

THE HISTORY OF THE BARBICAN BAPTIST CHURCH HEALTH CLINIC

Reprinted from the 25th Anniversary Programme for the Health Ministry

It was the Jamaica Baptist Union's Holistic Ministry theme and activities that propelled the development of the Barbican Baptist Church Health Ministry in August 1983. Churches within the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU) had a strong desire to make an impact on health care in the Island. This desire was acted upon by Dr Anthony Allen in the late 1970s, who led a team of doctors, nurses and pastors to establish health clinics throughout Jamaica.



The Baptist community soon began making positive strides in the delivery of health care in communities across the Island. Mrs Joye Levermore, a Registered Nurse, worked as part of Dr Allen's team. She wondered about her own church community in Barbican and consulted her Pastor, Reverend Earl Morgan, to ascertain whether a clinic could be established there.

Reverend Morgan supported the idea and enlisted the services of Mrs Linda Woolery to spearhead the programme with Mrs Levermore.

In 1983, both ladies worked fervently to launch the clinic. The clinic received assistance from Mr Lester Woolery, who was at the time Director of Pharmaceutical Services at the Ministry of Health. Mr Woolery donated a surgical bed, blood pressure instruments, thermometers, along with other equipment and medication that would be needed in the clinic. Other members of the Church came on board and assisted with the operation of the clinic. These members included Ms Joyce Vincent, a Nurse Practitioner, Mrs Fredricka Swaby, an Enrolled Nurse, Deacon Etna Barton and Ms Lena Lindo. This group was the first managerial committee of the Barbican Baptist Church Health Ministry.

The clinic started on the ground floor of the Church's Education Multipurpose Building. Clinic was held on alternate Mondays at 5:00pm. Patients benefited from renowned practitioners in the health field, such as Dr Aggrey Irons, Head Psychiatrist at the Bellevue Hospital and Dr Lennox Francis, Consultant and Surgeon at the Kingston Public Hospital (KPH).

The Clinic sought to live up to its Mission Statement, Taking Care of the Whole Man by delivering quality health care services to meet the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of its patients. In addition to offering routine health services such as diabetes and blood pressure checks and treating asthma cases, the Health Ministry Team has also been instrumental in diagnosing critical conditions that often led to saving lives. Patients with conditions requiring specialized treatment would be referred to a specialist Physician. Special mention must be made of Dr Eve Palomino-Lue, who graciously accepted paediatric cases of a specific nature at no charge. Patients at the Clinic would be asked to pay only a minimal fee for registration.

The people of Barbican were happy for a clinic. Mothers brought their young babies to see the Paediatrician, while men, women and children of varying ages came to see the family Doctor. It was in 1988, that God blessed the church with its own resident Doctor, Dr Neville Ballin. He joined the Clinic staff, and worked diligently with his patients, attending to their ailing conditions with sensitivity and passion. Dr. Michelle Beckford, Paediatrician, joined the clinic years later and balanced her job with care, zest and understanding for her young patients.

The reputation of the Clinic has grown over the years, and persons attend from neighboring communities such as Grants Pen, Jacks Hill and even as far as St Catherine, to have their health needs met. Presently, not much has changed, as on a monthly basis, vast numbers of persons attend the Barbican Baptist Church Health Clinic. Over the years, the clinic has seen one thousand four hundred patients... and counting.

In the 1990s the Clinic started caring for AIDS patients. The Clinic assisted in AIDS awareness programmes and under the guidance of the Physician, dispensed drugs to patients with AIDS in the Community. Education had therefore taken on greater relevance to the administrators of the Clinic. Since 1994, the Clinic has been involved in lectures and Health Fairs to educate its public on the importance of taking care of one's body.

The Clinic not only caters to meeting the health needs of the physical man, but members of the Clinic are deeply concerned for the spiritual welfare of their patients. Sister Lena Lindo was the first leader of this arm of the Health Ministry, ensuring that prayers were held with the patients attending the clinic. The Pastor is also available for counselling on a referral basis. Since the Clinic is housed at the Barbican Baptist Church, it is essentially a Christian health facility, and patients are exposed to the Gospel while being attended to by a health care professional. Several persons have been converted to the Christian faith through the Health Ministry.

The Clinic has evolved over the years and is still making tremendous strides in the Barbican Community. Some of the original workers have left the Clinic, however, throughout the years God has blessed the Clinic with professional and faithful workers who are now a part of the Management team. The current members of the Health Ministry Team are:

Medical Staff

- Dr. Neville Ballin
- Dr. Michelle Beckford
- Dr. Yvonne Munroe
- Nurse Valerie Hardware
- Nurse Joye Levermore
- Nurse Fredrika Swaby
- Nurse Loraine Drysdale
- Nurse Johnson

Administrators

- Mrs Verna Ballin
- Mrs. Pearlina Elliot
- Mrs. Agnes Gilbourne
- Mrs. Norma Johnson