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DEVELOPING PROACTIVE STRATEGIES FOR PARTICIPATION  
IN PROGRAMMES AMONG MEMBERS OF ANTIOCH  
BAPTIST CHURCH, KUMASI, GHANA

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## ABSTRACT

This project was carried out to develop proactive strategies for participation in programmes among the members of Antioch Baptist Church, Kumasi, Ghana. Church programmes are vital to the success of any church. The mission and the vision statements of the church which is generally about the Great Commission can only be achieved when members participate in programmes. Church programmes are diverse likewise the causes of poor participation. Besides, due to complexities of human nature, there is no one way approach or solution to the problem of poor participation. Every problem is born out of context and the context also determines the solution. Hence this project developed some ideas that can help solve the problem of poor participation in programmes in Antioch Baptist Church, Kumasi. These ideas form the proactive strategies.

To address this problem, two questionnaires were administered. The pre-test questionnaire ascertained the problem of poor participation in programmes as well as the causes. Following the administration of pre-test questionnaire, five studies covering mission and vision statements, effective church membership, spiritual gifts, discipleship and change were conducted to proffer solution to this ecclesiastical malady. From the pre-test questionnaire some of the causes identified include: lack of relevant programmes, lack of proper integration into church membership, the problem of time, and ignorance of spiritual gifts just to mention but a few. This was followed by post-test questionnaire to evaluate the impact and the relevance of the studies.

The result of the pre-test questionnaire showed that there was a problem of poor participation in church programmes. One striking revelation from the pre-test questionnaire was the fact that over sixty percent of the respondents were workers. The implication of this is that most workers do not participate in programmes. The result also shows that those who had been in the church for more than fifteen years were more than those who had been in the church for less than five years. This is a serious challenge to the church; possibly the church is not doing well in evangelism or is not retaining new members. The result of post-test questionnaire shows that the studies were very effective as strategy for solving poor participation in programmes. One striking revelation from the post-test questionnaire is the need for new innovations in church programmes. In addition, most of the respondents affirmed that the studies helped them to identify their gifts and they have decided to use their gifts in the church. It is worth noting that response from the members after these studies was very commendable. They all unanimously admitted that the studies were very good, necessary and the studies should be ongoing programmes in order to keep the church on track and help her to fulfill its mandate.

Considering the importance of church programmes, the researcher recommends that for church programmes to be relevant, exciting and appealing to members, pastors should be dynamic, creative and innovative. In addition, to encourage participation, church programmes should be people-focused or people-oriented. In other words, church members should be involved in programmes and ministries of the church while pastors serve as equippers.

## Conclusion

Participation in programmes is vital to church growth and church health. Antioch Baptist Church, Kumasi, vision statement revolves around five areas: worship, discipleship, fellowship, evangelism and ministry. It is worth noting that except church members participate in programmes, the vision statement will remain a mirage.

The approach of the researcher in this project is to make church programmes people-focused or people-oriented while the pastor serves as equipper and coach. This approach is based on Kenneth Gangel's assertion that "programs and ideas belong to the people, not just the pastor."<sup>173</sup> Ephesians 4:11-12 also provides the biblical basis for this approach. As part of the five fold ministry, pastors were charged to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. The researcher strongly believes that except the church members believe, accept and even own the church programmes, all the efforts of the pastor may be a waste or fall below expectation.

To achieve this, these strategies aimed at removing the problem of upward delegation whereby church members will depend on pastor for all the programmes in the church. Thom S. Rainer affirmed that "small group is the biblical and best way to mobilize the laity. Real ministry takes place in small groups. Small groups encourage face-to-face ministry; this will not take place in traditional church structures."<sup>174</sup> The researcher quite agrees with this assertion. For implementation, the researcher has initiated Discipleship programme during Bible study on Wednesday. While twenty six members representing 34.21 percent attended Bible study, forty eight people decided to

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<sup>173</sup> Gangel, 151.

<sup>174</sup> Rainer, 200.



attend discipleship programme and this figure represents 69.57 percent. This increment shows that indeed small group is effective in mobilizing the youth. Besides, the strategies are steps in right direction.

Another small group that recorded significant improvement is W.M.U. From the pre-test questionnaire, only seven people representing 20 percent attended the programme. However, with the change of time from morning to evening and fortnightly instead of weekly, the attendance moved from seven members to twenty-two members. This figure represents 73.33 percent. The increment shows the relevance of the strategy as well as the importance of the small groups in mobilizing the laity.

#### Recommendations

Considering the importance of church programmes, the researcher made the following recommendations.

1. This work is recommended to all Baptist Pastors both in Nigerian Baptist Convention and Ghana Baptist Convention as strategies for enhancing participation in church programmes.
2. The work is also recommended to all the moderators, chairmen, presidents of conference, sector heads as well as convention officers as manual for planning church growth conference.
3. The work is also recommended to lecturers in the Seminaries, Colleges of Theology, School of Theology and ministry as manual for keeping students abreast with the latest trend of doing ministry. Also, the project is recommended to all student pastors in theological institution as reference material for doing ministry.
4. Finally, the work is recommended to all the church growth experts and missionaries on the field as strategy for church growth.