

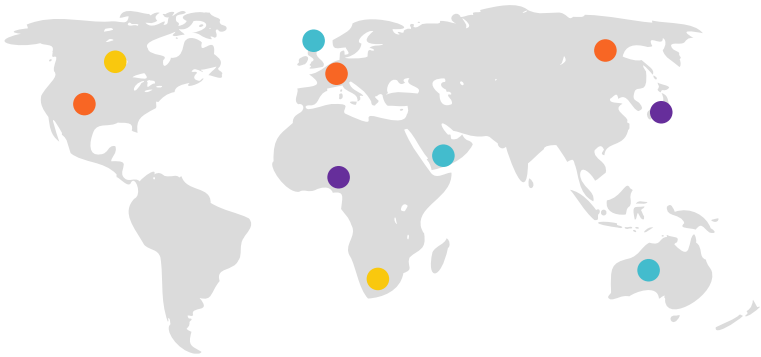
ALDER

CHURCH REPORT

THE ALDER CHURCH REPORT

NIGERIA 2023

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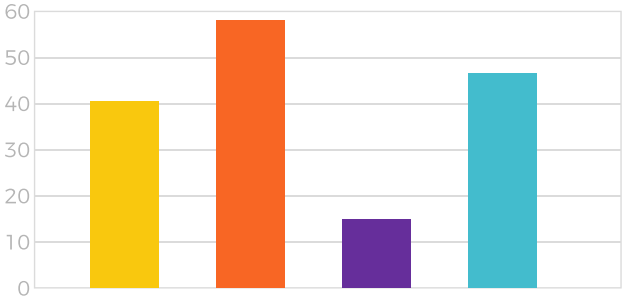
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Introduction to the 2023 Alder Church Report

THE WHY

Why do we do these reports? This is perhaps the most pertinent question concerning this Report. But the answer is not convoluted. We simply seek to provide intelligence.

There are three types of intelligence specified in scriptures. In Bible century speak they were known as word of knowledge, word of wisdom and prophecy. Word of knowledge is the state of things. It is looking at data sets and seeing a clear picture. It reaches into the past. Word of wisdom is simply strategy - how to get from Point A to Point B. It focuses on outcome. Prophecy is projection into the future. It is about a future outcome.

What this Report seeks to do is provide information on the state of things, hoping that projections can be made, and strategy formulated to tackle the inherent challenges.

The clergy play a significant role in Nigeria, especially with regards to engaging the youth. Nigeria has a huge youth population. The youth account for 70% of the estimated population of c. 217 million. That's 151 million young people. Of these 42% are under the age of 15. Churches are critical to Nigeria's social security system. In many states they are the social security system. Where the state has failed, or the effort proves woefully inadequate churches have picked up the slack. But they often work blind. They don't have access to critical data, especially the type of information provided in this report. It's a one of a kind report. The report bridges the knowledge gap.

We've invited write-ups from a diverse range of writers. Those perspectives themselves provide information to the clergy. As usual, we have made the information easy to digest. And it's free!

Please enjoy!

Leke Alder
Principal, Alder Consulting



HIGHLIGHTS



97.3%
believe that Christians should run for political office



89.1%
do not believe that members of the LGBTQIA+ community should get married in church





97.6%
believe Christians should be involved in politics

85.6% do not believe in premarital sex

93.1%
trust their church with their financial contributions



<50%
Less than half of Christians attend church once a week



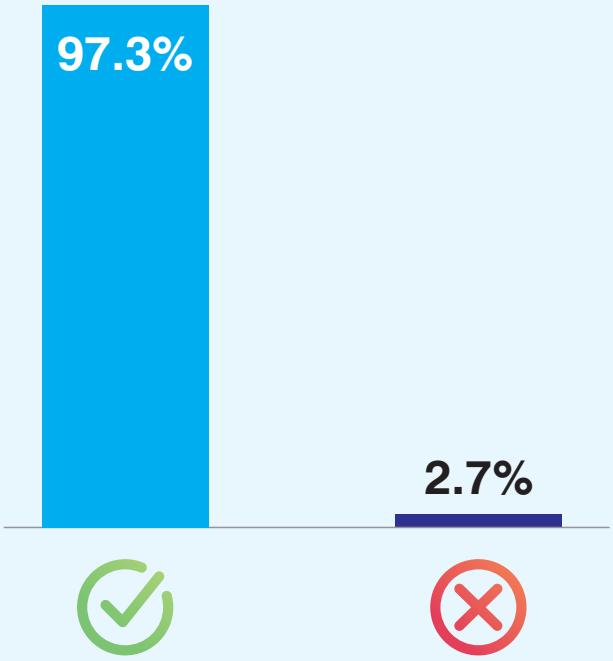


Political Participation

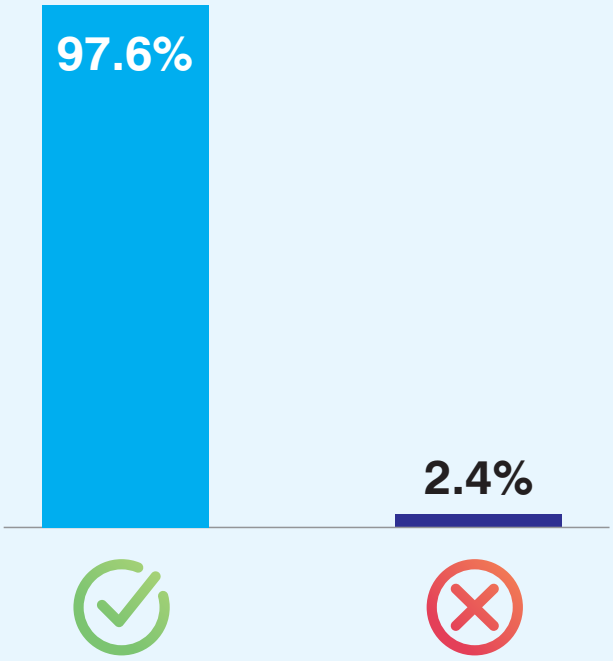
SECTION ONE

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Do you believe Christians should run for political office?



Do you think Christians should be involved in politics?



These results clearly show that there is a strong belief that Christians should run for political office and be involved in politics. This represents a clear shift in how Christians view politics and political engagement. The next and necessary question is: should the Church provide guidance on how Christians can be involved in politics beyond voting? A further question is: what role should the Church play in raising the next set of political leaders?

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION



What is your vote based on?

95.9% Competence
0.7% Ethnic Identity
1.9% Religion
1.5% Other

A number of respondents opted for a mix of two or three factors. Other factors that were stated include: character, values, and track record.

Almost all the respondents stated they vote based on competence. This may seem surprising in the wake of the 2023 elections, where tribalism was stoked to an alarmingly high degree. This leads us to question whether the majority of Christians voted based on competence or ethnicity, or if it was a case of the loudest voices in the room not reflecting the majority. A further question is: do Christians vote according to their tribe or Christian ideals?

What is statistically clear is that Christians desire competence over religious affiliation when it comes to political aspirants and leaders. A Christian candidate is not guaranteed the Christian vote if he or she is not competent or perceived as competent.

Overall, the results show that Christians are becoming increasingly aware of the role politics plays in society. This signals a changing attitude in this generation's belief in participation in politics, as the older generation did not believe in political participation.



WHY DID THE PROPHECIES FAIL?

by Leke Alder

The 2023 election was a watershed in the annals of politics in Nigeria. There was an unprecedented participation of youths in the election process, especially in the campaign period leading up to the presidential election. It was a follow up to the #EndSARS campaign against police brutality, a demonstration of political consciousness. In a country in which the electorate had been stupefied to apathy by the sense of hopelessness projected by the political system, the inflamed passion proved a shock to the system. It scared politicians. Every position was up for review.

The clergy were not left out of the euphoria. They started a get out the vote campaign from the pulpit. It soon morphed into pointed political activism. Youths and clergy were tired of same ol', same ol'. A cacophony of persuasions and viewpoints flooded social media.

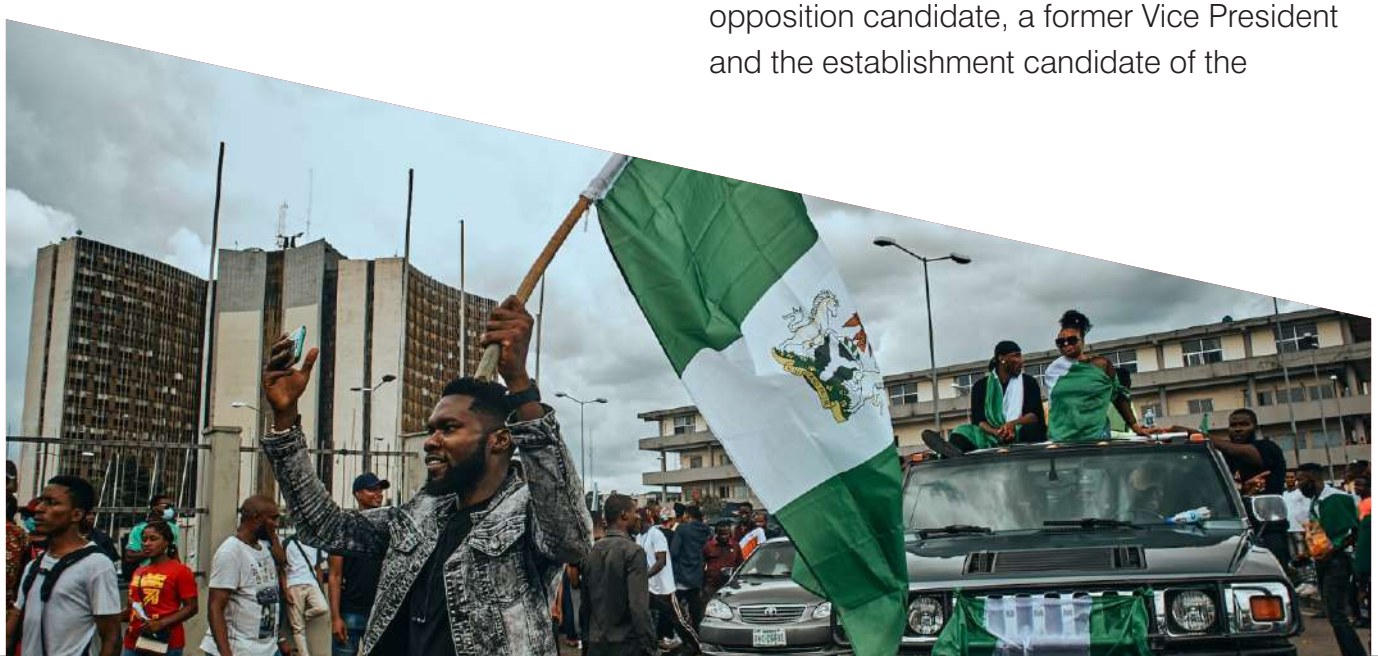
But the country was divided along religious lines. This was partly the outcome of the policies of the outgoing administration. That administration was fond of "I don't care" lopsided political appointments that seemed to favour a region. The country is made up of tribes and the principal fear has always been hegemony. No tribe wants to be dominated or exterminated.

Hegemonic tendencies played out in the politics of the first republic, culminating in a civil war. Unfortunately, that fear became amplified when the candidate of the incumbent party, the All Peoples Party - APC, picked a fellow Moslem as his running mate. It was explained as a pragmatic choice. Being from the South, the presidential candidate felt beholden to the North in his choice of a running mate. The North has a Moslem majority. He reckoned he would lose the election to the main opposition candidate, a Moslem from the North, if he chose otherwise.

But the Moslem-Moslem ticket was unsettling to many Christians, though it had precedence in the 1993 presidential election. In that election, Chief Moshood Abiola, a Moslem from the South, chose Babagana Kingibe, a Moslem from the North, as his running mate.

To ward off attacks and assuage Christian fears, the APC candidate cited his marriage as proof of religious tolerance. He is married to a pastor of a major Pentecostal denomination. It did little to placate many Christians, however. So many pastors opposed the ticket, and they sermonised their feelings. They rather gave their support to the candidate of a then-obscure party, the Labour Party (LP). He is a Christian, and he espoused values that are the very opposite of what is usually obtained. He eschewed the politics of vote-buying. Many urban youths supported the candidate, and there was a groundswell of support on social media as well. The passions were so inflamed the contest could hardly be described as civil. Many friendships were lost.

What followed was a rash of prophecies, most in support of the LP presidential candidate. Some of the prophecies were extreme. But at the conclusion of the election, the Labour Party candidate was declared 3rd by the electoral umpire. Second place went to the main opposition candidate, a former Vice President and the establishment candidate of the



The Bible enjoins Christians to judge prophecy. The ultimate proof of the provenance of a prophecy the Bible says, is its veracity. If the prophecy fails it is not from God. And that makes absolute sense since such a failure impugns the character and integrity of God.

People's Democratic Party (PDP). In other words, those prophecies failed. Why?

Some opined the prophets experienced a Macaiah moment. When King Ahab required prophecy on the outcome of a military campaign against Aram, all the court prophets—400 of them prophesied victory for Ahab. All except a controversial prophet named Macaiah. He filed a minority report. As it turned out, a free radical—a lying spirit had infected those mass prophecies. Macaiah's minority prophecy of doom to Ahab came to pass. Yet the other prophets were inspired.

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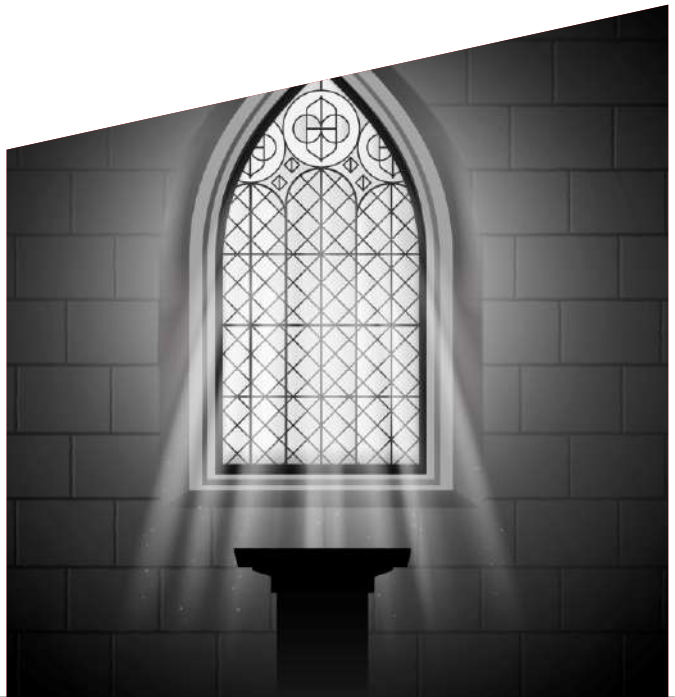
But how can a fever of prophecies that indicated celestial unanimity on the outcome of an election be so wrong? Can so many prophets be wrong at once?

The answer may lie in theology. Contrary to popular belief, there isn't just one type of prophecy. There are actually five types. Could the types have been confused?

The five genres of prophecy are: absolute prophecy, conditional prophecy, sequential prophecy, consequential prophecy, and time-lapse prophecy. If these are mixed up, a prophet will likely mis-prophesy. Let's break it down.

An absolute prophecy comes to pass irrespective of natural conditions or the laws of science. An example of such a prophecy is the prophecy of the birth of Jesus. Mary improbably became pregnant without sexual intercourse. Her old aunt, Elizabeth, also became pregnant despite the onset of menopause. These prophecies were absolute. Nothing could stop them.

A conditional prophecy has an "if…then" configuration. Based on the fulfilment of a condition, another event occurs. A popular conditional prophecy is this passage of scripture: "If my people who are called by my





name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14) It has an if…then configuration.

But sometimes the conditionality is not expressly stated. This is often the case with cases of repentance. The end result is linked to the compassionate nature of God. God told Jonah to go and prophesy judgment against the people of Nineveh. Nineveh was the ancient capital of Syria. As it turned out, it was a conditional prophecy, but it was not expressly stated. The people repented, and God withheld judgment. It was a whale of a story, as far as Jonah was concerned. He wasn't particularly fond of Ninevites. His prophecy turned out to be a conditional prophecy.

Sequential prophecy has a domino-like effect. God told Ezekiel to prophesy against Israel: "This is what Almighty says: One disaster after another disaster is coming…" (Ezekiel 7:5) The successive plagues in Egypt might also be likened to a domino prophecy. God promised to display successive signs and wonders in Egypt.

Consequential prophecy is produced by a cause. A causative factor triggers consequences. Because of the Bathsheba scandal, God told David his family would live by the sword, his wives would be given to another man, who would sleep with them in public view, and the bastard child would die. That's a consequential prophecy. Similarly, God told Solomon his glorious temple would be destroyed if the people went whoring after foreign gods. They did, and the temple was destroyed in 586 BC.

Time lapse prophecy is a prophecy that is seemingly delayed. The time of fulfilment is pushed forward, but it will come to pass. God told Abraham his descendants would be enslaved for 400 years, but it actually took 430 years. To the man reading the prophecy in the 401st year, the prophecy failed, yet it was going to come to pass. God promised Abraham a son at the age of 75. The child came at 100 years, and not before he had introduced Ishmael into the equation, creating consequences that are still with us today. The Israeli-Arab conflict is a

But how can a fever of prophecies that indicated celestial unanimity on the outcome of an election be so wrong? Can so many prophets be wrong at once?

war of the children of Abraham. In a time-lapse prophecy, the time may seemingly lapse, but the prophecy will come to pass.

The Bible enjoins us to rightly divide the word of truth. Without an understanding of the different types of prophecy, a pastor can mis-prophesy. This is not to excuse prophecy failures or explain them away. And this analysis does not accommodate opportunistic charlatans looking for fame. Those have existed since the time of Paul and will continue to exist until God gathers the harvest. But a conditional prophecy can easily be mistaken for an absolute prophecy. When God passes a judgement on a nation or an individual, it can be suspended if God sees repentance. As evil as Ahab was, he had this knowledge. When Elijah prophesied against Ahab, Ahab humbled himself before God, tore his clothes, put on burlap, fasted, and walked about like a man approaching a priest for communion. He treaded softly. The judgment was postponed until the time of his successor. In other words, an absolute prophecy morphed into a conditional prophecy and disembarked as a time-lapse prophecy. Elijah's prophecy was not false.

Ultimately, a prophet's reputation rests on his antecedence and his perceived relationship with God. Nobody would disbelief Elijah's prophecy, even if God suspends a judgment. He had an unblemished track record. Everyone knew he was a servant of God. A prophet is in God's civil service.

All said, some of the election prophecies would prove unnecessary. Polls already showed the youths were not going to vote according to religion. They were going to vote candidates. One of those polls was conducted live on television by Alder Consulting at The Platform. Based on this poll, the so-called Christian votes

Contrary to popular belief there isn't just one type of prophecy. There are actually five types.

were self-nullified. There would be no block of Christian votes among youths. They would vote according to other persuasions.

Perhaps pastors need to pay heed to rational analysis. The Church is a priest-king combo. It cannot stand on one leg. The anointing of Jesus is after the order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek was a priest and king. He dealt in prophecy and policy. The Church is a two-legged proposition.

No doubt there's a place for prophecies in an election season. But perhaps the primary role belongs to the sons of Issachar. They understand the signs of the time. It is their job to gather intelligence, crunch data, interrogate indices, and make projections. Those projections are a type of prophecy. Were the Bible written today, they will be called strategy consultants and analysts.

—

Leke Alder is a strategy consultant and the founder of Alder Consulting. He has consulted on several elections and primaries.



The LGBTQIA+ Community

SECTION TWO

THE LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY

Do you believe members of the LGBTQIA+ community should be able to get married in church?





