

Greaves, Eric S.

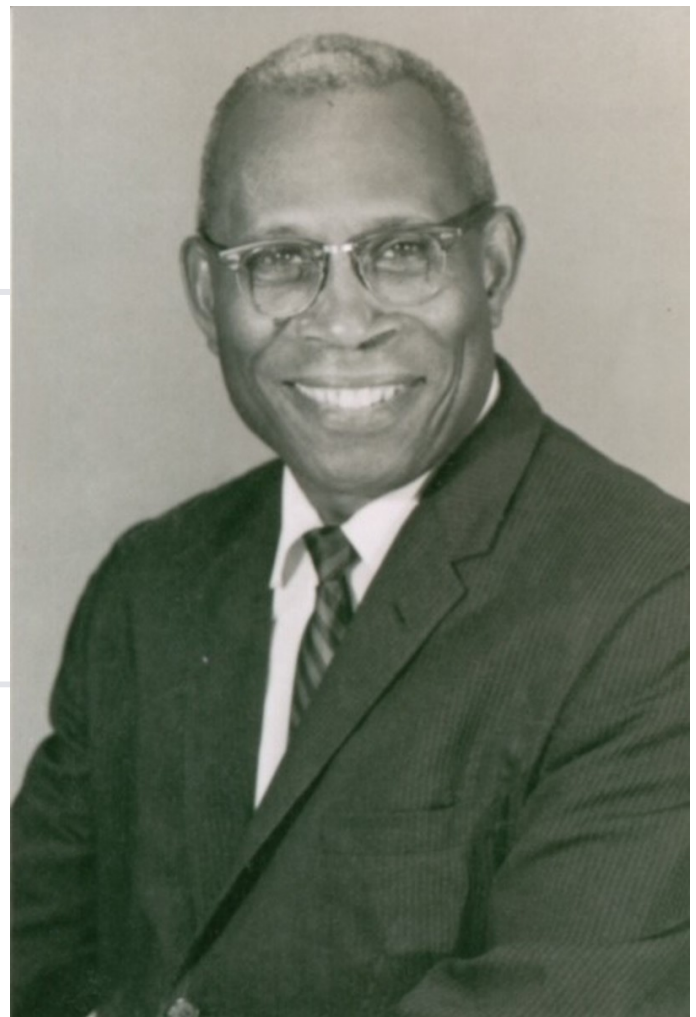
(1906–1999)

GLENN O. PHILLIPS

Glenn O. Phillips, Ph.D. (Howard University, Washington, D.C.), although retired, is actively writing, researching, lecturing, and publishing. He was a professor at Morgan State University, Howard University, and the University of the Southern Caribbean. He has authored and published numerous articles, book reviews, and books, including "The African Diaspora Experience," "Singing in a Strange Land: The History of the Hanson Place Church," "African American Leaders of Maryland," and "The Caribbean Basin Initiative."

Eric Sylvester Greaves was a pioneering Caribbean mission field secretary, evangelist, minister, union secretary, and conference president, whose faithful ministry spanned for over 56 years from 1928 to 1974. He was among the early Seventh-day Adventists in Barbados and was a pioneer in spreading the Three Angels' Messages around the vast regions of British Guiana (Guyana) in the 1930s. He started companies and churches in remote areas of the only English colony on the South American continent. Later as the Caribbean Union publishing secretary, he was responsible for encouraging numerous young Caribbean Adventists to become effective literature evangelists. He became the first Barbadian to serve as president of the Leeward Islands Conference (now East Caribbean Conference) from 1961 to 1964. He tirelessly continued to serve his church in retirement, often serving as interim pastor of several churches for extended periods into the mid 1990s!

Eric Sylvester Greaves was born on November 19, 1906, the sixth of seven children of Alfred Ernest and Albertha Adelle Greaves in Evins, St. Lucy, Barbados. He attended the St. Lucy Anglican School and excelled. On completion of his schooling, he became a teacher at the All Saints Anglican Primary School in St. Peter. During 1926, he and most of his family became Seventh-day Adventists as a result of an evangelistic crusade held in their neighborhood by Samuel T. Jones. After his baptism, he attended the recently established East Caribbean



Pastor Eric S. Greaves

Photo courtesy of Norman Greaves from the Greaves family photo collection.

