The foods we eat affects our health and environment

Over the past five decades, many Caribbean countries like Jamaica have shifted their more traditional diets to Western-style diets. Western-style diets tend to be calorie-dense, have a high proportion of meats and high number of processed and ultra-processed foods. Traditional Jamaican diets include healthy foods like fish, legumes (peas, kidney beans), green vegetables like callaloo, vitamin rich sweet potatoes, cornmeal porridge, curry and jerk chicken and steamed cabbage. These plant-based traditional foods have been shown to be better for our environment.

God gave humans dominion over the planet and foods we produce. Many of the foods that cause our bodies to be sick also harm the planet and can promote climate change. Rising temperatures can result in increases the number of heart attacks, deaths from lung disease and longer allergy seasons. If we switch our diet from eating mostly meat to eating a plant-based diet, we can reduce early deaths by 25%. Animal source foods have more than twice the harmful impact on the environment than plant-based foods and red meat is the worst of them all.

Watch this video produced by Harvard School of Public health to learn more

God Provides Foods In Abundance

To make environmentally sound food changes:

1. Eat less red meat.
2. Swap out red meat for healthier meats like chicken and fish.
3. Reduce overall meat to 1-3 servings per week.
4. Consider the following recipes that include environmentally friendly foods- peas, beans, nuts and seed.

There are many resources available online which provide recipes for preparing healthy, environmentally friendly foods. Here are examples of two recipes.

### JAMAICA JERK SPICED NUTS

Spiced nuts have a place at any gathering, they make an easy appetizer or munchie; anyone can pop them in their mouth.

**INGREDIENTS**

- 1 20 oz bag mixed nuts
- 2 egg whites
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon allspice
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- ¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon

*Consider reducing or removing the salt and sugar components and using more of other spices

1 https://www.gaplesinstitute.org/sustainable-diets/
2 https://www.lemonsforlulu.com/jamaican-jerk-spiced-nuts/
Persons will work in groups to consider the resources needed to plan a kitchen garden. What plants are likely to flourish in Jamaica? How much time will be needed to prepare? What type of crops can we grow? How long will they take? How will they be shared after growth?

Practical tips: Churches may consider creating a garden book (with various experiences of members who have kitchen gardens) and a cook book using home-grown food from gardens like local vegetables, fruits and seasoning. This sharing may help persons at the beginning of the journey.

Click on this link and read about how the foods we eat impact our environment:
https://healthiersteps.com/recipe/kidney-bean-curry-jamaican-style/