First (1st) Sitting of the Twentieth (20th) Meeting of the First (1st) Session of the Thirteenth (13th) Legislature

THE PARLIAMENT OF TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

2 APRIL 2026

(Parliament)

Hon. Speaker

Speaker

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PRAYER

OPENING OF THE SITTING

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Good morning, Honourable Members. I now call this first sitting of the 20th meeting of the first session of the 13th Legislature of the Parliament of the Turks and Caicos Islands, to be held on Thursday, 2 April 2026, at the Honourable Angus S. Francis Building, Pond Street, Grand Turk, to order. Honourable Members, I now call on our Chaplain, Bishop Coleta Williams III, to pray for the Parliament.

PRAYER

Chaplain:

John chapter 13, verse 12. So after he had washed their feet and taken his garment and had sat down again, Jesus said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Today is Holy Thursday, Maundy Thursday, in Holy Week, which centres on Jesus' final day and night before his crucifixion, highlighting the institution of the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper, the washing of feet, a model of humble service, and the new commandment to love one another. Key themes include the intimacy of the Lord's Supper, the scandalous humility of God serving, and the call for mankind to become the body of Christ through love and service.

Our focus areas today are the institution of the Eucharist, emphasising the meal as the source and summit of Christian life, where Jesus becomes truly present and nourishes his followers. It is seen as a sacrifice of love that transforms bread and wine into his body and blood, uniting believers into one body. The washing of feet is an act of service. It is presented not as a mere historical moment, but as a living sign and directive showing that true greatness is found in humility and serving others.

It illustrates that no act of service is beneath you, embodying Jesus' love to the very end. Finally, the new commandment: Jesus commanded his disciples to love one another, setting a new standard of unconditional love, even when facing indifference, confusion or betrayal. No greater love than this, that a man will lay down his life for his friend. Let us pray. Father God, the chief servant who set the greatest example of servanthood, who called us and has given us this great opportunity to serve our people and this great country, cause us not to take it for granted and always to put country above self as we serve with empathy, love and trust. Lord, as our leaders gather in this Parliament on this Holy Thursday, we ask that you will grant our Speaker the spirit of discernment and good judgment, the spirit of boldness, creativity and vision for our Premier and Minister of Finance as he lays the Appropriation 2026-2027 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, the spirit of wisdom and courage for our Leader of the Opposition, the gift of strength and the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, who served with a servant heart, to all members of this Parliament, the gift of wisdom and sound legal advice for our Attorney General, and the gift of strength and good stewardship for our Clerk.

Lord, bless this parliamentary session. Bless and protect our beautiful-by-nature Turks and Caicos. Let us pray the Lord's Prayer. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever.

Amen.

OPENING OF THE SITTING

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Please be seated. Honourable Premier.

REARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, colleagues, and to all in the gallery and listening via radio. Good morning, Turks and Caicos. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 49, I wish to rearrange the business of this Honourable House so that Government business can have precedence over all

other business.

The change today is minimal. I move that item number 6, Papers, be taken as item number 4. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

PAPERS

APPROPRIATIONS 2026-2027 ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE AND CONSTITUTIONAL AND STATUTORY BODIES ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE 2026-2027

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Premier. I again welcome Honourable Members to this Parliament meeting this morning. I also welcome the strangers in the gallery, those listening via Radio Turks and Caicos and those watching via our social media platforms. Members, I also send condolences to persons who have lost loved ones since we last met.

I particularly send condolences to the family and friends of Officer Beckles, whom we recently lost. Beckles was, I think, the major of the Cadet Corps, and he did an excellent job with those young persons. He was, in my book, a consummate professional, and he will be missed. Can we please stand for a moment of silence? Thank you very much.

Please be seated. Honourable Members, I also send a shout-out to our athletes who will be participating over the weekend in the CARIFTA Games in track and field and also in swimming. I think they have already left for Grenada for the track and field and for Martinique for the swimming. I wish them all the best as they compete for the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Honourable Members, I will now return to the Order Paper. We now have messages from Her Excellency the Governor. There are none. We are now on Papers, and we will have the Appropriations 2026-2027 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure and the Constitutional and Statutory Bodies Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure 2026-2027, to be laid by the Honourable Premier and Minister for Finance, Economic Development, Investment and Trade.

Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

What is that?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Read the notes.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Sorry.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to lay on the table of this Honourable House, in accordance with section 32 of the Standing Orders and the Turks and Caicos Islands Constitution Order 2011, sections 105 and 115, the Appropriations 2026-2027 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure 2026-2027. Mr. Speaker, I move that the said Appropriation 2026-2027 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure and the Constitutional and Statutory Bodies Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure 2026-2027 be referred to the Appropriations Committee to be dealt with in the normal manner.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Madam Clerk.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Premier. Do you have a presentation to make on the Estimates?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Order Paper this morning is very short, as indicated by the prayer earlier and the comments by Bishop, our Chaplain. Today is in the middle of Holy Week, and I would first apologise to the sensibilities of those who strictly follow Holy Week and the tradition of the churches in the Turks and Caicos Islands to observe this week as Holy Week. I believe people would appreciate that the work of government must go on, and as Jesus once said about the Sabbath, I say about Holy Week: it is lawful for men to do good on Holy Week, as it is lawful for men to do good on the Sabbath.

