

THE UNITED CHURCH IN JAMAICA AND THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

REASONS WHY GAMBLING INCLUDING CASINO GAMBLING SHOULD BE OPPOSED

Definition: One of the briefest and yet most succinct definitions of gambling is - the obtaining of money or money's worth through an event, the outcome of which is determined by chance. The essence of gambling is that it is based on chance rather than on skill.

OVERVIEW

We affirm the inherent dignity of human beings made in the image of God and also Christ's commandment that we love our neighbour as we love ourselves. We believe that Gambling violates these two principles because it is driven by a desire to gain for oneself at the expense of another. It also exploits human weaknesses by playing upon base human desires, which devalue the individual and undermine the community. (*Matthew 22:35-40*)

In light of the above, the growing Gambling industry in Jamaica and Cayman poses a serious threat to the future development of the two nations. The United Church therefore revisits the whole issue to give guidance to both nations and especially to the Church. We urge persons to consider earnestly and prayerfully, the spiritual, moral, social and economic reasons for opposing Gambling, which are given below.

A. SPIRITUAL, MORAL AND SOCIAL REASONS

(1) Gambling offends the Tenth Commandment

All Gambling is sinful because it is an offence against the 10th Commandment - "Thou shalt not covet anything that is thy neighbour's" (*Exodus 20:17*).

Gambling is an attempt to gain that which is our neighbour's by a means other than by work or gift. It is covetousness, which, say the Scriptures, is idolatry.

(2) Gambling denies the Providence of God

Gambling encourages a false attitude towards life as a whole. It encourages the philosophy that one should base one's life on luck' or chance rather than on the Providence of God and on the use of one's talents and abilities (*Matthew 6:24-33*).

(3) Gambling destroys Family Life

Income, which should be used for the provision of necessities, is squandered away. This is even truer in poor communities than in relatively rich communities.

For whereas there might be some excess income for a 'flutter' in rich communities, the income in poor communities cannot even support a family at subsistence level.

Research has shown that poorer families engage in gambling up to four times more than wealthy families. Gambling has therefore affected the ability of a family to send children to school, to provide food for the home and to enhance the stability of the family through prudent saving. Because of gambling, fathers have gone home at the end of a week with nothing to show from a week's earnings. This has caused serious strife within the home and has led to the break-up of many marriages. But the evil of gambling is not only in the fact of loss.

Detrimental results can also flow from the fact of winning! A win, no matter how small, encourages the person to spend more and more in the hope of winning again! This may never happen. Whole family businesses have therefore been lost through gambling. Largely because of our history, Jamaican family life has always been in a precarious and unstable condition. Anything, which threatens to further destroy family life, is highly detrimental to the Jamaican society.

(4) Gambling is Addictive

The person who begins with a "little flutter" is being constantly tempted to "try again". Because of this, more is risked in the hope of a "big win". Soon the little flutter becomes the "big bet". The originally reluctant gambler becomes "hooked" on gambling. It is significant that there is now an organization called "**Gamblers Anonymous**" which is similar in form and aim to "Alcoholics Anonymous". In the world of addictions the three main addictions are - Alcohol, Drugs and Gambling. Statistics show that Casino Gambling carries the greatest risk of addiction.

(5) Gambling sins against the Principle of Stewardship

In the Christian view, life, talents and possessions are held in trust. Our money is not our own to do with as we like. We are answerable to God for the means by which we make money and the methods by which we spend it. The gambler is an unjust steward (*Matthew 25:14-30*).

(6) Gambling encourages a false attitude towards Money

Gambling encourages the "get-rich-quick" mentality and so can lead to other sins such as stealing, deception and fraud. It is noticeable that there has been a high incidence of corruption in Jamaica and in other countries. There is no doubt that widespread Gambling has stimulated the "get-rich-quick" mentality (*Ephesians 4:2 8*).

(7) Gambling seriously affects attitudes towards Work

If one believes that one can get a lot of money for nothing, work is resented as an unnecessary burden. Work does not only provide a means of making money but of stimulating creativity, enabling a sense of achievement and giving worth and value to human life. If work is devalued and in any way belittled, this deprives the human being of full self-expression. Gambling therefore seriously affects the work ethic (*Col. 3:23-25*).

(8) Gambling often leads to other Crimes

A person who has lost his entire week's earnings can become desperate. This is especially true when that income is hard to come by. The loser can be tempted to recoup his losses by turning to crime.

(9) Gambling sins against the Commandment to Love

The gambler aims at gaining another's property without giving anything in return. It amounts to seeking for gain at another person's loss. The motive is entirely selfish and in contradiction of the rule to love. (Leviticus 19:18).

B. ECONOMIC REASONS

(1) Gambling is a Useless Transfer of Money

Gambling is a transfer of money creating no new value. It means taking from the poor to give to the poor or to the rich.

(2) Gambling Undermines Productivity

It is the considered opinion of those who have analyzed the Jamaican economy that the greatest need is for increased productivity (output per man-hour). This can only be achieved through the creation of a culture of hard work.

Gambling fosters the very opposite to hard work. It encourages getting something for nothing, or for very little. The fact that prizes from gambling now run into millions of dollars is undermining and discouraging all efforts to inculcate a culture of diligence into the Jamaican society.

We have therefore lost many businesses, which began to operate in the Island, because of "low productivity." Gambling is seriously retarding national economic development.

(3) Gambling is Intrinsically Opposed to Saving

Because of our present need for capital formation, the emphasis in Cayman and Jamaica today should be on saving. To promote gambling on a national scale, especially in an unstable economic environment, is an admission of defeat.

C. POLITICAL POLICY

It should be the policy of any administration to encourage hard work and saving. Therefore it is a seeming contradiction for any administration to encourage the practice of Gambling which is seriously detrimental to both hard work and saving.

If an administration is considering long-term economic development of its people it could never base this development on Gambling.

We will offer our services in the advancement of any scheme for the true welfare of the people of

our nations, but we must protest in the strongest terms the encouragement of any form of Gambling in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands on the spiritual, moral, social, economic and political grounds stated above.

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