

Church looking to attract more young people

Web Posted - Mon Sep 25 2006

By Allison Ramsay More active memberships in churches across Barbados is ideal, but at the same time, churches must step up efforts to attract Barbadians, especially the youth, through the church doors.

This assessment came from president of the Barbados Christian Council, Stephen Sandiford, in an interview with the Barbados Advocate about the numbers of active members in churches across Barbados. The International Religious Freedom Report for 2005 notes that activity in Barbadian church ranges from a high of 95 per cent for Jehovah Witnesses membership to 20 per cent in the Roman Catholic Church.

□ Generally, the Barbados Christian Council would be deeply concerned with what is happening. We would like more youth in church, but there is a drift and the church does not have as many people, particularly young people in our churches as we would like to see, □ said Rev. Sandiford. □ We still have to be concerned with the youngsters on the block; how many people we see on the streets that should be in the church. There is the challenge for the church to bring in more people, especially young people, □ he continued. Sandiford said churches have to do more work in the community because most young people will not just decide to go to a church. □ We have to get out where the people are. We have to work with them on projects, show them love and concern. It □s not like 40 or 50 years ago, because problems of society are different. ... The churches have work to do. The churches have to let people know that they care for them. □

The Anglican Church has the largest membership in Barbados, of approximately 70 000 people with an average 65 per cent of its members active in the church. To the issue of members being more active in the church, Anglican Bishop Dr. John Holder said: □ The ideal is that every Christian in the world should be active. Some people start out very enthusiastic, then they fall on the wayside. Some people go to church from the time they are children, they drift away and come back. So, people vary in their responses to religion. □ Ideally, we would like all people to pursue their religion, but what we would like even more is for all people to pursue the Christian principles of love, compassion, kindness ... If we all did that, whether we are Christian, Muslim or Hindu, the world would be a better place. □

Bishop Holder said it would be best to □ have everyone at church, but the reality is that some people may go to church once a year at Christmas. At that time, we would have about 80 to 90 per cent of the church population. Around Easter, about 70 per cent of our members would come out. Some people start out very enthusiastic and although we would want everyone to be there every Sunday, especially the youth, everyone won □t be there. □