Chaplain:

Amen.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

I think we are doing some good here, given that we have just gone over, a couple of days ago, the end of the fiscal year 2025-2026, and we need to get the business of the people done as we begin a new fiscal year, 2026-2027. I want to leave enough time for members perhaps to send Easter greetings to their constituencies, so I will be very brief, because the purpose of laying the Estimates is really just that: to lay them so that the Appropriations Committee can do its job.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I will make a very brief statement. Mr. Speaker, honourable members of this Honourable House, Madam Clerk, supporting staff from various ministries, visitors in the gallery, TCI Islanders everywhere, ladies and gentlemen listening by Radio Turks and Caicos and on social media, I rise today humbled by the responsibility entrusted to this Government and grateful for the confidence of our people. I acknowledge the dedication of my Cabinet colleagues, Permanent Secretaries, and especially the Budget Office and the many public officers whose quiet diligence underpins the stability of our nation. I thank them sincerely. Scripture reminds us in Psalms 127:1, Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.

We acknowledge that wisdom, discipline and stewardship must guide every decision we make. Before I forget, Mr. Speaker, the theme of the Budget Presentation will be, as it was in the State of the State Address, Strong Today, Secure Tomorrow. Today I have the honour of laying before this Honourable Parliament the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Budget. That Budget represents the coherent plan for our people, our economy and our future.

Strong Today, Secure Tomorrow speaks to a Government determined to protect stability now while making responsible, forward-looking choices that secure tomorrow's opportunity and resilience for generations to come. In that context, we present this Budget at a time of profound global uncertainty. Across the world, geopolitical tensions remain elevated, conflicts persist, supply chains remain vulnerable, inflation continues to affect the cost of food, energy, insurance and finance, and climate-related shocks are more frequent and more severe. As indicated earlier, global uncertainty includes the war involving Iran, the United States and Israel.

Small island economies like ours must navigate these risks with caution, agility and discipline. Yet history has taught us something important. The Turks and Caicos Islands are resilient. We are not insulated from global shocks, but we are not powerless. Sound fiscal management, strong institutions and a premium tourism product give us tools that many others do not have. The Budget, and the fiscal strategy that underpins it, recognise global realities without surrendering to pessimism. It balances realism with confidence, and caution with ambition. I take a moment before I sit to speak to the current realities and challenges.

Let us be clear-eyed. Tourism continues to perform strongly and remains the main driver of our economy. Nearly 2 million visitors chose our shores last year. Foreign direct investment agreements exceeding $1 billion signal continued confidence in our destination. But success brings pressure. We face rising costs in healthcare and security. We must protect the vulnerable while preventing abuse and fraud. We must deliver major infrastructure projects efficiently and on time.

We must diversify our economy while safeguarding our environment and our way of life. These are not abstract challenges. They affect families, businesses and communities across every island. This Budget responds to those realities with careful stewardship, strength today and security tomorrow. I would like to highlight some progress since the last Budget.

Despite these challenges, the progress since our last Budget has been substantial. Crime has declined significantly, restoring confidence in our communities. Tourism and investment have continued to grow. Social programmes have been expanded and targeted more effectively. Behind these statistics are real people, as I said earlier: a young person who can walk safely to school, a small business owner who sees opportunity instead of fear, and a family whose income is more stable because work is available. This is what responsible government looks like. Since this is a very high-level introduction and the laying of these Estimates, let me speak briefly about the Fiscal Strategy Policy Statement, which sets the framework for the Budget and the years ahead.

It commits the Government to fiscal sustainability and prudence, responsible debt management, protecting essential services, and building buffers against future shocks. Let me make it clear: we will not mortgage the future to satisfy the present, nor will we retreat from necessary investment out of fear. Tourism will continue to grow, but we approach that growth with measured optimism. Construction and real estate remain key drivers of employment. Ports are advancing, and while airport development has faced delays, our commitment to modern and resilient infrastructure is unwavering. Through the Public Sector Investment Programme, public-private partnerships and disciplined execution, we are positioning the Turks and Caicos Islands for modest but sustainable growth.

Let me speak briefly about the revenue and expenditure overview. The Budget builds on strong revenue performance without imposing any broad new taxes. Our focus remains on improved compliance, greater efficiency and economic expansion.

FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027 BUDGET ESTIMATES

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Revenue growth must come from a growing economy and fair enforcement, not from burdening working families. On the expenditure side, we distinguish clearly between recurrent operations and capital investment. We are tightening controls, reducing underspending and improving value for money. In

that regard, Mr Speaker, the budget priorities focus investment where it matters most.

Mr Speaker, the Budget reflects our values. Public order and safety is allocated $105.2 million. Safety is the foundation of freedom. This allocation strengthens policing, courts, border protection, immigration management, corrections and fire and rescue services. Safer communities mean stronger families and a more confident economy. General public services is allocated $102.7 million.

Effective governance matters. We continue public service reform, improve communication and advance digitisation, including the national digital ID, to deliver faster, fairer service across every island. Health is allocated $94.1 million. Health is both a social and a fiscal priority. We are reforming healthcare to ensure long-term sustainability, strengthening local services, improving efficiency, digitising records and refocusing the Treatment Abroad Programme to serve Turks and Caicos Islanders and British Overseas Territories citizens. Fewer families should have to leave home to get quality care, and so we are focusing on making that a reality.

Economic affairs is allocated $86.7 million. This allocation drives inclusive growth, supporting infrastructure across the islands, renewable energy, digitisation, land access and the operationalisation of the credit union and mortgage corporation to protect citizens from predatory lending. Both institutions are scheduled to open their doors in 2026-2027. Education is allocated $63.3 million. Free community college education for all islanders, early childhood investments, scholarships, sports and recreation remain the surest path to opportunity and national resilience. Social protection has come a long way in the last five years, and today we are allocating $28.1 million.

