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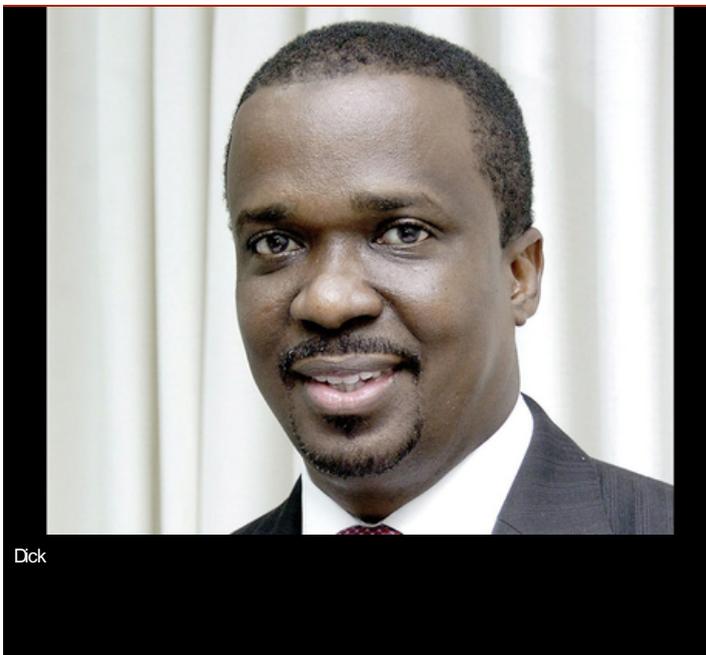
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Church Has Power To Transform Politics

Published: Monday | March 17, 2014

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Dick

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Jermaine Francis, Staff Reporter

With more than 80 per cent of Jamaicans of the view that the country's politicians and public officials are corrupt, according to a 2011 LAPOP survey, church leaders are expressing the view that there is power in its flock to transform politics here.

The religious leaders argue that the Church should not shrink away from informing its congregants about taking part in the political process and demanding more from its leaders.

Head of the Moravian Church in Jamaica, the Reverend Dr Paul Gardner, argues that the Church must play a part in demanding that the country's leaders act on their promises.

He says the Church must not allow political leaders to make promises they cannot fulfil.

"As a Church, we have to insist on transparency in governance and how the business of the State is conducted," he noted.

Gardner, who is also chairman of the Jamaica Civil Society Coalition, believes political healing should begin with accountability and transparency, as this will redound to good governance, and "where you have good government, you will have a good country".

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The Reverend Dr Lloyd Maxwell of the Agape Christian Fellowship argued that the Church should use its influence in educating the populace.

"Despite what people might be saying, the Church still has credibility among the people and should use this to address the issues that are affecting the society," he said.

"The churches should be more actively involved in the communities where they are located and take an active role in the life of that particular community," Maxwell told **The Gleaner**, arguing that the Church should use its influence to demand more from political representatives.

The view that churches can help with the restoration of the nation by engaging the community was shared by the Reverend Dr Stevenson Samuels of the Escarpment Road New Testament Church, who argues that churches could become involved in development projects.

"Local churches can engage the wider community in developmental initiatives and invite both sides to collaborate by serving together on these programmes," Samuels posited.

For pastor of the Boulevard Baptist Church, the Reverend Dr Devon Dick, modelling the annual National Prayer Breakfast at the community level could go a far way in fostering a better politics across the country.

Both Samuels and Dick argue that churches could also ask opposing parties in their communities to sign statements that they are willing to work for peace.

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