# Session 2

## Growing up in Jamaica

The United Reformed Church Children

The Jamaican education system is very similar to the UK, and lessons are taught in English. The system is divided into several levels: early childhood education (one- to six-year-olds), primary education (six- to twelve-year-olds), secondary education, (12- to 17-year-olds) and higher education (17–19-year-olds). Education is compulsory for children between the ages of six and 17. Students study a wide range of subjects including English, Mathematics, Science, Religious Education, Physical Education, Art, and often Spanish, and have lots of homework.

In February 2026, Kevin Snyman (Head of World Justice and Inter Faith) visited Kingston in Jamaica and the Operation Restoration Christian School (ORCS). Kevin had the opportunity to chat to some of the children who lived there.

### Home Life

The students that were interviewed lived in Kingston and in nearby Trench Town and Waterhouse. Kevin learned from them that their homes are typically built of concrete and that family life is important and central to the children's identity.



He learnt that many families struggle financially, and access to water can sometime be an issue, showing how climate with an increase in heat affects daily life.

Many of the children contribute to family life through chores in the home such as washing dishes and clothes, sweeping, cleaning, cooking and helping with siblings.

The children described their school as supportive and encouraging, and where students build each other up.

### Leisure Interests

The most popular sport played by the group of children spoken to was football, although other games included tag, hopscotch, Roblox, and Free Fire. Dominoes is also a very popular game that is played.

**Dominoes** or 'Bones' as it is also called in Jamaica is a high energy game with lots of laughing. In Kingston, the game is being taught to toddlers as young as two years old. see **https://bit.ly/4yodOZb** It has been found that playing dominoes at a young age can aid in mental and social development and can stimulate and promote positive behaviour. This is because it involves line pattern and shapes as well as who, how, when, where and why.

Listening to music such as Reggae, or dancehall after school helps children and young people to relax and feel connected to friends and family.

### What makes you proud to be Jamaican?

When questioned about what makes them proud to be Jamaican, responses included, culture, food, music, creativity and family. Jamaicans are described as being strong, talented and resilient.

**Bible Link** Psalm 104: 24

"Lord, you created so many things!
With your wisdom you made them all.
The earth is full of the living things you made."

Proverbs 22:6 [6] Teach children in a way that fits their needs, and even when they are old, they will not leave the right path.'

When we are young, parents and caregivers teach us good habits, e.g how to be kind, to love others and how to forgive. As you practise these things, they become a natural part of you and remain with you as you grow older.

**Prayer** Dear God, thank you for the grown-ups that you have placed in my life who help and guide me. Thank you for teaching me how to be loving, kind and to follow you. Please help these lessons stay deep in my heart as I grow. Amen.

## Active Prayer Paper Heart Tree




Fruit trees in Jamaica produce delicious fruit that helps us grow. Invite children to add paper hearts to a tree as a prayer that they will grow in God's love.

*You will need:*
- piece of paper
- paper hearts or paper heart shaped post it notes
- pens or crayons
- glue

*What to do:*
Draw the trunk of a tree onto a piece of paper. On the trunk write **'Lord help me grow in….'**

Write one word on to each of the prayer hearts, such as love/ strength. Stick them onto the tree.

## Prayer
Dear God, help every child to grow strong in your love. Guide them in the right way, plant your truth into their hearts and help them bear good fruit as they grow. Amen.



## Greta Wonders:
- how you would describe your town, village, city to someone from another country?
- what leisure activities you enjoy playing with your friends?

## Activity 1 Dominoes
Play a game of Dominoes. The goal is to get rid of your dominoes before anyone else. The rule of the game is simple – match the numbers.

*You will need:*
- a standard set of 28 dominoes (bones) which feature numbers ranging from zero (blank) to six.

*What you do:*
Two to four players each start with seven 'bones'. The rest are set aside in a pile called 'the boneyard'. The game begins by placing the heaviest double bone, e.g. double six in the middle of the table.



Players take turns in putting down a bone so that its number matches the ones on the end of the chain. When you place a double, it is placed sideways. If stuck and you do not have a matching bone draw one from the boneyard pile. The first person to get rid of all their bones wins. The Jamaican vibe includes 'The Slam', when a player makes a good move they slam the bone onto the wooden table.

## Activity 2 Clay Ackee fruit

*You will need:*
- air dry clay
- paint
- brushes
- tools





*What you do:*
Using pictures or an actual fruit as a guide, mould the clay into an ackee fruit. It takes 24/48 hours for it to dry. It can then be painted.

## Action Point
What wise choices can you make in practicing being kind, forgiving, helpful and loving to people living in your community?

You can find out about a child's experience of living in Jamaica here **https://bit.ly/47ggZ9z**