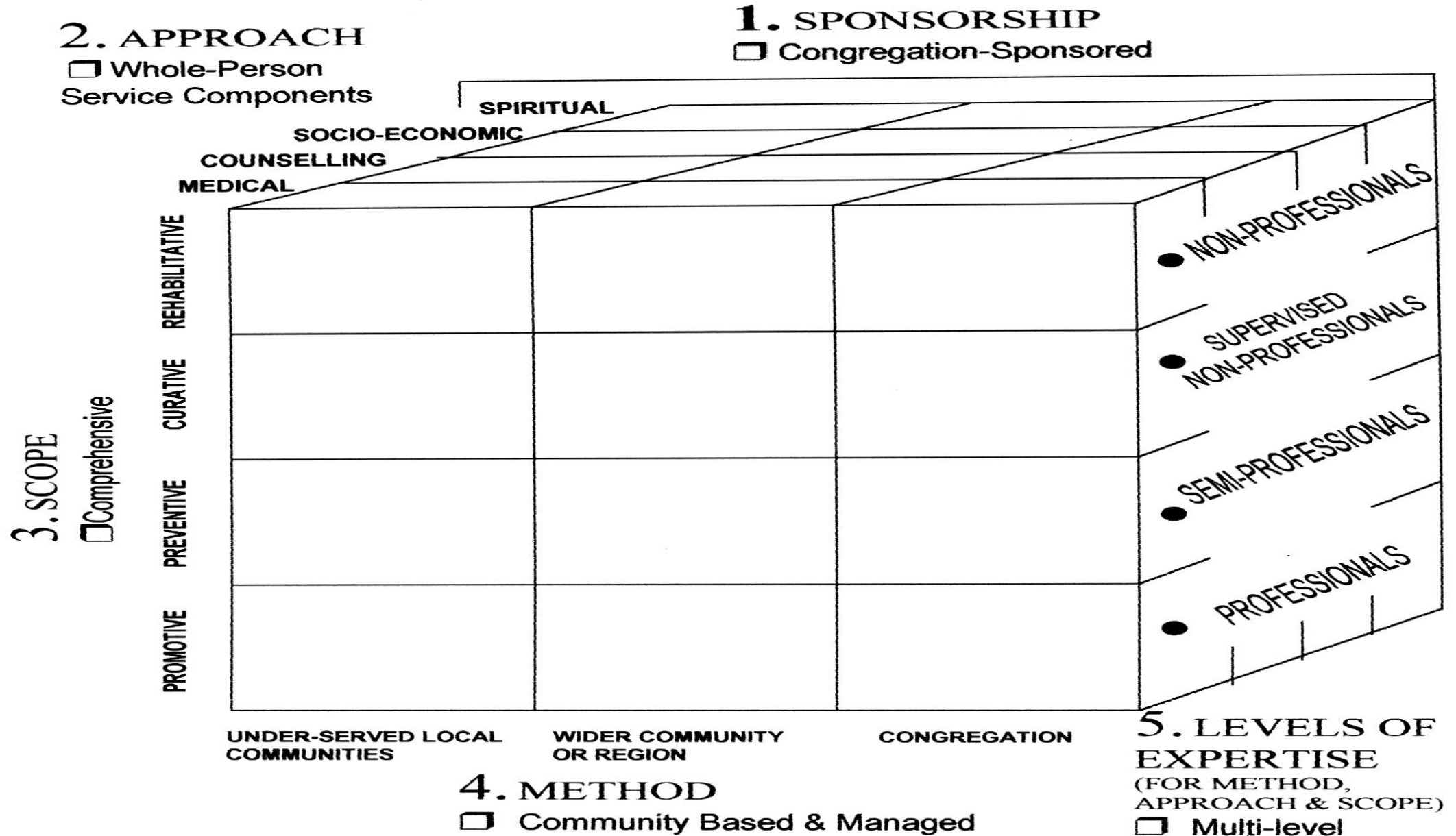
- Promotive
- Preventive
- Curative
- Rehabilitative

4. **METHOD:** Community-based and Managed

- Congregation
- Underserved Local Communities
- Wider Community

5. **EXPERTISE:** Multi-Level Human Resource Utilization

- Non-Professionals
- Supervised Non-Professionals
- Semi-Professionals
- Professionals