We protect the vulnerable with dignity while strengthening safeguards against abuse and fraud. This Government believes compassion and fiscal responsibility go hand in hand. Environmental protection, housing, defence and culture are also part of our focus. From environmental protection to housing renewal, disaster resilience and cultural development, these investments reinforce social cohesion and national security.

Mr Speaker, one must always have personal and national aspiration. Some priorities extend beyond this year's allocation, but they remain central to our vision: healthcare reform, infrastructure across all islands, housing and access to land, digitisation and transportation. These are not isolated projects; together they form an integrated framework for a resilient, people-centred future, fully aligned with Vision 2040 and the fiscal strategy. What will not be in this year's Budget, but will come perhaps in an early supplementary, is the fact that this Government realises that if we are going to make the progress we need to make, we cannot have a platinum credit card in our pocket, by way of the excellent credit rating that we have, and have no debt.

When we look at the need for infrastructure expansion, digitisation, including a fibre network and the national ID, and when we look across infrastructure, including solid waste management and the need to improve access to proper housing, this Government is going to the capital market to raise a substantial amount of money which will be allocated across four or five priority areas, which I will speak to when the full Budget presentation is made. I would also like to say, before I sit, that in some ways I would have liked to have had a broader consultation, but given where we are, and the fact that it is the Government's plan to escalate spending and raise the additional funding that we need to spend over the next three years, the midterm, we need to bring the Budget at this time so that it will give us the space we need to start those negotiations.

We have already gone out to recruit a debt adviser who will help us to contract and arrange the best service and the best deals that we can get. If we are going to power this economy the way it needs to be powered, while still putting in the safeguards to allow infrastructure and other critical services to catch up with the growth of the economy, we have to go to the capital markets to raise money to do so.

Members will have already been informed that the Government is trying to control growth so that the quality of the experience of our visitors and ourselves in this country is not degraded. This Government announced some time ago its Sustainable Tourism and Spatial Development Policy, which is meant to consolidate our gains and do a better job of controlling growth, because even growth has its limits, and we need to know what those limits are. We need to be careful that, in our effort to support growth, we do not escalate to an inflection point where the cost of that growth exceeds the benefit. These are all measures that we are taking to ensure that does not happen. Members will hear more from me in more detail when the Budget is presented in the next few weeks.

In closing, Mr Speaker, let me say that the Budget is not about Government alone. It is about partnership: partnership between Parliament and people, between public service and private enterprise, and between today's needs and tomorrow's responsibilities. Mr Speaker, that is why the Government is taking the people-empowering initiatives that it is taking, whether on business licences or improving access to land. It is again between Parliament and people, and we must put the pieces in place to make sure that that happens. Mr Speaker, strong today, secure tomorrow is not a slogan.

It is a commitment: a commitment to discipline over recklessness, to fairness over favour and to sustainability over short-term gain. There will be some tough decisions that have to be made if we are going to move forward with discipline, purpose and equity, so that the playing field is level for everyone.

Together, guided by faith, wisdom and shared purpose, we will continue to build a Turks and Caicos Islands that is prosperous, secure and just for all. Colleagues, Turks and Caicos Islands, Mr Speaker, and all under the hearing of my voice, may God bless this Honourable Parliament and may God bless these Turks and Caicos Islands. I thank you.

GOVERNMENT OF THE TURKS AND CAICOS

ISLANDS APPROVED VIREMENT LOG FOR THE PERIOD 23 TO 31 MARCH 2026

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Premier, for your brief presentation on the Appropriation Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for 2026-2027. Honourable Members, I will now return to the Order Paper. We are still on Papers, and we now have the Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands Approved Virement Log for the period 23 to 31 March 2026, to be laid by the Honourable Premier. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to lay on the table of this Honourable House, in accordance with Standing Order 32 and section 51(6) of the Public Finance Management Regulations 2012, the Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands Approved Virement Log for the period 23 to 31 March 2026.

TWO MINUTE SPEECHES BY MEMBERS

TWO MINUTE SPEECHES BY MEMBERS

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Madam Clerk. Thank you very much, Honourable Premier. Honourable Members, I will now return to the Order Paper, and we are now at two-minute speeches. Are there any contributions for two-minute speeches? The floor is now open. Are there any contributions? The Chair recognizes the Honourable Minister of Health.

Hon. Kyle Knowles:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to the persons listening by radio, and good morning again to those persons and strangers in the gallery. Mr. Speaker, I want to use this opportunity to wish all the wonderful people of my constituency of Wheeland-West Caicos a happy Easter. I always use the opportunity to address them from this platform to reassure them that as long as I am here, we continue to work in their favour. Mr. Speaker, I also want to use this opportunity to remind them of the activities that the constituency council and constituency groups will be having in the community on Saturday for all the children.

This is our sixth year, so it is always an opportunity for us to engage, embrace and have some fun with the children in our communities as we go through this time. It would be remiss of me, Mr. Speaker, not to remind those persons in our communities of the real reason why we are in this season, and for us to be mindful of the sacrifice made by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity. Thank you to those persons listening, to my constituents, my family and all those persons who continue to support me as I lead in my capacity as the MP. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Turks and Caicos.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your contribution. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Minister for Public Safety and Utilities.

Hon. Otis Chuck Morris:

Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, Honourable Members. Good morning to the wider Turks and Caicos Islands. Mr. Speaker, I stand this morning to give brief greetings and remarks to the constituents of ED1 and the people of the wider Turks and Caicos Islands. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, my beloved brothers and sisters, my constituents of ED1, and the wonderful people of the beautiful-by-nature Turks and Caicos Islands, as we gather in this sacred season of Easter, we are reminded of the greatest victory ever won: the triumph of life over death, hope over despair, and light over darkness through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The word of God declares in Matthew 28:6: He is not here, for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. Mr. Speaker, Easter is not merely a date on the calendar.