Training School in Maracas Valley, Trinidad. He enrolled in July 1928 and took Bible classes until that September, when he was invited to join the staff of the Leeward Island Mission (now East Caribbean Conference) headquartered in Barbados as the field secretary of the colporteur ministry. He traveled among the many islands of the Lesser Antilles in the eastern Caribbean, training young Adventists to become colporteurs in the very successful program of placing Adventist literature in hundreds of homes across the region.³

On July 2, 1933, he married Evelyn Cartyle Boyce of Cave Hill, St. Lucy, Barbados, to whom he was married for more than 66. To this union came three children: Timothy, Norma, and Donn. He continued to train young colporteurs across the Leeward Island Mission that stretched from the U.S. Virgin Islands to Grenada.⁴

In early 1936, Elder Greaves was invited to serve in the British Guiana Mission (Guyana Conference) as a district pastor, which he did for nearly 15 years. He travelled widely, conducting evangelistic crusades and guiding the churches in his district. In this large country with numerous rivers and heavy forests he often left his young family, traveling on foot for miles to reach his destination. He also traveled by bicycle, boat, or ship. These regions included the West Coast, Berbice, New Amsterdam, and the Corentyne, where he baptized converts and established companies and churches.

In 1950 he was called by the South Caribbean Conference to pastor in the northern corridor of churches in Trinidad that stretched from Laventille to the Arima area, where he conducted evangelistic crusades that resulted in the growth of these congregations.

In 1955, Elder Greaves was appointed as the publishing and temperance secretary of the Caribbean Union Conference, serving this region for six years. In 1961 he became president of the Leeward Islands Mission (East Caribbean Conference), becoming the first Barbadian to be president of a conference in the Caribbean Union Conference. He served for three years until resigning in 1964 to be near his son, Timothy, who lived in California and was seriously injured in an automobile accident in 1959. While living in the United States, he served as the associate pastor of the San Bernardino SDA Church in California for two years.⁵

Returning to the Caribbean in 1967, Elder Greaves served first the Caribbean Union and then the East Caribbean Conference until he retired in 1974. Even then, he continued to serve as the interim pastor of a number of churches in northern Barbados. His last tenure was at the Boscobel SDA Church in St. Peter until the mid 1990's.

Elder Greaves passed to his rest after a short illness on September 11, 1999, at his home in Cave Hill, St. Lucy, Barbados, just two months after celebrating his 66th wedding anniversary. His funeral service was held September 21, 1999, at the Black Rock SDA Church, Black Rock, St. Michael, and his interment was at the St. Lucy Parish Church Cemetery, in northern Barbados.⁶

SOURCES

"Pastor Eric Sylvester Greaves, 1906-1999." Obituary prepared for funeral service held on September 21, 1999, at the Black Rock SDA Church, Black Rock, St. Michael, Barbados. In the author's private collection.

Phillips, Glenn O. *Seventh-day Adventists in Barbados; Over a Century of Adventism 1884-1991*. Bridgetown, Barbados: Caribbean Graphics and Letchworth Ltd. 1991.

Phillips, Leon. "A Salute to Eric Sylvester Greaves." *Caribbean Union Gleanings*, Third Quarter, 1993.

NOTES

1. "Pastor Eric Sylvester Greaves, 1906-1999," obituary prepared for funeral service held on September 21, 1999, at the Black Rock SDA Church, Black Rock, St. Michael, Barbados; Eric S. Greaves to Glenn O. Phillips, Interview on January 9, 1991, Cave Hill, St. Lucy, Barbados.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Leon Phillips, "A Salute to Eric Sylvester Greaves," *Caribbean Union Gleanings*, Third Quarter, 1993, 13.
5. Glenn O. Phillips, *Seventh-day Adventists in Barbados; Over a Century of Adventism 1884-1991* (Bridgetown, Barbados: Caribbean Graphics and Letchworth Ltd. 1991), 73.
6. "Pastor Eric Sylvester Greaves, 1906-1999."

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