

AN EVALUATION OF WOMEN'S MISSIONARY UNION (WMU) ACTIVITIES
IN SOME SELECTED CHURCHES IN OYO WEST BAPTIST CONFERENCE

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ABSTRACT

The Women Missionary Union (WMU) of the Nigerian Baptist Convention celebrated her 85th year anniversary during the 92nd Annual Session of the Convention held in Ogbomoso between April 16 – 21, 2005. This all female missionary body received encomiums and fraternal greetings from well-wishers within and outside the country.

Beyond the well, deserved celebration a conscientious scholar would like to know and possibly undertake a research into what has made the WMU in question a celebrity, to have deserved the splash of praises during the convention session. The situation undoubtedly called for an unbiased assessment of the various activities of the WMU. This formed bottom line of this research study carried out on a selected local Baptist churches in Oyo West Baptist Conference.

The four organizational units of the WMU of the selected churches were studied and their activities evaluated to see how functional and successful these organizations have been in the past times. Some of the major questions in the questionnaires bordered on, e.g. participation of the organization in Weekly Activities, Assessment in Mission, Assessment of Average Attendance, Assessment of Members' Educational Growth, etc.

Based upon the field study through the various questionnaires, it is seen that the Sunbeam Bands of the ten studied churches were vibrant and therefore scored very high. The same could be said of the Girls Auxiliaries in

all the churches studied. However, the assessment dropped drastically as regards the Lydia Auxiliary. Not many churches had functional Lydia Auxiliary. Out of the 10 studied churches only 7 had Lydia Auxiliaries as most of the eligible Lydia members often left for tertiary institutions. But the survey showed a resurgence of active participation as seen with WMS of the 10 selected churches.

Township churches were rated high in the overall maintenance and participation of the organs of the WMU in the local churches. The village churches such as First Baptist Church, Ajeja often suffered from dearth of capable and trained officers.

The outcomes of this survey work are going to be an eye opener calling the immediate attention of the WMU and other stake holders to some gray areas that needed improvement at the local church level the associational and conference levels and at the convention level in general.

Recommendations

The Women's Missionary Union (WMU) of the Nigerian Baptist Convention has no doubt, since its inception 85 years² ago, blazed the trail by

²*Book of Reports, NBC, 92nd Session, Ogbomoso, 2005, 62.*

initiating and executing missionary oriented programmes locally, nationally and across the borders of West Africa.

However, the four cardinal organizational structures of the WMU which formed the main study in this research, namely:

The Sunbeam Bands (SB),

The Girls' Auxiliary (GA),

The Lydia Auxiliary (LA),

The Women's Missionary Society (WMS),

have revealed the need to make the following recommendations, so that the leadership and followership of the mission conscious union will not rest on their oasis. Instead, these recommendations based on the findings of this study, will enable them to chart new and greater heights. This will bring about greater effectiveness and efficiency in the system in the overall interest of their stated objectives.

(a) WMU Members for Sunbeam Bands

The Sunbeam Bands membership is made of infants and have therefore, become a rallying point for the church based WMS who as a matter of course, played the role of mother for these little ones. Although study has shown that there was always a functional Sunbeam Band in every organized local Baptist Church.

However, the WMU members should take note of the following recommendations.

1. Sunbeam leaders and directors should be carefully and prayerfully appointed to reflect women who naturally have the love of children

and therefore have the necessary patience to teach and protect these infants.

2. On no condition must Sunbeam leaders be chosen from Girls Auxiliary because such hand picked leaders could turn out to be bullies.
3. Sunbeam Bands have shown surprisingly low interest in Bible memory verses at the local church level, at the association and conference levels. The obvious general apathy manifests in the Convention Bible memory verses as well.

In order to stimulate renewed interest among these infant groups Sunbeam Directors and other local leaders should be adequately motivated.

4. Little children should be encouraged to give steadily to missions. Therefore, it is hereby recommended that parents should encourage their wards/children contribute positively to the weekly dues.
5. The Sunday worship of the Sunbeam should be directed by children pastors, associate pastors, student pastors as the case may be. This will afford the children to have a worthy worship experience.

Recommendations Through WMU for Girls Auxiliary

1. The Girls Auxiliary members are by nature always interested in out of classroom programmes. Their overall participation in such activities has shown by the outcome of findings in this study, e.g. hospital ministry was not encouraging. Their ministry to widows also showed a very low over-all percentage score. The MMU members are hereby

