IAD News

Prime minister of Bahamas praises Adventist contributions to society

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Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham called the church a "beacon of faithful service and Christian stewardship in our country," citing Adventist work among young people and in support of strong families and healthy lifestyles.

"You've also made an important contribution to education in the Bahamas, molding the lives of young men and women who have, in turn, contributed to the community and national development," Ingraham said.

The prime minister's comments came during the October 30 dedication ceremony for the new headquarters of the church's Atlantic Caribbean Union Mission. The administrative region oversees Adventist Church work in the Bahamas, Cayman Islands and the Turks and Caicos. Previously, the union mission served a constituency of nearly 30,000 Adventists from temporary headquarters in the Summer Winds Plaza, also in Nassau.

Ingraham previously commended the Adventist Church when the Bahamas parliament voted in May to recognize the church's then newly-established Atlantic Caribbean Union Mission as the legal entity of the church in the Bahamas. Church leaders first created the union mission when they split the former West Indies Union Conference into two administrative regions to recognize church growth and financial autonomy in the Caribbean.

Israel Leito, president for the Adventist Church in Inter-America, told Ingraham that Adventists in the Bahamas appreciate the high level of religious freedom the country's government grants.

In his keynote address, Leito also reminded the audience why they had gathered -- to dedicate not the building itself, but the people who work there "to serve God's people and the community."

"Any person should be able to walk in here ... and find solace and comfort because there is somebody here to pray with them and to help them," Leito said.

Leonard Johnson, president of the Atlantic Caribbean Union Mission, thanked Ingraham and other government officials present for leasing the land on which the new headquarters is located.

Ingraham also addressed growing crime in the Bahamas.

A recent Nassau Guardian newspaper article quoted Ingraham as saying that the government, churches and other faith- and community-based groups have a "mission" to "promote a culture of peace and nonviolence, a culture of mutual well-being and fellowship, a culture of life and respect for the gift of life."

A group of Adventist pastors in the Cayman Islands is currently mentoring young people in the community who are vulnerable to drug abuse and gang involvement. Church leaders and members in the Caribbean have