

The Anglican Togetherness Group (ATG) hosted a panel discussion on restorative justice, with a focus on parenting. This followed a joint service of its six congregations in the Greater Mona Valley (GMV) on Ash Wednesday the 6th of March at St Margaret's Church, Liguanea.

Mrs Colleen Wint-Bond of the VPA spoke about the importance of effective parenting and she elaborated on the sessions held in the community. These aimed to prepare participants to become parent facilitators in their own communities. Topics included working with adults and general facilitation skills, as well as topics such as:

- **Parenting Then, Parenting Now** – considering how families functioned in the past, compared to the current day, with all the influences and immediacy of traditional media, the internet and social media. It is difficult for many parents to know and keep up with the rapid changes and impact of their children. Parenting now, requires a different set of skills.
- **Understanding Child Development** – this is essential for parents and all who work with children to understand. How one communicates with a 4 year old is different from how one will communicate with a ten year old or a seventeen year old. Understanding how children develop, their ability to learn and grasp new and more complex concepts and skills, their language development. Many parents are frustrated, even angry because they have unrealistic expectations of their children.
- **Self-esteem** - considers the value or worth we place on ourselves. How children values their skills, achievements, status, can be positive or negative, high or low, dependent on how they see themselves most of the time. Do they express sentiments such as “Nutten nah gwaan fe me” or “Ah so the thing set”? Or do they feel more sure of themselves, confident that they have some good qualities, they are valued and have more of a ““I think I can” attitude? Parents can affect how children feel about themselves. Their words, their actions and attitudes towards them play a critical role in developing one’s self-esteem.
- **Communication** – this is another common thread in all human relationships. Speech, body language, tone of voice, cultural context – all play a role in how individuals relate to each other. An essential part of caring for children, is to communicating with them in an age-appropriate way. This includes listening to them, encouraging them to ask questions, share stories, and learn new words.
- **Fathering** – historically, Caribbean families were often broken up, and men were usually not allowed or encouraged to play a significant role. Many fathers today need guidance and greater awareness of the important role they play in their children’s lives. Likewise, women also learn to understand and allow greater participation and involvement of fathers. Many children suffer because of the lack of a significant, caring and present male figure in their lives.
- **Discipline** – is a challenge for most parents. Again, understanding the stages of childhood development can assist parents in better coping with discipline. It is important to remember that discipline takes time and patience, and must be consistent. Discipline takes place before an undesired behaviour occurs. Punishment occurs afterwards. The child will learn more self-discipline with greater patience and communication from the parent(s)

Colleen further addressed the seven strategies for ending violence against children, using the acronym INSPIRE. *INSPIRE* - is an evidence-based technical package developed by the World Health Organisation and other international organisations to support countries in their efforts to prevent and respond to violence against children aged 0-17 years.

- **Implementation and enforcement of laws**
- **Norms and values**
- **Safe Environments**
- **Parent and caregiver support**
- **Income and economic strengthening**
- **Response and support services**
- **Education and Skills**

The ATG team was very appreciative of the partnership with the Violence Prevention Alliance, along with other stakeholders in the Greater Mona Valley. They proposed five activities in moving forward: They will continue their parenting and youth development thrust in the communities, promote after school care, regular Sunday school attendance, and plan for a stakeholder consultation in 2020 with all partner, with the intention of making the GMV a centre of excellence.

Coleen Wint Bond

Violence Prevention Alliance (VPA)