

## ADVENT I 2019

The Advent season is a time of preparation for our hearts and minds for the anniversary of the Lord's birth on Christmas. The use of the wreath and candles during Advent are a longstanding religious tradition that was originally adopted by Christians in the Middle Ages as part of their spiritual preparation for Christmas.

The wreath and candles are full of symbolism tied to the Christmas season. The wreath itself, which was traditionally made of various evergreens, signifies continuous life in the midst of winter and death as the evergreen is continuously green. The circle of the wreath, which has no beginning or end, symbolizes the eternity of God, the immortality of the soul, and the everlasting life we find in Christ. The wreath as a whole is meant to remind us of both the immortality of our souls and God's promise of everlasting life to us through Christ. Additional decorations, like holly and berries, are sometimes added. Their red colour points ahead to Jesus' sacrifice and death on the cross, shedding his blood for our sins. The Advent season not only symbolizes the waiting for Christ's birth but also for his final return.

The candles also have their own special significance. The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent, and one candle is lit each Sunday. Three of the candles are purple because the colour violet is a liturgical colour that signifies a time of prayer, penance, and sacrifice. **The first candle which was lit this morning, is purple, it symbolizes hope.** It is sometimes called the "Prophecy Candle" in remembrance of the prophets, especially Isaiah, who foretold the birth of Christ. It represents the expectation felt in anticipation of the coming Messiah.

In the words of our New Testament Reading in v 11

**13:11 Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers;**

**13:12 the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light;**

**13:13 let us live honourably as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy.**

**13:14 Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.**

Then the words of Wake Up Everybody a contemporary song first made popular by Teddy Prendergass and Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes came to mind [https://youtu.be/rAMjUUck\\_8E](https://youtu.be/rAMjUUck_8E). The song has the lyrics ( Source LyricFind)

Wake up everybody no more sleepin' in bed

No more backward thinkin' time for thinkin' ahead

The world has changed so very much  
From what it used to be  
There is so much hatred war an' poverty  
Wake up all the teachers time to teach a new way  
Maybe then they'll listen to whatcha have to say  
'Cause they're the ones who's coming up and the world is in their hands  
When you teach the children teach em the very best you can

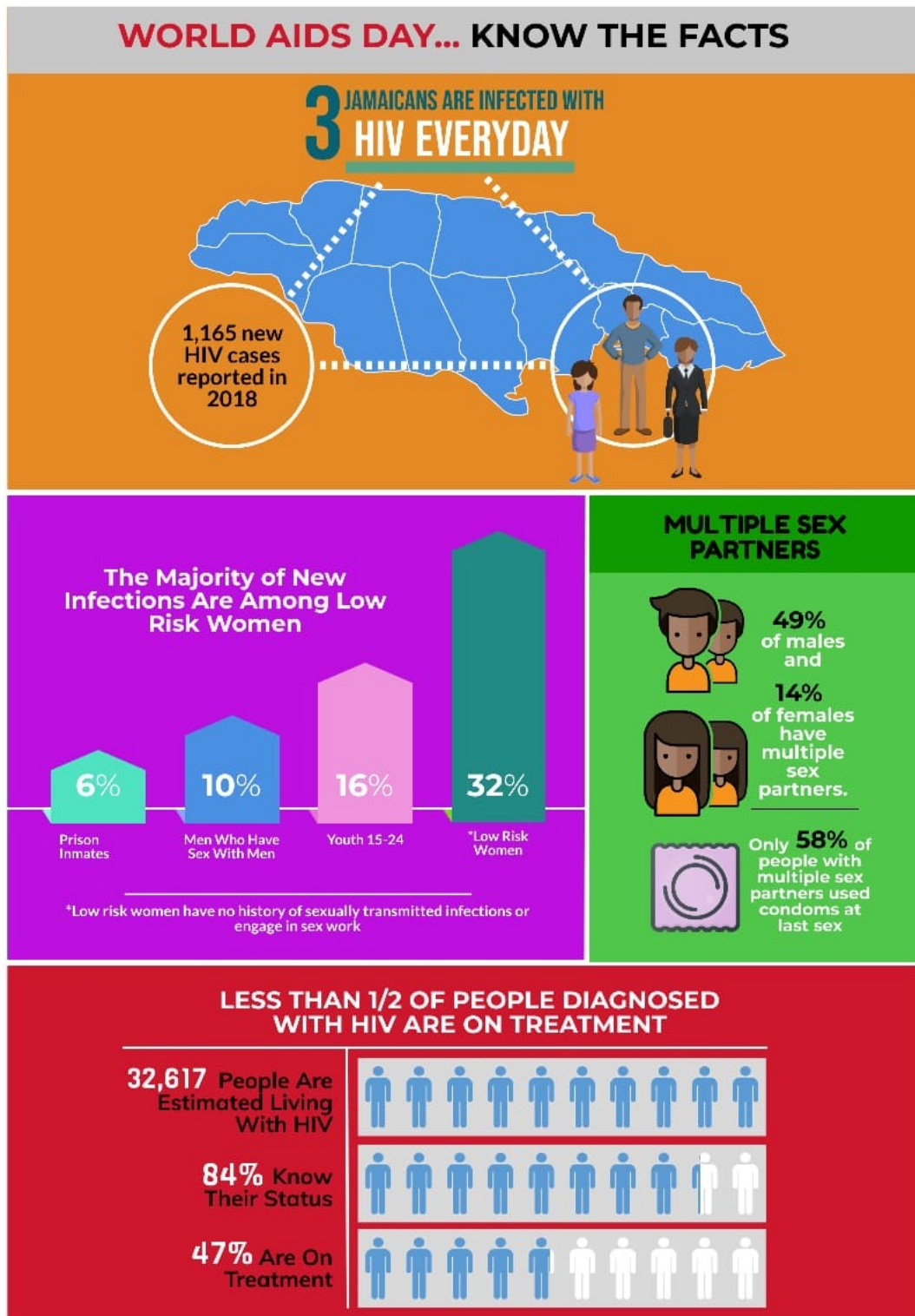
The world won't get no better if we just let it be  
The world won't get no better we gotta change it yeah, just you and me