It is a divine reminder that, no matter how dark the night may seem, joy comes in the morning. It tells us that every struggle has an end, every burden can be lifted, and every life can be transformed by the power of our risen Christ. To the people of these islands, I say: let this season renew our faith, restore our hope and strengthen our love for one another. In a world where challenges may arise, whether in our homes, our communities or our nation, we must hold fast to the truth that God is still in control.

Mr. Speaker, the resurrection teaches us resilience. It teaches us that even when things seem buried, God has the power to raise them again. Families can be restored, communities can be rebuilt, and dreams can once again live. The Bible reminds us in 1 Peter 1:3: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Today, I encourage each citizen across these islands to walk in that lively hope. Let kindness prevail. Let unity guide us. Let us lift one another higher, just as Christ was lifted for us. As your representative and servant, I remain committed to building stronger, safer and more compassionate communities where every individual has the opportunity to rise, just as Christ rose. Mr. Speaker, may this Easter season bring peace to our homes, healing to our hearts and renewed purpose to our lives. May God bless each and every one of us, and may God continue to bless the beautiful-by-nature Turks and Caicos Islands. Happy Easter to everyone.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your contribution. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Member for Blue Hills.

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to you, my colleagues in this Honourable House, friends and visitors in the gallery, and those listening from across Turks and Caicos by RTC or social media. I also take this opportunity to extend a very special greeting to the wonderful people of Electoral District 8, Blue Hills, whom I am honoured to represent. Mr. Speaker, I begin on a solemn note by joining you in offering condolences to all families who have lost loved ones since we last convened in this Honourable House. There are a few names I want to call out: the family of Officer Backles, the family of Ms. Mary Morley from Five Cays, Ms. Dreadlane Morley, my niece, and Mr. Stanley Hall.

Mr. Speaker, in times such as these, we are reminded of the comforting words of Scripture from Deuteronomy 33:27: the eternal God is your refuge and his everlasting arms are under you. May these words bring strength and peace to those who grieve. Mr. Speaker, on a brighter note, I wish to extend sincere congratulations to those who are celebrating achievements and special milestones.

In particular, I commend our young men at the Blazer Elite Academy for their outstanding performance in securing victory at the Grand Bahama Classics basketball tournament this past weekend. Their discipline, teamwork and commitment to excellence are commendable, and they serve as an inspiration to our youth across these islands. I say to them, hats off, and I wish them continued success in all of their future endeavours. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to all of my colleagues from this Chamber for their condolences, sympathies and kind words of support over the past two months following the passing of my beloved brother.

Your presence, your messages and your unwavering support, particularly during his life celebration this past weekend, have not gone unnoticed, and for that I am sincerely grateful. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I extend thanks to the many individuals from across the Turks and Caicos Islands who took a moment out of their busy lives to offer condolences, sympathies, prayers and words of encouragement to my family.

Know that your kindness has been a source of comfort during a very difficult time, and we are immensely grateful. Mr. Speaker, to the people of District 8, Blue Hills, may you have an Easter filled with the light of the Lord and the joy of his resurrection. May your Easter Day be blessed as we celebrate hope and the promise of a new life. Easter blessings to you and yours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your contribution. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Member for the Bight.

Hon. Kimbule A. Skippings:

Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and to the wonderful people of Electoral District 6, the Bight, and the Turks and Caicos at large. As we celebrate this Easter season, I extend warm and heartfelt greetings to each and every one of you. Easter is a time of renewal, hope and reflection. It reminds us that even in our darkest moments, there is always the promise of new beginnings.

This season calls on us to show kindness, compassion and unity, to look out for one another, and to strengthen the bonds that hold our community together. Whether we are spending this time with family, in worship, or in quiet reflection, I encourage us all to embrace the true spirit of Easter. Let us continue to move forward with faith, love and sheer commitment to building a stronger, safer and brighter future for our community and our entire country. May God bless you all, and may you have a peaceful and joyful Easter.

Thank you.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your contribution. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Minister.

Hon. Shaun David Malcolm:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to you, my colleagues here, and those in the gallery. Mr. Speaker, I also want to say good morning to all the people of these Turks and Caicos Islands. I would also like to stand on all the condolences that have been expressed this morning to families around these Turks and Caicos Islands. Mr. Speaker, as we are in the Easter season, I would like to use my brief time to express Easter greetings, as the Minister of Religious Affairs, to the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

But before that, Mr. Speaker, let me also remind them that, in true Turks and Caicos tradition, we know that tomorrow is Good Friday. As a boy growing up, I know that Good Friday is a high religious tradition here, so I want to admonish our people all over this country to find a church home or church house to go to tomorrow as we reflect on this most sacred time in the Christian community.

Mr. Speaker, I was also born on Easter Sunday morning. I am

a resurrection baby, and tomorrow I celebrate my 54th birthday. I want to thank God for sparing my life. Yes, I was born on resurrection morning. Grandmother always told me from a little boy that I am special. No matter what, I will always resurrect. I thank God she put that blessing on me.

And we know it is not tomorrow's resurrection; I hear you, Mr. Premier. Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank Him for sparing my life to see many things over the years, and now I speak to this country as the Minister of Religious Affairs. Mr. Speaker, I also rise to extend warm Easter greetings to you, Honourable Members of this House, and to the people of these Turks and Caicos Islands. Easter is a sacred and reflective season, one that reminds us of sacrifice, renewal, hope, and the enduring power of faith.

