

# Lloyd & Elaine Cook

## Serving the Lord in Jamaica



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The New Year is rushing along with us and we are trying to keep up, and hoping that Jamaica and the world will not have to repeat the year 2020, as we wrestle with the virus Covid-19. Daily we wait with trepidation for the local TV news to terrify us with how many new positive cases were found; how many died yesterday; and how many entered hospitals for treatment. Finding beds in our hospitals has become quite a problem. Presently Jamaica has near 34,000 confirmed positive; with just over 500 deaths; nearly 400 hospitalized, of which 28 are critically ill.

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**A Gift from India:** Elaine has this word of news for our supporters: “We give God thanks for our first supply of vaccines, a gift of 50,000 (doses) from India. We thank our caring Heavenly Father Who sent it in the midst of our rising costs.

**Number of Murders:** “Yet, for us there is a greater concern, that of the number of persons that are being killed every day. Lloyd and I have been praying that our churches would be awakened to the need of evangelizing our nation. Despite the many churches that we have, there is a new generation that knows not our God.” But, our hope for change was much encouraged on February 21st. when the local Ministers Association, of which Lloyd is the Secretary, received a message from the Custos Rotolorum (a term left over from our British days.) He is like a local “Patron”, to use a Spanish term) who is the representative of the Governor General, who is the Queen of England’s representative in Jamaica.

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While the planning is just beginning, the churches are eager to see this day arrive (April 28) when there will be a special Prayer Event in Mandeville; other churches will be opened for any who wishes to enter for personal prayer to do so.

Do pray with us for the planning, and for effective prayer activities that will take place on that day. We desire to see God work and begin a new set of witness and prayer activities in our town and parish. O that God would help us to lead many persons to receive His salvation!

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**Health:** We and our extended families are doing well, as we depend upon the Lord for protection and preservation, in face of the Covid-19 pandemic. We thank God that only one relative of Elaine’s family, and also one of Lloyd’s family, a brother of hers who lives in New York, contracted the virus and had to be hospitalized. He has recovered and is back at his business.

Lloyd's son-in-law who lives in North Carolina, also contracted the disease. He too has recovered. His wife our second daughter is a Physician's Assistant in a hospital there. We thank the Lord that she has weathered the threats safely. We are unsure if she has yet received the vaccine. We pray constantly for their protection by our loving Lord Jesus.

Elaine and I are looking forward to Jamaica getting the Johnson & Johnson vaccines, as we would like to be able to get that vaccine, since it would be only a one-dose vaccine.

**The Vaccine's Effect on Education:** Because of the Covid-19 pandemic our involvement in Christian education here has been much affected, but we are learning to deal with it. Nationally, our schools have been closed to face-to-face classes for about a year now. Public schools are using various methods of teaching virtually by T.V., Radio and telephone platforms. On the Infant and Middle-schools level, many children have been left behind because of the families' difficulty in providing computers, tablets, and phones for the students. Various businesses and individuals, local and in the diaspora, have been donating tablets, etc. to the schools for those students in need. But, despite all the efforts, many children are left behind.

We found a boy and his smaller sister, sitting just outside our gate, with his tablet and her telephone connected to our Wi-Fi trying to follow the school lessons being broadcast. Many cannot find local Wi-Fi contact to connect. The Ministry of Education has decided to extend the school year into a part of the summer holidays in order to help them be ready for exams which will decide if they can be moved up for the next school year. Many students have fallen behind in their school work. The entire Caribbean has been facing the same education issues.

Lloyd has taught one of his College courses by the Learning Management System utilized by his College. But, he has seen the need to discontinue teaching at the Caribbean Graduate School of Theology this semester. This is regrettable, but his time, health, and technology difficulties necessitated this. Do uphold him so he will know when to discontinue his teaching responsibilities completely, since advancing age is making it more difficult each year.

In late May Lloyd will celebrate his 79th birthday: while he still enjoys good health, he is beginning to face some physical difficulties, particularly with getting adequate sleep most nights. He does have prescribed tablets to help, but is unwilling to use these every day lest he becomes drug dependent. Pray that he will take necessary steps to get back to a regular schedule of sleep time.

**Ministries:** With schools shut down, and gatherings of most sorts not encouraged, we are unable to continue most of our public evangelistic activities. Elaine is unable to continue most of her outreach to children and youth. Lloyd's teaching opportunities have also been affected. Even church gatherings are under the government's guidance. Churches are limited to not more than ten (10) persons at meetings; even funerals have been limited to this number; and only cemetery internments: with memorial services in churches are suspended for a two-week period. Jamaicans are not appreciative of being so restricted for funerals. Funeral homes are also complaining of difficulties in preserving bodies until they are free to return to having burials.

Yet, we take every opportunity we can find to witness: especially to individuals. Even as we walk in the community daily, Elaine will often stop to ask people gathered along the way if she can pray for them. There never has any resistance to doing so. Our people respect prayer and religious beliefs and practice. We praise God that that Christian respect is still common in our country, but many do not have that faith in the Lord which indicates certainty of personal salvation. We pray that we would be able to help whoever needs the assurance of God's presence and help to them in this time of questions about the future. The greatest spiritual need we see around us now is the lack of HOPE.

We will continue to make ourselves available to be used as God's instruments to lead family, friends and others to faith and spiritual certainty in Christ. "David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep." (Acts 13:36) We plan to do the same, before we also "fall asleep." We desire that "those who come behind us will find us faithful." May you do your best to do likewise.