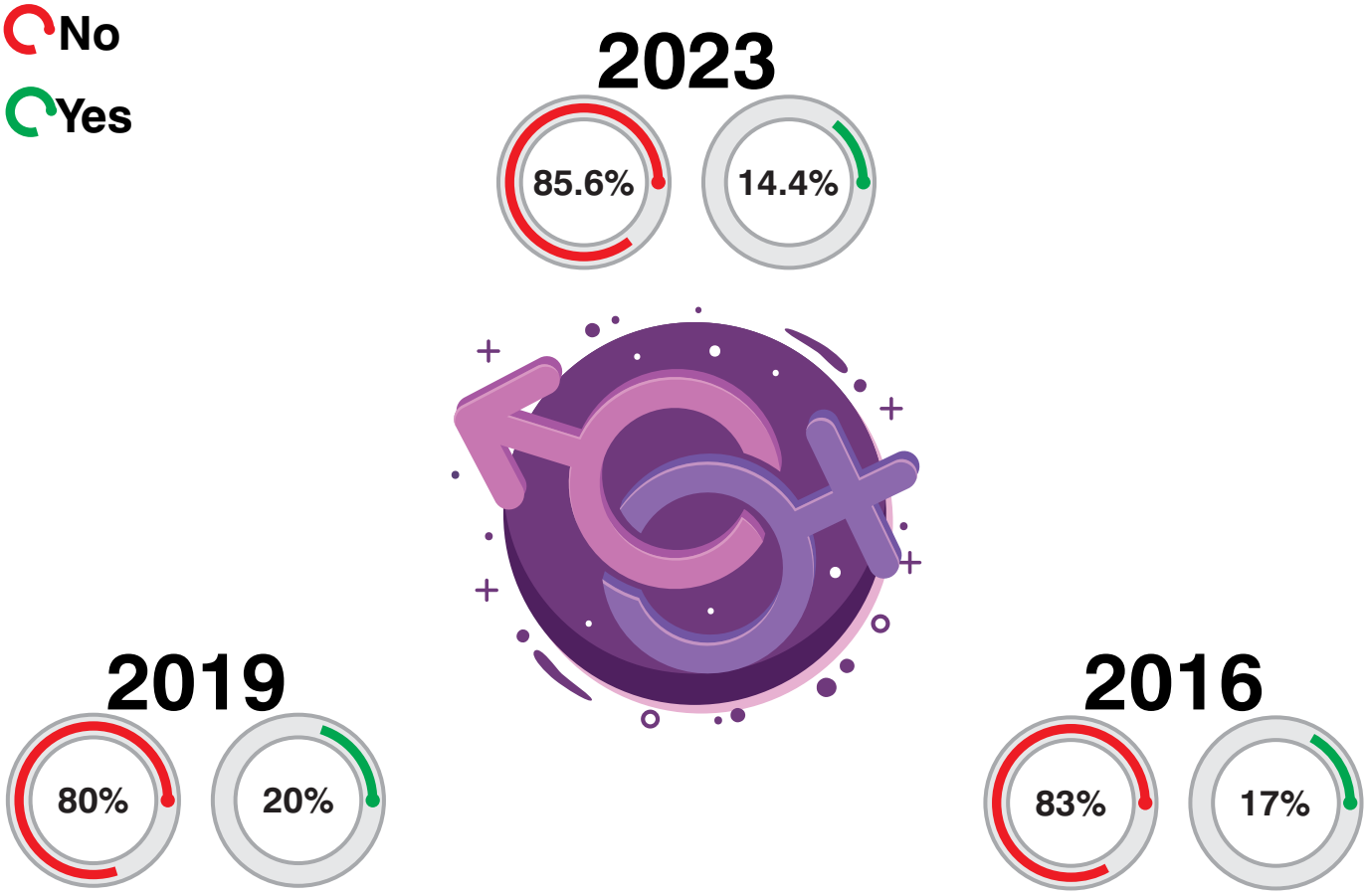


Sex

SECTION THREE

SEX

Do you believe in pre-marital sex?



In 2023, we saw an increase in the number of respondents who do not believe in premarital sex.

It is important to note that belief and practice do not always align, and the results do not provide insight on the number of Christians engaging in premarital sex. It only shows the number of people who believe in what the Bible admonishes. There is faith, and then there is practice.

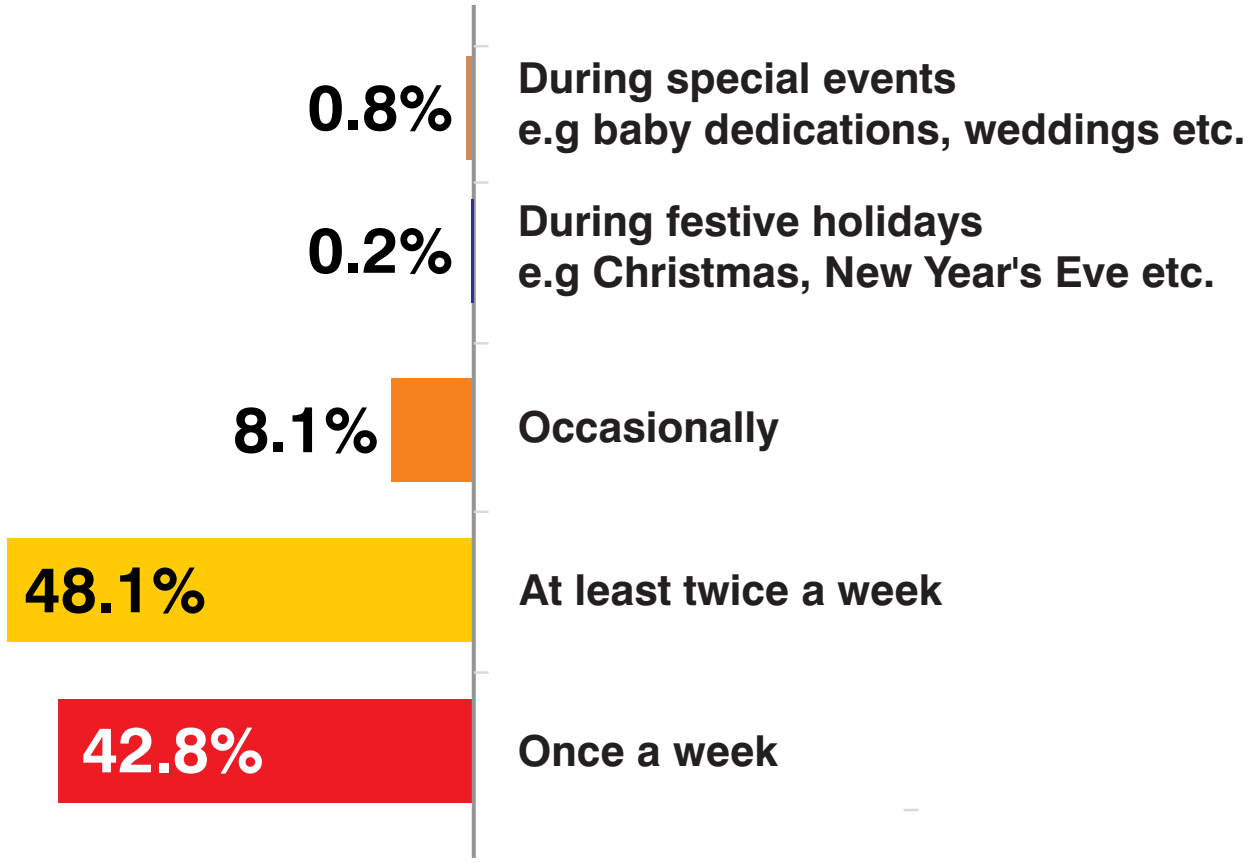


Church Attendance

SECTION FOUR

CHURCH ATTENDANCE

How often do you attend church?



CHURCH ATTENDANCE

How do you attend church?

Online
3.8%





Physical
53.2%



Both
43.0%

CHURCH ATTENDANCE



Only 53.2% of Christians attend church physically, with 3.8% attending online. Where are the remaining 47%? Clearly, there is a missing mass of Christians on Sundays, and it is a huge number. If Christians are not attending church physically or online, it may be time for churches to rethink how church is done.

A good place to start will be for churches to re-format their existing online church templates. Consider Elevation Church (US), which has succeeded in creating a thriving and diverse online community. The church has 6 different online broadcast times on Sundays, with a re-broadcast on Tuesdays. The sermons are available to watch on the church's YouTube channel and website. The sermons are also uploaded as podcasts on available podcast apps. The church has a YouTube channel called Elevation+ where engaging discussions about the sermons are uploaded. There is active recognition of the online community by the pastors throughout the service, and online worshippers are encouraged to use the chat function throughout the broadcast. Online worshippers are also encouraged to set up watch parties in their communities. These watch parties take place during the broadcasts and enable people to worship and listen to the sermon together. The church has also cultivated a thriving online Bible study group community. Through the groups, people from all over the world are able to get together to discuss the Word of God, share experiences, and develop relationships. The church is also intentional about ensuring that people who are unable to participate in church activities in person can do so online.

Cultivating a strong online community requires work and dedication. It is the churches that are ready to do the work that will see an increase in church attendance.

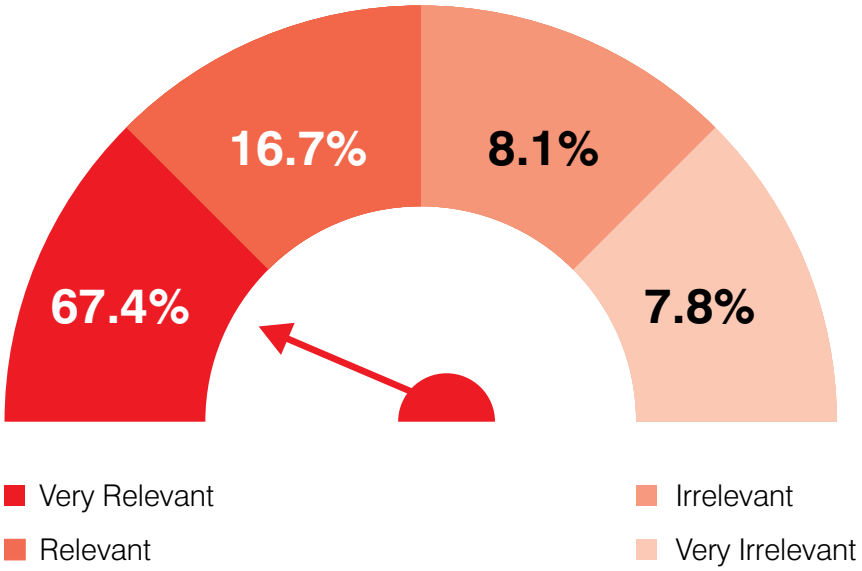


Relevance of the Church

SECTION FIVE

RELEVANCE OF THE CHURCH

How relevant do you think the Church is to society?



We asked the respondents how relevant the Church is to society. Two-thirds stated the Church is very relevant to society.

With the prevalence of churches in Nigeria and the importance attributed to religion, two-thirds may not seem high enough. It does, however, show two things: (a) the Church does have relevance in society; and (b) the Clergy have quite a bit of work to do to increase the relevance of the Church to society.



RELEVANCE OF THE CHURCH

In what ways do you think the Church could be more relevant to society?

Common answers included:



Empowering the youth



Teaching the Word of God



Helping businesses grow



Charity

Promoting good governance



Focus on education

Promoting Godly values



Community engagement & development



Political activism

RELEVANCE OF THE CHURCH

On the heels of the 2023 elections, it is not surprising the respondents stated political activism and promotion of good governance as the ways in which the Church can increase its relevance in society. This could suggest that pronouncements from the pulpit no longer qualify as sufficient political engagement, and Christians need a further and deeper level of engagement. It also shows that Christians are more cognizant of the role politics plays in their lives. Christians are looking for a second force to counter the traditional political structure to force them to deliver good governance and lift people out of poverty. Therefore, when the Church fails in its duties to society, the sense of disappointment is higher because the Church is seen as this second force. How the Clergy engage with this mandate is another issue entirely.

Other responses centred around community engagement and development, helping the poor and disadvantaged, education, and enablement of young people and entrepreneurs. These responses suggest that Christians still look to the Church to address societal issues and plug the existing economic and humanitarian deficits.





Reno Omokri
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Subscribe

And next Sunday, Nigerians will wake up, take showers, wear their Sunday bests, and attend churches pastored by men who prophesied that Peter Obi would be the next President. Then pastors who made all types of fallacious 'prophecies' about Peter Obi will collect tithes from these same Nigerians. And then, on Monday, these citizens will complain about corrupt politicians. One of these pastors even prophesied that he himself would be the sixteenth President. Between your pastor and politicians, who is more corrupt? A politician that lies in the name of man or pastors that lie in the Name of God? You, my friend, are part of the problem.

THE CHURCH & POLITICAL CURRENCY

by Very Rev. (Prof.) Konyin Ajayi, SAN



INTRODUCTION

There it was – not so sweet, staring everyone in the face; you could "hear" this tweet - hiss and spit, on "Church & Society" pace. Dragging the "pastor" on social media street. Tackling him by the feet; dragging her off her seat. Making them neither meet nor fit. Turning the Church to red meat for those wanting to destroy it – saying: it's a cheat - with spiritual currency, and without a bit, of political currency. Isn't this gaining currency, much like everything else corrupt and mediocre in society? Is the Church losing its literacy? That is: literacy in Church Mission, particularly the intersection between Church and politics; and the use of political currency.

The phrase "political currency" is simply a metaphorical proposition that speaks of the medium through which a desired political objective is achieved. Such that the amount of political currency possessed determines the level of political objectives achievable. That could be unity, peace, order and progress – interpreted by some as ensuring the Kingdom of God on earth. To others that's money or power to be in control. Thus the question: is the Church entitled to spend political currency? Does "Mission" allow the pursuit of political objectives? Should the Church be partisan rather than political?

Any student of Church history will acknowledge the undulating tussle that has existed between the Church and the State. From the Roman Empire to the Byzantine Empire, trailing down to the British Empire, the Church has consistently remained entangled in political affairs and vice versa. However, with the American and French revolutions at the end of the 18th century, came the advocacy for the separation of the Church and the State, and its replacement with a secular ideology, particularly as some of the actions of the Church in political affairs caused many to question the utility and moral justification for the Church's involvement in the State - more so where it was spending and being spent in the way of the world.

Remember that communism buried religion with capitalism; just as the internecine wars of the Old Testament were a conflagration of "Church" and State. Step forward today and you hear Reno Omokri drown out the missiology of the Orthodox Church, in a sea of the "miracle-prosperity-faith" that has polluted the works of Martin Luther, and devalued the currency of the Church, like Buhari's tumbling Naira. In essence, the Church which was to be a beacon of righteousness had been desecrated and reduced to a mere tool for political manipulation, and the accumulation of wealth and power.

Whether in Metaverse or here, the

contemporary forces, compete for the separation of the Church from political affairs, especially in many societies – beyond what we consider secular – taking out political currency from Church balance sheet. According to the World Population Review, a secular country is one that is officially neutral with regard to religion, doesn't discriminate based upon religious beliefs (or lack thereof), and doesn't let faith play a role in law or policy-making. With such there is no Church political currency.

Nigeria gives a lie to this, as in the US, where religious references and symbols are used in government, and religion plays an outsize role in both governance and politics – hence its ""political currency". Thus, from a pragmatic lens, if there cannot be a total separation of the Church from political affairs, then shouldn't the real question be how the Church can be involved in political affairs in a manner that upholds the tenets of God? Or should there be depoliticization of Christianity? Did the success of the 2023 Muslim Muslim ticket daunt the political currency of the Church? Or was the insertion of religion in public debate and the uncompromising style of public discourse such as to alienate many non-adherents and members of the larger public – such as to devalue the Church's political currency?

POLITICAL CURRENCY & THE CHURCH

Perhaps Nigeria perfectly exemplifies the herculean task of attempting to separate the Church from political affairs. In fact, one could argue that the Nigerian Church is not coy about spending political currency. After all, didn't the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria – create the Directorate of Politics and Governance as its political organ? Do we not have Christian spiritual leaders publicly supporting and praying for political candidates, directing members to register for their voters' cards, as well as declaring prophecies on Nigeria's political future? Or do politicians not flock to Churches in the run up to elections?

If we scrutinize how the Church spends its political currency, what will be discovered is that quietly lurking in the corner is the "holy political apathy" of many genuine Nigerian Christians to be involved in political affairs.

A perfunctory observer of these activities may hurriedly determine that the Nigerian Church has a healthy posture towards politics. Conversely, a detailed observer would argue that for a country with the sixth-largest Christian population globally (according to the Pew Research Centre), our politics ought to depict Christian values, as introduced by Christians, directly and proactively involved in political affairs. However, this is not our reality; with Nigeria consistently ranking low in areas such as government effectiveness, political stability, and rule of law, according to the World Governance Index.

Of course, the Church can pat its back and say that the mere fact that it is not silent on political matters is a big win. However, applauding its vocality and stopping there is a disservice to the Church's Mission. If we scrutinize how the



Church spends its political currency, what will be discovered is that quietly lurking in the corner is the "holy political apathy" of many genuine Nigerian Christians to be involved in political affairs. Like John Locke in his 1685 Letter on Toleration, these Christians believe that "the only business of the Church is salvation of souls…" and since "our citizenship is in heaven" then why bother about the ephemeral matters of politics on earth.

HOLY POLITICAL APATHY?

Some may argue that considering Nigeria's political history and socio-economic circumstances, the political apathy of the Nigerian Christian to politics is not because s/he is a Christian, but because s/he is Nigerian. This reasoning presumes that if all was right in Nigeria, then the Nigerian Christian would not be apathetic but in fact, pro-actively participate in politics and governance.

However, this reasoning presents a dangerous view of the Nigerian Church as an institution whose members would rather wait in apathy for a perfect and sanitized nation before finally strutting in to get involved. Such a view is one that the Nigerian Church must reject, as it presents it as a hypocritical institution with no utility in nation-building.

Perhaps what is more dangerous is that many members of the Nigerian Church do not necessarily attribute their political apathy to the state of the country, but instead consider their political apathy as an expression of holiness and alignment with the Bible. Two scriptures misconstrued as justification for this politically apathy are Mark 12:17 and John 15:19. Interestingly, some have interpreted Jesus' response on "politics" to mean that the Church should be separate from political affairs and has no business spending political currency. However, such an interpretation disregards the question. The Pharisees and Herodeans asked the question on the premise that Jesus, being from God and a teacher of the way of God, is no respecter of men and the affairs of men. If Jesus by this scripture was advocating for the political apathy of the Church, then this question presented a golden opportunity to communicate this clearly especially seeing as he had stated numerously that he is not of this world. Instead, by his response, Jesus mandates that the Church has a responsibility to God and the State. Hence, the Christian need not jettison the State and its affairs on the basis of adherence to the tenets of God.

Yet, the politically apathetic Nigerian Christian may argue that how can s/he have a responsibility to the State and its affairs when in John 15:19, Jesus states "*If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but*

Perhaps what is more dangerous is that many members of the Nigerian Church do not necessarily attribute their political apathy to the state of the country, but instead consider their political apathy as an expression of holiness and alignment with the Bible.

because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you". Hence, being not of this world, s/he ought not to engage in political affairs which may require chasing after the world for its love. However, they seem to forget that though they are not of the world, they still exist in the world. They also seem to forget Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:13-16 that we are the "*salt of the earth*" and "*light of the world*". The value of salt is appreciated when it gives flavour to food, and it does this by mixing with food. Also, the value of light is only appreciated where darkness is present.

It is noteworthy that Paul's teaching in 1st Timothy 2:1 that "*prayers should be offered for Kings and all that are in authority so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable*" is equally not a biblical justification for political apathy. Paul does not state that the Christian cannot go beyond praying for authority, to becoming part of the authority being prayed for like Joseph, Queen Esther, Nehemiah, Daniel, etc. In fact, when the Church prays for Christians in authority, there is a greater assurance that we can lead "*quiet and peaceable lives,*" and follow the guidance of Romans 13:1-6.

This requires the creation, increase and proper use of political currency by the Church, and disavows the apathy purchased by fake currency printed by: the prosperity preacher who genuflects to AGIP; the politics and infighting for Church leadership; indiscipline and mediocrity in the clergy, and their race to be of the world. This is the trending and loudest, but not necessarily the most meaningful, music we hear! So he who has ears let him hear that now is the time for the Church to rise and shine, as scripted in Isaiah 60.

HOW CAN THE NIGERIAN CHURCH SPEND ITS POLITICAL CURRENCY?

