Session 4
Challenges I face

The United Reformed Church Youth

Building safer communities: Violence affecting young people



Violence affecting young people is a challenge faced by communities in many parts of the world, including Jamaica and the UK. It is connected to wider issues such as inequality, lack of opportunities and the impacts of past and ongoing injustices.

In November 2025, the URC's Standing Together programme brought together participants from Jamaica and the UK, including the Revd Kevin "Nana Moses" Calvert, Minister of Visual & Performing Arts within the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, and Dr Joanna Simpson, Educator of Community Social Workers at the University of the West Indies. Together, they explored how churches and communities can work together to create safer, more hopeful futures.

This learning connects with the URC's Legacies of Slavery work, including exploring mentoring for Black young men to help develop confidence, identity, self-worth and hope.

Discussion:

- What challenges do young people face in your community?
- What helps young people feel valued, supported and hopeful?
- What can we do to support young people and create safer communities?

Activity 1 - Listen to "God is!" by Nana Moses

Listen to the song **"God is!"**
by the Revd Kevin "Nana Moses" Calvert.

YouTube Link: https://bit.ly/4zAazyb

- What words, phrases or images stood out to you? Why?
- The song opens by talking about "misconceptions" people might have about God. What ideas or assumptions do people sometimes have about who God is?
- Nana Moses sings:
- *"God is self-existent, immortal, way beyond your wildest imagination, not limited to your biased traditional views…"*
- What do you think this means? How might this challenge the way people think about God?
- What words or images would you use to describe God?

Game - Stucki is a game often played in Jamacia; it is more familiarly known as stuck-in-the-mud in the UK. It's easy to 'get stuck' in a negative frame of mind when we are facing challenges, but part of resilience is the trust that God can help you live life to the full. Have some fun playing this game, but when someone is caught shout 'Stucki'

Prayer -

Loving God,

Thank you for the stories, struggles and hopes we have shared today.

Help us to remember the past with honesty, work for justice and healing, and build communities where everyone is valued and able to thrive.

Give us courage, hope and wisdom to use our gifts to create a fairer world.

Amen.

There are seven national heroes in Jamaica, Let's find out about two of them.

Samuel Sharpe (1801–1832)

Samuel Sharpe is one of Jamaica's National Heroes because he stood up for freedom and justice. He was an enslaved Baptist deacon who believed that everyone is equal in God's eyes and should never be treated as property.

In 1831, Sharpe helped lead a large movement for freedom. Many history books call this the "Baptist War" or "Christmas Rebellion", but many people today, especially those working for reparatory justice, prefer the term "Emancipation Wars" because it focuses on the fight for freedom and avoids describing people seeking justice as rebels.

Samuel Sharpe was executed in 1832. His courage inspired change. The movement for freedom helped bring about the abolition of enslavement across the British Empire. Today, he is remembered for his faith, bravery, and belief that justice and freedom belong to everyone. His story reminds us that freedom was not simply given by those in power; it was fought for through the courage and determination of people who resisted the injustice of enslavement.

Nanny of the Maroons

Nanny of the Maroons was an important leader and freedom fighter in Jamaica during the early 18th century. The Maroons were communities of formerly enslaved Africans who escaped and created free communities in Jamaica's mountains and fought to remain free. Nanny was respected by both the Maroons and the British for her strong leadership and courage.

In recognition of her achievements, Jamaica named Nanny of the Maroons a National Hero on March 31, 1982, alongside Sam Sharpe.

Discussion:

- Why is Nanny considered a national hero?
- How did Samuel Sharpe's faith inspire him to seek justice?
- What challenges do you think Nanny faced as a leader?
- What qualities make someone a hero? Who is a modern-day hero, and what makes them heroic?
- Why does the language we use to describe history matter?
- What justice issues do we see in our world today, and how can we help make a difference?

Activity 2 - Resilient bands

You will need:

- resistance bands or towels



What you do:
Spend some time using resistance bands. If you do not access to them a towel will work. Roll it up, hold each end and pull away from each other. Discuss the effort needed to use the bands but also what the rewards are. How might they make you resilient. How can we be resilient in life?

Bible link - Psalm 46:1 – 3

"[1]God is our protection and source of strength.
He is always ready to help us in times of trouble.
[2] So we are not afraid when the earthquakes
and the mountains fall into the sea.
[3] We are not afraid when the seas become rough
and dark and the mountains tremble. Selah"

It must be very difficult to read this Bible passage if you have ever actually experienced an earthquake, hurricane or any natural disaster. Fear is an emotion that can be hard to control. However, this passage does remind us that no matter what is happening to us we can be resilient because God is always with us.

Hurricane Melissa

Hurricane Melissa was a catastrophic Category 5 hurricane that struck Jamaica on October 28, 2025, becoming the strongest hurricane ever recorded in the country. Sadly 95 people died, 141 were injured and 27 are still missing. The hurricane was devastating. Research what has happened since this tragic day.

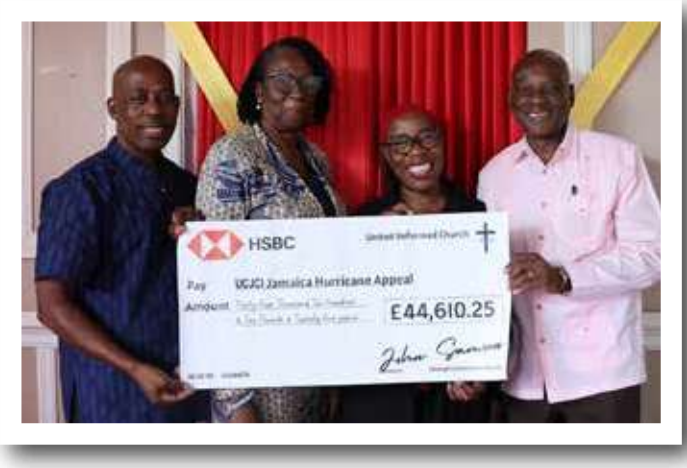
Discussion:

- What has Jamaica been doing to rebuild?
- How did the UK help in the effort?
- I wonder if there are enough safeguards around when a hurricane is going to hit a country?

The United Reformed Church were pleased to hand over a cheque for £44'610.25, this money was raised to help with the rebuilding after the hurricane hit.

https://bit.ly/4ysdgl3

https://bit.ly/3Vu77Gp



Action point - I wonder what sort of things you and your group might be able to do to help raise awareness for this fundraising. Perhaps you could have a bake sale or spend an evening making bracelets to sell.

Prayer - Use Lego or similar construction materials to make the shape of a house or church with open doors. As you place each brick, think of someone who may need the church's help or welcome, or someone you've heard about who offers that to others. You may want to think of places where apology is still needed and where relationships still need to be rebuilt.

Leader Note: Language and History
The words we use to describe history shape how we understand the past. The movement Samuel Sharpe helped lead is often called the "Baptist War" or "Christmas Rebellion" in many history books. Many people today, especially those working for reparatory justice, prefer the term "Emancipation Wars" because it highlights the struggle for freedom from enslavement and avoids describing people seeking justice as rebels. The term "Emancipation Wars" recognises the courage, faith, and determination of enslaved people who took action to challenge the injustice of enslavement and fight for freedom.

Here about how Claudettes faith helps her to stay resilient **LINK**