We thank God daily for you all! Please continue to keep us close to your hearts and in your prayers, as we seek also to do for you. Keep close to the Lord during this Lenten.

# *Lloyd & Elaine Cook*

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## The Changing Seasons, of Life

The seasons are changing, both of the New Year and of our lives, whether we are prepared to handle it or not. Life does not stand still: especially facing the Covid-19 lockdowns, and the present focus on getting vaccines to protect us from the pandemic with the vague hope to “return to normal” soon.

Some are likely to ask, with a half-smile, ‘what is “normal”? Is there really such a thing? Life is about constant change. We agree with the request of the old hymn “O Thou that changeth not abide with me.”

Here in the mountains of south-central Jamaica, Mandeville, the seasons are not very different: we seem to have continuous summer/fall conditions. Spring doesn’t show itself by seemingly dry and dead twigs suddenly bursting forth in blossoms. It simply begins by certain trees, like the various colors of the Pouii tree (yellow or pink) loosing its leaves and bursting forth into blossoms alone as soon as the first rains bring an end to the three or more months of no rains beginning in December.

The island has never had snow. Except, it was reported many decades ago that there was frost on the ground on the top of our highest mountain, (Blue Mountain Peak – 4804 feet above sea level). Though we do not have a ‘Fall’ season here where there is a burst of golden red leaves which then fall to the earth leaving leafless twigs until the spring, but there are a small number of trees which from time to time produce full coat of yellow flowers, or purple, when showers of rain follow a brief dry period. We also look forward to the magnificent Poinciana trees bursting forth in various shades of red and golden yellow flowers. Those will soon bless us with their presence. In the more eastern Caribbean islands of Dominica and St. Lucia they call them ‘Flambouyaa’ (Flamboyant).

This is also the time when certain tropical fruits tantalize us with their sweetness: fruits such as ‘Star-apples’ ‘naes-berries’, followed by a variety of mangoes. These are now coming into the fullness. Every Jamaican goes crazy at “Mango-time”. Many west Indians at this time “wash out we pot, turn them down, for its mango time.”

Another sign of changing seasons refers to our aging: when our hair turns from its youthful black (or other colors, red, auburn, yellow, etc.) to grey. Lloyd celebrated his seventy-ninth year on May 27th. A friend who called him to celebrate with him reminded him that “next year this time, you will be an Octogenarian.” It almost sounded as a bad word, but it a reality. We thank god for all the years He has graciously given us, We will accept every extra year He gives us, and will use each to serve Him and advance His Kingdom here on earth.

Another season-change we are looking forward to is the reopening of schools after the coming summer holidays. Both Elaine and I are tired of classes, church services, and other meetings that are being held 'virtually'. He wants to meet and see people face-to-face once again. The schools where Elaine often ministers with her "Wait-and-Win" abstinence program; and the children classes he holds in other places have either been on lockdown, or the ministerial Colleges where Lloyd teaches, have all been on lockdown for the past year, and have to be taught 'virtually', mostly by ZOOM. Even our churches have been restricted by the government to limited numbers, though things are beginning to be opened up, and the national curfews are now being lengthened a bit, yet the country wants to get "back to normal." The vaccination program is beginning to have its effect, as the Covid-19 numbers are training down noticeably. We praise God for that!

Elaine and I have gotten the first jab of our Astra-Zenica vaccines, and look forward soon to getting our second dose within the next week. And, Lloyd will be taking a trip to the USA in the next week, to be at the High School graduation of our first granddaughter, Annika.

Elaine has this to say "... we thank God that with the vaccines, there appears to be some hope of seeing an end to this epidemic. She continues to assist a few of the community boys with their reading. Kymani, a nine (9) year old is the only one she is working with now, out of Covid-19 caution, and the fact that he needs 'one-on-one' help. He has not been in school since the onset of Covid. Because of his level of reading, he is not able to use the 'virtual' on-line service for schools, and there is not enough for those at home."

Lloyd will be doing some travelling through much of June. He will be visiting Raleigh-Durham in North Carolina to attend the High School graduation of our grand-daughter. In September she will be going to College, intending to follow her mother – Eleanor Gail – in medical studies. Her brother, Tyler, will have another year to go before his graduation. In the meanwhile he will continue to win wrestling matches in his state. Their seasons are also changing, as the move forward hoping for "normal" living, while learning trust in the Lord as Savior, Advisor and Lord.

As you pray for us, do uphold our siblings and their families. Thank God that no member of our families have had Covid problems, except for a brother of Elaine's who lives in New York. He has successfully overcome infection and hospitalization, but has recovered and is back to running his Air-Conditioning business. God has been gracious to Lloyd's daughter who works in a Raleigh hospital in the critical care unit as a Physician's Assistant. But her husband, a retired Fireman and EMT tech, did test positive for the Virus. He is now fully recovered, thank God.

Pray with us for a nephew of Lloyd who has had recent emotional/psychological problems. The entire family has cooperated to see him getting counsel and moving towards recovery. We pray for him to learn to fully trust the Lord, and lay his burdens at the Lord's feet.

We praise God for your faithful support of us by prayer and financial support. May you know daily fellowship with your Savior and Lord, and His Shepherd-like care. We thank you for being our helpers as we serve the Lord here.