Some may argue that Nigeria is not bereft of Christian political actors. However, there is a difference between a political actor labelling himself a Christian by title and a Christian political actor. The latter is one who understands that he is first a Christian before he is a political actor. He knows that he has been put in the domain of politics to be a change-agent with a clear mission to consciously introduce the values of Christ. His allegiance is first to God before man.

The Church is a priesthood of all, and so both laity and clergy must emulate our forefathers, who were effective in bringing about change, averting revolutions, and ending apostacy as we see in the life of He, Who had government on His shoulders, Who we must emulate.

The Nigerian Church therefore has two primary duties in this regard. First, it must clear the doubt of its members on whether the Church ought to participate in political affairs directly

and proactively, and unequivocally communicate the urgent need for Christians to get involved in politics and governance. Second, once the doubt is cleared, the Nigerian Church must consciously teach Christian political actors the values of Christ that must be meaningfully experienced in political affairs. If the Church doesn't spend its political currency in this manner, then it must get ready to relinquish it, with heads bowed and lips sealed, no matter the policies that may batter society day and night.

In ending, I remember that in the legal aspects of money there's fiat currency, (like the dollar or Naira), and digital currency (made of bitcoins mined of AI). But by Emefiele's redesign policy, Naira became "political currency". The Church must not spend of that currency, rather to increase the value of its political capital, it must spend "Christian" political currency: that is living the doctrine of Christ and raising godly citizens.

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Very Rev. (Prof.) Konyin Ajayi SAN, is a Presbyter of Methodist Church Nigeria. He is passionate about the currency of Church in Society.

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1. This can be said, is to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom; to teach, baptise, and nurture new believers; to respond to human need by loving service; to seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind, and to pursue peace and reconciliation; to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth – see https://www.cccw.cam.ac.uk/encounter/whats-mission/ & Luke 4:18 - 19.

2. See Sections 2(1) & 4(2) Nigerian Constitution.

3. Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Church and State". Encyclopedia Britannica, 30 Apr. 2020,

https://www.britannica.com/topic/Church-and-State. Accessed 9 September 2023.

4. Ibid.

5. That is the hypothetical immersive virtual world

6. World Population Review. "Secular Countries 2023". https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/secular-countries. Accessed 9 September 2023.

7. Though Section 10 Nigerian Constitution says it is secular.

8. See e.g. Ruth Braunstein, The backlash against rightwing evangelicals is reshaping American politics and faith - https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jan/25/the-backlash-against-rightwing-evangelicals-is-reshaping-american-politics-and-faith.

9. Reuben Abati. The Cable Newspaper. "Politics and the Church in Nigeria". https://www.thecable.ng/politics-and-the-Church-in-nigeria. 2022. Accessed 6 September 2023.

10. Diamant Jeff. Pew Research Centre. "The countries with the 10 largest Christian populations and the 10 largest Muslim populations". 2019. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/04/01/the-countries-with-the-10-largest-christian-populations-and-the-10-largest-muslim-populations/. Accessed 9 September 2023.

11. Obasesam Okoi and MaryAnne Iwara. Georgetown Journal of International Affairs. "The Failure of Governance in Nigeria: An Epistocratic Challenge". 2021. Accessed 9 September 2023.

12. Philippians 3:20, 2 Corinthians 10: 3-4 (New International Version).

13. Mark 12 records that while Jesus was teaching the people, some Pharisees and Herodians asked "Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" Jesus responded in Mark 12:17 – "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

14. That is any government in power – with no scruples on what the Scriptures dictate, not what Church history teaches.

15. As the Bible says "You are a royal priesthood and a priestly kingdom," 1 Peter 2:9 & and "Through your blood you have made us into priests and kings" - Revelation 5:10

16. E.g. Moses, Miriam, Joshua, Deborah, Samuel, Esther, Daniel, Isaiah, Huldah, Jeremiah, Jonah, Paul etc.

17. Very Rev. Prof. Konyin Ajayi, SAN, Chaplain Emmanuel Chapel Methodist Church (with Temijuopelo Alufa).



The Church & Finance

SECTION SIX

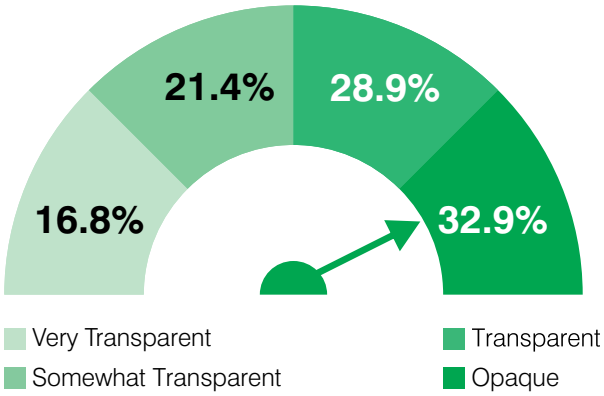
CHURCH AND FINANCE

Do you trust your church with your financial contributions?

93.1%

6.9%

How transparent is your church when it comes to finances?



Over half of the respondents perceive the Church as transparent when it comes to finances. It is important that churches maintain this level of trust, which can easily be eroded with opacity in financial stewardship.

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP AND THE CHURCH

by Abimbola Olashore

The Church simply means a community of people or body of Christ congregating in a common belief, worship, and service to God the Creator. There are different responsibilities and roles played by congregating members at every point in time according to their abilities, talents, and spiritual gifts (1st Corinthians 12:4–31). Material resources are also contributed for a common purpose: to meet the needs of the Church and others (Acts 2:44, 6:1).

Stewardship refers to accountability for whatever has been entrusted to one's care for the good of all. In the larger society, we have various classes of stewards: family heads, political office holders, traditional rulers, spiritual heads/leaders etc. Everyone has a stewardship role over a given responsibility. Some are elected, some selected among the people, some ordained, and others appointed. For the purpose of this paper, we are limiting our discussion to the Church or Christian society. In this case, stewardship goes with commitment, dedication, morality, ethics, sacrifice, and faithfulness (Acts 6:1–10).

One cannot be a good steward without character or virtue. There are basically 4Ts of sacrifice in stewardship: Time, Talent, Treasure and Temple. A good steward must commit his time, talent, and treasure and be connected to the Temple/altar.

In Christendom, stewards can come in any form - Reverends, Pastors, Evangelists, Deacons, Elders, ushers, choir members, church workers, etc. Over the years, the Church has had a common understanding to entrust its affairs to chosen people to attend to certain matters, and one of such matters is the finances of the Church. It has been an accepted practice to entrust certain members of the Church with this responsibility. They, in turn, are expected to give an account of their stewardship. Denominations have different names for this stewardship. Some are called Parish Council, Church Committee, Elders Council, etc. At the end of the year or over a given period of time, these stewards are expected to render stewardship based on how they have managed the resources in their care (Matthew 25:16–23). It is important for stewards to have an enterprising acumen, be faithful, and apply wisdom, among other qualities. A good steward must be concerned with multiplying the financial resources in his care; he must be interested in investment yields.

Financial stewardship, in simple terms, means the act of protecting the assets of an organisation through a commitment to moral, ethical, and prudent decision-making. It is an act of commitment to do that which is moral and ethical. Prudence must also be applied in the protection of assets entrusted to the steward's care.

Review of History: What Has Been

Over the years, a big gap has grown between members of the Church and the stewards, or office holders. A big communication gap has thus been created between the two contractual parties. The members no longer get feedback from the stewards, or sufficient information or disclosure is not made available to the



members. Yet people are concerned about how their financial affairs are run.

Findings have shown that the most popular inquiry at every meeting or Annual General Meeting (AGM) centers on the management of the organisation's resources. So many inquiries are made to the stewards in this regard. Satisfactory responses are rarely provided. So many activities are shrouded in secrecy because of the personalities involved.

The lifestyle of most of the leaders/stewards do not conform to a pattern that suggests prudence has been exercised in the management of the resources or the affairs of the organisation or Church. This has brought about a loss of confidence and credibility in stewardship. The system over time lacks transparency and accountability. With no structured corporate governance system in place, stewards appear not to be accountable in any form.

The Way Forward: What Should Be Done

In the world we live in, with the democratisation of information and outlets with citizen journalism, everyone has instant access to information. With the attendant proliferation of fake news, it is incumbent on every church to be proactive in the management of its resources and transparent in reporting same.

A strategic financial policy is needed, and it must be institutionalized. This will not happen without careful planning. A thoughtless plan is no plan at all. One plans to fail if one fails to plan financially.

For effective implementation of financial stewardship, leadership must exhibit certain attributes:

a. Leadership must be visionary and creative.
b. Leadership must listen, and listen attentively.
c. Leadership must be accountable for finances.
d. Leadership must have financial discipline.
e. Leadership must engage in regular stewardship teachings and trainings.

There is need to have an independent body to serve in an advisory capacity such as an Advisory Church Council or Management Committee as the case may be, especially as it relates to financial management of the Church.

Strategic Financial Policy

A strategic financial policy should comprise the following:

a. Budget Planning Process

A budget must work for it to serve its purpose. Church leaders should see the need to operate a working budget. This will guide the operations of the Church.

b. Financial Record Keeping

All financial records should be properly documented. Records should be formally maintained and made available for scrutiny.

c. Purchasing System Policy

There is a need for a purchasing order policy that guarantees value for money.

d. Financial Reporting Policy

Audited financial reports or other periodic reports should be presented to members at the end of the year or at any other stipulated time.

e. Financial Control Policy

There should be adequate internal control procedures in the process of receiving and expending money.

In the face of all these, there is need to have an independent body to serve in an advisory capacity such as an Advisory Church Council or Management Committee as the case may be, especially as it relates to financial management of the Church. This body can be likened to an Audit Committee which reports directly to the board in the corporate setting.

Case Study

In the case of Our Saviour's Church (TBS), a Finance Advisory Committee was set up to bridge the gap that exists between members and management during stewardship reporting. The membership of the committee is drawn from the Clergy, management, and lay members. The majority of the committee members are knowledgeable in finance and accounting and have significant general management experience.

Role of the Finance Advisory Committee

a. To develop policy guidelines for the smooth operations of the Church.

b. To ensure policy guidelines are strictly adhered to in its operational activities.

c. To carry out investment analysis for the Church using the prevailing economic indices and advise management accordingly.

d. To review and analyse the financial activities of the Church from time to time.

e. To ensure prudence in the disbursement of resources such that value for money is guaranteed on purchases, contracts, projects, and guidelines.

One cannot be a good steward without character or virtue. There are basically 4Ts of sacrifice in stewardship: Time, Talent, Treasure and Temple. A good steward must commit his time, talent, treasure and be connected to the Temple/altar.

Benefits of the Finance Advisory Committee

The benefits of establishing the Finance Advisory Committee are as follows:

a. Increasing confidence in management/ stewards of the Church.

b. Restoring the trust eroded over time.

c. Maintaining financial stability in the Church system.

d. Proffering investment advice.

e. Ensuring good value for money at all times

f. Reducing waste and leakages.

g. Enshrining corporate governance into the system.
h. Providing credibility to the entire finance system. This will enhance the internal processes as members will be confident that all presentations and reports have passed through levels of scrutiny before submission.
i. Drastic reduction in the time typically spent on stewardship reporting.

To avoid misunderstandings between the Church management and members, it is useful for the Finance Advisory committee to design upfront how the funds collected by the Church will be distributed. This can be implemented through the preparation of an annual budget approved by the Church Council. At the end of an agreed accounting period, the Church must publish how it spent the collection in the given period and explain deviations from the agreed budget to the members.

The annual budget must reflect the core mandate of the Church, which is mission and evangelism, and ensure that resources are appropriated judiciously in some key areas:

a. Evangelism
b. Missions
c. Clergy Welfare
d. Support Staff and General Administration
e. Gifts and Donations
f. Church Committees
g. Projects and Investments

It is advised that percentages be attached to the distributions to ensure impact on every aspect of the Church's work. The percentages must be reviewed periodically to reflect the needs of society and the growth of the Church.

Conclusion

Those who have been entrusted with the responsibility of stewardship should render their service in good faith and in service to God, knowing that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Investments by the Church must reflect the congregational needs of housing, health, and education. It appears a lot of investments are guided by financial returns rather than the needs of the congregation. A fine balance must therefore be struck between satisfying current needs and having investments to provide for future needs.

Finally, to be a good steward requires you to commit your time, talent, treasure, and connection to the temple of God, for stewardship is a service to God and humanity.

—

Mr. Abimbola Olashore is a seasoned investment banker. A member of the Parish Church Council of Our Saviour's Church (TBS) and Chairman of its Finance Advisory Committee.

CHURCH AND FINANCE

What areas should the Church focus its finances on?



Church Buildings /Projects

45.9%



Political Activism

16.4%



Community Development

72.7%



Evangelism

74.1%



Benevolence/ Charity

76.6%

Respondents were asked to select all applicable options to them.

The high results for community development and benevolence/charity hint at the failure of the local government and the requirement by Christians for the Church to step up in these areas. Clearly, Christians require the Church to play a prominent role in these areas.

The low results for political activism may seem surprising considering that a high percentage of respondents believe in Christians running for office and participating in politics (see Section 1). However, what these results show is that respondents favour individual financial participation over institutional financial participation. Further, it could be that the respondents are not sure that the Church will value competence over religion when it comes to political candidates and leaders.

LIGHT AND LOVE

by Olubankole 'Banky W' Wellington

Light | The role of the Church in today's political climate

Matthew 5:14-16

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven".

On a very recent Instagram post of mine, one of my followers left a comment that I found a bit concerning. She said, "Why am I low key happy he didn't win the election?? This is your calling sir!! Do the Lord's work! Love it!". The post in question was a video compilation highlighting some of the work I had done that weekend at various events – I spoke at a Christian marketplace conference, sharing with believers about my journey in business, ministry, and yes, politics. I was also featured on a friend's Christian TV talk show and visited some other locations in between. What I found concerning was the idea being insinuated… that, as children of God, we should be happier when we are kept out of government and politics so that we can focus on "doing the Lord's work" within the confines of church-related places and platforms. While I genuinely do not think that she intended for her remark to be malicious, I truly believe she was incredibly misguided.

As children of God, we're called to be the "light of the world". The primary job description of light is to dispel darkness – to illuminate and shine in areas where it is needed the most – and I honestly cannot think of many spaces darker than our political system. We make a serious mistake when we assume that God does not want His people in government. If that was truly the case, the scriptures would have left out the stories of several of our heroes of faith. Remember Joseph, Esther, Daniel, and Nehemiah, to name a few? If Joseph was not serving as Pharaoh's second-in-command at the time, the Jews would have died. If Esther did not have access to the King's palace, the Jews would have died. If Nehemiah was not a high-ranking government official, how else would the Israelites have rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem? Scripture is filled with examples of what happens when God's people are actively involved in the affairs of nations… and when they are not. Proverbs 29:2 says, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; But when a wicked man rules, the people groan."

The Greek philosopher Plato once said, "The punishment for not getting involved with politics, is that you'll end up being ruled by your inferiors". I am not trying to imply that we are superior to those who have entered our political system; however, I do think we are paying a hefty price for our refusal to be a part of the process. We cannot avoid participating in politics and then turn around and complain about the results the process produces. We cannot ignore our roles and responsibilities in nation-building and then hope to somehow receive the rewards of a more prosperous, peaceful country. Galatians 6:7 says, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." If we truly want a better nation, we are going to have to build one. If we want a more honest,

We cannot avoid participating in politics and then turn around and complain about the results the process produces. We cannot ignore our roles and responsibilities in nation-building and then hope to somehow receive the rewards of a more prosperous, peaceful country.

It is time for right-thinking, like-minded children of God to intentionally work together and help put Nigeria back on the path towards growth and development.

transparent, accountable, effective, and impactful government, we're going to have to put more of those kinds of people in it.

It is time for right-thinking, like-minded children of God to intentionally work together and help put Nigeria back on the path towards growth and development. Not all of us can run for office, but some of us must. Some of us must answer the call, stick our necks out, and make the sacrifices necessary to enter the murky, treacherous waters of politics. And those of us who will not run for office must partner with those of us who are willing to. It is the only way we pull our nation out of the mess we're in.

The reality is that God will always do what only He can do, but He will never do what we are supposed to. So, God was going to part the red sea, but Moses, you have got to stretch out your rod. God was going to bring down fire from heaven, but Elijah, you have got to set up the wood and speak the word. God created the animals, but Adam, you have got to name them. And God was going to help the nation of Israel slay Goliath the giant, but David, you have got to aim at him. Yes, we must pray, but we also have a critical part to play if we are ever going to live in the Nigeria of our dreams.

There is no perfect political party, just like there is no perfect church, company, school, or family. Human beings are inherently flawed; even the Bible does not mask the mistakes of great men. So any organisation or collection of people will certainly have its issues, as not everyone will be rowing in the right direction.

This is still not an excuse for us to steer clear of getting involved. The destination of a greater nation is our goal. The various vehicles we use to get there are just the transportation.

We therefore need more children of God to join political parties, as flawed as they are, understanding that our role is not to defend their history but to redefine their future. We need to participate in party primaries – the processes that produce candidates, and not just complain about the people that come out of them. We need to enter into institutions like INEC, because until we have institutions that are set up to properly police themselves, we must be the ones to police them. And we must pay more attention to the various seats at different levels of government, not just the President or the Governors. Because our Senators, Representatives, Assembly Members, and Local Government Chairmen have as much to do with the policies and laws that govern our environment as our Presidents and Governors do. And besides, today's Representative or Local Government Chairman could very well be tomorrow's Governor, Minister, or Presidential candidate, if you know what I mean.

We've been praying for Nigeria for so long, but it is time for the Church to do more than pray, isn't it? It is almost as if we are quick to remember the scripture that says "Pray always without ceasing", but we forget the one that says "Faith without works is dead". Children of God… it's time to get to work. "Light of the world", it is time to shine.

Love | The role of the Church in today's social climate

Acts 1:7
He said to them, "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

In the 1970s, motivated by an intense, ongoing war against organised crime, the US Government established the Witness Protection Program, authorised by the Organized Crime Control Act. The government would identify witnesses within the criminal world of the mafia who were willing and ready to be rescued, and in exchange for their testimony and evidence, they would give them new identities, relocate them, and protect them. Over 19,000 witnesses and their family members have benefited from this since 1971.

There is an ironic parallel between that Witness Protection Program, and what happens in the life of a believer. Prior to receiving salvation and being adopted into God's family, we all had different stories, struggles, and sins. But we all recognised our need for rescue. We all got to the point where we knew we needed a Saviour and turned to Jesus Christ, who "called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light". He gave us new identities as children of God, and relocated us into His kingdom. He provides for and protects us. However, in exchange for this privilege of our new life in Him, Jesus says in Acts 1:8 that we are to be His witnesses. And just like the witnesses who were called upon in the court cases against the mafia, we are supposed to be the ones He can call upon in the war against the darkness that covers the earth. He goes on to list Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth as a pattern representing the areas of impact – in essence, implying that our job as witnesses is to be in our immediate city, surrounding region, and nation, and then across the world. Therein lies the problem. Because somehow, as members of His church, we seem to have forgotten our job description.

Not everyone of us is called to preach, but we are all called to be witnesses. And the primary job description of a witness is that when the trial begins, the witness is to provide testimony and evidence to help secure the victory. I think it is safe to assume that we would all agree that these are indeed trying times. Economically, the world is in turmoil. Inflation is through the roof, and most countries are in some semblance of a recession. Most nations are at war. Either within their borders or outside their borders, tribalism, racism, xenophobia, and insert-any-other-scientific-name-for-the-spirit-of-division-here seem to be the order of the day. Mental health issues are skyrocketing, with the number of people battling with depression, anxiety, and suicide at an all-time high. We are seeing more

Somehow, as members of His Church we seem to have forgotten our job description.

