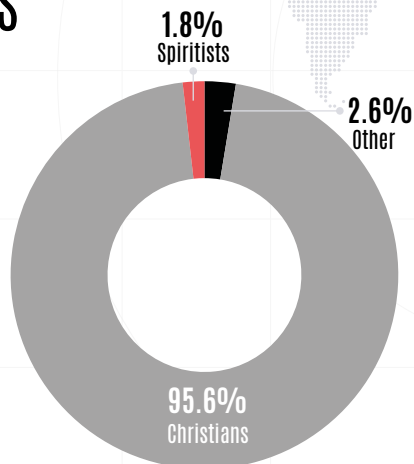




SAINT LUCIA

RELIGIONS



LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND ACTUAL APPLICATION

In the Preamble to their constitution,¹ the people of Saint Lucia affirm their faith in the supremacy of Almighty God. They believe that everyone was created equal by God, with inalienable rights and dignity. They recognise that the enjoyment of these rights depends on certain fundamental freedoms such as freedom of the individual, thought, expression, communication, conscience and association. They realise that human dignity requires respect for spiritual values.

The constitution specifies that everyone has these fundamental rights and freedoms, whatever their race, place of origin, political opinion, colour, creed or sex, subject to respect for the rights and freedoms of others and the public interest (Article 1). It recognises the right to personal freedom, equality before the law, as well as freedom of conscience, expression, assembly and association (Article 1, a and b).

Conscientious objection to military service is recognised (Article 4, 3, c).

No person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of their freedom of conscience, including freedom of thought and religion, the freedom to change religion or belief, the freedom to express one's belief, alone or with others, in public or in private, in worship, teaching, practice or observance (Article 9, 1).

Except with their consent (or that of their parents or guardian in case of minors under 18), no one attending an educational establishment or held in prison or serving in the Armed Forces can be required to receive religious instruction or take part in or attend a religious ceremony that is not of the religion they profess (Article 9, 2).

Every religious community has the right to establish and maintain, at their own expense, educational establishments. They also have the right to provide religious instruction to the members of their organisations irrespective of whether or not they receive a government subsidy (Article 9,3).

No one shall be compelled or coerced into taking an oath against, or in a manner contrary to, their beliefs or religion (Article 9, 4).

Furthermore, no one shall be treated in a discriminatory

manner by any person or authority. Discrimination means providing different or special treatment, totally or partially, to people based on their sex, race, place of origin, political opinion or affiliation, colour or creed (Article 13, 2 and 3).

Ministers of religion cannot be appointed to the Senate (Article 26, b) or elected to the House of Assembly (Article 32, b).²

INCIDENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

In an interview in January 2019, a Methodist clergyman, Rev. Seth Ampadu, expressed concern about the rapid emergence of “money-making” churches, with ministers posing as prophets, who cheat people and take money from them. He stressed that the government needs to regulate these churches.³

In May 2020, in response to the Coronavirus pandemic, Prime Minister Allen Chastanet announced that community and religious organisations could reopen, provided they prepared and presented a COVID-19 response plan for approval by the Ministry of Equity, Social Justice, Local Government, and Empowerment.⁴

PROSPECTS FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

In the 2018-2020 period, no violations of religious freedom were reported; the situation has not changed and the future prospects of religious freedom are positive.

SOURCES / ENDNOTES

1 Constitution of Saint Lucia, Laws of Saint Lucia, <http://www.govt.lc/media.govt.lc/www/resources/legislation/ConstitutionOfSaintLucia.pdf> (accessed 31st October 2020).

2 Ibid.

3 CMC, “Clergyman concerned about proliferation of ‘money making’ churches in Saint Lucia,” St. Lucia News Online, 16 January 2019. <https://www.stlucianewsonline.com/clergyman-concerned-about-proliferation-of-money-making-churches-in-saint-lucia/> (accessed 3rd April 2020).

4 “Saint Lucia churches, faith-based organisations allowed to open,” St. Lucia News Online, 11th May 2020, <https://www.stlucianewsonline.com/saint-lucia-churches-faith-based-organisations-allowed-to-open/> (accessed 18th September 2020).