# Lloyd & Elaine Cooke

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March 2021

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Yours in loving service to our Savior,

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# Lloyd & Elaine Cook

## Serving the Lord in Jamaica



September is here: and half-way-through already. Labor Day is behind us, so we are into the Fall season already. But while you in the United States will have the beautiful colors as the leaves change, we in Jamaica will see no difference. We miss this season's colors more than any other time of the year. But, "to everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven".

To us in Jamaica it is still the Covid-19 pandemic season. Our Government has gone so far as to intervene with "lockdowns" each of the past three weeks from Sunday to Tuesday, in an effort to cut back on the infections and reduce the daily death totals. But then, on the days before the weekly lock downs, and on the first business day after the lockdowns the crowds seem to be greater than normal as people shop or do other business to make-up for the days of lockdown. One wonders of they make sense. We look forward anxiously to them coming to an end. May it be as soon as the coming weekend.

I will not scare you with the present Covid numbers: as it seems that is what the papers and TV nightly news is all about – how scared can the society be made to be, in order to increase listenership. We are for less mandates and lockdowns, rather that shutting down all of living until we get the Virus extinguished. May God help us to learn to live with a less-than perfect society. Only when we reach Heaven will we have perfect days with "no discouraging news". We trust you are living for eternity: and doing everything you can to take as many with you as possible: that is our focus, and we pray your will be so too.

A few days ago Lloyd's younger sister reminded all her friends on Facebook that on 9/11 she had taken off from Newark, New Jersey on a plane at about the same time the first plane went into the World Trade Center. Thus her plane was among the many airlines that had never gotten to their intended destination when the skies were shut down and all airlines forced to land for many hours. We also remember watching the activities of that day on TV from Mandeville, as we were in our first year of returning to Jamaica to close out our missionary service within our own nation where there were still many souls who needed to hear the gospel and enter into a personal faith relationship with Jesus to be sure of their salvation. This was important to both Elaine and Lloyd, as we had grown up in official churches in Jamaica, but for a long period of time did not yet have a certain knowledge of our salvation by expressed faith in Jesus as our Saviour.

We are still seeking to help fellow very religious Jamaicans, find confidence and certainty – not by the outward acts of "Church membership" – but by the inward act of calling upon Christ for salvation ("by Grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works lest any man should boast." Ephesians 2: 8 – 9.)

One-on-one salvation is still the ministry involvement that gives us the greatest satisfaction. It is also one of a number of College Courses that Lloyd teaches at the Bible College where both he and Elaine trained decades ago before each became foreign missionaries. Lloyd was called to the eastern Caribbean in the late years of the 1960s; and Elaine to Zambia, Africa as a Missionary nurse in the early 1970s. It would be more than twenty years before we would come together in marriage (1996), and then (after three years) return to Jamaica to end our years as missionaries in our homeland.

### ***An Earthquake and a Hurricane:***

The earthquake, which destroyed many homes and businesses in southern Haiti a few months ago, was also felt here in Jamaica. Thank God we got no damage here in Jamaica. So, we have become concerned for the Haitian people. And many Jamaican churches, as well as other Caribbean nations, have gathered material help and sent to Haiti after disasters there since we consider ourselves to be similar in history and religious culture to them.

Many Jamaican denominations have branch churches in Haiti. Jamaican churches often visit Haiti for Summer Short-Term Missions as a part of our spiritual responsibility. We have also had to take in Haitian boat-people, protect them and then send them back to Haiti, after various hurricanes, droughts and earthquakes. The recent hurricane Ida that brought floods to Haiti, also lightly brushed us here in Jamaica.

Our government has often sent military teams from our Army and Air Force to help after natural disasters. A couple of our Jamaican businesses also have Haitian subsidiaries. One such Jamaican Chicken and Broiler Company, with a distinct Christian culture, has set up a branch of their business to help Haitians earn by becoming chicken farmers, and then purchasing the mature birds for preparation for the market. Do pray for this 'Christian' company and its principals who seek to see Haitians helped and brought to faith in Christ.

***Covid-19 and Education:***

Our local Ministry of Education has just reopened schools for face-to-face classes after 18 months, since the pandemic caused all schools to be closed last year. This has come about as the effort to educate our children from their homes by 'Virtual' classes has not been very successful, largely due to lack of Tablets or Telephones, and difficulties in getting classes into areas with WiFi connectivity. In some areas over 40% of students have had no schooling during the past year and a half. There is still some hesitancy on the part of teachers and their Trade Unions to see schools re-open. But we are trusting the Lord for a successful school year. Pray with us!

***Vaccination:*** Elaine and I are fully vaccinated since June, with the Astra-Zenica brand. We are trying to still follow the suggested protocols, since we have seen where fully vaccinated persons can still get the virus. Here in Jamaica we are said to be going through a third wave. More vaccines are being imported, and there are special calls to the unvaccinated. Most hospital Covid beds are full, or nearly full. Additional bed space is being supplied by Church halls near to the hospitals. Many additional vaccination sites are being set up. The crowds that come to them are often more than can be handled by the authorities. Deaths are still a relatively

***Health:*** Our families are in good situations, as far as we are aware. But, Elaine's grand-nephew who has grown with us since 2000 was sent home from his Cruise Ship job as an assistant-Chef over a year ago. He was recently recalled to rejoin a ship in Italy. He got all his documents and tickets to fly out: then his Covid-19 test proved positive. So, he is going through a 14 day quarantine with us, before getting tested again. Pray that all turns out well in the future!

