



**Senator the Honourable Donna Cox
Minister of Social Development and Family Services**

**Feature Address
Family-Focus Broadcasting Network**

REVIVAL 2021 AND BEYOND

February 16, 2021

Dear friends in Christ, I wish to sincerely thank you for the opportunity to be part of your continuing efforts to shine the light of Christ into the darkness that is seeking to pervade our nation. Since signing on with their first broadcast in 1991, the Family-Focus Broadcasting Network has been a pillar of sobriety and an instrument of grace in an industry often desecrated by the offerings of some. Just as lamps ought not to be put under bushels and hidden from sight, the Family Focus Broadcasting Network has allowed its light to lead many to the discovery of their place as children of God, and for this, on behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, I thank you immensely.

There is no doubt that these are perilous times for us as a country. As if the COVID-19 pandemic was insufficient, we are still to find the antibodies to cure the viruses of mistrust, hatred, intimate partner violence, and the list can go on endlessly. How do we make the blind see and the lame walk, in a land consumed by its own greed and lust for power? How do we make the deaf hear and dumb speak, in a country that has turned on itself? How do we begin the process of healing our land when, among those charged with that responsibility, there is division along the lines of race, class and religion? Sad to say, this exists also in the church.

The answer lies not in the abandonment of hope but rather in the exercise to which you have committed yourselves over these three (3) days.

The answer lies in the call to a solemn assembly; an appeal to the people of God to heed the words of II Chronicles 7:14 to humble ourselves and pray and seek His face and turn from our wicked ways. Then and only then will He hear from heaven and forgive our sins and heal our land, and of course, there will be revival.

The healing of our land, I submit, begins with the people of God, each one of us called by His name, recognising the times we are in, taking full responsibility for our shortcomings and spiritually clothing ourselves in sackcloth and ashes. Therein lies the keys to reclaiming our land named after the Trinity.

REVIVAL 2021 and BEYOND

It is my respectful view that this event, being hosted by the Family-Focus Broadcasting Network, is more fortuitous than happenstance, as Trinidad and Tobago's revival for 2021 and beyond must begin with our acceptance that the family is the focal point for any significant change within society.

It is the cornerstone upon which we must rebuild.

It is the place where the values of respect for all life, honesty in all our affairs, upholding truth above all else, and accepting responsibility for both mistakes and successes, are inscribed into the hearts of all of us. These very values, or their very absence in so many spheres of public life, have resulted in us being in the position in which we find ourselves today.

As we focus our attention on the family however, we must underscore the importance of the family of God and the need for the body of Christ to be in the right place spiritually, that position of oneness in purpose. For we are quite aware that judgement begins within the household of God and if it begins with us it behoves us then to put our house in order before we begin to peer on the outside. This event is but the beginning of that internal healing process, which must occur if we are to achieve the more long term results we are hoping and longing to see. The foundation of any success of course, will be our obedience as a people, to God's directives.

In this regard, I ask us for a moment to reflect on the choice of "Isaac FM" as your radio identity.

Whilst we are acquainted with much of the commentary about the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham and the latter's faith, righteousness, obedience and courage, I am of the view that we should always spare a thought for Isaac, who displayed complete obedience, total trust in his prophet-father, and a willingness to submit to the will of his father too, regardless of the pain and consequences. Indeed, Isaac was the forerunner to the redeemer Christ who would come to earth in accordance with the will of the Father to suffer and die to save us from our sins. Isaac's reward for this obedience, like his father, his exaltation and the fulfilment of the promise to his father by God Himself to bless him; to make of him a great nation and to bless all nations through him.

So too, I believe that it is in obedience and complete trust in the voice that led you to choose both the station's identity and the group's name, that you will lead the revival, using the instrument of media to call the people to true repentance and a return to devotion to God. It is a revival that must see us offering hope to those who have none, welcoming back the outcasts who have been abandoned to the peripheries of society, and empowering those who are poor and suffering to reclaim their places in society.

The divine three-pronged solution therefore being the call, prayer and fasting and the proclamation of the Word, which is the transforming power, dividing asunder soul and spirit, joints and marrow and discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart of man.

That is the work to which we too at the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services have committed ourselves, empowerment of the vulnerable and marginalised. All institutions of society must play their role if as a nation we are to recover from the shocks, both economic and social, which have hit us so forcefully in recent times. Government, civil society, the community; families, the private sector, faith-based organisations, we have to do it together. Through our various interventions at the Ministry, we are not only giving people a fish for a day, but concentrating rather on teaching them to fish for life.

Permit me for just a brief moment to share with you some of the ways in which we are contributing to the recovery process.

Through our *Sowing Empowerment through Entrepreneurial Development (SEED) Programme*, for example, we target micro-entrepreneurs within our communities who are not eligible for traditional loan facilities and provides grant funding up to a maximum of \$15,000 TTD for the purchase of goods and/or equipment, as well as a provision of up to \$7,500 TTD to facilitate skills training at a recognized/accredited institution. That is how economic revival is started.

Indeed, only Friday last, I had the privilege of attending the opening of a hair and beauty salon that is owned by a young university graduate who was rendered unemployed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic but through determination, resilience and faith in God, was able to experience a new beginning and renewed hope. Many like her are poised for revival through the SEED programme.

The Ministry's interventions, particularly with the homeless, provide even further evidence of us fulfilling our mandate to assist in the revival of those who are unable to do it by themselves.

There are so many of us who opt to cross to the other side of the Jericho road when we encounter the homeless lying on our streets.

There are so many of us who heap scorn on those who, because of the choices they made, find themselves now counted amongst the homeless.

Our work at the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services is neither to cross to the other side nor pour scorn on them, but rather to enter into the trenches of poverty and social dislocation, and lift up the fallen, one by one, ensuring that no citizen is left behind.

Another very important initiative for which we have responsibility is the development of a national Values Attitudes and Behaviours (VABs) campaign, which will promote those VABs which are necessary for us as a country to adopt if we are to become a developed nation. These are progressive values such as belief in a supreme being, hard work, which promotes productivity, non-excessive individualism, observance of the rule of law, entrepreneurship and innovation, to name a few.

This indeed is an important responsibility and true to the adage 'charity begins at home', we have commenced this initiative in the Ministry and as we observe the impact of implementation, we will move towards rolling it out at the national level.

At the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, we are doing our part to address the soul of the nation, the poor and down-trodden and the family as the bedrock of the society; as the Church, the body of Christ, you are doing your part in the realm of the spirit. I have no doubt that working together, the Family Focus Broadcasting Network and the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, we will continue to make a huge impact on the ability of our citizens to lead empowered and fulfilled lives and to achieve the revival we envision and long for, and that is so vital for our survival in this era of the new normal.

I congratulate you on the initiative upon which you have embarked, and offer you not only my unqualified support and that of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, but the gratitude of a nation in need of urgent action to stem the tide of social decay.

Remember to keep us in your prayer as we work together for the betterment of our beloved nation.

May God bless you

May God bless Family Focus Broadcasting Network

May God bless our nation.

I thank you.