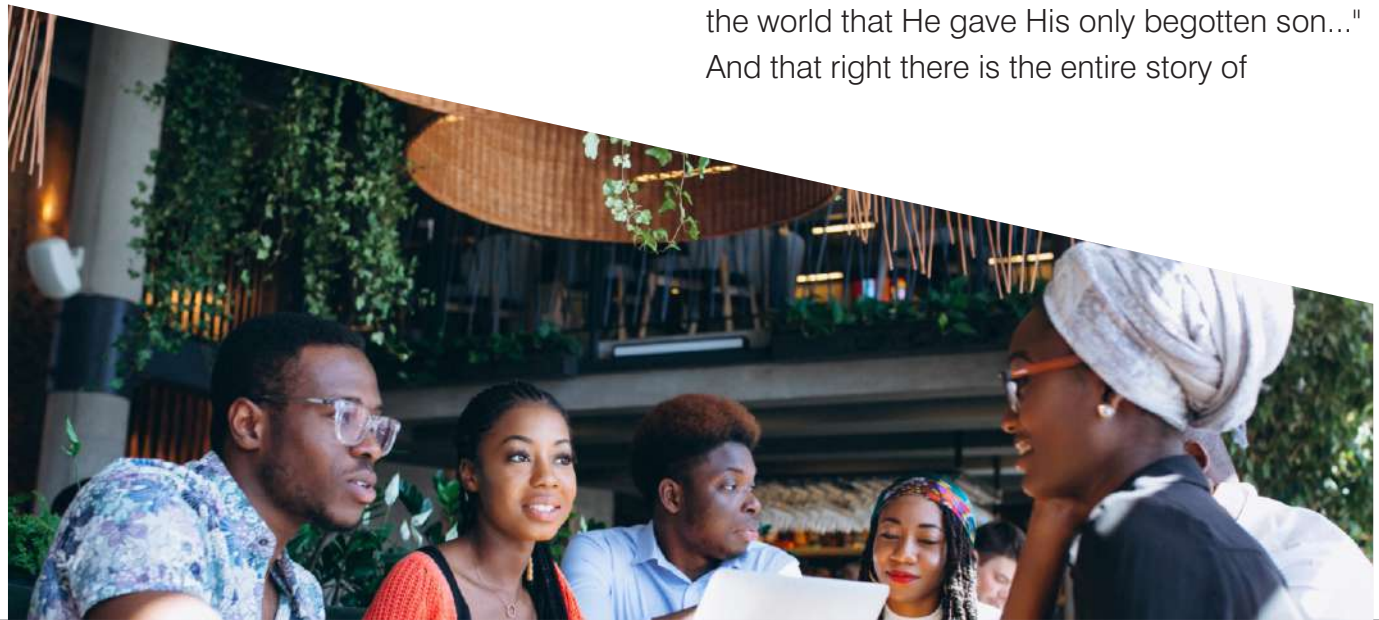
divorces than ever, and we are all addicted to something or the other – from opioids to pornography, from social media to living hedonistically. And these are just some of the highlights. It is as if we are embodying the verse that says, "Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people…"

This is what being in a trial looks like. The challenge is that for so many of us, we have forgotten that we are in the courtroom, not as the judge, jury, or prosecution, but as witnesses. Our testimonies are required now more than ever. The world is in desperate need of the evidence we have that God exists and He is who He says He is. We are the only Jesus that some people will see, but too many of us have been giving God bad PR. We are ambassadors of God, and God is love. And I strongly believe that if we want a hurting nation and world to respond, then LOVE has to be our primary message.

Unfortunately, so many of us grew up in churches that preached a message of salvation rooted in fear. But that is not going to work in these days and times; for a world of people that are living in hell-on-earth right here and now, they cannot be bothered to fear a hell that is to come. What the world needs now more than ever is love. And God IS love. That's what we have to preach, teach, and reach them with. We will not win Gen Z kids and their millennial siblings back into the church with threats of future punishment and damnation. We will not win broken adults and confused children with judgment and an elitist, superiority-complex mindset. They've seen divorce and domestic violence in their families. They have witnessed oppression and injustice in their neighborhoods. They have suffered the worst forms of corruption, perversion, and hypocrisy in every corner of society, from the palaces to the pulpits.

We will not win Gen Z kids and their millennial siblings back into the church with threats of future punishment and damnation.

So what is our job as witnesses of the kingdom? Well, simply put, I believe it is to provide evidence and testimonies of God's love. In John 13:35, Christ Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if you have love for one another". And in Matthew 22:39, He said, "Love your neighbour as yourself". John 3:16 (arguably the most popular Bible verse of all time) says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son..." And that right there is the entire story of



Christianity – one big love story of a Father trying to reconcile His children to Himself and willing to do whatever it took, even giving the ultimate sacrifice of death to make it happen. That is exactly what the world needs right now. Love. Not fear, or judgment, or prosecution, or the picking of sides, or the hurling of stones. Just love. That reckless, overwhelming, never-ending agape love of God. To know that there is a God who truly loves them, and He has some children who do too.

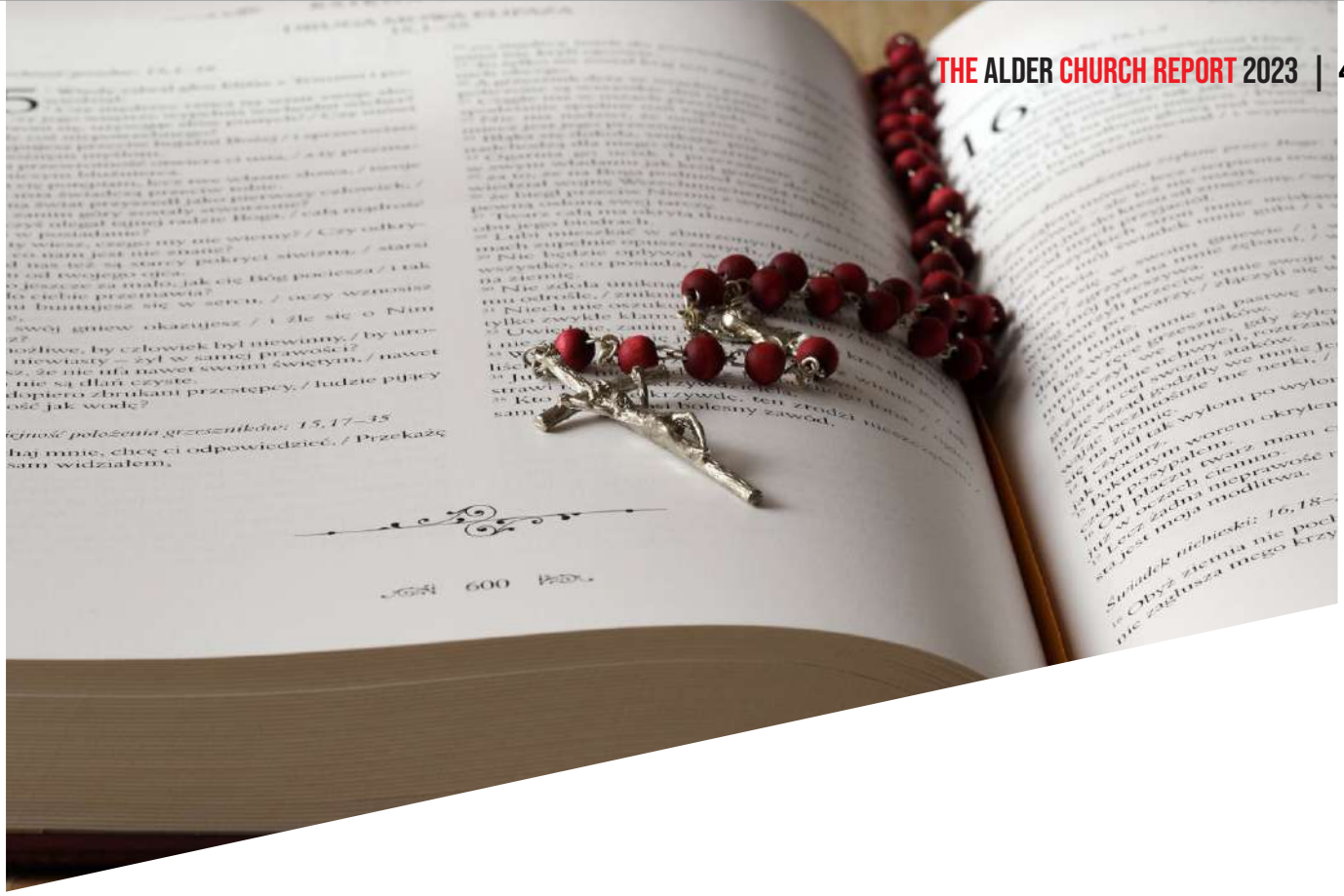
Our churches need to go back to being the headquarters of God's love—safe havens where a tired, depressed, lost world can come to and feel seen, accepted, and truly loved. They get enough judgment, hypocrisy, vile and vitriol everywhere else. They must experience something different in God's house. They must get a chance to "know the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge". When they finally realise that nothing can separate them from the love of God, then maybe they will stop running from it. After all, the scriptures say "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me". So when we run from God, it is not punishment we are running from; it is His goodness and mercy. Perhaps that is why the Bible says it is "the goodness of God that leads you to repentance".

Our churches need to go back to being the headquarters of God's love – safe havens where a tired, depressed, lost world can come to and feel seen, accepted, and truly loved.

Here is hoping that the true witnesses of the kingdom, the ambassadors of God's family - the Church will rise to the occasion and get back to our original job description. It is not our job to judge people. It is not even our job to change them. It is our job to love them and let God do the work of saving, healing, and ultimately changing them.

"And these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love." The love of God. That is it. That is the job.

Olubankole "Banky W" Wellington is an Entrepreneur, Filmmaker, Musician, Pastor, Politician and Philanthropist.



DO NIGERIANS NEED RELIGION?

by Subomi Plumptre

Do Nigerians need religion? For the average Nigerian, this might come across as a trick question. For them, the answer would be obvious, and this is because the average Nigerian is religious.

The often-quoted claim that Nigerians are one of the happiest people on earth may largely be attributed to the hope that comes from their religious faith, and as many Nigerians of all classes say daily, “God dey”.

According to a report by the Council on Foreign Relations, in a recent poll of Nigerians, among the 28% of respondents who claimed to be immune to COVID-19, nearly half attributed their confidence to faith in God.

Islam and Christianity, which spread into West Africa from other regions, are the dominant religions in Nigeria. There is yet a significant portion of the population who subscribe to traditional African religion, often in conjunction with or under the cloak of the dominant major religions.

National and Social Perspectives

Beyond faith as a personal affair, however, this piece aims to tackle the question from broader national and social perspectives. Thus, the question may be rephrased as, “Does Nigeria need religion to achieve the fundamental objectives and principles of State?”

Attempts have been made to answer the question of whether religions benefit society by seeing if there were any differences in the rate of growth between nations where religion is practiced and those nations that prohibit or limit freedom of worship.

America, Israel, Germany, Norway, Denmark, and the UK—all countries representing the gold standard in economic growth and development—are notable examples of countries where Christian religion is fundamental to their way of life.

In contrast, it is argued that countries with restricted religious freedom like Russia, Japan, and China have shown mixed results. Japan had delayed economic growth but shot up in the 20th century with massive technological breakthroughs. Russia has not shone forth like other countries of its age due to Communism, a political ideology that more or less replaced religion for a long time and undermined economic growth and development. Although China has become a recent economic miracle, its economic liberalisation, which mimicked the western course of development, happened because of the toning down of communism and better religious tolerance.

Perhaps no sharper side-by-side contrast can be found than that which exists between North Korea and South Korea, with the North having a significantly slower pace and quality of economic development than the exceptionally rapid growth in South Korea (which has one of the largest churches in the world).

Even in a highly religious society like Nigeria, there are those who argue that religion has done more harm than good.

The Nigerian Reality

Back home in Nigeria, the role of religion in economic development is rated with opposing views and responses. Even in a highly religious society like Nigeria, there are those who argue that religion has done more harm than good.

The Nobel Laureate, Wole Soyinka, during a discussion with an academic counterpart, singled out religion as the primary problem hindering Nigerians from being liberated as “rational beings.”

In his words, “Religion has become the number one problem for Nigerians. Hope is all very well but hope itself can become putrid. Especially if it is hope for unearned advantages in society. If religion becomes an excuse for flouting the law, then that religion has got to be tackled head-on.”

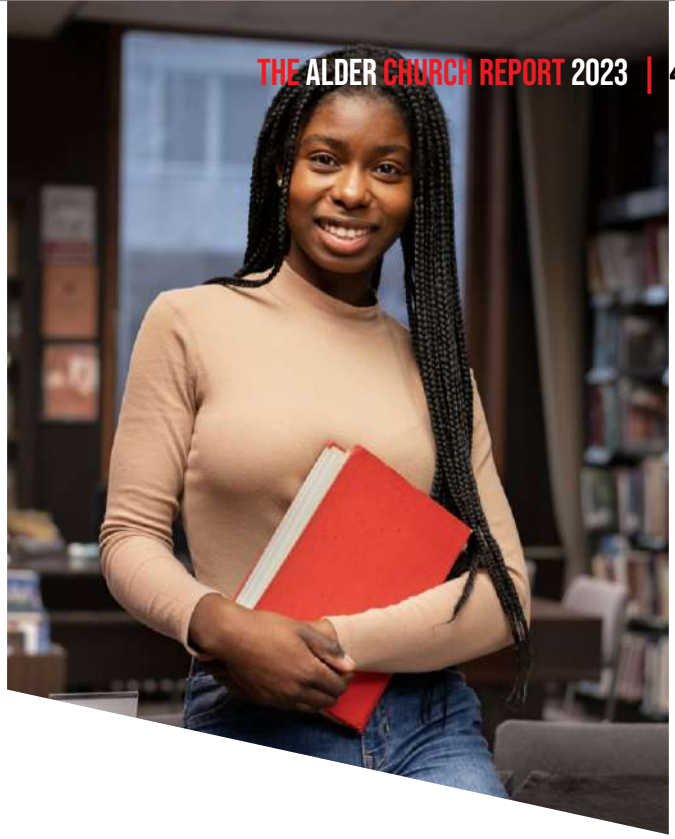
His position, while not condemning religion, speaks to the tendency for it to be manipulated to unlawful ends by those in positions of political and religious influence. Examples of such range from religion being used to manipulate and exploit adherents to actual terrorism, as typified by the case of Boko Haram.

The Role of Christianity in Nigeria

According to a policy brief on The Impact of Ethnic and Religious Diversity on Nigeria’s Development Priorities by the Berkley Centre for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, there are four predominant Christian groups in Nigeria - Protestant, African Christian, Roman Catholic, and marginal or unaffiliated Christian.

Research shows that religion has played significant roles in the socio-cultural and economic development of Nigeria. This assertion shall be examined through the lens of the main indicators of development, particularly education, health, employment rates, and gender equality.





Education

If there is one sector in which the church in Nigeria has made a significant impact, it is education.

As far back as 1843, Methodist missionaries started the first primary school in the region now known as Nigeria. By this token, they effectively introduced formal education in Nigeria. A few years later, in 1854, Christian missionaries started CMS Grammar School in Lagos, which became the first secondary school in Nigeria.

Investment in education is not exclusive to the early missions and orthodox church initiatives, though. There has been a significant contribution to education among key members of the more recent post-colonial Pentecostal churches.

An example that readily comes to mind is the Living Faith Church, which has a conglomerate of nursery, primary, and secondary schools with branches all over the nation. Not unlike the Assemblies of God (AOG), which are reported to have a network of secondary schools tied to

Research shows that religion has played significant roles in the socio-cultural and economic development of Nigeria.

their many branches and reported to be among the best in the country with boarding houses.

Like Living Faith Church, which established Landmark and Covenant Universities, AOG established Evangel University, adding to 38 church and ministry-owned universities in Nigeria, with at least 15 more awaiting approval as of August 2023.

Other notable examples of these church-sponsored universities include Babcock University (7th-day Adventist), Benson Idahosa University (Church of God Mission), Bowen University (Nigerian Baptist Convention), Crawford University (Apostolic Faith Mission), Anchor University (Deeper Life Bible Church), Mountain Top University (Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries), Madonna & Caritas Universities (Rev. Fr. Ede), Kings University (Pastor M. Ashimolowo), Bingham University (Evangelical Churches Winning All-ECWA), McPherson University (Foursquare Gospel Church), and Pan African University (Opus Dei).

Apparently, the church may appear to be single-handedly building Nigeria's private university system.

These efforts are sometimes criticised for relatively higher tuition fees, limited financial aid, less diversity, and, in some cases, lesser than claimed quality.

The pros, however, far outweigh the cons. They include better facilities, smaller class sizes, more flexible programmes, strong alumni networks, better access to exchange programmes, a stable school calendar, and generally higher quality education in most cases.

Healthcare

While it may be easier for some to associate the church's work in the area of health with miracles of healing, the church in Nigeria is arguably an indispensable part of the health care system.

Church missionaries established the first health care services for the people—a dispensary opened in 1880 by the Church Missionary Society in Obosi, followed by others in Onitsha and Ibadan in 1886.

The very first hospital established in Nigeria was Sacred Heart Hospital in Abeokuta, built by the Roman Catholic Mission in 1885. This was a good eight years before the establishment of the first government-owned hospital, Lagos Island Hospital, in 1893. By independence in 1960, mission-owned hospitals were more than government-owned hospitals.

These mission-owned hospitals laid the foundations of Nigeria's health care system today. For example, The Seventh Day Adventist Hospital in Ilesha and the Wesley Guild Hospital in Ile-Ife were the nuclei of the Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital.

As of May 2020, when the Catholic Bishops Conference donated all of its health facilities as isolation centres for COVID, they had donated a total of 425 such health facilities across the country.

As noted in a report by Health Action International, "Most mission sector health

While it may be easier for some to associate the church's work in the area of health with miracles of healing, the church in Nigeria is arguably an indispensable part of the health care system.

providers describe themselves as existing to serve the poor, marginalised, and unreached, and as such, the activities of these churches tend to be more concentrated and more significant in rural areas."

Social Welfare and Economic Empowerment

Research shows that many Christian religious organisations are actively involved in the empowerment of youth, women, and the vulnerable.

Gender Equality

Gender equality, in the context of Nigeria, is not a biological struggle for sex equality; rather, it is about giving both men and women equal opportunities to contribute expertise and competencies, regardless of gender.

The Church has, both historically and in more modern times, often been associated with the oppression of women and the promotion of inequalities and inequities in gender social life. Pre-existing patriarchal society values can be quite potent, for good or ill, when backed up with religious beliefs, dogmas, and intolerance.

According to some researchers, this is largely due to misinterpretation of Scripture. Scripture passages, though seemingly derogatory to women, merely reflect the exigencies of the culture and tradition of the times and the contexts of both the authors and interpreters (Uchem, 2005, p. 11).

As far back as the early 1990s, the church had already begun to be challenged to reflect on its role in oppressing women. In 1995, Pope John Paul II issued a manifesto on women's rights, in which he apologised for past discriminations against women. In a 19-page letter addressed to "women all over the world," he wrote: "As far as personal rights are concerned, there is an urgent need to achieve real equality in every area: equal pay for equal work, protection for working mothers, fairness in career advancement, equality of spouses with regard to family rights, and the recognition of everything that is part of the rights and duties of citizens in a democratic state. This is a matter of justice but also of necessity. Women will increasingly play a part in the solution of serious problems in the future."

Nigerian churches are often very active in providing support to widows, in line with Biblical injunctions, and have been responsible for the welfare of women exposed to various vulnerabilities such as domestic violence and economic disempowerment.

Good Governance

It is common to see partnerships between the



government and religious groups or faith-based organisations to disseminate programming to citizens.

According to a Chatham House report examining such government and faith-based partnerships aimed at addressing corruption, it argues that these partnerships are premised on a number of assumptions, including:

1. that integrity and ethics are central to the belief systems of the major religions practiced in Nigeria (Christianity and Islam), and
2. that religious people are more likely to behave according to ethical standards established and expected by those belief systems.

However, a 2012 study of the politics of religion and corruption found that religion contributed to reducing corruption only in contexts where the public has strong democratic values and views corruption as destructive to democratic governance.

Conclusion

So back to the question at hand: do Nigerians need religion?

A most popular quote on the subject is the one by Karl Marx, who asserted that "religion is the opium of the people". This quote is often called upon to allude to the negative effects of religion. However, this is arguably a misinterpretation of Marx's intended meaning.

For one thing, some have argued that, at the time of this claim, opium was legal and was widely used to relieve pain. So, Marx was not arguing that religion was some kind of addictive drug that caused people to behave in an unreasonable manner. Rather, he was arguing that religion was a comfort to people who were suffering.

A fuller rendition of the quote, with its pre-text, reads thus: "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people".