Lloyd is doing dental rehabilitation work with his nephew, a Dental surgeon, financed by his daughters. This will replace the need for 'false teeth' with implants. The new teeth to be connected to the implants are being made in the U.S. They should be ready for October, he is told. We thank the Lord for this provision and how it will help.

***Family:*** We now have a grand-daughter who has begun her College training in Eastern North-Carolina. She came home for the Labor Day weekend to see her younger brother, and picked up her car, as well as a bicycle her parents have gotten her for travelling around the campus. We pray she finds sound Christian friends and witness groups she can become involved with and see her faith tested and grow strong in the Lord. Pray with us for her!

Lloyd's nephew has grown up in his church, and helped as a 'Server'. Recently he has been having spiritual conflicts and is searching for certainty and reality in his faith. He is much conflicted and family members think he needs psychological help. We are supporting him with our prayers that he will find a position of stability and understanding of what the Lord may be saying to him and how He will guide. He is open to being used in service to the Lord. PRAY!

***Olympics:*** Jamaica was again deeply involved in Track & Field events during the Olympics in Japan. Our female track athletes were once again world beaters, causing much rejoicing at home. The same was not as true of our male athletes, since the retirement of 'the fastest man on earth', Usain Bolt. Yet, considering our small size and population, we did well and should be satisfied. But we have been spoiled over the last 20 years or more.

We thank God, and we pray that we would likewise produce world-renowned servants of Jesus Christ. We do have a number of missionaries in many countries who are building the Church among "the last, the least and the lost". Let us be faithful in being their prayer and financial support partners. We thank you for being our prayer supporters.

Join us in making these spiritual matters our priority issues as we pray and look forward to the soon return of our Beloved Lord Jesus Christ, to Rule and Reign in His world. Let us all become ready as we await Jesus' soon return!



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Thanksgiving is past: the date, that is: but Christmas Giving never ends. We need to say thanks to all of you – for loving us; for praying for us; and especially for giving often and sacrificially to help meet our personal and material needs so that we could remain here to serve people, and in so doing win the opportunity to tell them about the lover of their souls, Jesus Christ. We do greatly thank the Lord for your faithfulness in standing with and beside us during the past years of serving Jesus in Jamaica, our homeland.

We thank God that despite the scourge of Covid-19, we have been spared, even though a few relatives of ours have contracted and safely overcome it. Praise God!

But we also praise the Lord that the vast majority of those who have touched by the pandemic have had the opportunity to think on their human frailty, and called upon the Lord for His loving mercy, grace and forgiveness. They have prepared for eternity, but have survived. Thank God! So many have not!

Health wise we have been kept well, and thank the Lord that while Elaine and Lloyd are both in our late seventies (70s), we have very few of the ailments that usually torment and take away many of our age group. Our daily walks of about two (2) miles help to keep our cholesterol low, and prevent/reduce cardiac problems. Thanks be to God!

Though Jamaica does not celebrate Thanksgiving, we enjoy watching the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade each year. As Christmas will be here in a short while, we want to wish you and your family all God's blessings. And, as you look backwards you will find much reason to give the Lord thanks, just as we do, for ordinary daily and extraordinary blessings which He has bestowed.

Ministries have been adjusted and changed in recent years. While most public and school based involvements have been scaled back, because of the lockdown of schools, or shift to Virtual instruction because of the Covid-19 pandemic, we still find ways to share the salvation message to whoever we can.

Elaine gets community kids together to assist them in their reading: most are behind in their reading proficiency as they get little help at home, and read very few books. She has also been able to get help from her church Class to obtain tablets for a few of the High School kids, to enable them to follow the virtual lessons from their schools. She has not been able to get into the schools for Wait & Win sexual- abstinence classes and witnessing presentations. Also, her outreach to students in the Government's 'Heart Trust' remedial and apprenticeship training program to come to her church weekly, for educational and moral instruction and support, was also suspended. She looks forward to getting this back on track when the Covid-19 pandemic is brought under control. We give thanks for each of these programs where she has been able to help children and youth.

Give thanks with us for the many opportunities she makes to pray with neighbor and community persons, as well as Taxi passengers she travels with, to get their permission to Pray with them. This has become quite a ministry: she rarely gets anyone who refuses her offer of prayer. I am often surprised at her boldness and proficiency in this ministry. Wednesday last, she walked into local Alcohol 'Pubs' and asked to pray for the customers and 'Bar-maids'. She then gave a Bible to each of the ladies for whom we had been personally praying for.

Give thanks with us to God, and help us continue our prayers for open hearts.

Lloyd has done very little College lecturing over the past 18 months of the pandemic shutdown. He did teach one such Virtual course at each of the two Bible Colleges, but dislikes the lack of person-to-person teaching, and has resisted doing more classes. However, many community persons come to our home for odd jobs, and for help with financial and food requests. We see these as opportunities to share Christ with them. Sometimes younger family members live for a while with us, and we are able to share Christ, as well as advice and counsel.

Pray particularly for a nephew of his who stayed a couple months with us while trying to settle spiritual and psychological questions relating to adjustment and change of denominations. He has spiritual leadership potential, but needs guidance and counseling.

At our increased age, it is sometimes difficult to describe our activities and/or ministries: are we active missionaries, retired missionaries, or just returned residents who formerly served as missionaries and Christian College lecturers and children's workers. Whatever we are, we thank God for the experiences we have had serving the Lord in Dominica (Eastern Caribbean), Zambia, Africa, Jamaica and Florida in the United States.

