

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Adventist Church in Peter's Rest, St. Croix Burns Down; Fire Department Wages Massive Containment Effort

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The adventist church in Peter's Rest, St. Croix was consumed by fire on Tuesday, May 5, 2020

ST. CROIX — The landmark Seventh Day Adventist Church in Peter's Rest across from the Junie's Bar & Restaurant was completely consumed by fire Tuesday morning, with V.I. Fire Service personnel from stations across the island combining their efforts to contain the mammoth blaze.

The fire was first reported at about 9:43 a.m. today, according to a log of the emergency call.

Royston Philbert, communications director for the SDA North Caribbean Conference, told the Consortium that members were shaken by the event, but not daunted. Mr. Philbert, who is stationed on St. Croix and reminded that the church is not necessarily a structure but rather the people, said the SDA landmark would be rebuilt.

The church also held a high-quality livestream service on Saturdays that Mr. Philbert said served people across the territory and the world under stay-at-home orders because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"We are visibly shaken by what we see. Such a prominent church offering an amazing online ministry to the community and to the world, it does come as a setback to all the expectations that people have when the weekend comes in regards to the services that they render. But we're not daunted; it's part of church to understand that even if it's burnt, the ministry still goes on because the ministry is with the people... We are people of hope and so we will rebuild better and bigger."

On the scene were firefighters stationed across the island of St. Croix, uniting their skillsets to bring the blaze under control. They encamped the church facility from all sides — north, south, east and west — and doused it incessantly until the blaze was under control.

At one point the front-facing ceiling, which appeared to be segmented off from the rest of the roofing as part of the design, collapsed as the heat compromised the structure. Eventually the entire roof — which had solar panels on top — caved in, said Mr. Philbert. Firetrucks large and small were utilized, and a water truck was also on the scene to replenish depleted tanks.

No one was hurt as a result of the fire, said Mr. Philbert, the SDA North Caribbean Conference communications director.

An investigation into the fire had yet to commence at time of writing.