

AN APPRAISAL OF THE METHODS OF ELECTING CHURCH OFFICERS IN
NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION

NBTS
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M. DIV. TH

AN ESSAY PRESENTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES
THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
OGBOMOSO, OYO STATE

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF
DEGREE OF MASTER OF DIVINITY IN THEOLOGY.

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JUNE 2006

09 - 0090

ABSTRACT

This essay, the Appraisal of methods of electing church officers in the Nigerian Baptist Convention is an interpretative evaluation of the methods of electing church officers in our local churches of the convention.

Since leadership is very crucial to growth and development of any organization, there is the need to constantly evaluate methods of evolving leaders, in order for us to have the goal of growth being met. It is perceived by the writer that the expected growth is not being met in the churches of the Convention, compared with years of existence and influence. This has now led to appraising the methods of election in our Convention Churches, as a point to start with.

This study, which has, five Chapters, made use of investigative approach in its methodology. Questionnaire and library work were used to collect data. Five churches within four Baptist associations were surveyed. The findings from the study revealed that the reasons why church members appoint some of the officers do not go along with the provision of the Bible especially the NT. Thereby defective services are offered in a way slowing down the growth of the church or at times crippled her.

The writer concluded that, following the biblical approach and pattern of discipling, electing among those being disciplined, and being prayerfully done, coupled with their meeting the stipulated qualifications would be meeting the needs of the church to have called people to serve her. This helps to produce men and women that will faithfully and with vision serve the church and which will lead to her growth and multiplication.

Conclusion

An appraisal of the methods of electing church officers with an eye on New Testament pattern and result has brought to the fore how important that selection process is to the growth of the word of God and multiplication of disciples. Leadership is very crucial to the growth of any organization, church inclusive. This could be seen in the record of the New Testament church and further corroborated with emphasis on the qualification status of would be officers in the scripture, especially in the Epistles by several writers.

Therefore, as method of electing church officers was of great influence to the church in the New Testament, it is also today with the contemporary church. This now calls for concerted, prayerful effort of getting men and women of the Spirit and faith into constituting the nominating committee, since this happen to be the norm in our convention, for them to follow the New Testament principles of selecting people into offices. This is important because the church in conference always relied on their choices as the appropriate one. Commenting on this issue Judy J. Stainey said, "proper enlistment begins with the person doing the enlisting. This person must understand the need for the position, the goals, the tasks, and how the job is to be evaluated."¹

It is becoming more obvious from the result of data collected that even though the general assembly is being educated about the work of the church and the electing processes, the people to do the election must be well educated i.e. the nominating committee. They must be people that have been thoroughly disciplined in order for them to make right choices. McDonough said, "The church's priorities, a person qualification and attitude, and the Holy Spirit's leadership must influence this

¹ Judy J. Stainey, "Equipping the Saints to Serve", Bruce P. Powers (Ed) Church Administration Hand Book (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1997), . 239.

choice.”² The components of this comment needs to be well emphasized to the nominating committee, in a way to produce spiritual and committed leaders for church services.

It is observed by the writer that the programme of training for the elected officers is not sound enough. There is need for the leaders to be will trained, and equipped for good service delivery. In the view of McDonough “leaders’ training is so important, it should not be left to sporadic efforts on an as needed basis. A definite, continuing organization is needed to determine leader training needs and administer a comprehensive leader training programmes.”³ Constant reminder of church purpose and mission and the commission are quite important to effectiveness of those chosen. Their coming together to review, pray and evaluate what they are doing will enhance performance. Acts 4:23-24.

The Baptist Churches should strive as the people of the New Testament, to conform to the pattern of choosing officers in the New Testament, so as to bring the growth desired. Also, this will make the church to be a model to other denominations in the body of Christ. In the past that this issue of influence on the church by power brokers and politics being the determining factors of getting people into the nominating committee and the actual election has retarded the growth of the denomination. This paved way for many that are only position seekers and power brokers not mission minded people. But if the observation of this research will be taking note of, it will help produce men and women who would give the Nigerian Baptist Convention Churches the true speed it deserves both spiritually and numerically.

² Reginald M. McDonough, Working with Volunteer Leaders in The Church (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1976), . 30.

³ Ibid. . 36.

Recommendations

Based upon the data collected for this study and other interactions on the title, the following recommendations are made for further improvement.

1. Avenue should be created for proper education of all church members on the mission and purposes of the church, the provision of the New Testament on kingdom services and qualifications.

2. The church should be well educated about the general provision of the church constitution and bylaws as it is in consonance with the scriptures. Efforts should be made that each of them has a copy of the constitution and bylaws. This will enhance understanding and bring to minimal all those schisms and strifes that do come up.

3. The church should promote discipleship training in the church much more beyond being a programme but for life formation. For it is this avenue according to the New Testament that produces the qualitative leaders that brought growth to the church.

4. Due to the importance of leadership to growth, the church should copy the New Testament pattern of purposeful and focused praying for leadership of the Holy Spirit to point to those He has chosen. Failure in the place of prayer by the church has created room for infiltration of wolves.

5. Voting procedure to make nomination should be approached in a biblical way. This should be taken as a godly responsibility in the church of Christ. As earlier said, substantial time could have been spent in prayers before this activity comes up.

6. There should be an amendment to churches' constitutions and bylaws to reflect as a matter of importance, what qualifications, based on the New Testament, each person to be elected in to offices must possess. Some of the constitutions and bylaws are silent on this area.

7.As churches are familiar with preparing budget proposal for the year, so also for every new year of electing officers, the church should set achievable goals for the service year. This will enable the church to assess whether she has grown or not, whether the officers have performed or not? It will make the church and her officers to be a purpose driven church.

8.The writer will like to recommend “*the appraisal of the performance of elected church officers in relation to church growth*” for further research.