We thank God for every opportunity we have had in Sunday School teaching, Children's Ministries, Christian Camping, Missionary Church-planting, Missionary Nursing, Training Caribbean missionaries, Sunday Adult Bible-teaching, and 'Open-Air' preaching, and indoor church preaching. One does not retire from sharing the message of salvation in Christ by any means we can, (although Lloyd will be an 'Octogenarian' at his next birthday in May of next year. Elaine is doing a great job taking care of him. He gives thanks to God for all His mercy and grace during the nearly eight decades he has kept him alive and met all of his needs: physical and spiritual.

Let us remember to pray for Haiti, and particularly for the unfortunate 14 missionaries that remain in captivity, while their captors seek to become millionaires at their expense. Let's praise God for their Mission Agency which is praying for the kidnappers to experience God's Love in their souls. We praise God for the tremendous job that missionaries have done in Haiti over the last century or more. May they feel free to continue their service to the Lord in that great country.

Let's all be Thanks-givers and Christmas gift-givers to those in need this Christmas!



# Lloyd & Elaine Cooke

## Serving the Lord in Jamaica

June 2021

### The Changing Seasons, of Life

The seasons are changing, both of the New Year and of our lives, whether we are prepared to handle it or not. Life does not stand still: especially facing the Covid-19 lockdowns, and the present focus on getting vaccines to protect us from the pandemic with the vague hope to “return to normal” soon.

Some are likely to ask, with a half-smile, ‘what is “normal”? Is there really such a thing? Life is about constant change. We agree with the request of the old hymn “O Thou that changeth not abide with me.”

Here in the mountains of south-central Jamaica, Mandeville, the seasons are not very different: we seem to have continuous summer/fall conditions. Spring doesn’t show itself by seemingly dry and dead twigs suddenly bursting forth in blossoms. It simply begins by certain trees, like the various colors of the Pouii tree (yellow or pink) loosing its leaves and bursting forth into blossoms alone as soon as the first rains bring an end to the three or more months of no rains beginning in December.

The island has never had snow. Except, it was reported many decades ago that there was frost on the ground on the top of our highest mountain, (Blue Mountain Peak – 4804 feet above sea level). Though we do not have a ‘Fall’ season here where there is a burst of golden red leaves which then fall to the earth leaving leafless twigs until the spring, but there are a small number of trees which from time to time produce full coat of yellow flowers, or purple, when showers of rain follow a brief dry period. We also look forward to the magnificent Poinciana trees bursting forth in various shades of red and golden yellow flowers. Those will soon bless us with their presence. In the more eastern Caribbean islands of Dominica and St. Lucia they call them ‘Flambouyaa’ (Flamboyant).

This is also the time when certain tropical fruits tantalize us with their sweetness: fruits such as ‘Star-apples’ ‘naesberries’, followed by a variety of mangoes. These are now coming into the fullness. Every Jamaican goes crazy at “Mango-time”. Many west Indians at this time “wash out we pot, turn them down, for its mango time.”

Another sign of changing seasons refers to our aging: when our hair turns from its youthful black (or other colors, red, auburn, yellow, etc.) to grey. Lloyd celebrated his seventy-ninth year on May 27th. A friend who called him to celebrate with him reminded him that “next year this time, you will be an Octogenarian.” It almost sounded as a bad word, but it a reality. We thank god for all the years He has graciously given us, We will accept every extra year He gives us, and will use each to serve Him and advance His Kingdom here on earth.

Another season-change we are looking forward to is the reopening of schools after the coming summer holidays. Both Elaine and I are tired of classes, church services, and other meetings that are being held 'virtually'. He wants to meet and see people face-to-face once again. The schools where Elaine often ministers with her "Wait-and-Win" abstinence program; and the children classes he holds in other places have either been on lockdown, or the ministerial Colleges where Lloyd teaches, have all been on lockdown for the past year, and have to be taught 'virtually', mostly by ZOOM. Even our churches have been restricted by the government to limited numbers, though things are beginning to be opened up, and the national curfews are now being lengthened a bit, yet the country wants to get "back to normal." The vaccination program is beginning to have its effect, as the Covid-19 numbers are training down noticeably. We praise God for that!

Elaine and I have gotten the first jab of our Astra-Zenica vaccines, and look forward soon to getting our second dose within the next week. And, Lloyd will be taking a trip to the USA in the next week, to be at the High School graduation of our first granddaughter, Annika.

Elaine has this to say "... we thank God that with the vaccines, there appears to be some hope of seeing an end to this epidemic. She continues to assist a few of the community boys with their reading. Kymani, a nine (9) year old is the only one she is working with now, out of Covid-19 caution, and the fact that he needs 'one-on-one' help. He has not been in school since the onset of Covid. Because of his level of reading, he is not able to use the 'virtual' on-line service for schools, and there is not enough for those at home."

Lloyd will be doing some travelling through much of June. He will be visiting Raleigh-Durham in North Carolina to attend the High School graduation of our grand-daughter. In September she will be going to College, intending to follow her mother – Eleanor Gail – in medical studies. Her brother, Tyler, will have another year to go before his graduation. In the meanwhile he will continue to win wrestling matches in his state. Their seasons are also changing, as the move forward hoping for "normal" living, while learning trust in the Lord as Savior, Advisor and Lord.

