

BIN - MADGE SAUNDERS Madge Saunders: 'Born to serve'

By Ellis Laing

THE Rev. Madge Saunders, one of the most outstanding female ministers of religion in Jamaica, describes her life as one 'born to serve'. Says she, "my whole life is Christ-centred and God-centred".

She speaks this with a sense of humility that belies her outstanding achievements as a pioneer in Jamaica's education and religious fields.

It is possible to say that her entire life has been characterised by an unstinting service to mankind coupled by uncharacteristic faith in God and a visionary mind.

In reflecting on her life she points to the opportunity of serving her people as being the most significant element in her colourful life which has taken her beyond the shores of Jamaica to parts of the



Madge Saunders

Caribbean, the United Kingdom and other parts of the world.

She recalls that as a child she always wanted to serve and at age 14 after qualifying as a Pupil-Teacher she taught at the Galina Government School as a volunteer teacher — she was too young to be paid.

After moving to Free Hill school she entered the Bethlehem Training College, St. Elizabeth, and was trained as a teacher. On completion of college and various teaching assignments as an Assistant Teacher and Principal in government schools, Madge Saunders felt a greater call to service — the full-time ministry of the Presbyterian Church of Jamaica.

It is no surprise that she wanted to enter the full-time service of her church: her parents were devout

Presbyterians and in February 1917 when the Synod of the Presbyterian Church met in Port Maria they were there — her mother in an advanced state of pregnancy. During the Synod service her mother whispered to her father, 'the baby is coming'. The service over, her parents travelled three miles to Galina where Marjorie Prentice Saunders was born shortly after.

Today she proudly declares, "I have never left the church from that night. It's destiny."