



East Jamaica Conference Of Seventh-day Adventists

OFFICE OF POSSIBILITY MINISTRIES

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TO ALL: MEMBERS IN EAST JAMAICA CONFERENCE OF
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

June Focus on the Blind or Vision Impaired

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 1:2.

The month of June the Possibility Ministries Department of East Jamaica Conference we will zoom in on the Blind or Vision Impaired. Last month May we highlighted in four (4) articles the Deaf Community and the Church for the Deaf located on the Portmore Seventh-day Adventist Church grounds.

The seven areas covered by Possibility Ministries are 1. Deaf & Hard of Hearing; 2. Blind or vision impaired; 3. Physically Disabled; 4. Mental and emotionally impacted; 5. Orphans, Autistic and other; 6. Vulnerable Children; 7. Spousal Loss persons and Caregivers. The focus for the month of June will be on number two (2) the Blind or Vision Impaired and we have Elder Junior Bennett to assist with these articles for the month.

Elder Junior Bennett currently serves at the Sandy Park Seventh-day Adventist Church as the Possibility Ministries Director. He for years have worked intimately with the blind community and have served on the Board for the Jamaica Society for the Blind, (JSB).

The Jamaica Society for the Blind (JSB) is located at **111 1/2 Old Hope Road, Kingston 6**, St. Andrew. The JSB logo is below



Read the articles and be informed.

God's Speed

Yours in the Master's Hand,

Sheldon Schooler
Pastor



Focus on Blindness and Vision Impairment (Part 1)

By: Elder Junior Bennett

The church has the power to transform lives and to greater impact the lives of people who are living with special needs. The Jamaica Society for the Blind, (JSB) mission is to promote avoidable blindness and vision impairment and provides opportunity to advance the well-being of persons who are blind and visually impaired through education and social programmes. I believe advancing the well-being of persons who are blind and visually impaired should be the responsibility of every citizen. We have a responsibility, especially the church to demonstrate unconditional love for everyone especially those living with special needs including persons who are living with blindness and vision impairment.

As sighted people, we have a duty to learn how to interact, work with and care for all persons with difference of abilities. The interesting reality is that today you may be caring, servicing, or supporting a person living with blindness and visually impairment and tomorrow you, a close friend or family member may need to go through an adjustment to blindness programme because of a myriad of reasons including aging.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) in an article entitled “Blindness and vision impairment” published on the 13th of October 2022. There is approximately 2.2 billion of the world population living with near or distance vision impairment. Notwithstanding, almost half of the vision impairment cases globally either could have been prevented or has not yet been addressed. Uncorrected refractive errors and cataracts are the leading causes of vision impairment and blindness. Other causes of blindness include glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy. The report reveals that vision loss can affect people of all ages and further indicates that majority of the people living with vision impairment and blindness are over the age of 50 years.

The Caribbean Council for the Blind and Visual Impairment of which JSB is a member estimated in 2020 that 1% of the population that is approximately 27,093 of adults in Jamaica are functionally blind. The estimated number of children who are functionally blind is 863. An estimated 3% of population or 81,279 consist of adults with low vision. The estimated number of children with low vision is 2,589.

Commendations are in order for the work of the Salvation Army in Jamaica, through the School of the Blind that caters for the blind and visually impaired children in Jamaica. Based on the number of blind and visually impaired children, there is a need to evaluate the provision that is in place for education at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels.

The church overall can do more to support and advocate for improved quality of lives, education and employment for persons with special needs. It is commendable that the Seventh-day Adventist church has incorporated Special Needs



Ministries for several decades with a primary focus of serving and attending to people with special needs. The Sandy Park SDA Church has a very close relationship with the Jamaica Society for the Blind and has hosted the launch of the Annual Sight Awareness Week, which was mutually beneficial to the church, community and the JSB.

Helen Keller said that the only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision. The time has come for sighted persons to pause, embrace and support the vision of empowering persons who are living with blindness and low vision. The more we empower and provide opportunity for education and employment, the greater their contribution will be to the economic development of our country.