As you pray for us, do uphold our siblings and their families. Thank God that no member of our families have had Covid problems, except for a brother of Elaine's who lives in New York. He has successfully overcome infection and hospitalization, but has recovered and is back to running his Air-Conditioning business. God has been gracious to Lloyd's daughter who works in a Raleigh hospital in the critical care unit as a Physician's Assistant. But her husband, a retired Fireman and EMT tech, did test positive for the Virus. He is now fully recovered, thank God.

Pray with us for a nephew of Lloyd who has had recent emotional/psychological problems. The entire family has cooperated to see him getting counsel and moving towards recovery. We pray for him to learn to fully trust the Lord, and lay his burdens at the Lord's feet.

We praise God for your faithful support of us by prayer and financial support. May you know daily fellowship with your Savior and Lord, and His Shepherd-like care. We thank you for being our helpers as we serve the Lord here.

Yours in loving service to our Savior,

*Lloyd & Elaine Cooke*

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# Lloyd & Elaine Cooke

## Serving the Lord in Jamaica

August 2021

Children daily fill our outdoors, and often our porch. Elaine is by the outdoor washing lines, trying to hang out the items of clothing she has just washed. Some of the kids are sitting at the outdoor lawn table with attached benches waiting for her. Meanwhile a teenager on the front porch is trying to read a section of the newspaper, to improve both his reading and comprehension skills. Five kids of school age are awaiting Elaine's attention, so Lloyd offers to finish the hanging of the clothes so she may attend to the children.

Elaine could have her entire day involved in helping neighborhood kids with their reading, and communication skills. Elaine says she "was awaiting her 9 year old student on Monday morning to assist in his reading, when four others arrived: 7-9 years old. To adhere to the Covid protocol she had to spread them over different days." A Bible story and snacks were also included. So many are needy! Pray!

### *[Covid -19 and Schools]*

Why are the children not in school? Because school has been on a prolonged 15 month hiatus from face-to-face classes because of the Covid-19 pandemic. They are now supposed to be on summer vacations, but the local Ministry of Education is attempting to help the children 'catch-up' on lessons missed by the majority of school age children who have fallen behind by missing classes done by video, virtual lessons sent out by national radio, television and media platforms.

Many school-age kids were without lap top computers, or tablets smart phones. Most parents were unable to provide these electronic tools as they only had one or two electronic devices. So those families that had more than one child to receive and respond to lessons being digitally screened could not get the lessons. Reports from most schools are that less than 30% of students were involved with school during the past school year.

Despite the above, the teacher's Union was resistant to supporting teachers being required to conduct "summer-school" to facilitate making up for lost lessons. This was supposed to be "their time" though they had been fully paid during the "lost" months of no school. Jamaicans would say "What a 'Bam-Bam?'"

### *[Public Prayers]*

The local Ministers Association was asked by the Civic authorities to lead a special time of public prayer, in cooperation with political and community leaders. This was due to a request from the 'Custos Rotolorum' (representative of the head of State and chief lay magistrate) of the parish, that we seek God's intervention to bring an end to the current crime wave. This effort took place during the month of May, with a special week and Day of Prayer': persons leading in prayer in sequence, during special times each week-day on the virtual platforms; and broadcast on a local Christian College's radio and television station into the community. There was participation across many churches and towns of the parish, and we trust that there will be lasting spiritual results.

Murders and other serious crimes are down in Jamaica 24% over this time last year. But other crimes are on the increase. A main cause is family disputes together with disagreements between friends that could/should be settled by dispute resolution interveners. People are being trained in this area, but people rarely seek such aid when they need it. We trust to see more Christians making themselves available to serve Christ in this way by getting involved as interveners. Pray!

### *[National Year-End Vigil]*

A somewhat similar request also came to the Mandeville Ministers Association from a committee representing the national head of state – the 'Governor General' who is the representative of the Queen of England, since Jamaica is a part of the British Commonwealth: former colonies of Britain that chose to remain under the Queen as symbolic 'head of State'. Similarly we are to plan and lead in a public gathering, together with a parish-wide community project, that will benefit and continue to represent our civil goodwill, after it is all over.

We are trying to find the right combination of public and private involvement together with religious ideas, which will leave lasting benefits to the parish and Island. Much discussion, planning, prayers and financing of this spiritual/civic community time of activities to give God thanks for His blessings and help to our nation during the year ending and the one about to begin. Pray with us for our part as Lloyd serves as the Secretary of the Ministers' Association.

We would love to see the churches of our part of the nation catch new visions of ways to show the love and helpfulness of our God and Savior to the nation. May we grab with full hands these opportunities to share the gospel in our immediate communities and in the wider parish of Manchester.

Keswick Convention, is a regular and looked-forward-to spiritual event in this town. The annual Keswick Convention was started here in Jamaica in 1900. But, this is the first time that local church members were not able to come together to listen to outstanding local and foreign Bible teachers, and Spiritual-life promoters for a week of morning and evening meetings. The final week of July this year the meetings were presented virtually. Only on two nights were worshippers to meet face to face. All these changes were due to government requirements in response to the Covid-19 protocols. We trust that many were helped and ministered to by the Spirit of God, as would have been expected under normal conditions. It is one of just a few opportunities for Christian fellowship across the denominations each year in middle-Jamaica.

Pray for Lloyd as he serves on the Executive as Secretary of the Mandeville Ministries Association. May he choose wisely how much he can still do, as he just had his 79th birthday.

