

B/N Rev. Saunders, M.

THE UNITED CHURCH OF JAMAICA AND GRAND CAYMAN

March 1981

The Reverend Marjorie Prentice Saunders

The Rev. Marjorie Prentice Saunders is the first woman to assume responsibility for a Pastoral Charge in the United Church of Jamaica and Grand Cayman when she was inducted Minister of the Salem Charge, St. Mary in 1976.

Unfortunately, she was forced by illness to quit as Pastor just before she was due to retire as a fulltime servant of our Church.

Most Jamaicans remember Madge as the first person to leave for service on a foreign mission field under the aegis of the United Church of Jamaica and Grand Cayman. Her commissioning for service with then Prebyterian Church of England and Wales (now part of the United Reformed Church) coincided with the inauguration of our new Church out of the former Congregational Union of Jamaica and Presbyterian Church of Jamaica on the first of December 1965.

From the local base as Deaconness, or more appropriately Associate Minister of the St. James Presbyterian Church, Sheffield, she exercised a ministry that was truly Catholic transcending the boundaries of denomination, race and nationality. This she did with unusual verve and resourcefulness until she returned to Jamaica in 1975 in the tenth year of the existence of our United Church.

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2.

As a Caribbean person located in Sheffield, the Rev. Miss Saunders served as a 'bridge' in a truly theological sense between the migrant and largely coloured community and the white host community of Great Britain. Among her most significant contributions to the ministry of Reconciliation and Rehabilitation in Britain is the handbook she prepared for migrants in Britain. This extremely useful guide was published by The Friends Race Relations Committee on behalf of the Standing Committee on Migration of the British Council of Churches. It is impossible in a brief citation to mention all the areas in which the Rev. Saunders gave leadership while serving as a Missionary in Britain. It suffices therefore to mention only the most significant ones.

On the local scene in Sheffield, she was Founder and First President of the International Friendship Guild, St. James Presbyterian Church, member of the Sheffield Council of Churches, the Sheffield Radio Council, Executive member of the Sheffield Committee for Community Relations, Official School Visitor Sheffield Education Department which entailed her associating with the work of Grammar and other Secondary Schools in that area; Honorary Member of the Business and Professional Women's Club, Vice President of the West Indian Association Sheffield. Further afield in Britain, she served as a member of the British Council of Churches' Standing Committee on migrants.

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B/N Reverend Margorie Saunders

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The Rev. Saunders' work on the mission field was done at the peak of her career as a committed Christian Educator, and leader in Church and community. By 1965 when she accepted the call to the foreign mission field she had already served in her native Jamaica as Principal of Primary Schools, first fulltime Youth Organiser of the Presbyterian Church of Jamaica, first national to be appointed Organising Secretary of the Girls' Guildry Movement in the Caribbean, and among other things, a member of the Synodical Council of the Presbyterian Church of Jamaica and the Executive Committee of the Assembly of the Reformed Church in the Caribbean.

Trained at Bethsalem Teachers' College and St. Colm's Missionary College, Edinburgh, and holder of the Certificate of Proficiency in Religious Knowledge, University of London, Miss Saunders expertise is in the field of Education and Youth leadership.

X A pioneer in the establishment of Basic Schools, she was untiring in her advocacy on behalf of poor Jamaican children at the pre-school stage. Her pioneering work in education was not confined to Basic Schools however. She will be remembered as co-founder of Meadowbrook Preparatory and High Schools, Mona Preparatory School and the Kelly Lawson Training Centre for training girls and women in domestic skills, and young people of the Church in leadership skills.

Miss Saunders as a servant of the Church collaborated with various organizations and agencies involved in social change and national

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development. Among the organizations with which she associated are the Jamaica Federation of Women, the Y.W.C.A. and the Family Planning Association of Jamaica.

Today's Girls' Brigade Movement in Jamaica, the Youth Organization of the United Church and the health of the Ecumenical Movement in Jamaica and the rest of the Caribbean, stand as living monuments to the quality of Christian Witness and leadership of the Reverend Marjorie Prentice Saunders, one of the daughters of Jamaica, the United Church and the Church of Jesus Christ throughout the world and, of course, of her beloved Jamaica.

At this time when the ravages of ill-health compel her to take to the pulpit and the classroom less often than yesteryear, our beloved 'Madge' continues to serve Church and country out of her vast resources of knowledge and highly refined Christian experience. An ardent member of Hope United Church, the Reverend Madge is as active as ever in the life of the Church. It must be the prayer of all who know her and are aware of her long and many-faceted ministry that she will continue for many more years in the service of Christ and the Church in which she was cradled and disciplined, and the fellowship of the People of God among whom she stands as servant and fellow traveller with such rare distinction.

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May she be given grace to experience continuing fulfillment in her retirement from formal service, and the rest of us, opportunity to benefit from the boundless store of wisdom of this faithful servant of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and our beloved Church.

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