In light of the above, this author submits that while religion in Nigeria has not come without its challenges, its benefits to Nigerian society are more overwhelming. Overall, religion, especially the Church, has acted as a social safety net, giving succour to the oppressed and imbuing a soul to a society that would otherwise be numbed by sundry societal evils.

This author humbly submits that religion, at least as far as the church is concerned, has done more good than harm, and thus Nigerians do need religion.

—

Subomi Plumptre is a social entrepreneur and co-founder of Volition Cap, a SEC-licensed asset management firm working to bring financial prosperity to middle-class Africans and Diasporans.



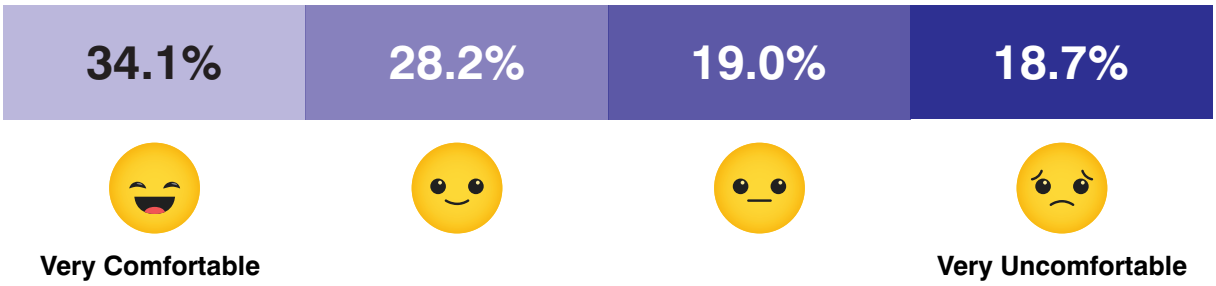
The Clergy

SECTION SEVEN

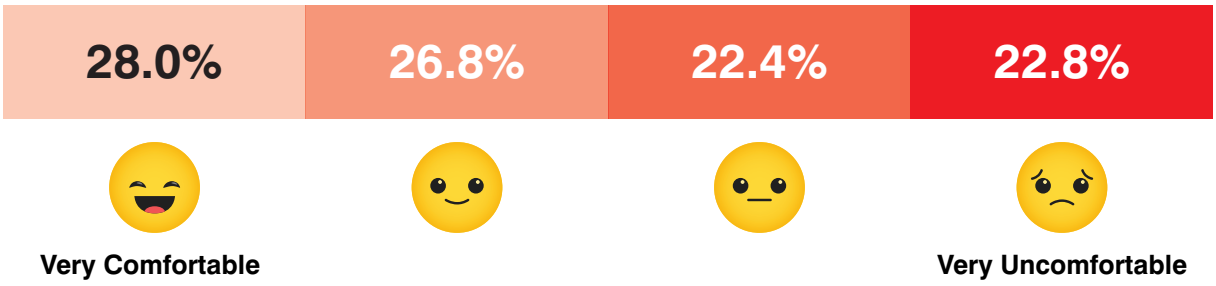
THE CLERGY

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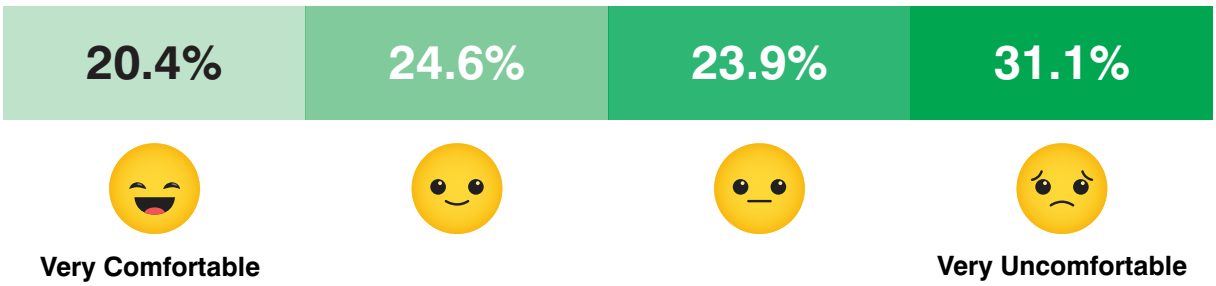
I am going through a divorce



I am a victim of sexual violence



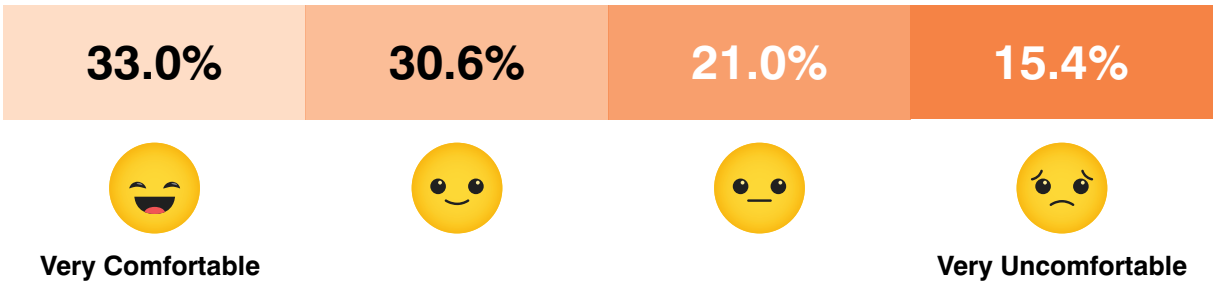
I have been unfaithful to my wife or husband



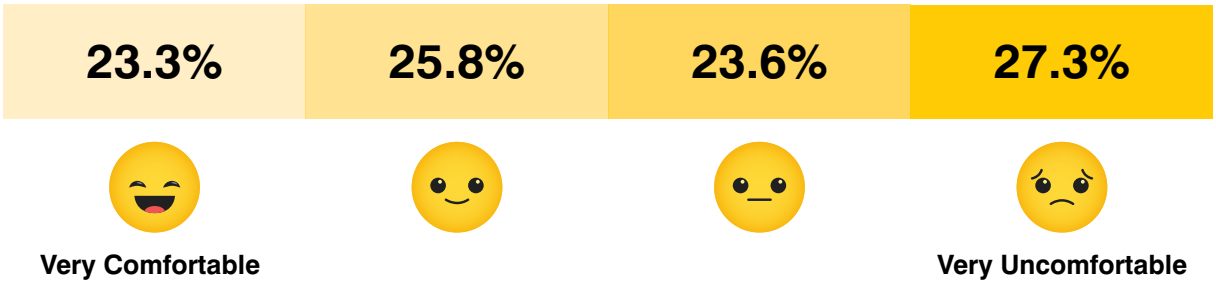
THE CLERGY

How comfortable would you be discussing the following with your Pastor/Clergy?

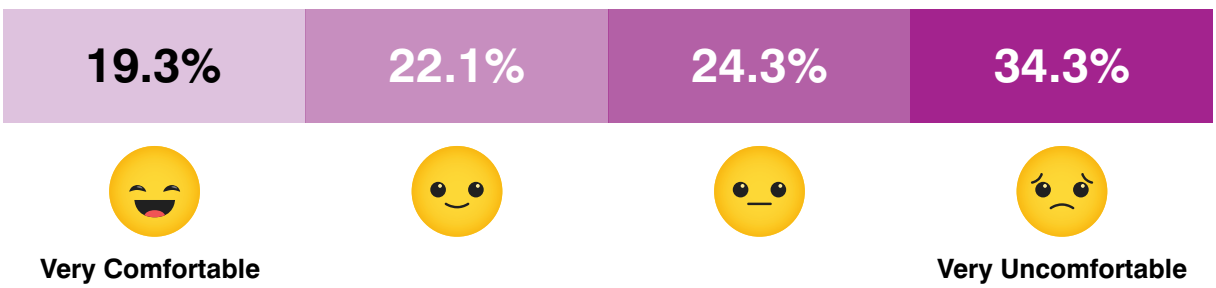
I am going through depression



I'm pregnant out of wedlock/ I have impregnated someone out of wedlock



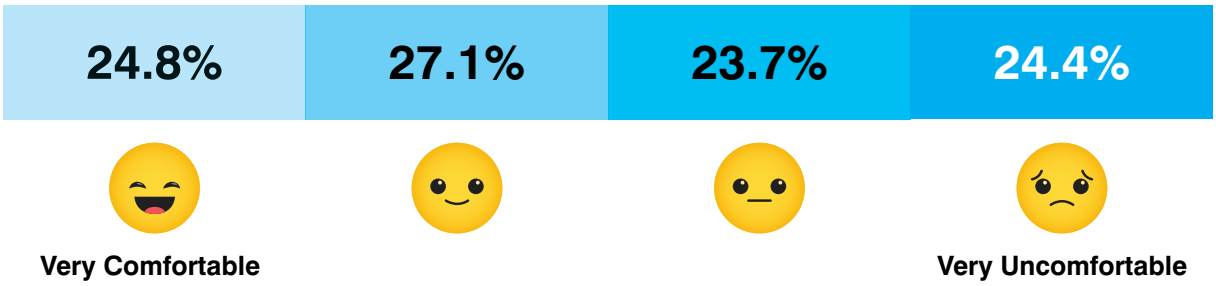
I am addicted to sex, porn or masturbation



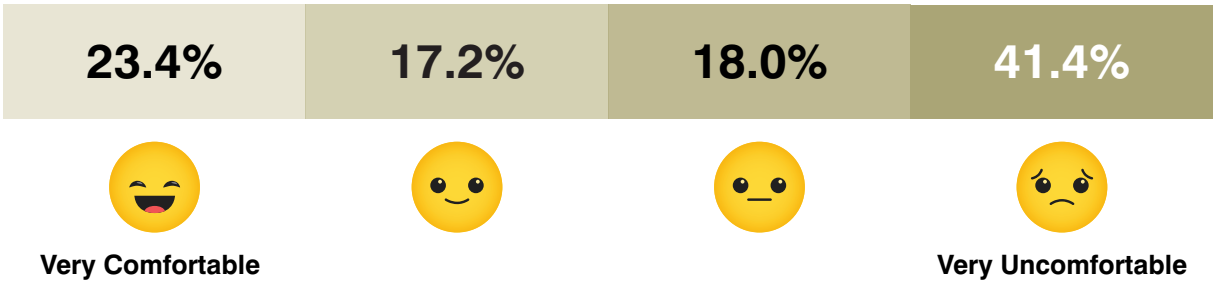
THE CLERGY

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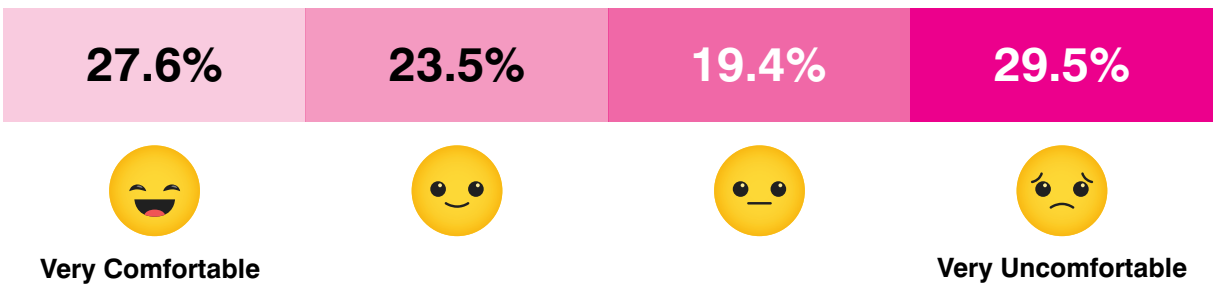
I am addicted to alcohol or drugs



I am a member of the LGBTQIA+ community

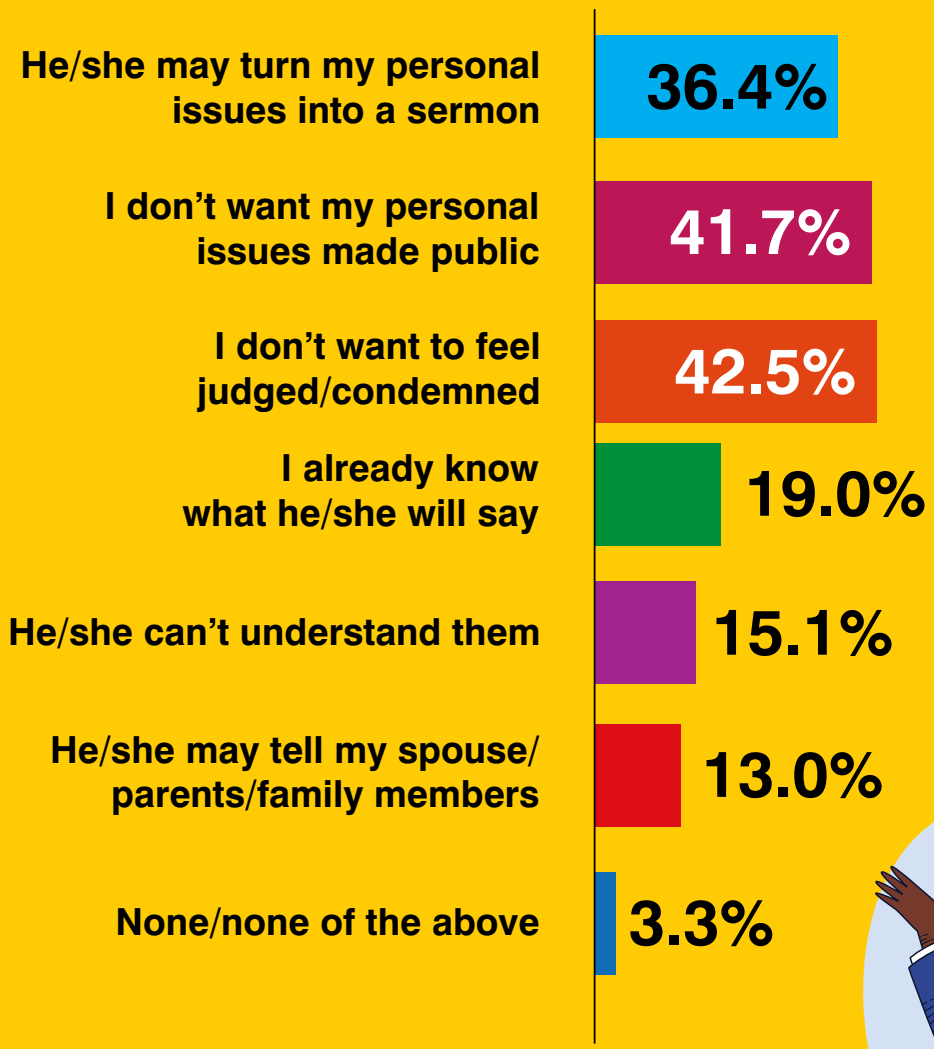


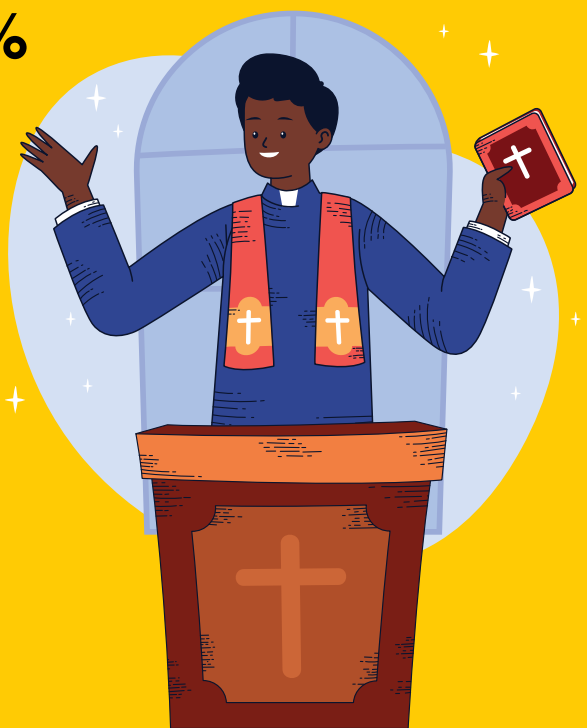
I am HIV positive



THE CLERGY

What are your concerns, if any, about discussing personal issues with your Pastor/Clergy?



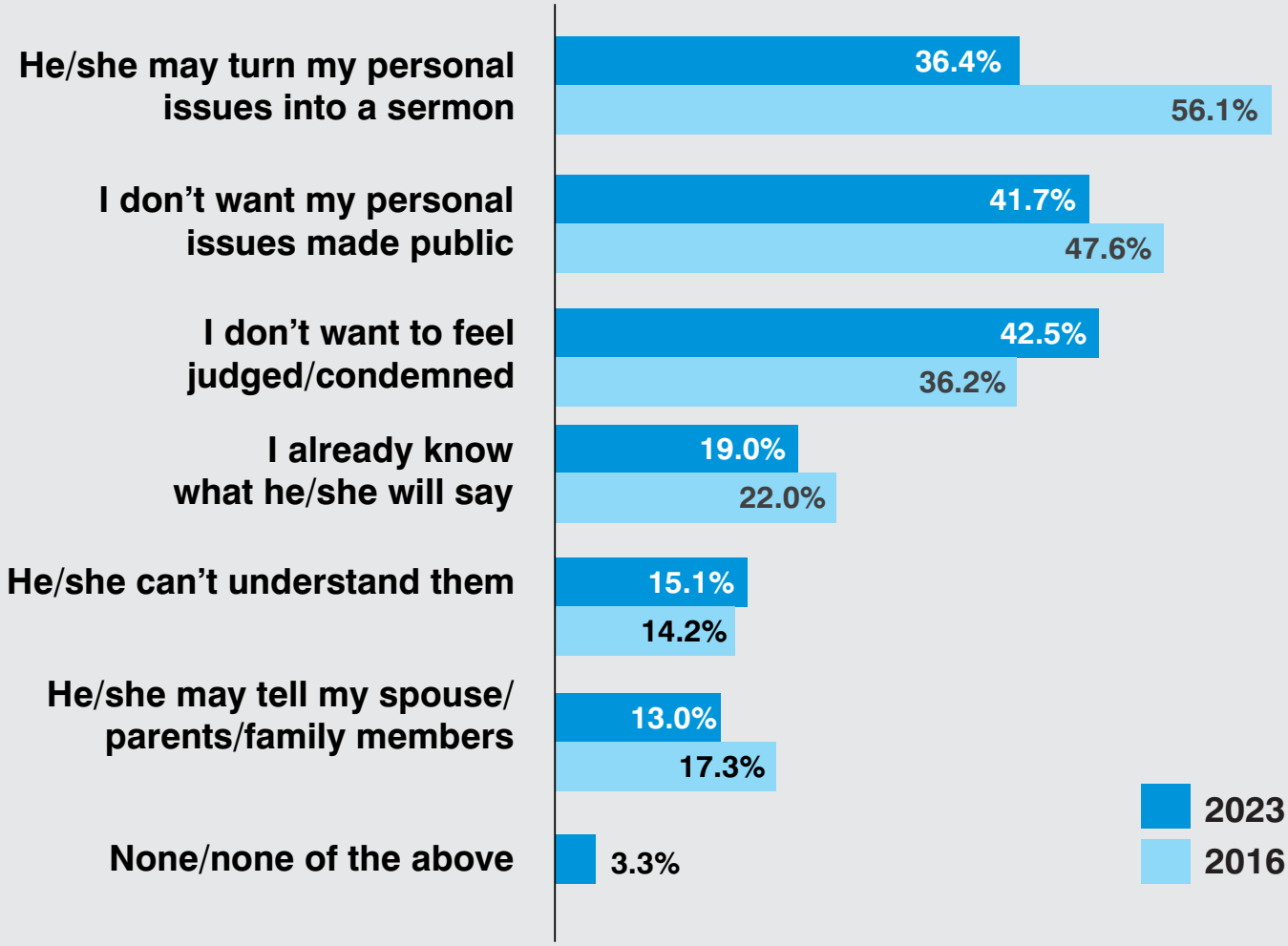


Respondents were asked to select all applicable options.

THE CLERGY
Comparison

What are your concerns, if any, about discussing personal issues with your Pastor/Clergy?