#### **[United States Visit during June]**

The Lord provided in various ways to enable Lloyd to visit in Raleigh, North Carolina, for the High School graduation of our grand-daughter, Annika Tracy. She is getting ready to enter Eastern North Carolina University in the Fall to study medicine. Our concern and prayer is that she will seek out Christian student groups on campus, so that she can be built up in her faith and help to guide others to find Christ as their Savior during these crucial days of her life. Pray with us, please and with her Mom, Eleanor Gail.

Leaving North Carolina after the weekend of June 10 – 13, Lloyd went down to Miami, Florida, to work with Billy Hall on a centennial “History of the ‘Open’ Brethren” Movement in Jamaica that they are co-authoring. They are hoping for publication before the end of the year. Much got done during the ten days they worked together to get the text ready for printing. Now we need to see the funds for publication supplied. The Jamaican leadership is seeking sponsorship from local and diaspora connections. Pray!

#### **[Covid-19 Counts]**

Only 15% of Jamaicans have been fully vaccinated (including us). The hope is to see 65% vaccinated. Not enough vaccines have been received as yet, but an order of 300,000 is expected to arrive today and more later. The authorities are warning Jamaicans to keep up their vigilance.

There is fear of a third wave, due to the reopening of the entertainment industry, and the breaking of the rules that our party happy Jamaicans have been displaying. Deaths so far have just gone over twelve hundred, out of a population of 2.3 million. The new Delta variant has not yet been detected in Jamaica, thank God. We trust it will not soon reach here. We also have a high number who do not intend to be vaccinated. This does not bode well for the government, and they are urging all Jamaicans to go get vaccinated.

#### **Difficulties, But God!**

Sometimes we get the clear impression that everything is stacked against us. As we look around us we would be excused to share Solomon’s attitude to all that we can see “under the Sun”, that is, that there is no reason for hope. But, we could take an opposite attitude and approach, That God is on our side, and we just need to turn everything over to Him and seek His answers. A former lecturer of mine, while I was in Bible College, would often say that “God is previous to our needs.” Even Solomon seems to have found out this truth, for he ends his soliloquies in Ecclesiastes with the admonition to “Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every evil thing into judgment, including every secret thing whether good or evil.” (Eccl. 12:13b.-14.)

Lloyd had to learn this lesson during his trip to North Carolina and Florida a few times, but God always came through for him. Finding a place to stay near to Billy Hall’s home was problematic. But He provided through my daughter’s husband’s best friend (Virgil Campaniera and his wife Natalie). They were super friends, and took care of me as if I were their best friend. Then, I couldn’t rent a car for transportation purposes (because car-rental companies do not rent to those over 72), but my daughter gave me a phone that had the App for ‘Uber’ installed, (with her Credit card picking up the tab); then, at the airport when I was departing (I was greatly overweight) my Debit card would not accept the charges, as they were monitoring it for unusual spending taking place on my account.

After much back and forth, I finally remembered that I had another Debit card, based on a Jamaican account I didn’t think would have been acceptable: but it was, so I got to get back home after all. God was good to me in meeting all my needs even when I had no clue as to how things were going to turn out. Truly, “God was previous” to all Lloyd’s needs.”

“God is with us! I will not leave you nor forgive you!” The, walk with Him without FEAR. Because God has given you the assurance that “Whatsoever, Ye ask, in My name I will do unto you!” Thanks for often taking God’s place for us. Thanks for your prayers and your support. Surely whatever we accomplish for the Lord, you help make it happen. Continue to be faithful as unto the Lord! He will reward you in the right time.

Yours in loving service to our Savior,

*Lloyd & Elaine Cooke*

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# Lloyd & Elaine Cooke

## Serving the Lord in Jamaica

September 2021

September is here: and half-way-through already. Labor Day is behind us, so we are into the Fall season already. But while you in the United States will have the beautiful colors as the leaves change, we in Jamaica will see no difference. We miss this season's colors more than any other time of the year. But, "to everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven".

To us in Jamaica it is still the Covid-19 pandemic season. Our Government has gone so far as to intervene with "lockdowns" each of the past three weeks from Sunday to Tuesday, in an effort to cut back on the infections and reduce the daily death totals. But then, on the days before the weekly lockdowns, and on the first business day after the lockdowns the crowds seem to be greater than normal as people shop or do other business to make-up for the days of lockdown. One wonders if they make sense. We look forward anxiously to them coming to an end. May it be as soon as the coming weekend.

I will not scare you with the present Covid numbers: as it seems that that is what the papers and T.V. nightly news is all about – how scared can the society be made to be, in order to increase listenership. We are for less mandates and lockdowns, rather than shutting down all of living until we get the Virus extinguished. May God help us to learn to live with a less-than perfect society. Only when we reach Heaven will we have perfect days with "no discouraging news". We trust you are living for eternity: and doing everything you can to take as many with you as possible: that is our focus, and we pray your will be so too.

A few days ago Lloyd's younger sister reminded all her friends on Facebook that on 9/11 she had taken off from Newark, New Jersey on a plane at about the same time the first plane went into the World Trade Center. Thus her plane was among the many airlines that had never gotten to their intended destination when the skies were shut down and all airlines forced to land for many hours. We also remember watching the activities of that day on T.V. from Mandeville, as we were in our first year of returning to Jamaica to close out our missionary service within our own nation where there were still many souls who needed to hear the gospel and enter into a personal faith relationship with Jesus to be sure of their salvation. This was important to both Elaine and Lloyd, as we had grown up in official churches in Jamaica, but for a long period of time did not yet have a certain knowledge of our salvation by expressed faith in Jesus as our Saviour.

