



## **PRESS RELEASE – Report of sexual abuse by church leader**

**January 11, 2017:** The Jamaica Coalition for a Healthy Society (JCHS) makes reference to the case of Rev Rupert Clarke who has been charged with having sex with a minor. The JCHS extends sincere sympathies to the young girl involved and to her wider family.

The nation must mourn and be enraged about any and every instance of abuse against our children and especially where people of faith are the alleged perpetrators.

We await the outcome of the investigations but we say emphatically that the law must be allowed to take its full course in this matter.

Of additional grave concern is the story carried in the Daily Gleaner of January 10, 2017 which indicates that the church's leadership was aware of the behavior of Rev. Clarke. The JCHS firmly states that there cannot be any room within church leadership for compromise on the matter of sexual misconduct, especially sexual abuse of children.

The JCHS strongly recommends that all institutions, including churches, be pro-active in establishing systems for protecting the children under their care and with whom they come in contact. This could include a Child Protection Policy that would bring guidance in these situations according to our child protection laws so that crucial decisions are not left to the discretion of any one leader. However, there has to be transparency, accountability and responsibility by the membership of the church itself in monitoring adherence to such policies because human leadership can fail.

We urge all Jamaicans to consider sex sacred and special and to return it to its rightful place between only an adult male and female, in marriage.

We call on fellow Christians who are committed to biblical sexual ethics and the truth, whether they be leadership or laity, to rededicate themselves to lives of sexual purity and to being protectors of the nation's children.

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