

THE BISHOP OF THE BAHAMAS AND THE TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

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Press Release

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**The Rt. Rev'd. Laish Boyd
BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF THE BAHAMAS
AND THE TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS**

First of all, on behalf of the Anglican Diocese of The Bahamas and The Turks and Caicos Islands, I wish to express my concern for all those who have been affected by Hurricane Dorian: those who went through the storm, those who have loved ones unaccounted for, those who lost loved ones in the storm, those whose loved ones went through it, those whose homes were destroyed or damaged, those who have had to evacuate, and to the entire Bahamas. This is a national tragedy which grieves and devastates **ALL** of us.

We also remember those who have died May They Rest in Peace.

Dorian was a monster storm, unprecedented, which visited historic tragedy on the islands of Abaco and Grand Bahama: catastrophic devastation such as has never before been seen or imagined in these parts.

We could not foresee the extensive damage to homes, businesses, landscape, infrastructure and crops. No amount of preparation can withstand winds in excess of category 5.

The most heartbreaking aspect of it all is the humanitarian crises: people disrupted, devastated, homeless; some persons lost all their possessions, and their loved ones; some have loved ones unaccounted for, and some needed to evacuate. It is horrific, unbearable suffering that will not go away quickly.

We see this kind of natural disaster and human devastation on television all the time, but it has never happened to us. And why not happen to us if our country is no better than any other country? Well, it is happening to us now, unfortunately.

This tragedy wounds and devastates all of us. We feel distraught, heart ached, angry, depressed and despairing. These are normal responses even if you did not go through the storm or if you do not know anyone who did.

The fact of the matter is that as a country we are not accustomed to events of this magnitude. We have no experience with events of this magnitude. Even countries much larger than us find it difficult to cope with a storm such and its aftermath. Our best efforts alone would not be sufficient. That is why we are so grateful for the United States, The United Kingdom, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Holland, Canada and other countries. Our best systems, infrastructure, efforts and resources could **NEVER** do it alone.

The Prime Minister, the cabinet, the government and all its departments and agencies have been stretched beyond their limits over the last two weeks. I think that they have done well, all things considered, and are to be commended. I repeat our best efforts could not have prepared us for this event. Some things did not go smoothly. There are some things that we need to do better but this is a natural disaster that is much bigger than any to which we are accustomed, so what do you expect?

We will learn from this experience. protocols, regimes and procedures will be expanded, and others created. We will grow because of this - but all experiences cause people to do that.

What is most disheartening is the fact that so much negativity has been flooding social media and some of the airwaves and print media. While some things have gone wrong, natural disasters are messy and things cannot be resolved at the speed and ease of the ideal. Many of the delays in rescuing and recovering could not be avoided in the circumstance and given our standing local resources. Human dislocation and evacuation are tedious and harrowing in the best of circumstances. Patience and understanding are key in this scenario.

Abaco, Grand Bahama, and the whole Bahamas will not be the same for a long time. There are years of healing, settling and resettling, rebuilding and redevelopment before us. Entire local economies have to be rebuilt.

However, right now the pain and anguish and suffering are great, for all of us. Blaming the Prime Minister- any Prime Minister- is not helpful. Lambasting the Government- any government - is of no value. We need to come together, not be divided. Animosity and competition, fighting among ourselves and being at odds do not heal.

Let us work harder on being positive. I admit that everything is not perfect and that there is always room for improvements. However, we need to create a national atmosphere that is more positive and encouraging. Interpreting every occurrence in a negative or conspiratorial light does not ease burdens Tell the stories of survival not as criticisms, but as what they are: triumph in the face of great odds. Tell the stories of those who overcame great odds. I believe that The Bahamas **WILL** overcome this.

There are people of all ages who have been traumatized severely. We will all need ongoing love, counseling and support. But a negative atmosphere will not help anyone to heal. We need to use this time to speak encouragement and healing and wellbeing, to calm and to reassure the broken and the uncertain.

I call on the users of social media and the members of the press to help to ease the national angst with more positive stories and outlooks and with more love and cheerfulness.

Acts of kindness and a kind atmosphere do more to cause healing than the discussion and negativity that is so prevalent in some quarters.

Above all we must remember the words in *Psalms 46: 1-3* “*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.*”

These words must be our motto at a time like this. The God who has brought us this far is the God, we must trust to carry us further...through this aftermath, to accomplish restored lives and communities.

Let us rebuild stronger and better. Let us become better people because of this. Full recovery will take time but, it is on the way. God already has us in His hands.

+LZB/ns