We are still seeking to help fellow very religious Jamaicans, find confidence and certainty – not by the outward acts of "Church membership" – but by the inward act of calling upon Christ for salvation ("by Grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works lest any man should boast." Ephesians 2: 8 – 9.)

One-on-one salvation is still the ministry involvement that gives us the greatest satisfaction. It is also one of a number of College Courses that Lloyd teaches at the Bible College where both he and Elaine trained decades ago before each became foreign missionaries. Lloyd was called to the eastern Caribbean in the late years of the 1960s; and Elaine to Zambia, Africa as a Missionary nurse in the early 1970s. It would be more than twenty years before we would come together in marriage (1996), and then (after three years) return to Jamaica to end our years as missionaries in our homeland.

### *An Earthquake and a Hurricane:*

The earthquake, which destroyed many homes and businesses in southern Haiti a few months ago, was also felt here in Jamaica. Thank God we got no damage here in Jamaica. So, we have become concerned for the Haitian people. And many Jamaican churches, as well as other Caribbean nations, have gathered material help and sent to Haiti after disasters there since we consider ourselves to be similar in history and religious culture to them.

Many Jamaican denominations have branch churches in Haiti. Jamaican churches often visit Haiti for Summer Short-Term Missions as a part of our spiritual responsibility. We have also had to take in Haitian boat-people, protect them and then send them back to Haiti, after various hurricanes, droughts and earthquakes. The recent hurricane Ida that brought floods to Haiti, also lightly brushed us here in Jamaica.

Our government has often sent military teams from our Army and Air Force to help after natural disasters. A couple of our Jamaican businesses also have Haitian subsidiaries. One such Jamaican Chicken and Broiler Company, with a distinct Christian culture, has set up a branch of their business to help Haitians earn by becoming chicken farmers, and then purchasing the mature birds for preparation for the market. Do pray for this 'Christian' company and its principals who seek to see Haitians helped and brought to faith in Christ.

***Covid-19 and Education:***

Our local Ministry of Education has just reopened schools for face-to-face classes after 18 months, since the pandemic caused all schools to be closed last year. This has come about as the effort to educate our children from their homes by 'Virtual' classes has not been very successful, largely due to lack of Tablets or Telephones, and difficulties in getting classes into areas with WiFi connectivity. In some areas over 40% of students have had no schooling during the past year and a half. There is still some hesitancy on the part of teachers and their Trade Unions to see schools reopen. But we are trusting the Lord for a successful school year. Pray with us!

***Vaccination:*** Elaine and I are fully vaccinated since June, with the Astra-Zenica brand. We are trying to still follow the suggested protocols, since we have seen where fully vaccinated persons can still get the virus. Here in Jamaica we are said to be going through a third wave. More vaccines are being imported, and there are special calls to the unvaccinated. Most hospital Covid beds are full, or nearly full. Additional bed space is being supplied by Church halls near to the hospitals. Many additional vaccination sites are being set up. The crowds that come to them are often more than can be handled by the authorities. Deaths are still a relatively

***Health:*** Our families are in good situations, as far as we are aware. But, Elaine's grand-nephew who has grown with us since 2000 was sent home from his Cruise Ship job as an assistant-Chef over a year ago. He was recently recalled to rejoin a ship in Italy. He got all his documents and tickets to fly out: then his Covid-19 test proved positive. So, he is going through a 14 day quarantine with us, before getting tested again. Pray that all turns out well in the future!

Lloyd is doing dental rehabilitation work with his nephew, a Dental surgeon, financed by his daughters. This will replace the need for 'false teeth' with implants. The new teeth to be connected to the implants are being made in the U.S. They should be ready for October, he is told. We thank the Lord for this provision and how it will help.

***Family:*** We now have a grand-daughter who has begun her College training in Eastern North-Carolina. She came home for the Labor Day weekend to see her younger brother, and picked up her car, as well as a bicycle her parents have gotten her for travelling around the campus. We pray she finds sound Christian friends and witness groups she can become involved with and see her faith tested and grow strong in the Lord. Pray with us for her!

Lloyd's nephew has grown up in his church, and helped as a 'Server'. Recently he has been having spiritual conflicts and is searching for certainty and reality in his faith. He is much conflicted and family members think he needs psychological help. We are supporting him with our prayers that he will find a position of stability and understanding of what the Lord may be saying to him and how He will guide. He is open to being used in service to the Lord. PRAY!

***Olympics:*** Jamaica was again deeply involved in Track & Field events during the Olympics in Japan. Our female track athletes were once again world beaters, causing much rejoicing at home. The same was not as true of our male athletes, since the retirement of 'the fastest man on earth'. Usain Bolt. Yet, considering our small size and population, we did well and should be satisfied. But we have been spoiled over the last 20 years or more.

We thank God, and we pray that we would likewise produce world-renowned servants of Jesus Christ. We do have a number of missionaries in many countries who are building the Church among "the last, the least and the lost". Let us be faithful in being their prayer and financial support partners. We thank you for being our prayer supporters.

Join us in making these spiritual matters our priority issues as we pray and look forward to the soon return of our Beloved Lord Jesus Christ, to Rule and Reign in His world. Let us all become ready as we await Jesus' soon return!

Yours in loving service to our Savior,

*Lloyd & Elaine Cooke*

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