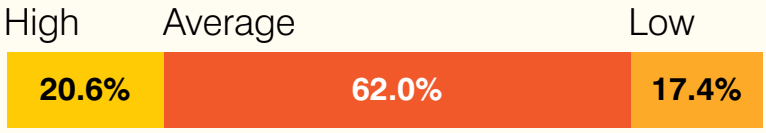
2023 v 2016



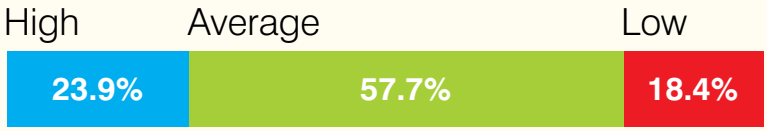
The results show an increase in the number of people who do not want to feel judged by their Pastor or Clergy. This raises an important question: has the Church become more judgmental and condemnatory?

THE CLERGY

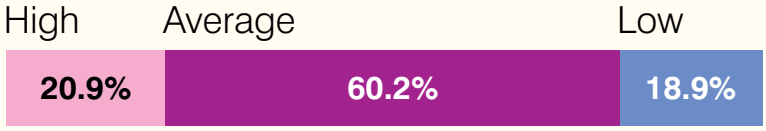
How will you rate Nigerian Pastors/Clergy on the following issues?



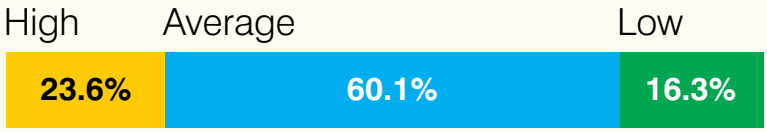
Honesty & Integrity



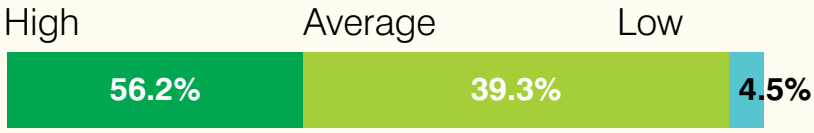
Care & Concern



Discretion & Confidentiality

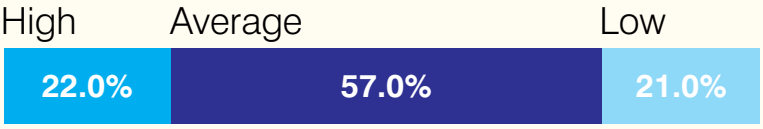


Ethics & Morality

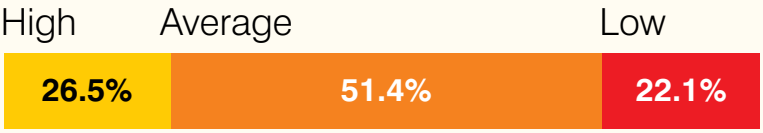


Knowledge of the Word

THE CLERGY



Financial Stewardship



Prophecy

Other than ‘Knowledge of the Word', where respondents rated the Clergy highly, the majority of respondents opted for average in respect of the other issues.

The results require the Clergy to conduct a self-analysis, especially in areas they rate themselves highly. The Clergy need to ask how they can increase trust levels.

Trust is a vital ingredient in the success or failure of any relationship; trust is the oil that lubricates the wheel of human relationships. Trust is the foundation for leadership, and when members of an organisation trust the leader and believe that the leader's intentions are for the benefit of the organisation as a whole, they are more likely to strive for organisational goals. It behoves any leader that wants to succeed in his or her leadership to promote a culture of trust amongst his or her team members. The Church as a community of believers will not be very effective without trust as part of its values.

PROMOTING A CULTURE OF TRUST

by Pastor Nike Adeyemi



Building a trust-based relationship requires credibility, reliability, intimacy, and reduced focus on oneself (Maister, Green, & Galford, 2000). Trust needs to be reinforced periodically so that the leader can continue to establish his or her image reflecting integrity, competence, openness, and consistency. When followers feel they can count on their leader, they are more likely not to want to let down their leader or team (Sosik & Jung, 2018, p. 79). Patrick Lencioni, an author and leadership expert, considers the absence of trust to be the number one cause of dysfunction in a team. That means any team that lacks trust will malfunction, whether it is a marriage, family, church, corporate organisation, or nation.

Reasons for the Absence of Trust

1. When a leader's actions contradict his or her words

Actions speak louder than words. Trust can be lost when members realise that the leaders' expressed values do not align with their actions (Grojean, Resick, Dickson, and Smith, 2004, p. 225). Such leaders are considered to be hypocritical, like the religious leaders of Jesus' day, whose actions contradicted their teachings (Matthew 23: 2-3).They lack credibility, which is one of the key components of trust.

2. When gossip thrives

Gossip is a conversation or report about other persons in their absence that is unkind, negative, and disapproving. Gossip kills trust among any group of people because of the damage it causes to the character and reputation of the person being discussed. A culture that encourages gossip will cause division and contention within the group or organization. Proverbs 11:13 says, 'a gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret'. Allowing a gap in the dissemination of important information gives room for people to fill in the gaps and creates distrust as the information is distorted through informal channels.

Any team that lacks trust will malfunction, whether it is a marriage, family, church, corporate organization, or nation.

3. Trauma from previous experience
People join groups, organisations, or churches from previous ones. Some have experienced betrayals in any of such groups or relationships in which they were involved in the past. The trauma from such a bad experience can inhibit their ability to trust others. It will take a lot of effort and a show of genuine love for them to experience healing so they can trust again.

4. Environment and default culture
Trust requires honesty and open communication. However, some of our environments and default cultures do not encourage people to speak their minds or confront others with love and respect. This conflict between the default culture, which is probably fear-based, and the culture of open communication may affect trust in the church as members come in with their various cultural backgrounds. Our environments and cultures sometimes encourage suspicion and distrust. According to Sherwood Lingenfelter, Senior Professor of Anthropology at the School of Intercultural Studies and Provost Emeritus of Fuller Theological Seminary, USA, "Because people rely on their cultural understandings for meanings, security, and significance, cultural differences have inherent power on human relationships to foster fear and mistrust" (2008, p. 20). The conflict over the admittance of non-Jewish believers into the Christian fold (Acts 11; Acts 15, Galatians 2:10–12) is a demonstration of the power of culture over human relationships.

What to do to promote the culture of trust
When trust is lacking, the leader as well as the members of the team must do something about it to bring back trust into the team. Here are the steps.

Trust requires honesty and open communication. However, some of our environments and default cultures do not encourage people to speak their minds, or confront others with love and respect.

1. Be trustworthy
A person who is not trustworthy should not expect to be trusted. The lack of integrity and authenticity are some of the issues plaguing leadership in our world today. That includes leaders in the Church. Very often, we see screaming headlines about corruption, moral failures, corporate failures, etc. Many followers desire a leader they can trust who is authentic and ethical. From a survey of over 100,000 business and government executives from nations worldwide, James Kouzes and Barry Posner, transformational leadership experts, established that honesty is the number one leadership characteristic selected the most in their surveys. When followers can establish that the leader is honest, their trust level goes up. Being trustworthy is one of the values of Christianity. As taught by Jesus Christ in Matthew 5:37, "Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No" (NIV).

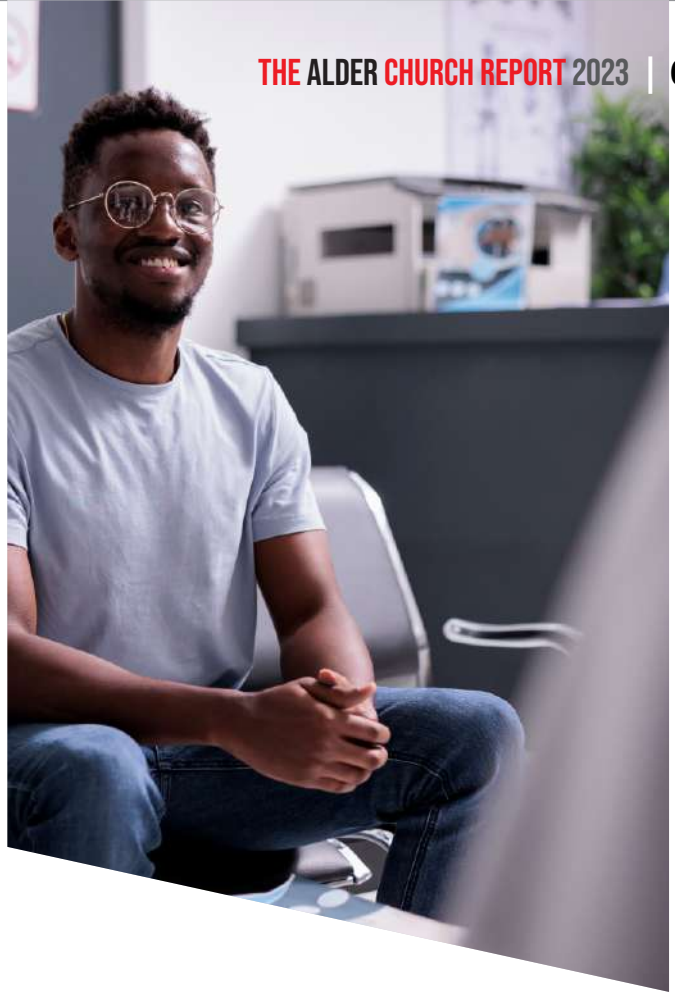
2. Create an atmosphere of mutual respect
Mutual respect means that everyone is considered important and treated as such. The scripture encourages that we honour all humans (1 Peter 2:17). We must respect people from different backgrounds, with different

perspectives, different personalities, and different approaches to an issue. People should be allowed to express themselves at meetings or during conversations without being shut down or treated with disdain. Creating an atmosphere of mutual respect involves acknowledging and celebrating the strengths and uniqueness of the various persons and groups in the church community or within our various teams.

3. Encourage open communication and discourage gossip

Gossip creates bad blood and promotes distrust. The Bible encourages that when there is conflict or disagreement among members of a church, the offended brother should go and speak with the perceived offender with the aim of resolving the offence or their difference. At Daystar Christian Centre, we do not encourage gossiping. Right from inception, it was the decision of the senior pastor that if someone comes to talk about another person, we will ask the person making the report or complaint whether he or she is willing to repeat what he or she is saying in the presence of the person being spoken about; if not, we cannot rely on his/her statements or continue with the conversation. The purpose was to kill the culture of gossip and encourage the resolution of offences or disagreements in a Christian way. One of the statements in our membership pledge taken during membership induction says, "I will not gossip". This is part of our effort to kill gossip in our church and promote open

Many followers desire a leader they can trust who is authentic and ethical.



communication. Open communication promotes unity, and unity is one of the greatest desires of Christ for His Church. Jesus said in John 17:21 (NLT), "I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me". Unity or oneness will be difficult to achieve in the absence of trust. Open communication also involves addressing "the elephant in the room". In Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 6, the alleged discrimination against the Hellenist Jews was the 'elephant in the room' and the Apostles addressed it openly. Organisational and team leaders must answer questions honestly, take responsibility when mistakes happen, and learn from them.

4. Be vulnerable with your team

One of the reasons followers find it difficult to trust their leader is when the leader pretends about his or her strengths and weaknesses. When a leader is open to his or her team, it

encourages them to also be open and accept responsibility when they fail or are not meeting certain expectations. To the followers, such a leader embraces his or her humanity and is in a good position to empathize with the strengths and personal weaknesses of followers. As a result, trust increases. The disciples of Jesus knew He was troubled, he told them. They knew when He was tired and needed rest; He did not pretend about it.

5. Walk in Love

CS Lewis, a British writer, literary scholar, and Anglican lay theologian, identified love as one of the seven cardinal values. Jesus Christ emphasised the importance of love among His followers when He taught that love is the factor that distinguishes them as His disciples (John 13:35). Where love is in full operation, trust will be high; when the leader and members of a team demonstrate love among themselves, it will gradually eliminate gossip, suspicion, fear, and distrust. Apostle Paul taught that love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres (1 Corinthians 13:3–4; NIV).

Trust is built over time; it is an essential part of friendship and authenticity. Even in business, trust is among the reasons customers continue to patronize a particular company or product. Trust plays a critical role in organisations because an organisation comprises various forms of relationships. A trust culture will enhance team bonding and team performance. Trust will boost the relationship between an organisation and its customers. With regards to the Church, community members and non-believers will reject the Church if her leaders and members cannot be trusted. So trust is so critical to internal and external success.

When a leader is open to his or her team it encourages them to also be open and accept responsibility when they fail or are not meeting certain expectations.

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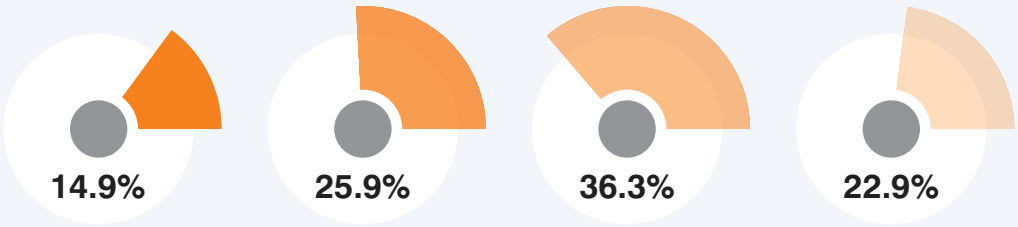
Impact of the Church

SECTION EIGHT

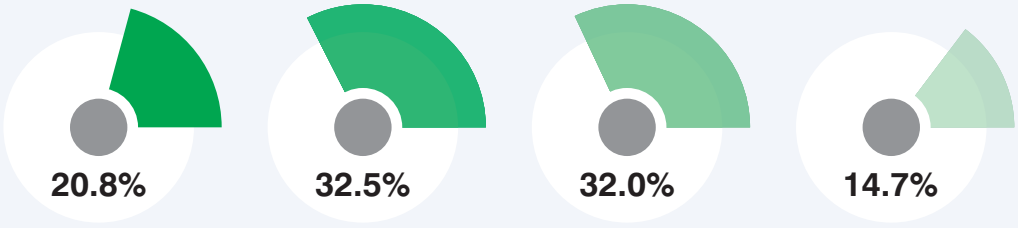
IMPACT OF THE CHURCH

How impactful has the Church been?

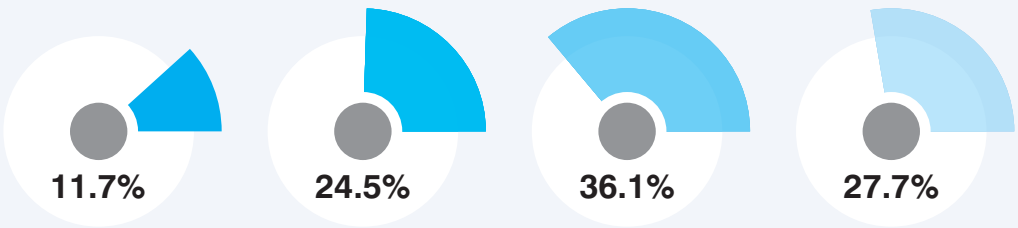
Lending A Voice To Burning Issues In Nigeria



Shaping morality and values



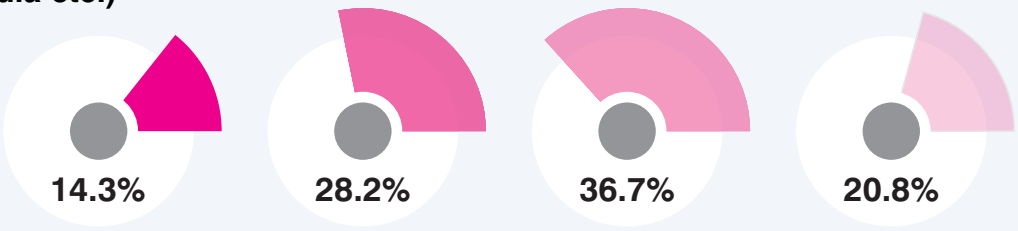
Promoting good governance



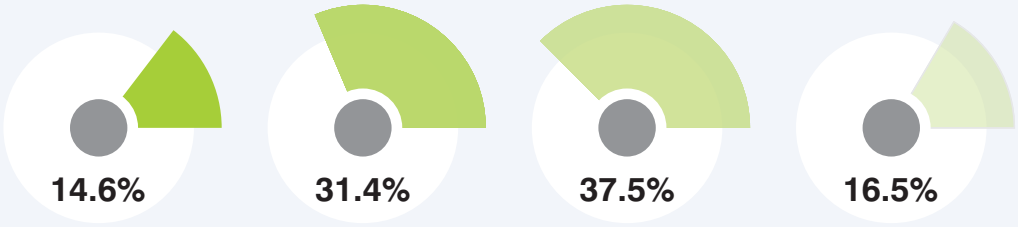
IMPACT OF THE CHURCH

How impactful has the Church been?

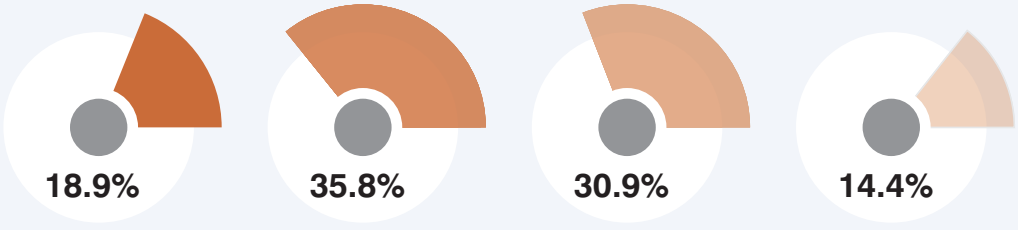
Moulding culture (music, fashion, movies, social media etc.)



Helping businesses grow

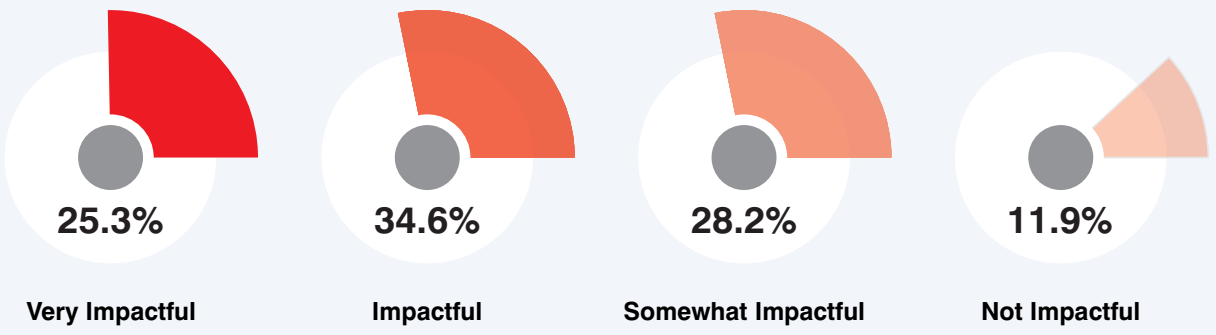


Helping the youth maximize their potential



IMPACT OF THE CHURCH
Continued

How impactful has the Church been in helping the poor and disadvantaged in society?



The results suggest limited visibility of the role of the Church in helping the poor and disadvantaged. However, research by Alder Consulting shows that churches are heavily engaged in their local communities and helping the poor and disadvantaged (please see the Church Good Deeds Report 2019).

The results raise two possibilities: (a) Christians may assume that the Church is required to help the poor and disadvantaged and will only credit the Church in the face of extraordinary interventions, or (b) there is a communication problem on the part of churches.

It may be that churches don't publicise their good deeds because of the right-hand, left-hand principle, as enumerated in Matthew 6:3–4. But churches should recognise that motivation and modes of communication play a key role in these matters. Further, communicating the work done for the poor and disadvantaged in the community provides political and social protection for the Church.

GENDER SEXUALITY & THE CHURCH

by Dr. Oyinkansola Alabi

The interplay of Gender, Sexuality, and the Church is a complex and dynamic web that will continue to evolve throughout history. Given the growing fluidity of gender and sexual diversity, it is imperative to establish the definitions, the Church's position, and its contribution to this dynamic and evolution because whatever you cannot define correctly, you cannot utilise accurately. Definition is pivotal to understanding concepts. So, it is crucial to check the root word of every concept, the first time the word is used, and its evolution. Let's start with Gender.

