

PARTNERSHIP IN MISSIONS AND ITS IMPACT ON CHURCH GROWTH:A
CASE STUDY OF LIVING SOULS BAPTIST CHURCH, LAGOS

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ABSTRACT

One major challenge that the church has today is in the area of world Evangelisation. Lots of struggles have been made and are on-going in the body of Christ in order for this goal to be achieved. Actually, in a sense with all the undertaken of the church in missions, we still observe some lapses especially in the area of mobilizing believers into missions. The Baptist denomination is not an exception. Among the evangelical Christians the Baptists have evolved a vigorous and dynamic minimum organization called Baptist Cooperative programmes. But the question remains; how are Baptists able to work together in spite of their belief in the priesthood of each believer.

Our individual salvation is independent of the other and so with a church's existence. Each congregation is a church not more or less in nature or function. "The New Testament doctrine of church and individual liberty opens the way for all cooperation that gracious hearts and wise heads can think or plan" This independence is transformed to interdependence in the vent of objective cooperation. That is, the purpose of voluntary co-operation is fundamentally that of missions and evangelism.

The future of mission is in partnership, going it alone won't work, collaboration or synergy, irrespective of semantics. The matter of Christian mission is becoming more complex, and researches are growing, new areas are being explored and time is running out in some instances.

To accomplish the global evangelization, the synergy of men and woman as initiator, executioner and agent of expansion is imperative. In addition with need money to sustain mission projects. This essay offered solutions to the challenge of lack of fund, personnel and materials for mission amongst local churches. This will make mission work in the Nigerian Baptist Convention break new ground and build up God's kingdom strongly in the land he has given to us.

5.2 Conclusion

The practice of Partnership has brought about the desired goals in the mission endeavor of churches, Partnership associations and even conferences. Partnership in missions is a special form of cooperative programme. It is a project voluntarily agreed and embarked upon by partnering members. This affirms the autonomy of the local church and upholds the principle of congregationalism. This is good for the Baptist church. The challenges are surmountable as long as the Holy Spirit continues to back up His church for “an aggressive worldwide mission enterprise”. Partnership program has brought about the desired goals in the mission endeavor of churches, associations and even conferences. Partnership should be sustained and encouraged because it makes the mission accomplishment easy and fast. It also provides an excellent way to network and partner with the local and other Denominations.

We must never forget that although the horizontal aspect of partnership is important, the most critical aspect is vertical which brings us into the proper

relationship with the most important partner of all—God Himself, the Lord of the Harvest. He will provide the opportunities for participation in his mission work and will facilitate the success of each endeavour. Hence the promotion of an aggressive prayer ministry that targets partnership initiatives will further challenge the local churches to see the world with “missionary” eyes and identify more with missions.

The challenge to church pastors and other church leaders is to recommit themselves to strengthening the spirit of unity that we enjoy.

5.3 Recommendations

The following practical suggestions are recommended for implementation.

1. The Convention can direct the theological institutions to develop and implement a comprehensive educational course on mission partnership. The convention should encouraged increased participation of Conference, Associations and especially, local churches in partnership through the continued development of programs that strengthen this engagement.
2. Church committee should secure adequate information about the concept of partnership and persuade the entire church to enter into partnership. Pastors should play more active and leading role in partnership.
3. More studies should be undertaken on the concept of partnership in missions.
4. There should be a guiding policy for partnership in missions.
5. The Conference(s) should act as a clearing house (common room) where rich and willing churches can meet with poor churches who are into missions so that demand will meet supply.
6. There should be clear definitions of the proper roles for churches, Associations and conferences in every Partnership project. There should be written agreement so that each partner knows his limit. The Global mission Board and Conference

and Association Mission coordinators should do more surveys and come up with opportunities at State, and Association levels. This should be shared with Men Missionary Union, Women Missionary Union and the Youth and Deacons.

7. The Nigerian Baptist Convention and the Global Mission Board need to promote partnership in mission program through various means available as many of the local churches seem to be ignorant of the approach and its effectiveness in church Growth and expansion of missions.

If the listed recommendations are responded to by the various stakeholders in the Baptist Denomination, it is obvious that sustainable growth and progress will be recorded in partnership in missions for expansion of mission work in Nigeria and the entire world.