

MESSAGE FROM THE HEALTH MINISTRIES DIRECTOR, JAMAICA UNION

FOR

World No Tobacco Day-- May 31, 2014

Theme: Tobacco Taxes

Today is being observed as *World No Tobacco Day*. The Seventh-day Adventist Church joins the World Health Organization (WHO) and in particular, the Ministry of Health in Jamaica, to give support to this activity.

Tobacco smoking is the primary cause of many preventable illnesses and premature deaths, accounting for many of the over 3000 cancer deaths annually in Jamaica. WHO reveals that every six seconds across the globe, someone dies of some tobacco-related illness. It estimates that the global yearly death toll as a result of tobacco use is currently 6 million (including 600,000 caused by exposure to secondhand smoke). This is expected to rise to 7 million by 2020 and to more than 8 million a year by 2030. It is predicted that by the end of the 21st century, tobacco will have killed one billion people. For every death caused by smoking, approximately 20 smokers are suffering from a smoking related disease.

The US Surgeon General 2010 report declares that, "there is no risk-free level of exposure to tobacco smoke, and there is no safe tobacco product." Tobacco is one of the addictive substances known to contain more than 7,000 chemicals. Many of these chemicals are toxic and harm nearly every organ of the body and dramatically reduce both quality of life and life expectancy. Smoking causes lung cancer, respiratory disease, heart disease as well as numerous cancers in other organs including lip, mouth, throat, bladder, kidney, stomach, liver and cervix.

The theme for this year's *World No Tobacco Day* is, *Tobacco Taxes*. This is firmly supported by WHO studies which reported that increasing excise taxes on tobacco is considered to be the most cost-effective tobacco control measure. Increased taxes on tobacco may hurt some peoples' pockets but it will save lives. Let us remember that the ultimate goal of *World No Tobacco Day* is "to contribute to protecting present and future generations not only from the devastating health consequences due to tobacco, but also from the social, environmental and economic scourges of tobacco use and exposure to tobacco smoke."

Your Church has been in the fore front of the anti tobacco campaign since 1863. We must continue this thrust in an effort to protect health and save lives. Consequently, we applaud the bold and unpopular step taken by the Honourable Dr. Fenton Ferguson, Minister of Health, to ban smoking in public places. Furthermore, we are morally obligated to support him in accordance with this year's theme, ***Tobacco Taxes***.

As members of the Adventist Church, I urge the faithful believers to recommit themselves to the teachings of the Church to regard their bodies as the Temple of God. In doing this, you will not knowingly place harmful substances such as tobacco products in your bodies. Moreover, we have a sacred responsibility to encourage non smokers not to start the habit and assist smokers to quit the habit.

God's blessings be with you all as we continue to stand like Daniel against substances like tobacco which impair health and destroy lives.

Milton G. Gregory,
Health Ministries Director

May 7, 2014