The etymology of the word GENDER is derived from the Latin word genus, which means "birth, family, nation," and the Old French word *gendre*. Gender, therefore, means how you were born. The state of your sexuality from birth. Using the masculine and feminine genitals to judge this, it will be easy to say we are born either as male or female. But these days, the definition of gender is evolving and using genitals to define gender is no longer enough.

In 2023, gender is widely used to define a range of identities that do not necessarily fit into the traditional categories of male and female. We now have identities such as transgender, non-binary, cisgender, androgen, intersex, polygender, and many more.

Next is the word SEXUALITY. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, sexuality is the quality or state of being sexual: the condition of having sex; sexual activity; the expression of sexual receptivity or interest, especially when excessive. Its definition has, however, now been extended to refer to multiple sexual orientations, including gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, queer, demisexual, and pansexual (LGBTQ+).

With these definitions, how does the Church intersect with GENDER AND SEXUALITY?

The etymology of the word 'church' is from Old English, which means cirice, "place of assemblage set aside for Christian worship; the body of Christian believers, Christians collectively; ecclesiastical authority or power," from Proto-Germanic *kirika (source also of Old Saxon kirika, Old Norse kirkja, Old Frisian zerke, Middle Dutch kerke, Dutch kerk, Old High German kirihha, German Kirche). The word is also derived from the Greek word eklessias, which means "the called out", and its derivative from the Bible is from Matthew 16:18, when Christ said to Peter, "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."

The church has had a long history of influencing societal norms and behaviours, and its position about gender and sexuality is distinctively clear. To the church, the only genders founded by God are male and female; hence, the concept is unaffected by social evolution. However, the question the church needs to answer is: why is there a growing number of sexual identities in the church too? What should be done to church members who no longer identify as either male or female? Are some people truly born other than male and female?



Due to its unfaltering position on gender and sexuality, the Church faces an ideological barrier in connecting with a generation and society that increasingly perceives gender and sexuality as a fluid social construct and a means of expressing their authenticity.

In Genesis 1:26-27 "*God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the heavens, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So, God created man in his own image; in the image of God, he created him; male and female, he created them."*

In Gen 2:18–24: "*Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him. Now out of the ground, the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock, to the birds of the heavens, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam, there was not found a helper fit for him. So, the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept, he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man, he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, this at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman because she was taken out of man. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."*

Due to its unfaltering position on gender and sexuality, the church faces an ideological barrier in connecting with a generation and society that increasingly perceive gender and sexuality as a fluid social construct and a means of expressing their authenticity. It is now forced to contend with the conflict between its traditional values and evolving social constructs, which holds significant implications for the rights and well-being of multiple groups.

THE CHURCH'S RESPONSIBILITY AND OPPORTUNITY

In recent years, gender and sexuality have been viewed as spectrums of life and tools of power that people can define and modify to suit their individual needs.

For example, Nigeria's shifting views of gender and sexual orientations are a mirror of broader global trends that favour inclusivity and diversity. However, while discussions about sexuality and gender have become more mainstream, LGBTQ+ people are still persecuted and discriminated against in the country.

As a key institution in Nigerian society, the church can extend its influence beyond the walls and shape the views. To succeed, however, it must first look beyond its traditional methods of engaging with society and employ social intelligence.



1 Corinthians 9:19–23 says "*For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I become as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law; to them that are without the law, as without law (being not without law to God but under the law to Christ), that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you."*

In a survey conducted by the Alder Church Report in 2019, 4,634 Nigerians were asked what social concerns they wanted the church to address. 86% of the respondents, the highest percentage, wanted the church to engage young people in conversations about sex. 85% of respondents voted for domestic violence; drug abuse received 84% of the vote; depression received 84% of engagement the vote; unemployment received 84% of the vote; and rape and sexual abuse received 83% of the vote.

Similarly, when asked which sectors the church could make the biggest impact on in this generation, the highest vote was for teaching the word, with 92% saying teaching the word, 86% saying offering therapy, and 83% saying engaging people on social media. Job creation, economic assistance, and the establishment of more youth churches also received high votes.

20% of the respondents said they believed in and engaged in premarital sex, a 3% increase from the 2016 survey, and 15% said they used pornography; 2% were homosexuals; 1% masturbated; and 20% admitted to being addicted to sex.

The church also received decreased ratings for its impact on moulding culture, shaping morality and values, helping youths maximise their potential, and lending a voice to burning issues in Nigeria.

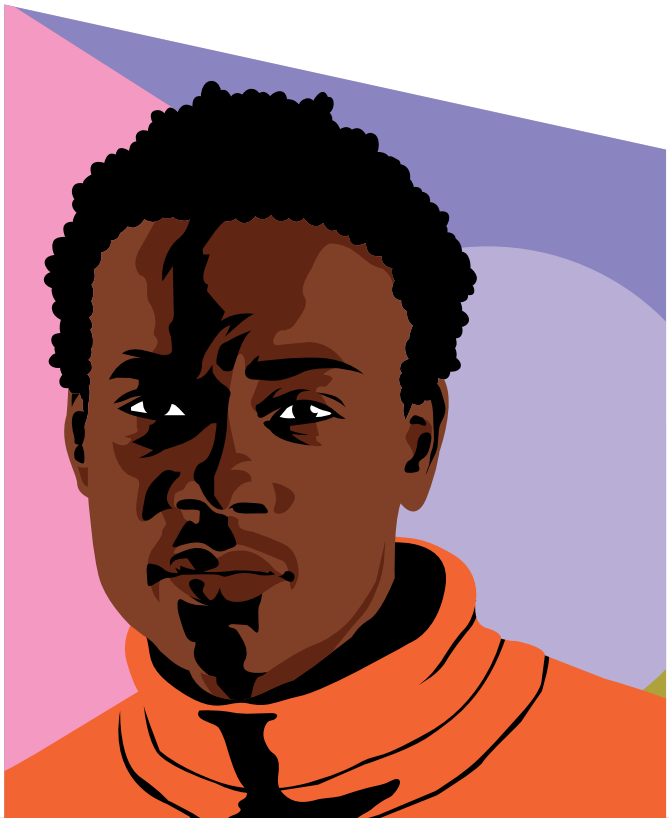
As a key institution in Nigerian society, the Church can extend its influence beyond the walls and shape views. To succeed, however, it must first look beyond its traditional methods of engaging with society and employ social intelligence.

There is no denying that the church has historically played a role in shaping societal norms. However, when people look outside of the church for community and solace, it may be because the church has failed to fill a void or, worse, is the catalyst of the void.

The church must understand that whatever you persecute grows, if the church can come to this awareness, it will design a way to understand and help the LGBTQ+ community.

After extensive research on genetic investigation of sexuality by science.org in 2019, the largest genetic investigation of sexuality ever, the study of nearly a half million people closes the door on the debate around the existence of a so-called "gay gene." The report finds that human DNA cannot predict who is gay or heterosexual and sexuality cannot be pinned down by biology, psychology, or life experiences.

To bridge the gap between its conventional disposition and shifting social perspectives on gender and sexuality, the church should take several steps:



Create Inclusive Structures
The church can establish systems and support networks for individuals that identify beyond the binary. This includes offering access to mental health practitioners for therapy and providing emotional, psychological, and spiritual tools for LGBTQ+ members. Christians can embrace multiple "ontological truths" concurrently. One can believe in the fundamental truths of male and female and acknowledge that God loves and cares about everyone.

Create Safe Spaces
The church should create safe environments for open and non-judgmental discussions about gender and sexual orientations, fostering understanding and empathy among its members while upholding the core principles of love, compassion, and acceptance found in scripture.

Prioritise Therapy
The church should emphasise the importance of therapy alongside prayer and worship, recognising that healing can be achieved through both spiritual and psychological means.

Offer Sex Education
Incorporating comprehensive sex education programmes within church communities can provide accurate information about sexual health, consent, and healthy relationships, especially for young people.

By fostering dialogue, offering community and support to young people, speaking out for human rights, and supporting gender equality, the Church can help create a society that is more inclusive and compassionate, where all individuals are valued and respected.

—

Dr. Oyinkansola Alabi is the founder of Emotions City



Methodology

SECTION NINE

PARTICIPATING CHURCHES

A

Adegbola Adeyemi Memorial Methodist Church
All Saints Anglican Church
All Souls Church (Anglican Communion)
Anglican Youth Church of Pentecost
Apostolic Faith Church
Apply Praise Ministry International
Archbishop Vining Memorial Church (AVMCC)
Ascension Catholic Church
Assemblies of God Church

B

Believer's Church
Believers Ministries Inc
Bethany Methodist Church
Brandon Baptist Church
Breakforth Assembly

C

C & S Church of Christ, The Worshippers Parish
Calvary Bible Church
Catholic Church of the Divine Mercy
Catholic Church of Transfiguration
Cedarcrest Church
Celebration Church International
Celestial Church of Christ
CentrePort Ministries International
Change Conversation Community
Chapel of Salvation
Charis Family International Church
Charismatic Renewal Ministries Inc
Cherubim and Seraphim Church
Christ Apostolic Church
Christ Apostolic Transformation Church
Christ Apostolic Youth Fellowship
Christ Embassy
Christ Evangelical and Prayer Ministry
Christ Family Ministry
Christ Gospel Mission International
Christ Pavilion Ministries International
Christ The Messiah Church
Christian Revival Church
Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN)
Church of God
Church of God Mission International
Church of the Assumption
Church of the Messiah
Church of the Resurrection
Circle Church Global
Citizens of Heaven
Citizens of Light Church
City Church Lagos
City Mission Methodist
Communion Christian Centre
Compassion & Wisdom Ministries Inc
Covenant Christian Center
Covenant Connect Church
Covenant Word Christian Centre

D

David City Tabernacle
David's Christian Centre
Dayspring Sanctuary International
Daystar Christian Centre
Deeper Life Christian Ministry
Dominion City Church
Dun Laoghaire Evangelical Church
Dunamis International Gospel Centre
Durban Christian Centre

E

Ebenezer Baptist Church
Eden Life Experience Center
Elevate Community Church
Emmanuel Chapel Methodist Cathedral
Ensign Church of Nations
Envoy Nation Leicester

PARTICIPATING CHURCHES

Evangelical Church Winning All (EWCA)
Excel Point Community Church

F

Faith Community Baptist Church (FCBC)
Faith Evangelical Bible Church
Faith Impact Church
Family Worship Centre
First Baptist Church
Firstlove Assembly
Fountain of Grace Chapel
Foursquare Gospel Church
Freeman Methodist Cathedral
Fresh Anointing International Church
Friends of God Fellowship
Futures Church

G

Garden of Destiny
Gbenga Samuel Wemimo Ministries International
Global Citizen Church
Global Harvest Church
Global Impact Church
Global Influence Continental Church
Globalheart Church
Glory Dawn Christian Center
God's Glorious Tabernacle of Witness
God's House of Refuge
God's Love Tabernacle International Church
Gospel Baptist Church
Gospel Pillars Ministry
Goye Pentecostal Mission International
Grace Assembly Church
Grace Baptist Church
Grace Chapel
Grace Court Global Church
Grace Court Impact Centre
Great House Christian Center
Great Impact Baptist church
Great Light Church
Greater Evangelism World Crusade
Guiding Light Assembly

H

Halifax Christian Church
Harvest House Christian Centre
Harvesters International Christian Centre
Helpline International Ministry
Hephzibah Word Ministries
He's Alive Chapel
High Places Christian Center
Higher Ground Baptist Church
Hillsong Church
His Dominion Chapel
His Word Christian Center
Hope Alive Christian Center
Hope of Life Assembly
House of Lights
House on the Rock
Household of God Church
Household of Love Church

I

Idode Methodist Church
IGEM Christ Covenant Church
Ijero Baptist Church
Ileri Oluwa Bible Church
Insight Bible Church
International Central Gospel Church

J

Jesus Christ Evangelical Ministry
Jesus House (RCCG)
Jesus Liberty Chapel
Jesus Praise Evangelical Ministries International
Jubilation Church International

PARTICIPATING CHURCHES

K
Kerith Community Church
Kingdom Hall (Jehovah's Witness)
King's Faith Assembly
Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC)
KingsWord Ministries International
Koinonia Baptist Church

L
Lakewood Church
Largefold International Church
Legacy Church
Liberation Ministry
Liberty Church
Life Communion Church
Lifegate International Church
Lifepointe Christian Church
Light Tribe
Lighthouse International Christian Centre
Living Faith Church
Living Faith Foundation
Living Souls Baptist Church
Living Word Fellowship Church
Livingspring Chapel International

M
MCN Church
Metamorphosis Christian Centre
Methodist Cathedral
Methodist Church Nigeria
Methodist Church Nigeria, Oke-Ita Local Church
Methodist Church of the Trinity
Moncton Wesleyan Church
Most Pure Heart of Mary Catholic Church
Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries

N
New Anointing Deliverance Ministries
New Covenant Church
New Estate Baptist Church
New Paradigm Global Church
New Testament Christian Mission International
Northpoint Community Church

O
Oasis of Love Church
Overcomers Church World Outreach
Oworu Memorial

P
Paseda Memorial Methodist Church
Patriarch Bolaji Methodist Cathedral
Peace House Baptist Church
Petra Christian Centre
Potter's House Assembly
Power City International

R
Rainbow Charismatic Centre
Realm of Glory International Churches
Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG)
Relentless Love Church
Resurrection Power Outreach Ministries
Revival House of Glory International Church (RHOGIC)
Rhema Chapel
Right Way Ministry
Rock Foundation Church
Royalty Christian Center

S
SaltCity Church
Salvation Ministries Church

PARTICIPATING CHURCHES

Scripture Pasture Christian Centre
Seventh-day Adventist Church
Shekinah Assembly Lagos
Simply Worship Int'l Ministry
SMA House of Formation
Solid Rock Baptist Church
Sought Out Church
Soul City Church
Sphere of Light Church
Spirit & Life Family Bible Church
St. Agnes Catholic Church
St. Alphonsus Catholic Church
St. Anthony Catholic Church
St. Barnabas Anglican Church
St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church
St. John Mary Vianney Catholic Church
St. Joseph Mukasa Catholic Church
St. Leo's Catholic Church
St. Matthew's Anglican Church
St. Paul's Church
St. Peter's Anglican Church
St. Philip's Anglican Church
St. Thomas Anglican Church
St. Timothy Anglican Church
St. Wilfrid's Catholic Church
Standard Life Intl Church
Streams of Joy International
Summit Bible Church
Supernatural Life Assembly
Sword of The Spirit Ministries
Sycamore Church

T

Talabi Coker Memorial Methodist Church
The Apostolic Church Nigeria
The Ark Chapel
The Baptizing Church
The Blueprint Church
The Capstone (Church Without Walls)
The Cave Church
The Citadel Global Community Church
The Commonwealth of Zion Assembly (COZA)
The Covenant Nation
The Cyber Embassy
The Discovery (Youth Arm of Global Harvest Church)
The Dream Centre
The Elevation Church
The Elevation Church, London
The Father's Church
The Fountain of Life Church
The Franchise Church
The Gospel Faith Mission International (GOFAMINT)
The Governing Church
The Grace Trybe
The Historic Miracle Centre, (CGMI)
The Kingdom Culture International Christian Centre
The King's Assembly
The Latter House Christian Center
The Lighthouse Church
The Lord's Chapel (RCCG)
The Magnificent Christ Assembly (TMCA)
The Master's Place International
The New Church
The OliveBrook Church
The Pneumatikos Church
The Potter's House
The Praise Church
The Radiant Church International
The Redeemed Evangelical Mission (TREM)
The StandPoint Church
The Transforming Church
The Waterbrook Church
This Present House
Trinity Baptist Church
Trinity Methodist Church

PARTICIPATING CHURCHES

Triumphant Nation Everywhere

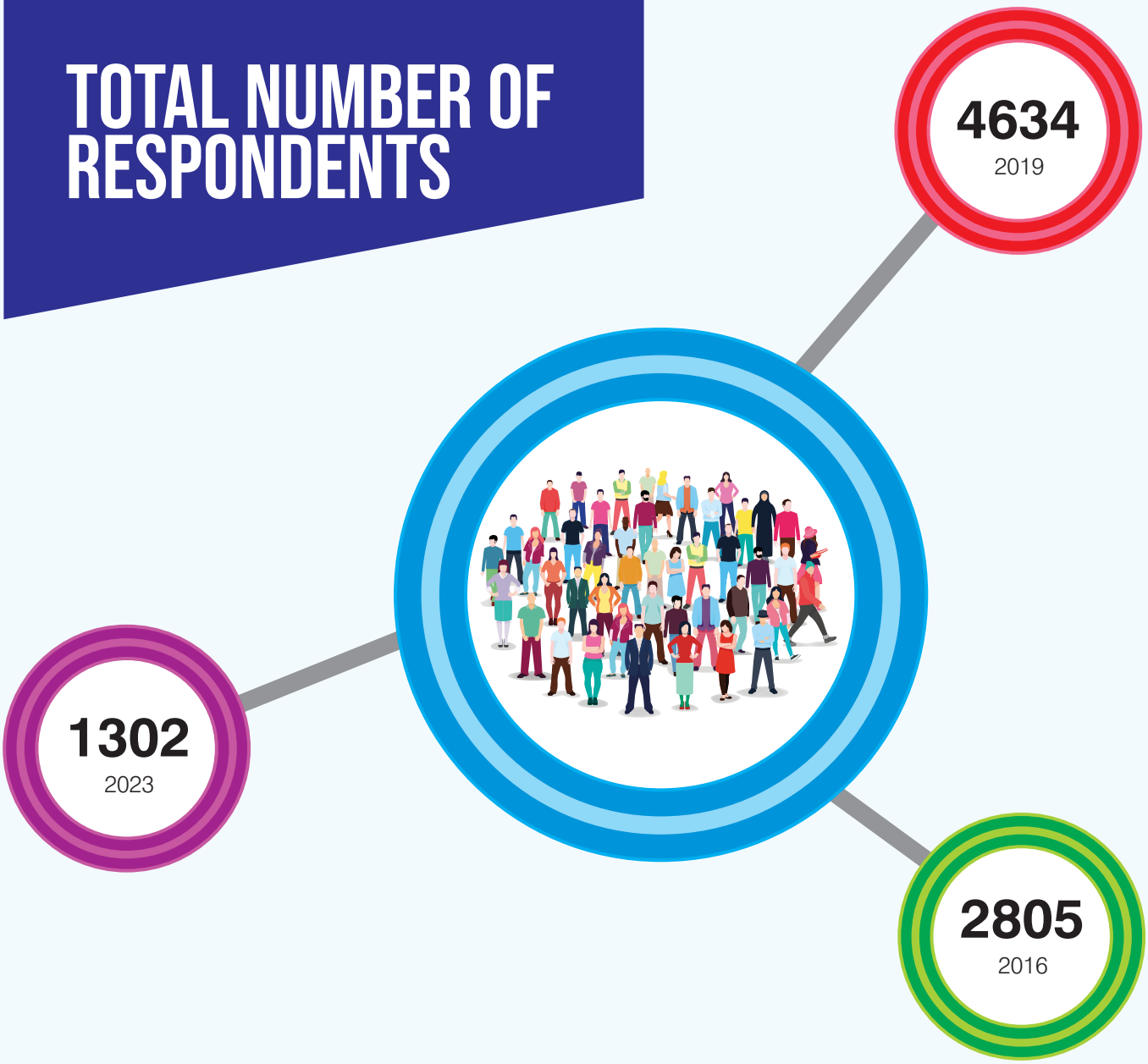
V

Victoria Fellowship Church
Vine Branch Church
Vine Church
Vine City Church

W

Wesley Cathedral
Wesley Chapel
Wesley Methodist Church
Westside Pentecostal Church
Williams Memorial Methodist Cathedral
Wonderland Baptist Church
Word of Faith Christian Church
Word Sanctuary
Worldlight Evangelical Ministries
Worship Tabernacle
Yaba Baptist Church

TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS

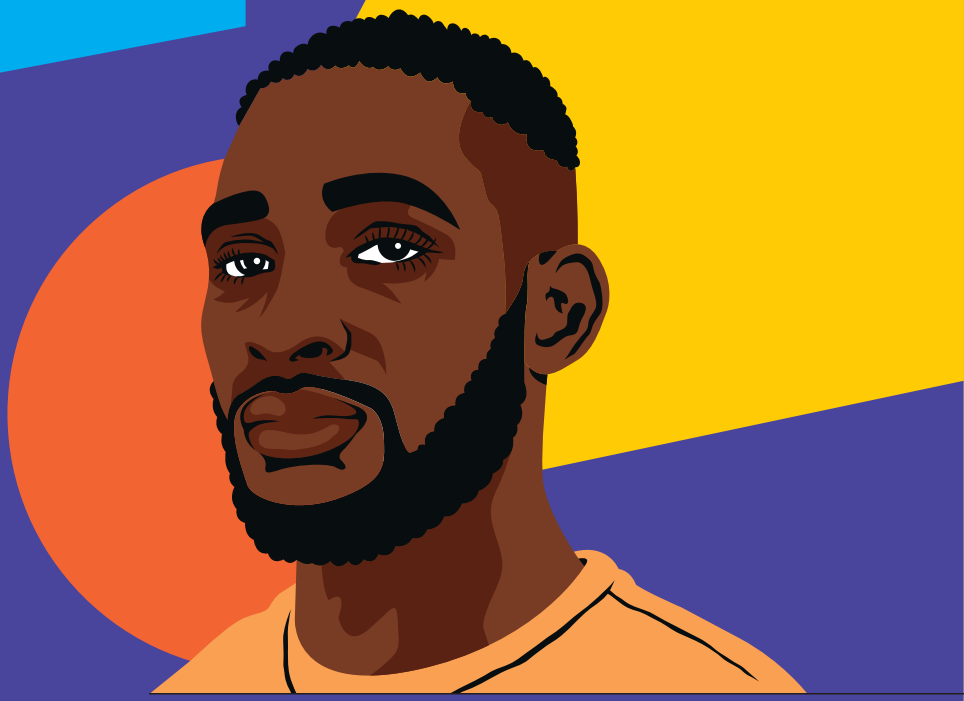


The Alder Church Survey launched in 2016, and the total number of respondents was 2,805. The number of respondents rose to 4,634 with the 2019 survey. In 2019, there were a lot of conversations surrounding the Church and topics like tithing were prominent.