It is a time when we are called to pause, to reflect on our purpose, and to recommit ourselves to service, compassion and unity. Mr. Speaker, as we carry out our duties in this Honourable Parliament, Easter serves as a timely reminder that leadership must be grounded in humility, integrity and a genuine commitment to improving the lives of our people. The message of renewal speaks directly to our collective responsibilities to strengthen our institutions, uplift our communities, and ensure that no one is left behind. Mr. Speaker, through the Ministry of Home Affairs, Religious Affairs and Transportation, we remain steadfast in our mission of bringing government services to the people, ensuring that every island, every community and every citizen feels the presence and support of our government.

During this Easter season, I encourage all of us to embrace the spirit of togetherness, extend kindness to one another, and continue working collectively for the advancement of our nation. Again, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, I wish all in this Honourable Parliament and all the people across these Turks and Caicos Islands a peaceful, blessed and joyous Easter season. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you, Honourable Minister, for your two-minute speech. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Eighth All-Island Member for her contribution.

Hon. Sharon A. Simons:

Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to my Honourable colleagues in this House, to those persons in the gallery, to the wider Turks and Caicos Islands, and to those persons who are listening to us via Radio Turks and Caicos and viewing via our social media platforms. I stand here this morning to first wish condolences to those persons who are grieving their loved ones. May God continue to bless and comfort them during this difficult time.

I would also like to wish my ride-or-die, the Honourable Minister for Home Affairs, when it comes around, a very happy birthday. I often remind him that I am older than him. Happy birthday when it comes around, and may God continue to bless him with good health and long life, that he will be among us for a long time. To those persons who are celebrating birthdays, anniversaries, or any special occasion, congratulations.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate those athletes who have been chosen to represent us in the upcoming CARIFTA Games in Grenada over the weekend, the swim team and also the athletic team. I would also like to congratulate those persons who have been chosen to represent the Turks and Caicos in soccer, who will be flying to South Africa to represent the Turks and Caicos Islands. I would like to say special congratulations to my niece, Kimari, who has been chosen as one of those persons.

I wish each and every one of them good luck and hope that we will be seeing a few medals from the team in Grenada and also a win for the female soccer team that will be travelling to South Africa. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to wish the people of the Turks and Caicos a happy Easter and, like my colleagues, remind them of the reason for this season as we reflect on the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I admonish those of you who are not associated with a church to please see if you can attend a church service during this Easter season, on the happy Easter morning when we celebrate that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has risen from the dead.

Mr. Speaker, to you and your family and to all of us here, I wish you a happy Easter when it comes around. Thank you.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your contribution. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Member for Cheshire Hall and Richmond Hill. Please put on your mic again, Honourable Member. Honourable Member, put on your mic for me, please.

Hon. Samuel Ernest Been:

Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to this Honourable House, to the support staff in the gallery, to everybody in the Turks and Caicos Islands, and a special good morning to ED7. Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to give ED7 a brief update on the situation with the roads, most especially the road through Cooper Jack that everybody calls me about.

I am pleased to say that I was able to get that road properly filled and rolled, so it is in a much better state now. I know ED7 would have seen my team and me through the area this week. We took an opportunity to check all of the roads and picked out four of the worst, which I will be working on starting next week Tuesday or Wednesday: two or three in the Kew Town area, and one in what we call behind Morrow. I am pleased to say that I have good support from a company that is really going to help us to get something done, where we will

build the foundation for the Government to take over and give us some good roads pretty soon. Mr. Speaker, I think that we are making serious headway on getting this done.

I would also like to inform them that the soccer pitch that I have been bragging about for almost six months is on the way. The team is in, and any day you can pass by the field in Kew Town and see that it is just about finished. Hopefully, in the next week or two we will be able to see it. Mr. Speaker, with that, I would also like to say a happy Easter.

During this Easter holiday, which starts from Friday until Monday, I urge some of my people in Kew Town and in the Glass Shack area to take a moment or a few hours and please help us to clean up around our areas. By doing that, it stops garbage and dirt from going into the drains and blocking them. I really hope that we take at least two or three hours, check our yards and do a little cleaning, and we, the Government, will do the rest. Happy Easter and God bless you all.

Thank you.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your contribution. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Attorney General for her contribution.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we recognize all those persons in the gallery and those listening through the various media platforms. As we gather in this honourable House during this solemn and sacred season of Good Friday and Easter, I invite us to pause, not merely in observance of tradition, but in deep reflection on the meaning of these days. Condolences are extended to all those who have lost loved ones.

In particular, we extend condolences to the entire Cadet Corps and the family of Lieutenant Colonel Beckles, whose loss we mourn deeply. Good Friday reminds us, Mr. Speaker, of sacrifice, of the weight of injustice, and of the courage to stand for truth even when the cost is great. Easter, in turn, speaks of renewal, hope, and the triumph of light over darkness. Together, they form a narrative that has shaped not only the Christian faith, but also the moral compass of societies across the world, including our beloved Turks and Caicos Islands.

Mr. Speaker, in the story of Good Friday, we see the reality that justice is not always immediate and that the path to righteousness can be marked by trial and suffering. Yet Easter assures us that no night is so long that the dawn will not come. For us as leaders, this season is a reminder that sacrifice is the foundation of service. True leadership demands that we put the needs of our people above our personal gain. Justice must be steadfast even when challenged. We must uphold the rule of law with integrity and fairness.