Wake up all the doctors make the ol' people well  
They're the ones who suffer an' who catch all the hell  
But they don't have so very long before the Judgment Day  
So won'tcha make them happy before they pass away  
Wake up all the builders time to build a new land  
I know we can do it if we all lend a hand  
The only thing we have to do is put it in our mind  
Surely things will work out they do it every time

The world won't get no better if we just let it be  
The world won't get no better we gotta change it yeah, just you and me

The recent brouhaha over the viral video of a teacher “losing it” in a classroom speaks of a new era when teachers are not the pillars of society generating respect and veneration while imparting reading, riting and rithmetic but front line soldiers in a social battle for the souls and smadyness of our youth. We must pay attention to our youth (boys AND girls as social media is awash with girls fighting and engaging in age inappropriate conduct). We must not neglect our youth. We must nurture, affirm and motivate them. We must allow and encourage them to express their emotions without judgment. Too many of our youth are lost and require guidance and appropriate male role models. Mothers and more so Fathers need to be physically and emotionally present in their children’s lives, and the concept of mentorship (big brother, big sister, engaged adult) are to be embraced and put into action.

Doctors and health care workers fight new diseases and illnesses or variants of known illnesses. At this point let us recognise World AIDS Day being celebrated today December 1. Let us reflect on the current statistics for Jamaica



These are the numbers Brothers and Sisters for infections and People Living With HIV/AIDS. In 2017 16 babies were infected with HIV. This number fell to 7 in 2018. This means we have yet to WHO validation of achieving mother-to-child transmission. The fact is despite huge funding and extensive research there is still no cure for HIV. However, in our professional and personal lives we can do much. We can give PLWA respect, love and their rightful space as members of our society. As employers or colleagues we can end the stigma and discrimination surrounding HIV AIDS. Let 2020 be the year when no person living with HIV/AIDS is wrongfully dismissed from their place of employment. Let 2020 be the year when an infected person can feel free to openly acknowledge his or her status without judgement about the how of their acquiring the illness being of importance but the how of support and management being foremost. Let us show love to children affected by the virus as we would any other child.

So we go back to Romans and Wake Up Everybody

Central to those verses are the notions that we need to realise that time is short and fleeting, it now time to obey the Lord. Our day of believing is some time ago and since then where has our growth in Christ taken us? The night is far gone reminds us of personal and societal moral darkness. The times and world as we once knew it are no more and we have to embrace a new time. The day is near (or at hand as in some translations) is our Carpe Diem call. We need to live honourably – setting aside anger, hatred, selfish ambitions, envy, lust, filthy language (even when di taxi mad dem bad drive yuh) and all unbecoming thoughts and behaviours. We must put on the Armour of Light or as in **1 Thessalonians 5:8** the breastplate of faith and love, the hope of salvation as a helmet. Mindful of this morning's candle – Hope. We must put on the Lord Jesus Christ – first put in baptism (Galatians 3:27) and made alive together with him (Colossians 2:11-13) – note WITH, that notion of being bound up. In putting on Christ we become renewed in knowledge, we take on mercy, kindness, humility. Righteousness, holiness and we can bear situations of long-suffering – the taking up of our individual crosses. Then we can leave no space, make no provision for the things of the flesh. This setting aside is most necessary if we desire the love of our Father in heaven and for us to live spiritual lives. We can do it with the help of the Holy Spirit though God's providence and with this **Advent Word, Watchful - Prayer**.

On this First Sunday of Advent, the start of the new church year let us resolve to be children of the day, not of the night. The time for growth and change is NOW. Let us put on the armour of light, put on Jesus Christ and walk properly as Children of Light.

For your meditation...

PLAY WAKE UP EVERYBODY – start at Time Mark 0:44

<https://youtu.be/ijgxJ6rPkc>