However, 2023 saw a marked decline with 1,302 respondents. It would appear that the 2020 pandemic and the 2023 elections have had an effect on how people perceive and experience the Church. The pandemic era redefined how people attend church and, by extension, their engagement with the Church. The 2023 elections saw increased engagement with the political system by Christians, with the election cycle peppered with a range of prophecies, some of which did not materialise.

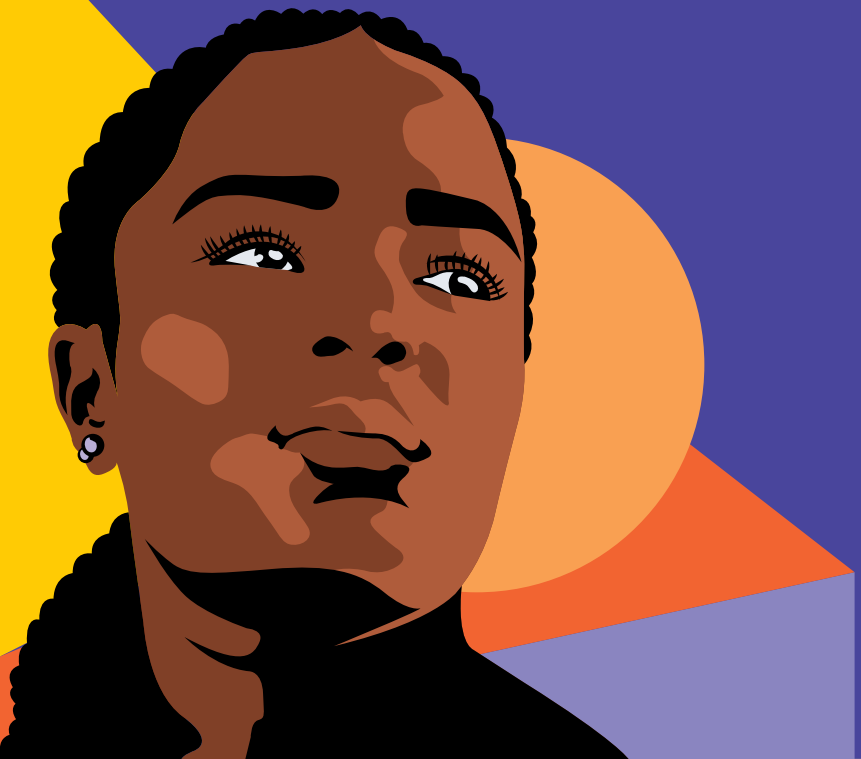
It is important to question what this means for the Church. Do the number of respondents signify less interest in the affairs of the Church by Christians? Could it signal a temporary state of apathy? Or could it be that the reduction in attacks on the Clergy has led to a decrease in conversations about the Church?

GENDER



Male

2023 **59.4%**
2019 **53%**
2016 **58%**



Female

2023 **40.6%**
2019 **47%**
2016 **42%**

AGE RANGE



Below 18

0.2%



18-25

10.2%



26-35

44.1%



36-45

32.2%



46-55

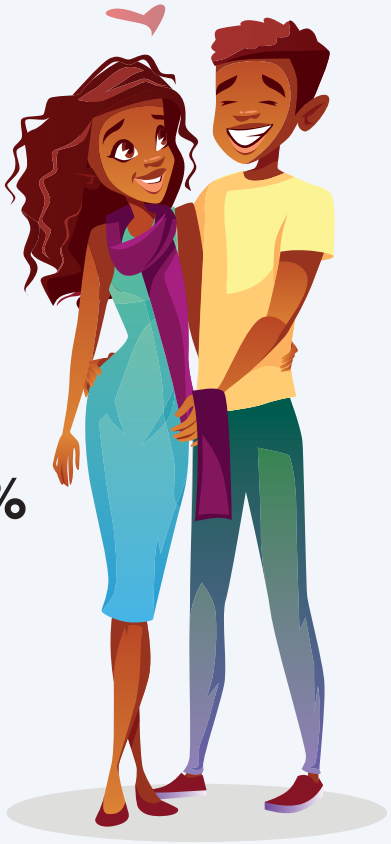
10.4%



Above 55

2.9%

MARITAL STATUS



Married

2023 **50.6%**
2019 **50%**
2016 **40%**

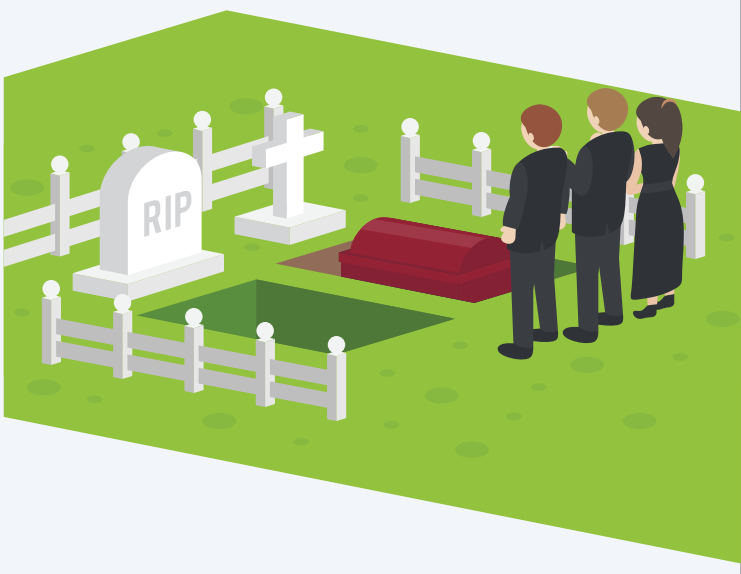


Single

2023 **45.2%**
2019 **50%**
2016 **60%**

Widowed

2023 **1%**





Divorced or separated

2023 **3.2%**

EMPLOYMENT STATUS



Employed
67.2%



Self-employed
25.2%



Unemployed
7.6%

CHURCH DENOMINATION



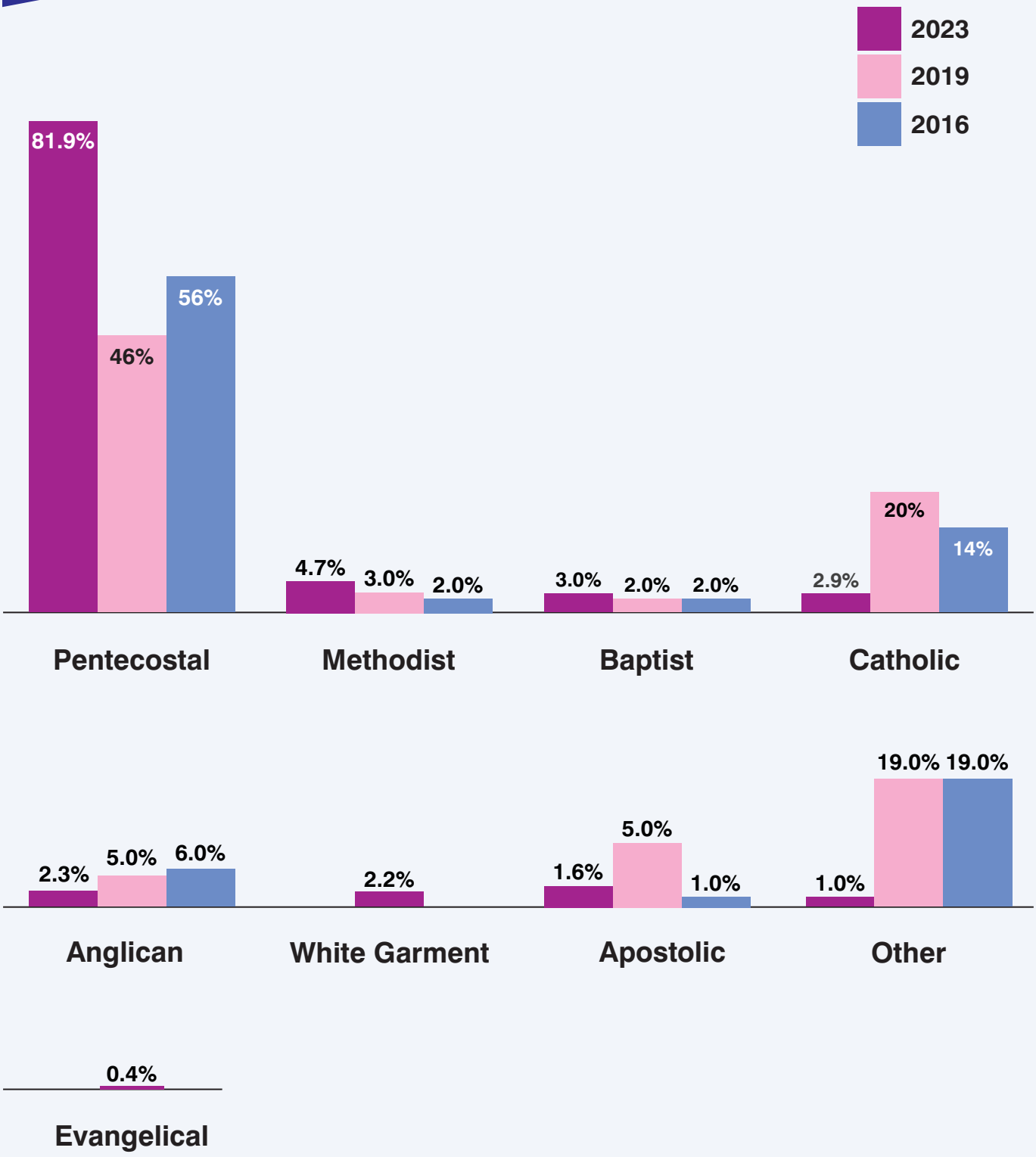
- 81.9% Pentecostal
- 4.7% Methodist
- 3.0% Baptist
- 2.9% Catholic
- 2.3% Anglican
- 2.2% White Garment
- 1.6% Apostolic
- 1.0% Other
- 0.4% Evangelical

This year, like previous years, has shown that Pentecostals are more activist with surveys than other denominations. Alder Consulting made a concerted effort to encourage members of other denominations to share their thoughts. The results still show a high number of Pentecostal respondents. This is however balanced by the number of participating churches, reflecting non-uniformity amongst Pentecostal churches. A total of 280 churches participated.

But this in general raises certain questions. Does the high public profile of Pentecostal pastors and churches define other pastors and clergy? Does the high preponderance of Pentecostals suggest that they are only able to share their views on public forums? The results could hint at the non-interactivity of the Pentecostal system and may signal its authority structure, with more credence given to the laity in other denominations.

CHURCH DENOMINATION

Comparison



LOCATION OF RESPONDENTS IN NIGERIA

A total of 29 states participated in the survey. Only 7 states did not participate.



LOCATION OF RESPONDENTS AROUND THE WORLD

EUROPE



- Austria
- Cyprus
- England
- Estonia
- France
- Germany
- Ireland
- Poland
- Portugal
- Russia
- Scoland

NORTH AMERICA



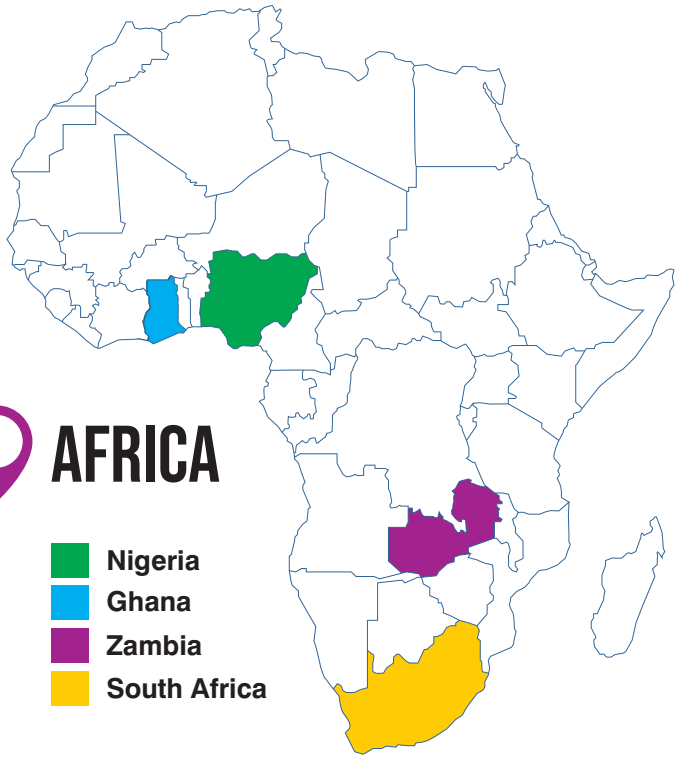
OCEANIA



21 countries participated in the survey.

ASIA





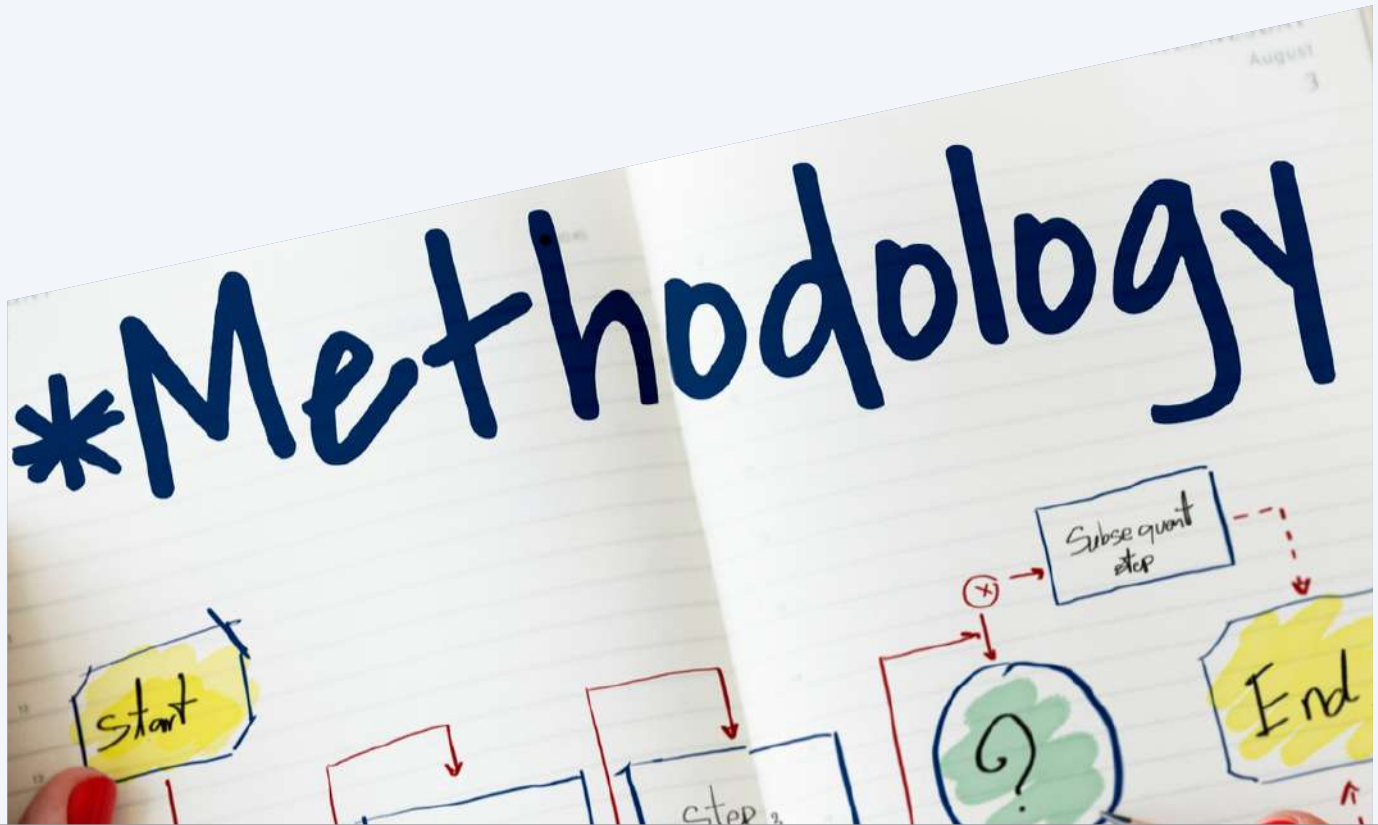
AFRICA

- Nigeria
- Ghana
- Zambia
- South Africa

This year, a number of respondents were located outside Nigeria. This reflects the ongoing trend of Nigerians leaving the country for a better quality of life. What the results show is that a number of Nigerians in the diaspora are still tuned into the Church in Nigeria and her leaders. Churches and the Clergy should recognise the importance of the diaspora and aim to cultivate borderless communities.

A NOTE ON OUR METHODOLOGY

The Alder Church Survey focuses on qualitative sampling rather than sole reliance on quantity of respondents. As such, we engage in a random sampling of individuals situated across different locations and comprising different age groups. The respondents are from different denominations and attend different churches. Marital and employment status are also considered. Notwithstanding the decline in the number of respondents, the survey remains credible as the respondents cut across society. The format used is similar to that adopted by Gallup in the 2020 American elections. In November 2020, Gallup polled 1,018 adults, aged 18 and older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia to determine the favourability of Trump and Biden in the presidential elections. We likewise polled 1,302 individuals to arrive at our results.



LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

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Leke Alder





THE ALDER CHURCH REPORT
NIGERIA 2023

Alder Consulting is Nigeria's foremost creative intelligence firm. In 2001, we introduced the consulting model for branding in Nigeria with the release of the first research-based brand report, The Alder Brand Report. We also presented Nigeria's first social media report in February 2014, The Alder Social Media Report. In addition, we presented The State of the Church Report 2016, The Alder Church Report 2019, and The Alder Church Good Deeds Report 2019.

Our client list spans government, manufacturing, finance, oil & gas, and professional services and NGOs.

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