

**Greetings to the Annual Assizes Church Service
Senator the Hon. Dorothy Lightbourne, Q.C.,
Attorney-General & Minister of Justice.
Venue: East Queen Street Baptist Church, Central
Kingston.
Date: 9.30 a.m., Sunday, Sept. 14, 2008.**

“Living in the Spirit, Living Justly”

Members of the clergy, the judiciary, the private and public Bar, ladies and gentlemen. It is with much pleasure that I greet you here today as Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, at this Assizes Service at the venerable East Queen Street Baptist Church, and of course just two days before the start of the Michaelmas Session of the Home Circuit Court.

We acknowledge here this morning, the on-going and serious challenges facing the administration of justice in Jamaica -- and all its participants – a challenge that will continue today and in the months and years ahead. But we are not at all fazed by these challenges, especially since we strive valiantly to be **Living in the Spirit and Living Justly.**

Galatians Chapter 5, verse 25 admonishes that: **“Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit”**, and it is in this vein that we are tackling the task at hand –

There are many reforms taken place to date and I wish to point out just a few of them to you :

I wish to point out that so far we have been successful in the following areas.

- The acquisition of the three Caucus rooms at the Jamaica Conference Centre as additional court rooms as part of the effort to address the backlog of cases in the Criminal Division of the Supreme Court
- Real time Court reporting is being introduced in four of the court rooms at the Supreme Court – there will no longer be the need for the taking of notes of the proceedings by the Judge, Prosecutor, Defence Counsel and the Court Reporters. Court rooms 1, 2, 3, and 8 will be the first court rooms. The judge will be able to view the notes of the proceedings on the bench as it is written by the reporters. At the end of the day the transcripts will be made available.

- Online computerization of the records of the Civil Registry and computerization of the court diaries has commenced
- The training of Court Reporters for real time has also started.

I pause here to make a special appeal, as I ask for the co-operation of every judge, the attorneys, Court staff- everyone in the Justice System who will have a role to play in ensuring that the new system runs smoothly.

- General upgrading of the Supreme Court is 90% complete (general painting, tiling and the installation of elevators)
- Legislation has been passed in both Houses of Parliament to increase the number of Judges of the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal and Masters
- Cabinet has given approval for me to increase, by Order, the number of Resident Magistrates
- Approval has also been given by Cabinet to increase the number of Prosecutors

- With support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) an assessment of the improvement needs of the Office of Director of Public Prosecutions has been completed
- A submission is before Cabinet to establish the administrative arm of the Courts, to be known as the Court Management Service. This is to be undertaken in three phases,
 - Firstly, the immediate administrative establishment of the governing body to give control for the administrative functions of the Judiciary to the Chief Justice that is currently carried out by the Ministry of Justice and the appointment of the Principal Executive Officer to head the CMS who will report to the Chief Justice
 - Secondly, the transfer to the CMS of additional court management functions which are currently assigned to specific court functionaries under specific statutes. Functions such as, transcription

services, judicial library and registry. Some of these will require legislation.

- Thirdly, the research and consequent legislative arrangements that will transfer full control to the Chief Justice addressing issues such as whether there would be a commission set up to deal with the representation of the judiciary for its budgetary provisions and an accountability framework.

In the interim the Ministry will continue to perform the functions under a MOU and later by Service Level Agreement, until the entity is in a position to assume the responsibilities.

- A draft national policy for Restorative Justice has been developed and consultations are now going on across the island to get the input of citizens into the process.

These are all steps on the way to upgrading, modernizing and transforming the nation's justice system. We are well aware that it will be a work-in-progress for some time to come.

We have to bear in mind that God is interested in every aspect of our lives, not just the spiritual. Since we live by the power of the Holy Spirit, then we should submit every aspect of our lives to God -- professional, emotional, social, physical, vocational, intellectual. And for us to **Live in the Spirit and Live Justly**, we must maintain constant contact with the Holy Spirit.

It might be the right time now also, for taking stock of our efforts since the last Assizes Service in November, acknowledging our failures and regrets for the past, and making positive resolves for the future. In this we would also enhance our relationship with God and with one another -- a time really, for spiritual and professional renewal.

As active participants at all levels in the justice system in Jamaica, land we love, we know that compassion, mercy, healing, sanction -- where appropriate -- and forgiveness

leading to reconciliation, must be at the heart of a fair and just criminal justice system.

We believe also that victims need to be more actively engaged in the criminal justice system, provided that healing and reconciliation are the focus of such engagement. Also, we encourage wholeheartedly, the initiatives being made towards a more widespread system of restorative justice.

As we contemplate the term's work ahead, bearing in mind the theme -- **Living in the Spirit, Living Justly**, I commend to you Proverbs chapter 16, verse 3:

“Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.”

In life, we must always bear in mind that if we are to succeed, we must trust God, as if everything depended on Him, while working as if everything depended on us. Only

in this way will we be able to demonstrate the qualitative difference between **Living Justly** and **Just Living**.

May God bless you.

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