The Model of a "Whole-Person Healing ministry" : Putting it together



**BETHEL BAPTIST  
CHURCH**

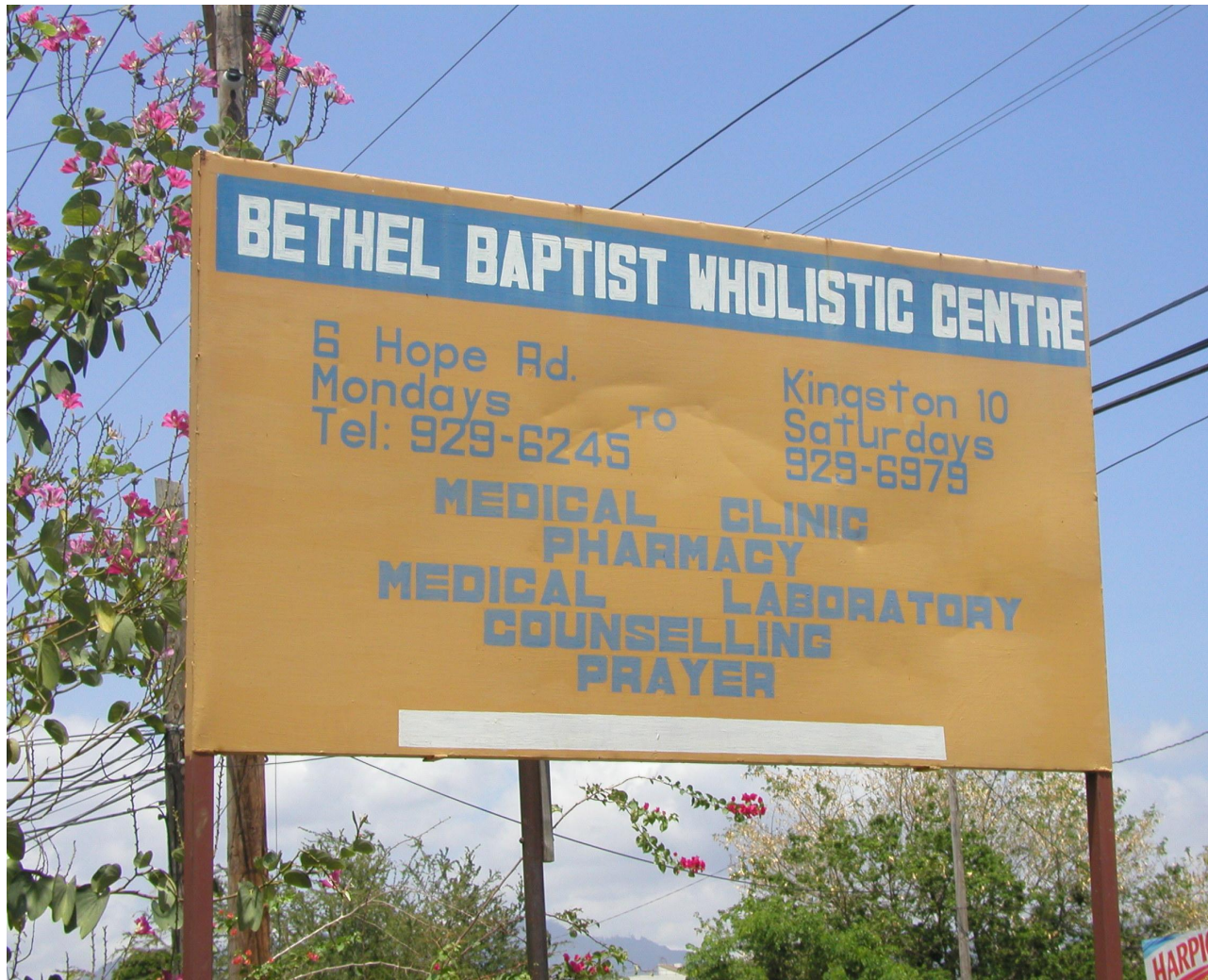
**BETHEL BAPTIST  
CHURCH**

# **The Bethel Baptist Church Healing Ministry**

- Under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. Burchell Taylor
- Started in 1974
- Provided an integrated set of services
  - medical services,
  - pastoral care,
  - counselling
  - prayer
- Model of an wholistic ministry



# The original vision for the Healing Ministry of the Church





← PHARMACY & CLINIC →

ASSEMBLY AREA

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HEALTH CENTRE & PHARMACY**  
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• Counselling • Laboratory Services  
• Pap Smear • Immunization • Physiotherapy  
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# Over the years

... the original “healing ministry” providing Primary Health Care (PHC) evolved into a broader understanding based on the model just described.

