

NBTS
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AN APPRAISAL OF THE AGAPE BAPTIST ASSOCIATION'S
INVOLVEMENT IN THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST
CONVENTION, MISSION EFFORT

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ABSTRACT

The church of Christ exists first and foremost for the course of mission. It is God's instrument of evangelizing the whole world. Manpower and resources for mission comes principally from the local churches and individual believers, who together comprise the local church. The task and the dimension of world evangelization are however, beyond what a local church on its own can successfully carry out. There is need for collaboration and co – operation among local churches, so that their resources can be pooled together for the speedy accomplishment of the task. Thus the Nigerian Baptist Convention provides such opportunity for collaboration and co – operation, among the Nigerian Baptists.

Despite the opportunity in the Nigerian Baptist Convention, little impact is felt in Home and International Mission. The reason being that local churches, which ought to give support to convention's mission efforts, physically, materially, financially and spiritually have reneged in their commitment to the co – operative programmes of the Convention. Hence, the need to appraise the situation, using the Agape Baptist Association as a case study. With a view to challenge local churches to their missionary mandate and the need to be faithfully committed to the Nigerian Baptist Convention Mission Efforts.

This project, therefore, examines the role of the local Baptist Churches in Agape Baptist Association in NBC mission efforts, by evaluating their commitments to the NBC programmes, in which local Churches are expected to participate.

The findings from the study reveals that generally the level of involvement of Agape Baptist Association's local churches in the Nigerian Baptist Convention Mission programmes is abysmally low. Hence, effective mobilization through Bible teaching and practical mission preceded with adequate and proper planning have been recommended as a way of enhancing local churches' commitment to the Convention mission efforts.

CONCLUSION

The supreme task of the church is the world mission and the responsibility for carrying out that task rests on local churches and individual Christian. However, the dimension and the scope of the task is beyond what a local church can handle. Hence, the need for co – operation and collaboration among local churches. The Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC) provides these rare opportunities for local Baptist churches to co – operate and collaborate for this great task. However, how far the Convention can go as regards this task depends on the level of commitment of local churches to this co – operative project. This commitment thus far on the part of local churches is highly unsatisfactory.

Local churches are to mobilize their members and resources for the task of mission and faithfully participate in and contribute generously to the NBC mission programmes as planned and coordinated by the Global Mission Board of the NBC. Associations such as Agape Baptist Association own it a duty to the NBC to mobilize their member churches to the task of mission. Pastors in local churches should use their God – given mandate as ministers of the gospel in his temple to teach and mobilize their members to faithfully and generously support the NBC mission efforts. With all the bodies and individual concerned coming together and playing their role as they ought to, the mission works of the NBC will record a giant leap and the Kingdom of God will be better for it.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the above findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are hereby proffered, which if faithfully implemented by the body or individual concerned will definitely lead to better participation of local churches in NBC mission efforts and ultimately better performance by the NBC in its mission efforts. These recommendations are however divided into four parts, based on the body or individual concerned.

Recommendation to Local Churches

Local churches to a large extent determine the success or otherwise of the NBC mission efforts. Firstly, therefore each local church, which has subscribed to the co-operative project of the NBC, should be faithful to the payment of 20% of its annual income to the NBC as jointly agreed. This could be paid on monthly or quarterly basis, so as not to allow unnecessary accumulation that may become difficult to pay on annual basis. A situation whereby churches pay 10% with the assumption that it is the tithe of their annual income, they suppose to pay to the Convention should be discontinued. The agreement is that, each church will pay 20% of its annual income as annual due to the Convention. The NBC is not God or high priest that demands our tithe, it is a co – operative body for all the Baptist churches that subscribe to its doctrine and policies and they are expected to be guided by its rule and principles.

Secondly, each local church should see the Convention mission programmes as its own programmes and must therefore observe home and international mission week of prayer and emphasis regularly. The programmes should be organized as a special worship service, with adequate planning and publicity. The mission committee of the church should plan the programme, being guided by the mission week booklet from the Convention. The committee should also have a financial target as offering,

based on the total revenue projection of the Global Mission Board for the week. In addition to these, the committee should mobilize every church members for prayers and donations in order to meet the targeted offering. Such offering and other material donations should be forwarded to the Convention in full and as soon as they are ready.

Thirdly, every church based missionary organizations such as MMU, WMS Youth Fellowship and BSF should on annual basis visit a mission field nearest to them and as well raise material and financial support for such fields. It is also recommended that each of these organization should plant a new church within their environment, through the watchful eyes of the church as mother on perennial basis or at least at interval of five years.

Fourthly, local churches should develop a well organized and systematic social ministry and development programmes or projects that will attract the lost and defiant to the gospel message. Such programmes or projects include, but not limited to schools, health clinic, visit to prisoner and disabled homes, digging of well and other community projects. These programmes and project are essential to gain access to the lost. When such access is created, it must be used to preach the gospel.

Lastly, every local churches should as a matter of necessity dedicate certain percentage of their annual budget to the support of pastors or missionary in training no matter how small it may be.

The Pastors in Local Churches

Pastors have great responsibility to the success or otherwise of the NBC mission effort. Firstly, as a local church leader he in co – operation and in concert with other church leaders lead the way to mobilize their members for world missions. This has to done by teaching them to understand God’s plan of salvation, motivating them to a loving response to God’s word and providing opportunities for them to use their gifts, abilities and resources individually and corporately to accomplish God’s

global plan of salvation. Biblical conviction is very essential for every local church to develop a right attitude for mission and for practical use of its means and resources for the course of mission. Pastors therefore, must preach and teach that the heartbeat of God is world missions and not parochial idea of local missions (mission to immediate environment – Jerusalem) as conceived and practiced by many local churches.

Secondly, Pastors having led each member to identify their gifts must help them to personalize it by identifying with a particularly missionary project or task. Members' talents and expertise (profession or occupation) must be harnessed by the pastor for the service of God in local, national and international missions of the NBC. Such members should be enlisted for the short term mission volunteer programmes of the Global Mission Board of the NBC to reach out to those mission fields their services are most needed and desirable, with full sponsorship from the church, for such volunteers.

Thirdly, Pastors in the planning of the church's calendar of activities each year must incorporate Home and International week of prayer and emphasis and other mission programmes of the Convention and ensure their full observance or participation in case of workshops, conferences and seminar.

Lastly, Pastors in co – operation with other church leaders must mobilize local churches to be faithful to the co – operative project of the NBC. They must teach local churches to see themselves as part of a universal church, that cannot exist and accomplish the great commission on its own, but have to co – operate with other churches or bodies such as NBC in order to accomplish God's global goal of salvation, Pastors must shift the focus of local churches from excessive autonomy as being practiced today for autonomy does not in anyway rule out interdependence. No absolute autonomy anywhere. There is nobody that is an Island of his own. In addition

