

THE PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF THE BAPTIST COOPERATIVE
PROGRAMME: A CASE STUDY OF OGBOMOSO BAPTIST CONFERENCE

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ABSTRACT

This research work investigated the Prospects and Challenges of Baptist Cooperative Programme of the Nigeria Baptist Convention in Ogbomoso Baptist Conference. It has of recent generated tension between the local churches and the Convention body how the financial resources are been administered. Some pastors have gone to the extent of insinuating their members against the Cooperative programme of the convention. In carrying out the research, the local church pastors and members were served with questionnaires within the five local governments of Ogbomoso Baptist Conference on the subject area. The result of the study showed that pastors' denominational backgrounds does not relate to their cooperation with the Programme. Also, the result revealed that both church pastors and members have to put up more positive attitude to the programme. However, pastors especially those in rural areas were of the opinion that the Cooperative Programme of the Convention is not adequate and appropriate for rural and urban churches. Furthermore, the result showed that many pastors have adequate understanding of the Cooperative Programme while some members do not. In addition, the result revealed that the teaching of faithful stewardship has direct effect on the Programme and that the curricula of our theological seminaries adequately prepare pastors for the Cooperative Programme and the Convention Commitment to the Programme. Based on the findings of the research work, the researcher hereby makes the following recommendations thus: the Convention should be committed to the support of local churches in both urban and rural areas. This would go a long way to enhance trust and confidence in the programme among local church members and churches. Also, orientation and re-orientation of Baptist members and pastors on the purpose of the Baptist Cooperative Programme should be given an attention in the Convention. In addition, the teaching of faithful stewardship should be encouraged among members in our local Churches, Associations, and Convention. Furthermore, Pastors should be well equipped through the curriculum of our theological schools for the Baptist Cooperative Programme of the Convention. The need and purpose must be well spelt out through proper teaching in our seminaries. Above all, all the church members, pastors, the Global Mission Board and Convention Officers should see the Cooperative Programme as God's ordained channel of reaching the lost across the globe. Thus, it becomes imperative for all to be committed and faithful to the divine mandate (Mt. 28:19-20). Though the result of the study is limited to Ogbomoso Baptist Conference but it will go a long way to address the challenges confronting the Cooperative Programme of the Convention if it is properly considered.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The role the Baptist Cooperative Programme had played in the past and is still playing today in the evangelization of Africa and beyond cannot be underestimated. The research work has looked into the challenges and prospects of the Baptist Cooperative Programme of the Convention based on the understanding of local church pastors, members as well as the understanding and effect of autonomy of local church on the Programme. The research work has shown that the future progress and success of the Programme rests solely on reorientation of Baptist ministers and local church members on the autonomy of local church such that it would mean what it is supposed to mean but not what individuals interpreted it to be.

The work also highlights the need for faithful stewardship in our convention. This is because little or no success would be recorded without faithful stewardship of God's resources in our hands. The members, pastors and Convention workers should see this as the only way forward to effectiveness and efficiency of our corporate effort to reach the unreached through the Cooperative Programme.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the research work, the researcher hereby makes the following recommendations:

- a. The Convention should be committed to the support of local churches in both urban and rural areas. This would go a long way to enhance trust and confidence in the programme among local church members and churches.
- b. Orientation and re-orientation of Baptist members and pastors on the purpose of the Baptist Cooperative Programme should be given an attention in the Convention.
- c. The teaching of faithful stewardship should be encouraged among members in our local Churches, Associations, and Convention.
- d. Pastors should be well equipped through the curriculum of our theological schools for the Baptist Cooperative Programme of the Convention. The need and purpose must be well spelt out through proper teaching in our seminaries.
- e. The cooperation should also be extended to other denominations who believe in the Cooperative Programme of the Convention. It should not be limited to only Baptist members and churches but to as many as believe in mission and evangelism.
- f. The Convention officers should also be committed to the goal of the Programme and faithful in spending the funds for what it is meant for, the money for mission and evangelism should not be used for what is not worthwhile.
- g. The Baptist Convention and Global Missions Board should use all available avenues to promote the Cooperative Programme of the Convention at all levels. This should cut across local churches, Associations and Conferences.

- h. Also, there is need for Global Missions Board to be transparent with their expenses such that will enhance trust and confidence in the management of the funds.
- i. There should be proper enlightenments for church pastors, leaders and members on the autonomy of the local church. The autonomy should not be taken for granted but must be responsible and responsive.
- j. Above all, all the stakeholders should see the Cooperative Programme as God's ordained channel of reaching the lost across the globe. Thus, it becomes imperative for all to be committed and faithful to the divine mandate (Mt. 28:19-20).