



Jamaica



The country of Jamaica is located in the Caribbean Sea, south of Cuba. The island is about the size of the state of Connecticut with a population roughly three-fourths of that state's. The capital city is Kingston. Jamaica was discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1494 and settled by Spaniards, though native people, called Taino had lived on the island for centuries.



The hills outside Kingston, Jamaica

The Taino people were enslaved by the Spaniards, who forced them to work on the sugar and cocoa plantations they established on the island. As the natives died off due to harsh

treatment and illnesses brought to the island by the settlers, they were replaced by African slaves.

England seized the island from Spain in 1655, continuing the plantation economy. In 1834, slavery was abolished in Jamaica and many former slaves became farmers.

In 1958 Jamaica gained some autonomy by joining other island countries to form the Federation of the West Indies. Jamaica withdrew from the Federation in 1962 and became an independent nation.

Catholicism was first brought to the island by the early Spanish settlers. In 1526, in an effort to evangelize the natives, the first stone church was built in St. Ann's Bay. This effort failed as the natives died from maltreatment and disease. Catholicism was outlawed with the arrival of the English in 1655 and not allowed to be practiced again publicly in Jamaica until 1837.

Today, most Jamaicans identify themselves as Protestant (about 65%). Only 2.2% are Roman Catholic.

Missionary Childhood in Jamaica

According to Fides News Agency, the information service of the Pontifical Mission Societies at the Vatican, one fifth of Jamaica's population grows steadily poorer each year. Poverty is rising in urban areas faster than rural areas because the rural citizens can depend on farming to support and feed themselves more regularly.

A rise in the crime rate and drug use is linked directly to inner city poverty, especially in the capital city of Kingston. Jamaica has the third highest death rate due to gun violence in the world.*

Most of us think of beautiful beaches, cruise ships and lush resorts when we think of Jamaica. The reality for many children is a life in a tin shack built on a garbage dump on the outskirts of the capital.



It is there that you will find missionaries at work building schools and health care facilities. Their work helps the children break the cycle of poverty and violence through education and the love of Jesus Christ.

"What we want to do is to give people the tools that will help them set themselves free...to help liberate them from poverty, from ignorance, from hunger, and from injustice," says a missionary priest who has started schools, clinics and feeding

programs in some of the most poverty stricken areas of Kingston.

One such place is the Christ the Savior Early Elementary Center. Children from the nearby slum crowd into classrooms filled with used, donated tables and chairs. Their classrooms are separated by blackboards or cardboard partitions. The noise can be tremendous with all those young learners in one space!



Pre-K class at Christ the Savior School

They come every day to learn to read, to write, get a hot meal, and to find out about the saving grace of God.

Because there is also a free clinic attached to the school, students and their families are given access to health and dental screenings—a luxury in such a poor area. Unfortunately, the medicine shelves in the clinic are often empty, as even the most basic supplies are very expensive.

At last report, members of the Missionary Childhood Association from around the world sacrificed \$15,500 to help the children of Kingston, Jamaica learn to live in peace, be healthy, and feel the love of Jesus Christ in their lives.

*<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/gun-deaths-by-country>