



## Monthly Missions Focus: Jamaica



Jamaica gained full independence within the British Commonwealth in 1962. Deteriorating

economic conditions during the 1970s led to recurrent violence and a drop off in tourism.

Elections in 1980 saw the democratic socialists voted out of office.

Political violence marred elections during the 1990s.

Location: Caribbean, island in the Caribbean Sea, south of Cuba

Area: total: 10,991 sq km – slightly smaller than Connecticut. The third largest island in the Caribbean.

Population: 2,713,130 (July 2004 est.)

Capital Kingston 882,000

Ethnic groups: black 90.9%, East Indian 1.3%, white 0.2%, Chinese 0.2%, mixed 7.3%, other 0.1%

Religions: There is freedom of religion. Protestant 61.3% (Church of God 21.2%, Baptist 8.8%, Anglican 5.5%, Seventh-Day Adventist 9%, Pentecostal 7.6%, Methodist 2.7%, United Church 2.7%, Brethren 1.1%, Jehovah's Witness 1.6%, Moravian 1.1%), Roman Catholic 4%, other including some spiritual cults 34.7%

Official language English; 99% of the population speak Jamaican Creole. Literacy 85%.

Economy: The mining of bauxite, production of sugar and bananas, and tourism are the main foreign currency earners. Income/person \$1,556 (5% of USA).

### Challenges for Prayer

- 🌐 The country has sunk into a morass of social and economic problems that appear insoluble.
- 🌐 Christianity is numerically strong but spiritually weak.
- 🌐 The spiritual temperature of Jamaica affects that of the whole Caribbean.
- 🌐 The less evangelized who need prayer:
  - a) The very poor have little exposure to the gospel. Most churches serve the better-off.
  - b) The Rastafarians began as a protest movement that espoused spiritism, Black Power and Black consciousness ideas and worshipped the Ethiopian Emperor (Ras Tafari)
- 🌐 There is little missions vision in the churches.

(Statistics are compiled from *Operation World* and *CIA – The World Factbook 2005*)

### Bibles for the World Distributes Bibles in Jamaica

Bibles for the World is partnering with "Food for the Poor's 2000" in 2000. That's an effort to build 2000 homes in Jamaica at a cost of two-thousand dollars per home. Bibles of the World's Rochunga Pudaite wants to place a Bible with each new home. "We were challenged that since Food for the Poor is building these 2,000 homes, could we provide a Bible, a family Bible for every home. With the occupation of the house they will also have the Bible that they can read daily." Bibles for the World is raising 20-thousand dollars for the project. Pudaite says scripture can have an impact on these poor people. "Most of them have never really had a true commitment to Jesus Christ. To provide a Bible has got to be a tremendous thing. You never know how many people in the family who will be reading and what the word of God is going to do for them." (*Missions News Network – January 15, 2001*)

### Work Among Rastafarians

The familiar promotion enticing tourists to Jamaica is the smiling, dreadlocked local on the beach playing reggae music. These images are of Rastafarians, followers of a movement born out of Jamaica's darkest depression. The late Bob Marley was the most famous of reggae artists and popularized the genre and the Rastafarian religion. Reggae music is a spiritual experience for Rastafarians.

Mark Mohr, a former Rastafarian who later embraced Christ, says that "what has become their [Rastafarian] church is the concerts, and the evangelists are the artists." Today Mohr's reggae band "Christafari" takes the gospel to spiritual seekers.

Mohr is not the only reggae artist to become disillusioned with the movement. "So many musicians and singers have converted to Christianity, it's amazing. The number is growing daily," says Judy Mowatt, another reggae artist. She adds, "He is drawing them. I know God is changing the singers and the players because they can influence the rest of society." Another artist, Papa San, says "I'm a fisher of men and music is my bait."

Pray for these converted reggae artists to be successful in sharing Christ with reggae enthusiasts. Pray for thousands of lives to be transformed by Christ as a result of their efforts. (*Global Prayer Digest – January 26, 2005*)