

**THE CAUSES OF PASTOR-LESS CHURCHES IN THE
NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION (NBC): A CASE
STUDY OF OGBOMOSO BAPTIST CONFERENCE**

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ABSTRACT

This research work attempted to find out the reasons many churches in the Ogbomoso Baptist Conference do not have resident or full time pastors. The seventeen associations were examined through the use of questionnaires, interviews and data gotten from books of reports, quarterly reports of associations, and analyzed to ascertain the reality of the problem of pastor-less churches, the causes and the effects.

It was found that the reasons there are churches without resident pastors include among others the following: poor financial state of some churches, remote location of some churches, ignorance of the importance of the ministry of the pastor in church leadership and lay leaders who would not want to relinquish church leadership to any resident pastor. It is also found that student pastors cannot be as effective as resident pastors because of their involvement in meeting up with the demands and challenges of their training in the seminary or any other Baptist pastors' college.

The thesis concluded by affirming the importance of resident pastors in effective church leadership, and recommended measures that could be taken in order to correct the abnormalities that cause church to be pastorless.

indiscriminate church planting which are left unsupported by the mother churches, powerful lay leaders who hold onto church leadership and not willing to relinquish leadership, poor financial state of some churches, remote location of some churches, the Seminary factor which provides “cheap pastoral labour”. bad examples laid by some pastor which makes some churches to prefer to be without pastors, and lack of administrative machinery that makes a church see the imperativeness of having a pastor as soon as it is planted.

The essay also presented some disadvantages of having a church without resident pastor. It is believed that these disadvantages can be eliminated or reduced to minimal level if recommendations given by this thesis are implemented.

Conclusion

To conclude this essay, it should be reemphasized that a church is liable to be stagnated for as long as it decides to remain without a resident pastor. Student pastors or lay leaders do not have all that it takes to provide the needed impetus for church growth and development. God’s pattern of church leadership mandates every local church to involve the ministry of the pastor. Given the right atmosphere and right pastoral leadership coupled with a co-operating and prayerful congregation, the church benefits and growth would be unabated.

Recommendations

The following recommendations presented in this section have their antecedence from the questionnaires, interviews and discussions on the question of pastor-less churches. It is believed that if they are implemented and properly administered, the problem of having churches without resident pastors will become minimal.

1 Adopting Small Baptist Churches

Churches most of which are in the rural areas that are small in terms of number and consequently in terms of poor financial state could be adopted by either their mother churches, other Baptist churches that are blessed to do so, or even the Global Missions Board so as to assist them in providing resident pastors and in the sustenance of the pastor. It is also possible for Global Missions Board to engage the ministry of missionary pastors to oversee such small churches, while student pastors continue to function as pastors in the churches. The various Baptist associations and the Conference should be concerned and seek for ways to assist the pastor-less churches.

First the abuse of our polity of congregational democracy and autonomy of the local church should be corrected through deliberate and directed education of our people. The misinterpretation of the doctrine of priesthood of all believers that since every believer has the right to approach God directly rules out the ministry of the pastor should also be corrected through proper education. The Baptists should always be reminded of scriptures like Hebrews 5:1 which says that “. . . Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin . . . “ In other words, God has a unique place for the ministry of the pastor and it should be recognized and honoured by the people of God.

The Baptist call system should be reviewed. While the current process is acceptable and is in agreement with our Baptist policy of autonomy of the local church the process should be reviewed such that our theological institutions could make recommendations to the appropriate associations and churches. Some churches that are financially handicap could have the mother churches provide pastors for their

preaching stations and assist in the sustenance of the pastor. Associations should also see it as their responsibility to assist church by ensuring that they have trained pastors and also contributing to the upkeep of such pastors.

2 Engaging in strategic and controlled church planting

The problem of indiscriminate church planting can be tackled by Associations putting in place measures that would control the church planting effort of local churches within an Association. Church planting should be strategic and well planned so that churches planted could be capable of growth and not stagnant. The planning should include how the churches would have resident pastors as soon as possible. This will greatly reduce the number of pastor-less churches.

3 Balanced education and orientation of members

A lot of the churches in the Ogbomoso Conference do not appreciate the need for having resident pastors. In such situation, the association, and/or the conference should organize periodical seminar to educate them on the significance of Pastoral Ministry in a local church. Education is also necessary to correct the misuse of Baptist principles especially that of the local church autonomy, and the misuse of the doctrine of priest hood of the believer.

Again, the conference and the Associations should work together in ensuring that a machinery or process is put in place that would enable each church see the imperativeness of the ministry of the pastor.

4 Reviewing the policy student pastors supervised ministry

The presence of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary in Ogbomoso has been identified as one of the major causes for churches not having resident time or

substantive pastor, the reason being that these churches have been used to “cheap pastoral labour” which the Seminary provides as she post students to these churches for their supervised ministries. Hence, the Seminary authority are called upon to re-access this practice with the aim to encouraging churches to getting full time pastor rather than depending on student pastors for several years and running into decades. This does not help the seminary as it is causing “pastoral unemployment” to her graduates.

5 Pastors to lead disciplined life and reporting to association or conference.

Mis-behaviour of some pastors which leads church members to be discouraged in calling pastors can be corrected or reduced if pastors are leaving a disciplined life and by putting in place a policy that would require pastors of local churches to report their activities either to the association or the conference. This in a way would check indiscipline among our pastors. Disciplinary measure should also be spelt out in the Nigerian Baptist Convention Constitution against any erring minister of God.