



DRAFT REMARKS

**THE HONOURABLE T. DESMOND BANNISTER, M.P.,
MINISTER OF EDUCATION**

on the occasion of:

Universal Children's Day Thanksgiving Service-2010

Theme:

"Bahamian Praise of Yesteryear"

Thursday, 25th November, 2010

Church of God of Prophecy

East Street, North

Nassau, The Bahamas

10:30 a.m.

Salutations:

- (1) Permanent Secretary – Mrs. Elma Garraway
- (2) Director of Education – Mr. Lionel Sands
- (3) Pastor Mario Moxey –Bahamas Harvest Church
- (4) Deputy Directors of Education: Ms. Leanora Archer & Mrs. Patricia Collins
- (5) District Superintendents
- (6) Mr. T. Milton Lewis –President of the Primary Principals’ Assoc.
- (7) Mr. Wenly Fowler –Vice-President –Primary Principals’ Assoc.
- (8) Committee Members of the Primary Principals’ Assoc.
- (9) Other Senior Education Officers (former & current)
- (8) Principals
- (9) Teachers, Parents, Stakeholders, and
- (12) Students in this church and around The Bahamas listening by way of radio

Good Morning!

It is good when we are able to gather together in celebration of our most precious asset, our children. I feel very blessed to be amongst you, the smart, talented, creative, and disciplined students who hail from the public, private and special schools all

over The Bahamas. Each of you is a precious gift and this morning **you** are our special guests.

Emma Goldman, social activist and writer once said, **“No one has yet realized the wealth of sympathy, the kindness and generosity hidden in the soul of a child. The effort of every true educator should be to unlock that treasure.”** We have all just witnessed some of the wonderful abilities that God has bestowed upon our youth. This reaffirms my belief that our country will be left in very capable hands in the future. Let me say that the Mighty Beacons from the School for the Blind, the students from the Combined Choir, and those who presented the various Readings –all of you did an outstanding job.

Your chosen theme, **“Bahamian Praise of Yesteryear”** is a very interesting one. It says to me that we must get ‘back to basics’ and continue to build a foundation. It says to me that we are a strong people and that we are capable of finding the solutions to all of our problems.

This is the focus that we have decided to take in education, and everyday more people are beginning to realize that there is merit in the way things use to be done. When I was growing up good manners was not something you chose to have, but something

that you were compelled to learn and was happy to actively practice. We were taught to exercise a more heightened level of sensitivity towards animals, senior citizens, children, the sick, and to those less fortunate than ourselves. We attended church regularly and yes, were disciplined when we disobeyed and disrespected our elders. We exercised self-discipline and respect for authority. We had chores to do which taught us responsibility, and our parents/guardians stressed the importance of gaining an education. In fact, we were compelled to uphold those right ideals which helped to propel many of our people to their respective achievements.

Yes, students, your theme asks us to look back and to make what was considered old, new again. Let us not be afraid to acknowledge and send praises to God. Let us not be afraid to say I will be an individual who chooses not to be led by the deviant pack, and let us not be afraid to aggressively pursue excellence. You have the potential to be great, and my question to you is – what can you do to nurture and develop this potential? Let there be no doubt that you too have a role to play in reaching your full potential.

Students, you have much to be thankful for as you are free to worship and to gain an education. There are children around the

world, however, who are not as fortunate as you are. Some do not have the luxury of enjoying clean drinking water like some of our brothers and sisters in Haiti who are now dealing with a cholera outbreak as a result of this. Some children face starvation on a daily basis such as those in some parts of Africa and Asia while others are not allowed to go to school but are made to work at a very young age. Many children in countries considered to be Third World die from diseases that can be very easily cured because healthcare in their countries is poor or non-existent. Many children are exposed to abuses of all kinds meted out to them by unethical and uncaring adults. Students, when you are tempted to complain about something, please think about those children in the predicaments that I have just mentioned, and be thankful for the numerous blessings that God has bestowed upon you.

I am sure you are aware that Universal Children's Day was started when the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child was adopted in 1989. This was supported by countries around the world following a recommendation to choose one day to honour and celebrate children and their well-being.

Today is the day that we have designated as your special day, when we remind ourselves and our Government that you also have rights which must not be ignored. We are compelled by the world's leaders to pay attention to the worldwide goals of:

- **Eradicating poverty & hunger**
- **Universal education**
- **Gender equality**
- **Child health**
- **Maternal health**
- **Combating HIV/AIDS**
- **Environmental sustainability, and**
- **Global partnerships**

We, at the Ministry of Education respect the individual talents and strengths of each of our students, and make a promise to you that we will continue to find opportunities to maximize your learning and achievement levels. We will find ways to give you the type of exposure and experiences you need to function in the ever changing global village of which we are a part. So students, we want you to remain focused on your education, and to begin to think seriously about your future. Set realistic goals for yourselves, be good role models to your peers, and uphold spiritual values even though at times it may seem difficult to do.

Students, you are successful because many persons at school, home and church and in the community care about your well-being. I commend our superintendents, principals, other administrators, teachers, support staff and other stakeholders for the great work that they do and for the dedication that they show to the growth of our nation's children. I certainly would not have been able to do my job in an efficient and effective manner without your able assistance.

I applaud Mr. Milton Lewis and the officers of the Primary Principals' Association who as always do a marvelous job in organizing these celebrations. I can say that thus far today's event has been an outstanding success. You could not have chosen a more beautiful and uplifting venue. We are indeed grateful to Bishop Franklyn Ferguson who always welcomes us with open arms into this edifice.

May God continue to bless each of you and I ask that you bear in mind these words from *Proverbs 16: 3*, which encourages you to **“Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.”** Thank God for your blessings. Remember in all

things give thanks and remember to also thank someone else who has made a difference in your life.

Have a wonderful Universal Children's Day!