Hope is a duty. In times of uncertainty, we must be the voices that inspire confidence in a better tomorrow. Mr. Speaker, while Good Friday and Easter are rooted in faith, their lessons transcend religion. They speak to the universal values of compassion, forgiveness, and renewal. In our work here, we are called to seek reconciliation over division. Just as Easter is about restoration, so too must we strive to heal the fractures in our communities, protect the vulnerable, and follow the example of selfless sacrifice that calls us to defend those who cannot defend themselves.

Lead with hope. Our policies, debates, and decisions should be guided by the belief that our nation's best days are ahead. Mr. Speaker, as we enter this Easter season, let us recommit ourselves to the principles that strengthen our democracy and our society. Let us remember that the laws we pass, the debates we hold, and the decisions we make are not merely political acts; they are moral acts, shaping the lives and future of our people.

May we lead with the humility of Good Friday and the hope of Easter Sunday. May we find the courage to confront injustice, the grace to forgive, and the vision to build a future worthy of the sacrifices of those who have come before us. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Office of the Attorney General, I extend to all members of this Honourable House and to the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands my warmest wishes for a blessed Good Friday and a joyful Easter. May this season renew our spirits, strengthen our unity, and inspire us to serve with integrity, compassion, and hope.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Attorney General, for your contribution. Honourable Members, are there any further contributions? The Chair recognizes the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let me first say a pleasant good morning to all those listening in radio land and on social media. A pleasant good morning to all friends, family, supporters, well-wishers and all the residents of the Turks and Caicos Islands. I want to say especially a pleasant good morning to the people of my constituency of Grand Turk

South and Salt Cay. Mr. Speaker, it was good listening to other members speak about this time of remembrance during this Easter holiday. But before I do, there are also families who have lost loved ones, Mr. Speaker, and we have to say condolences to all those families that have lost loved ones during this time. Especially, we think of Colonel Beckles, one of those officers who always respected the office of members of Parliament.

No matter where he saw us, he always stopped and did the

proper recognitions, Mr. Speaker. That is something that stood out with me in my 14 years of being here in this position. He never once in any way showed any disrespect to the office of members of Parliament, and he must be commended for that. He must be commended for his service to our people of the Turks and Caicos Islands and his service to the Cadet Corps.

We have seen where that is now, Mr. Speaker. He was someone who came to the Turks and Caicos Islands, not originally from the Turks and Caicos Islands, and has surely left a mark here in our country. Mr. Speaker, I also have to point out that he is one of our Masonic brothers. Mr. Speaker, Masonic principles of faith, hope, and charity are some of our main core guidelines.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say congratulations to all those teams that will be representing us. I want to give them congratulations ahead of time, as we know that they will represent the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands very well, whether in South Africa or in Grenada, as with the CARIFTA team. Mr. Speaker, in relation to what members said about the remembrance of this Easter season, I always reflect as a politician on the life of Jesus, and when he came to his own, the scriptures teach us that he came to his own and his own received him not. We know that when he rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday they celebrated his arrival, palms on the ground, Mr. Speaker. By Ash Wednesday going into Good Friday, everything changed.

Human nature. We can learn so many lessons from the season. From Palm Sunday, when they shouted, Hosanna, he has arrived, to Good Friday, when they shouted, Crucify him. Imagine the turn of events, Mr. Speaker, for his family, for his loved ones, for his disciples, and for all those who saw him for who he truly was. Mr. Speaker, if anyone has ever watched The Passion of the Christ, they tried to depict as much as they could to show the brutality of a Roman-style crucifixion, which they had perfected to a science during that time. If you dig into the history, they had to leave out some things from the movie because they were too cruel, what our dear Lord Jesus Christ suffered for us, Mr. Speaker.

So during this time, as members have said, let us remember and think about sacrifice. Members inside the House of Assembly, I want to caution you also from this story: never get too high on the highs and never get too low on the lows. As they shout Hosanna, as they celebrate you, people can pull you down. One minute they can celebrate you being inside the House, being a minister, being a member of Parliament, and the other minute they can pull you down. But, as the Minister of Home Affairs said, after Good Friday comes Easter Sunday, the resurrection. All your works inside of you, every one of you, I know your works will be recognized, and I want to thank you for being here and putting your name forward.

It is a great challenge. It is a great sacrifice. So every one of the elected members here, including the Attorney General, Mr. Speaker, and including yourself, all of us who work in the Parliament, I want to thank you. Bishop, I want to thank you. Sergeant, thank you. Our Clerk, thank you. It is a sacrifice. Let us make our people proud and know that not every time are they going to celebrate us, not every time are they going to agree with us, and not every time are they going to like what we say in here.

But if you are doing it for the good of our people, you will get your Easter Sunday. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

EASTER GREETINGS AND CONDOLENCES

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, for your contribution. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Zhavargo Jolly:

Good morning, Mr Speaker. Good morning, colleagues. Good morning to those listening in and those in the gallery. It is always a pleasure to be here in Parliament and to have the opportunity to represent my country. I want to join my colleagues in sharing condolences with all those who have lost loved ones recently.

We mentioned Lieutenant Colonel Beckles, who we all believe was just an overall good man. Having known him for many years, I think that not just his family but the entire community has suffered a loss. If you are a true believer in the word, you know that he has gone on to a better place, and we will have an opportunity to see him at some point in the great beyond. Although we are sad at the loss, we rejoice knowing that he has gone on to a better place.

I have a good feeling about a person who lived a life the way he did. Mr Speaker, I want to wish a happy birthday to everyone's good cousin, the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs, the Resurrection Baby. Knowing him fully well, we will have an opportunity to celebrate tomorrow. I think tomorrow he is actually giving a very impressive sermon, and I hope to be a part of it. I am very much looking forward to it. I hope to spend a portion of your birthday with you.