- We adopted a ***needs-based approach to ministry***, while our current Pastor, Rev. Dr. Glenroy Lalor facilitates a strong ***non-clergy-centered lay involvement***.
- We promoted ***self-help activities*** for self-care and ***healthy lifestyles***.
- Our ministries are ***comprehensive in scope***.



# Our various ministries include the following:

## WELLNESS PROMOTION

### Wellness Promotion via a Wholistic Health Promotion Committee

- Educational talks
- Family month activities
- Marriage enrichment sessions
- Health Fairs with preventive screening
- Special Healing Sunday →
- Female wellness group



# WELLNESS PROMOTION

## Support Groups

- Bereavement Support group
- Rays of Sunshine – education and support for various life challenges

## March Birth Month Social



## Practical Help

- Legal Aid Clinic
- Cyber Centre
- Thrift Cooperative Society
- Homework Centre
- Adult Learning Centre
- Life Coach
- Whole church organized into “Birth Month” Groups
- Regional prayer and outreach groups

# PREVENTION

**Carried out over the life cycle:**

- Pre-marital counselling
- Maternity monitoring
- Immunization for children
- Counselling and parenting education for parents of children to be blessed
- “Seniors in Action” group
- Screening for brain health and for non-communicable diseases
- COVID vaccination via partnership with government and USAID

# CURATIVE SERVICES

**Our primary care clinic provides our main curative services:**

- Medical doctors
- Counselling
- Social casework
- Deacons and members provide monthly homebound communion service along with a whole person needs evaluation



