

TOWARD ENHANCING CHURCH MEMBERSHIP THROUGH WITNESSING  
AND VISITATION IN EBENEZER BAPTIST CHURCH, ONDO TOWN.

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## ABSTRACT

One of the ways of starting a new church is through the release of some members from an existing viable church to form the nucleus for a new church at a different location. The challenges posed by such a method to the existing church such as possible reduction in human and material resources, calls for strategising toward membership drive. The purpose of this study was to put in place a witnessing and visitation strategy through which the church will continue to enjoy influx of new members regularly, and the conservation of existing members. This membership drive is required to sustain the church's goals in church planting. The research design used was pretest – post-test. The manual designed was taught to the church membership with the ultimate aim of eliciting effective involvement in witnessing and visitation. The pre-test and post-test questionnaires were administered and the resulting data were analysed, using appropriate statistical tool. The results of the study revealed that the distribution of the church members by sex, among males and females was in the ratio two to three (2:3). Again, the membership of the church that fall within the age bracket of 11-50 years is 83.2 percent of the entire membership while all the rest is 16.8 percent. It was also found that, the membership of the church was to a large extent well informed about what witnessing and visitation meant. However, the study still aided the understanding of some, as revealed by the levels of understanding recorded after the implementation of the manual. In addition to the above, it was discovered that only 33.9 percent of the membership had low experience of the barriers to witnessing and visitation prior to the teaching on how to overcome such barriers, but the percentage increased to 38.8 percent after the teaching. The study, therefore, revealed that only less than 40 percent of the membership are available for effective participation in witnessing and visitation. Also, the study pointed out that only about two-thirds (66.5 percent) of the membership had high awareness of the benefits inherent in witnessing and visitation prior to the study, but after the study, the number of members grew to be about three-quarters (74.7 percent) of the total membership. Furthermore, the findings from the results obtained showed a very notable change in the members' involvement pattern, particularly in the high level of involvement category. Prior to the teaching it was 20.5 percent involvement, but after the teaching 30.6 percent was recorded. This is a 49.2 percentage change in a positive direction. It is recommended therefore that the Church promote witnessing and visitation more than before, and utilise more fully its untapped human resources through effective and adequate empowerment for a sustainable church membership enhancement.

## Conclusion

The membership of Ebenezer Baptist Church, Ondo, by sex between male and females is in the ratio two to three (2:3). This membership is made up mainly of the active age group of men and women (11-50 years), who can be engaged in witnessing and visitation activities toward enhancing the church's membership.

The membership of the church is well informed about the subject of witnessing and visitation, but only about 40 percent of the membership is available for effective involvement. This is due largely to their struggle with various identified barriers to witnessing and visitation. However, the members are open to receive help to overcome these barriers to witnessing and visitation, and were willing to be involved when motivated. The church membership affirmed their need of a structured witnessing and visitation programme to aid better participation. This was confirmed by the 50 percent of the total respondents who volunteered to be part of the witnessing and visitation plan.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations can be offered to the Church as a way of making her improve on her efforts at enhancing the membership through witnessing and visitation:-

1. That the church promote the Christian ministries of witnessing and visitation more than before, with the intention of making witnessing and visitation the lifestyle of its membership.
2. That the church utilise its untapped human resources for church membership growth.

3. Since barriers to witnessing and visitation are hindering a large portion of the total membership from being effective, periodic teaching sessions should be organized to assist them to overcome the obstacles.
4. Mentoring, and on-the-job training in the areas of witnessing and visitation should be made readily available by mature and experienced members to assist other members to become effective in their witnessing and visitation.
5. The church should have a workable and structured witnessing and visitation plan in place. Working with a plan, apart from offering members an opportunity to be involved, will also help them cope with most of the struggles they face in the course of doing witnessing and visitation.
6. The manual designed to enhance membership should be taught to the entire congregation annually. This will re-invigorate members who have been in the church before, and also serve as a fresh training opportunity for people who joined the church membership lately.
7. Also, to sustain its efforts in enhancing church membership through witnessing and visitation, the church should set up a Long Range Planning for Witnessing and Visitation in the church. Such planning will involve setting targets of percentage of membership to be involved in witnessing and visitation as well as predetermined number of the membership within a stipulated time frame.
8. It is further recommended that a research be embarked upon on how best to motivate males to be as equally involved in church membership growth as the females.