I also want to thank all of the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands for continuing to support not just me but this entire Parliament as we work hard to bring legislation that we believe will ultimately benefit our people. It is always a good feeling when I can share the same message as the Leader of the Opposition. I did not make any notes, so I do not know if you were in my head today, but I had the opportunity to speak this week, and the word for me this week has been gratitude.

I know we talk about resurrection and Holy Week, but for me, when you think about the sacrifice that took place for us to be here, the whole sacrifice around Holy Week, I cannot resist the feeling of gratitude and being grateful for the opportunity that we have. I am grateful to the people for putting us in this position. I am grateful for the support we continue to get. I am grateful for the support I get in Cabinet as well as in Parliament, from my colleagues.

I want to thank the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands for

their support, but most importantly, I want to join the Leader of the Opposition in thanking the members here in this Parliament. It is very rare that you are on that side of the gratitude. We are constantly in here thanking people and giving condolences, but every now and again it is nice when someone who feels what you feel says thank you for your contribution. On a day especially like Holy Thursday, when a lot of us would usually have been trying to enjoy this time, whether resting or even spending it in church, I want to thank everyone here for making this sacrifice of your time and showing your commitment to your country and showing how important this work really is.

So if you do not hear from anyone else other than me and the Leader of the Opposition today, I want to make sure everyone here understands that I personally, as a citizen of this country, feel gratitude towards you for the work that you do. There are people like us out here who appreciate everything that is being done. Mr Speaker, thank you, and I close.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your contribution. Are there any further contributions? The Chair recognizes the Honourable Seventh All-Island Member for her contribution.

Hon. Josephine Olivia Conolly:

Thank you, Mr Speaker, and good morning to you. Good morning to my colleagues. Good morning to those in the gallery and those listening by radio. First of all, Mr Speaker, I would like to align myself with my colleagues in sending condolences to the family of Mr Beckles. Mr Beckles served our country with distinction and was very helpful in our community. He was involved in the cadets, and he was also a part of law enforcement. To his family, I want to say that you will remain in my thoughts and prayers.

Also, Mr Speaker, I want to say happy Easter to my amazing constituents, those who call me every day and those who send me WhatsApp messages encouraging me to be the best that I can be in this Parliament. Mr Speaker, I want to wish them a joyous and blessed celebration with their loved ones this Easter weekend.

As we gather with family and friends, let us take a moment to reflect on the values of renewal, hope and kindness that this time brings. May this weekend be filled with love and laughter. Mr Speaker, before I take my seat, I would like to say happy birthday to the Minister of Home Affairs.

I wish you the best, and continue to be the best that you can be for the people of this country, because that is what you signed up for. Mr Speaker, happy Easter to each and every one of you here. Happy Easter to our Clerk. Thank you for the good work that you are doing.

Thank you for all that you have done. Honourable Speaker, happy Easter to you and your family. To our Attorney General, whom we sometimes miss, happy Easter to you and your family. Bishop, happy Easter to you and your wonderful family. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your contribution. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Member for South Caicos.

Hon. Tamell Seymour:

Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Good morning to everyone in the gallery and everyone here this morning. I stand to wish the people of South Caicos, my friends and my family, a happy Easter. But before I get into the Easter wishes, I would like to take this opportunity to wish, as he has already alluded to, the Resurrection Baby, and I think that is his new name now.

But you have to die to resurrect. Everybody wants to get to heaven, but nobody wants to die. I am not sure if he will take that name personally, but I would like to say a happy birthday to the Minister of Home Affairs, and I would like to invite the Minister to spend his birthday in one of our beautiful properties and hotels in

South Caicos during this holiday season. He is nodding to my invite. I hope you take it up. I look forward to seeing you there. Mr Speaker, Easter is a special time of reflection, renewal and giving thanks. It reminds us that no matter the challenges we face, there is always hope and a promise of better days ahead. That spirit of strength and faith is something I see every day in the people of South Caicos. South Caicos has always been a place where people look out for one another, where family, faith and community still matter.

As we gather with loved ones this Easter, let us continue to support each other. Let us continue to show kindness and keep believing in the future we are working towards together. Mr Speaker, please know that I remain committed to listening to the people of South Caicos, standing up for them and doing my best to ensure that South Caicos continues to move forward. On a side note, Mr Speaker, I went through this book here, and we will discuss at a later date some things that are not pleasing to my eyesight.

Mr Speaker, may this Easter bring peace to the homes of the people in South Caicos, joy to our hearts and blessings to our beautiful island. I would like to say to the people of South Caicos: have a safe, joyful and blessed Easter. I would also like to take this opportunity to ask the people of South Caicos to find a church and go to that church on Easter Sunday, Good Friday or whichever church event you deem you want to join. If you do not have a church in mind, you can join me. I am not sure which church I could be at, but we can go to church together.

We do not have to dress up; we just have to be there. Mr Speaker, thank you.

EASTER GREETINGS AND CONDOLENCES

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your contribution. The Chair recognises the Honourable Minister for Innovation, Technology and Energy for his contribution.

Hon. Erwin Jay Saunders:

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would like to start by welcoming everyone who is listening to the House proceedings today by radio, those in the gallery and those streaming by Facebook. I would also like to wish the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs a happy birthday. I am aware that tomorrow is your birthday and, as they say, the resurrection baby. I also extend condolences to all persons who have lost loved ones, including the family of Mr Backles. In recognition of the Easter period that we are in and the sacrifice that Jesus made for mankind, Bishop and I were speaking today and he used the analogy that when Jesus came into the city, it was the lamb coming into the city to be sacrificed on behalf of us.