# VISIT OUR HEALING CENTRE



**Physician**



**Wholistic Interview**



**Group Prayer**



**Our Nurse**



**Prayer Partner**



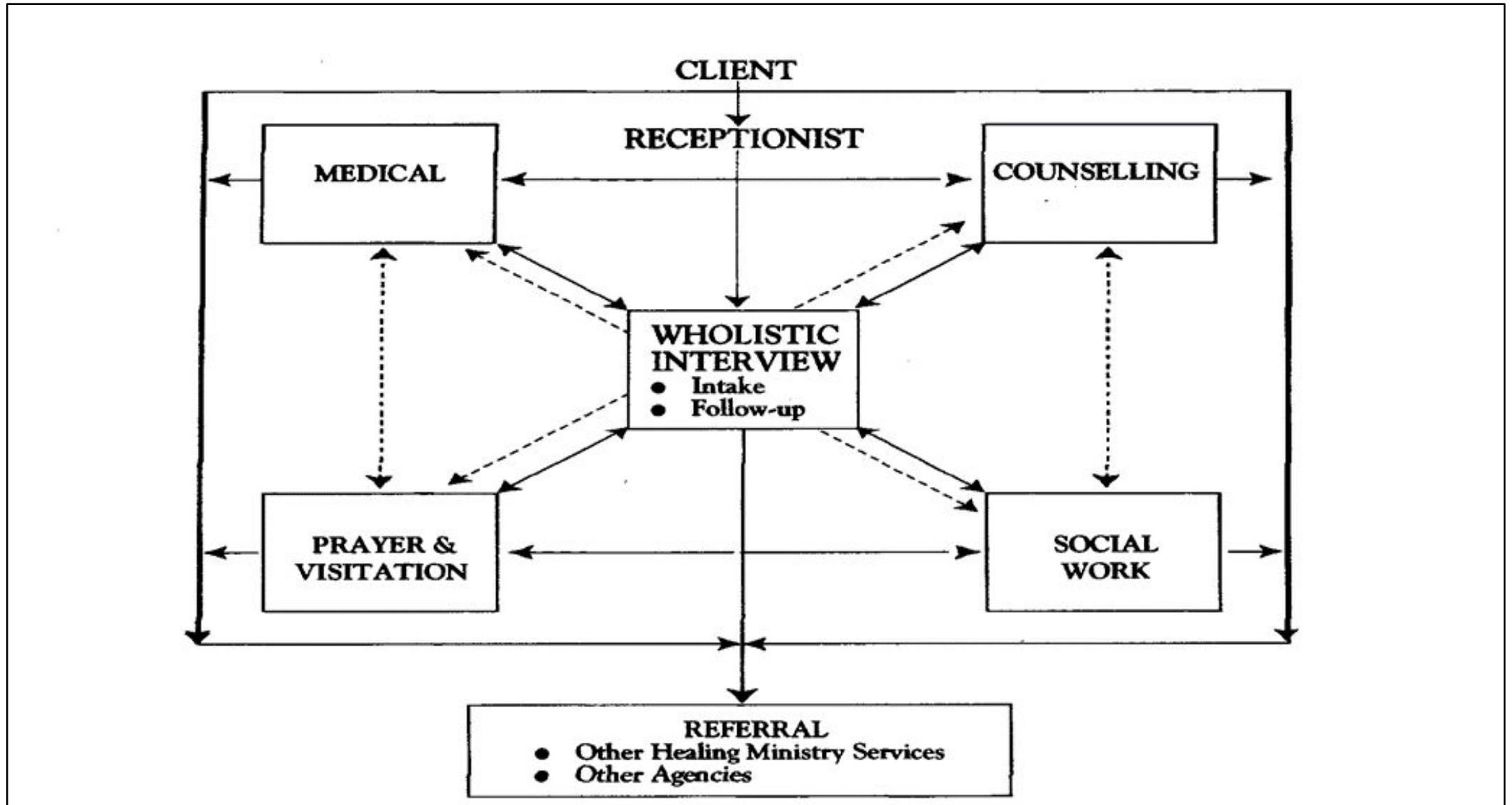
**Counselling**



**Social Worker**



# The Bethel Wholistic Clinic- A Flowchart of Curative Services



## REHABILITATION

Confidential access for support and intervention for persons with:

- Mental health conditions
- HIV/AIDS

There are also a:

- Special Care Ministry
- Homeless Ministry
- Community Outreach Ministry where we established basic schools in inner-city communities

**Over the decades, churches in most denominations have adopted some of the activities provided at Bethel.**

# Other Key Points to Note

- Ministries are carried out by multidisciplinary teams where members pray and strengthen each other
- The Jamaica Baptist Union trained lay counsellors and health workers
- For several years, capacity building for churches' healing ministries were carried out by a group called Whole Person Resource Centre.

# Other Key Points to Note

- We **network** with government and private sector agencies.

For example, recently the Jamaican governments included churches in the training of persons for lay counselling and psychosocial intervention.

- **Sustainability enabled** via
  - Strong administration,
  - Voluntarism,
  - Church ownership,
  - Cost recovery from clients, where possible,
  - Fundraising
  - Foundation for community outreach.

# How can your Church get started in a **Mental Health Ministry?**

- Train every member to become an emotional wellness supporter
- Establish a Mental Health Committee with a volunteer Coordinator of Mental Health Ministries
- Develop training and education to enable mental health literacy
- Combat stigma
- Seek advocacy for access to adequate services



# Every member can become an Emotional Wellness Supporter

1. Manage your own self-care through healthy life style practices
2. Become aware of individuals around you
3. Reach out and make yourself available and accessible
4. Spend time to listen, empathise while being respectful and confidential
5. Refer for professional help as necessary. Go with them if needed
6. Provide or recruit practical assistance
7. Help to keep the person integrated in social and spiritual relationships
8. Pray always for God's healing

# Mental Health is not a lost cause!

We are resilient  
as a people

We can “think  
big and start  
small”

We can overcome the  
barriers to Caribbean  
Church collaboration

**With God, we have “power and authority”.**

FOR BLACK GIRLS  
**Self Care**  
HAPPY HEALTHY WHOLE

## Other Care

*With this God of  
Power  
All Things are  
Possible!*

*Thank You for  
Listening*