

**SOCIAL WORK AS A TOOL FOR
EVANGELISM :
NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION
PERSPECTIVE**

NBTS
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THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Human needs are inexhaustible but God has made provision in meeting all these needs right from the time of creation. God's love for humanity is the basis for His action of provision and He instructed us to do likewise by loving Him and fellow human beings as our selves. Recognizing and meeting the needs of others is an act of social work which has helped in expressing God's love and propagate the gospel to others, thus God can be said to be the first social worker as He knows human needs and made provision for those needs.

There are many types of social work but special attention is paid to Christian social work or mission as a non-Governmental organization and its usefulness as a tool in evangelism with particular reference to Nigerian Baptist Mission. Through her social mission work many lives have been transformed physically and spiritually by the provision of services such as education, health, community and family welfare, and social awareness.

Chapter Two shares the basic foundations of social work for evangelism – the Biblical, Theological, and Humanitarian/ Ethical foundations would be discussed with specific examples.

Chapter Three presents types and resources for social work to meet the needs of humanity. Here, the four major groups of social work and the four major resources to minister in the Church and the environment shall be discussed.

Chapter Four will discuss various ways the NBC since her inception has contributed to evangelism through social mission of education, health services, welfare of targeted group, welfare of women and social education. Also the chapter shall discuss the resulting effect of her social ministry nation wide.

Chapter Five shall attempt to summarize the role of social ministry for evangelism in the NBC and it shall also identify areas to pay more attention with relevant recommendations and suggestions for improvement in achieving an effective social ministry for church growth and the society.

Social mission is part of the mission of the Church and thus that of every Christian, hence all efforts should be put to improve on what we have today as social work so as to be like that of the early church where “*multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul, neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.*”

Acts 4:32

Though the NBC has been very effective in the social ministry outside the Church, a lot still have to be done at the local church level because a few churches have a comprehensive plan for the social ministry , while many individuals are still in great need in our local churches. Charity should begin at home to avoid the loss of our members to other denominations due to their search for solution to their problems. For effective growth in our local churches, the ministry of social concern and action has to be improved upon. The NBC family is greatly blessed with good human resources in every category of life but unfortunately majority of those in these categories do not use the grace given them to touch other people's life in our local churches as expected. Instead one sees many of them being useful to those outside the church for reasons best known to them. To solve this problem and improve the social ministry of our local churches the following recommendations are proposed.

Recommendations

Judging from the migration of Baptist members to other denominations and the need to cater for various needs at our local churches so as to satisfy the spiritual, mental, physical and psychological needs of members , the local church should :

A. Make members be Christians and nothing less – If every member is made a Christian through discipleship training then every member will know that he/she is a minister who has a mission and a call to the Great Commission. Every Christian should thus be like Christ going about doing good, ministering to persons as their needs are encountered. Jesus Christ is the

model for all to follow. The Baptist doctrine of priesthood of believers² emphasized that all of God's children are to be ministers to perform acts of ministry both to and on behalf of other persons.³ Every Christian is therefore a minister accountable under God for the manner he/she fulfills the ministry committed in his/her hand. One way a Christian can discover God's mission for him/her is to become acquainted with the needs and opportunities for mission in his/her Church and community.

Social ministry should start in the Church. We must recognized that only small percentage of people in need are institutionalized in prisons, hospitals and rehabilitative homes, while there are people around us in the local church whose needs are as great but who are being ignored by the Church and Christian people. Christian people thus need God's eyes to see people in their immediate environment or church just as Jesus saw them and met their needs. A Christian as a minister should be willing to serve fellow human being by responding to the needs around him because God has commissioned him/her to this task, and through prayer, leadership of the Holy Spirit and sensitivity to others' needs, somebody can discover what ministry God wants him/her to perform. Local Church should engage in programs that would make its members real Christians to do the work of Christ in ministering to total humanity. Every Church should be engaged in at least one mission social activity project, but a Church must decide what it would do to match social action with the Church potential for ministry and witness. The Church must embark upon only what it is able to do otherwise it should be a referral agency.

² 1 Peter 2:9-10 (NKJV)

³ Stubblefield, Mission activities for Men and Boys, p. 7