I will quote part of a song that I have always liked and have been listening to more and more. It says that it is his breath in our lungs. It is the reason why we are here today. Because of all the things he has done for us, I wish everyone across the Turks and Caicos Islands a very happy Easter.

The Premier touched on it today. There are so many things happening around the world that, when we look at where we are right now, we can be nothing but blessed. Mr Speaker, I again wish everyone in the Turks and Caicos Islands a happy Easter and ask them, even if just for one moment, to recognise the greatness of God and the greatness of Jesus Christ and all that he did for us. Thank you.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member. Are there any further contributions? The Chair recognises the Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I feel like bringing a sermon today. I do not know if two minutes is enough, but I am just joking. I was inspired by the contribution of some of my colleagues. Let me again start by aligning myself with the condolences extended to Officer Beckles.

He seemed to have been the same person at any time, everywhere. One does not like to think of people as predictable, but I think he was a person whose mannerisms and relationships were very predictable. In this day and age, when everything about immigration is negative, it is important to remember that people who come to these islands to make a contribution and bring their expertise and training are people in whom the TCI Government did not have to invest. That is the positive side of it.

He was one of those persons who made a serious positive contribution to the people in this country who really matter, and that is the young people, the next generation. For that, to his family wherever they are, I express my thanks. Mr Speaker, I was thinking about the death and suffering of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. My favourite song is Lord of Glory, We Adore Thee, and one of the verses says: Lord of life, to death made subject, blesser, yet a curse once made, of thy Father's heart the object, yet in depths of anguish laid.

Thee we gaze on, thee recall, bearing here our sorrows all. Powerful, Mr Speaker. I also contrast this time, when there is supposed to be unity, with 2 Corinthians 3:5. I speak to all of us because it speaks to having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. I think that is true for so many of us in Christendom.

There is an outward appearance of religion, morality and true transformation by the Holy Spirit. Christianity is as unifying as it is divisive, because even in the sacrament that we will partake in this week we have different interpretations. It goes from transubstantiation all the way to the memorialising of that time. Within that division, it is important for us to find respect for each other's choice.

It is important to remember that the Minister of Home Affairs is the Minister with responsibility for religious affairs. As we approach the sacred season of Easter, we are reminded of one of the most profound moments in the Christian faith: the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a time marked by reflection, sacrifice, ultimate hope and renewal. Across the Christian world, Easter is observed in different ways.

Some gather in solemn observance on Good Friday, which is not the day of the resurrection. Others gather in joyous celebration on Easter Sunday. Many participate in the Holy Eucharist, receiving communion as a sacred remembrance of Christ's sacrifice, symbolising unity, redemption and spiritual nourishment. Yet, as we celebrate, we must also reflect deeply on the values that Easter calls us to uphold: love, humility and, importantly, forgiveness.

We should always remember that the reason Jesus went to the cross is to forgive. Even though he is a loving God and a just God, he is also a forgiving God. In that spirit, it is important to acknowledge that other faiths also celebrate seasons of light and perseverance. The Jewish festival of Hanukkah, for example, commemorates the triumph of faith and the endurance of a people against adversity.

Though different in theology, both Easter and Hanukkah speak to a shared humanity: a longing for hope over despair, light over darkness and faith over fear. Honourable Speaker, we cannot speak of hope without confronting the suffering in

our world today, because it is part of that same Christianity and Judeo-Christianity which has brought some of that suffering on us. We have to be realistic. Even now, as we prepare to celebrate Easter, men, women and children are enduring the horrors of war.

The ongoing conflict involving the United States, Israel and Iran has brought devastation across the Middle East, destroying lives, homes and communities, and placing the world on the brink of wider instability. We must pause to remember the innocent victims, the families displaced, the children lost, and the suffering that knows no bounds and no religion. We must also be honest: throughout history, and even in our own time, acts of violence and injustice have too often been carried out in the name of religion, including Christianity. This is a painful truth.

It stands in stark contradiction to the teaching of Christ, who preached love for neighbour, mercy for the weak and peace among all people. Easter, therefore, must not only be a celebration; it must be a call to conscience. It is a call for us as leaders and as a people to reject hatred in all its forms, to resist the misuse of faith as a justification for division or violence, and to recommit ourselves to the principles of justice, compassion and peace. Let this Easter season renew not just our faith but our humanity. May we stand in solidarity with all who suffer. May we choose peace over conflict.

May we honour the true message of Easter, not only in our words but in our deeds. Thank you, Mr Speaker. In closing, I again extend condolences across the Turks and Caicos to all those persons who have lost loved ones. I was privileged to be at the funeral on Saturday of Honourable Howell's deceased sibling, and I again extend condolences to him and his family. I do not know everyone who has passed recently, but I believe it is fitting for me to extend condolences to the family of Mrs Emma Newman, my former mother-in-law, who came to this country as an educator and planted two schools here, and educated many of our children. We did not pay for that education. She came to this country and made a contribution, as many people have done.

In our effort to empower Turks and Caicos Islanders, we must never forget those persons who have come, so to speak, to let their bucket down with us. To them, to every Turks and Caicos Islander, and to all those who have the right reason and the right intention for being here in this country and for our people, I extend Easter goodwill to all. I appreciate the time. Thank you, sir.

PETITIONS

PETITIONS

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Premier, for your contribution. Honourable Members, let us move on with the Order Paper. We have petitions. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Premier.

ADJOURNMENT SINE DIE

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Mr. Speaker, I rise to move that this House adjourn sine die. Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

ADJOURNMENT SINE DIE

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, this honourable Parliament is hereby adjourned sine die.