

The Social Ministry of The Apostolic Church LAWNA Territory Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper centres on the benevolent act of The Apostolic Church Nigeria which encompasses sacrificial empathy and selfless sympathy towards the incarcerated, the less privileged, the fatherless, widows and widowers. Though TACN is a heavenly conscious church which believes solely in the scriptures, but the destitute are not forgotten also, there are functional arms in the church inaugurated for active social ministry. The paper showcases the nitty-gritty of social ministry, a brief formational history of the church, the vision and mission statements of the church, her developmental expansion, and the various aspects in which the church gives back for an optimistic quest for a better society, some of the prospects of the church vis-à-vis systemic social ministry are also construed.

Key words: The Apostolic Church, Social ministry, Social gospel, Prospect

Introduction

This research work centres on the social ministry of The Apostolic Church, a paramount attention will be paid on the history (formation), vision, mission, achievement, welfare and challenges the church is being faced with. Sometimes, Christians make social ministry the church's purpose, others avoid it altogether. However, this is the few things to know about social ministry. John L. Rothra (2019) asserts that: "The social gospel is evangelism through kingdom establishment (social justice, social reform, etc); social ministry is needs-meeting ministry, not evangelism, wherein believers express their faith and love for God and man by serving those in need. The social gospel views social action as the gospel, while the social ministry views social action as love manifested because of the gospel".

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The Content of the Church Social Ministry

- (i) **Social ministry meets physical needs:** These needs could be: food bank, cloths, closet or other services, churches find ways to meet the needs of those that are in the church and the community members.
- (ii) **Social ministry is not evangelism, but should be evangelistic:** Churches meet people's physical needs and through this share the gospel of Jesus Christ to the benefactors. Though, sometimes, many do not walk through this door.
- (iii) **Pick few ministries and doing them well:** The fact still remains that a church cannot meet all the physical needs of the people, therefore, a church selects a few specific aspects and focuses on them well.
- (iv) **Social ministry could be done by the whole church, small group or both:** Most often, social ministry is done by the entire church, however, it is more effectively carried out when it is decentralised.
- (v) **Social ministry goes beyond the basics:** These could include volunteering at retirement homes, doing yard work for others, or anything that helps meet a physical need.

A brief history on the formation of The Apostolic Church

The Apostolic Church has its humble beginning from the western missionaries. Its denominational name was adopted in 1916 in the United Kingdom by the body of believers who were led by God, subsequent to the Welsh Revival of 1904-1905, into the truth of the Principles and Practices of the early Apostolic Church as contained in the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament (TAC, 2020). In 1918 during the period of the Influenza epidemic in Nigeria, some Christian brethren began to practise divine healing as a result of which they had to withdraw from their denomination and from the "Diamond Society" due to the persecution from those who did not believe in divine healing. In 1921, the "Diamond Society" became associated with the "Faith Tabernacle Congregation" of Philadelphia, USA because they also believed in divine healing, confessing and forsaking sins, paying tithes and offerings, baptizing by immersion, opposed to divorce/re-marriage and other similar scriptural teachings. They did not, however, believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit with signs following (TAC, 2020). A great revival started in the churches on June

10, 1930 in Ilesha, Nigeria, West Africa. There was fellowship with the “Faith Tabernacle Congregation” and much The Apostolic Church has its humble beginning from the western missionaries. Its denominational name was adopted in 1916 in the United Kingdom by the body of believers who were led by God, subsequent to the Welsh Revival of 1904-1905, into the truth of the Principles and Practices of the early Apostolic Church as contained in the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament (TAC, 2020). In 1918 during the period of the Influenza epidemic in Nigeria, some Christian brethren began to practise divine healing as a result of which they had to withdraw from their denomination and from the “Diamond Society” due to the persecution from those who did not believe in divine healing. In 1921, the “Diamond Society” became associated with the “Faith Tabernacle Congregation” of Philadelphia, USA because they also believed in divine healing, confessing and forsaking sins, paying tithes and offerings, baptizing by immersion, opposed to divorce/re-marriage and other similar scriptural teachings. They did not, however, believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit with signs following (TAC, 2020). A great revival started in the churches on June 10, 1930 in Ilesha, Nigeria, West Africa. There was fellowship with the “Faith Tabernacle Congregation” and much persecution resulted. This revival was led by the late Evangelist Joseph Babalola. Appeals for help to the leaders in Philadelphia went unheeded (TAC, 2020). Correspondence had, however, been exchanged with the headquarters of The Apostolic Church in the British Isles and now an appeal was made to that body for assistance. In response to the invitation three Missionary delegates arrived in Lagos, Nigeria on September 23 1931. They were the late Pastors D.P. Williams (President); A. Turnbull (Vice-President), and W.J. Williams (International Prophet). God richly blessed their ministry and after an exchange of views on doctrinal matters and other fundamental scriptural truths the Leaders of the Father Tabernacle Congregation of Nigeria unanimously decided to affiliate with The Apostolic Church of Great Britain and adopted The Apostolic Church as a denominational name together with its principles and practices (TAC, 2020). One great factor that contributed to the growth of the Church in Nigeria is the belief and acceptance of the Ministry of Apostleship and the Voice of the Lord through Prophetic Ministry. The Church has passed through turbulent times, particularly in 1931, 1940, and 1952; but the Voice of the Lord has kept the Church on till today (TAC, 2020). God has raised up many faithful Nigerian Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers who have served God and in sincere cooperation with the many dedicated Missionaries from Overseas have been used to spread the Gospel to every part of Nigeria and other countries in West Africa.

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The Vision Statement of The Apostolic Church

- (1) To preach the Gospel of Our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ according to the Holy Bible.
- (2) To teach the Holy Scriptures according to the Holy Bible conformably to the Constitution and the Guiding Principles of the
- (3) To preach and teach the doctrinal beliefs of the Church to every person either individually or as organized bodies with a view to their acceptance of such teachings and their signified desire that they be admitted to fellowship of the Church.
- (4) To carry on evangelistic programmes, form, establish and build Assemblies, Churches, Chapels, Temples and govern them according to the Guiding Principles of the Church.
- (5) To publish or cause to be published in any place and at any time, Christian literature, including Tracts, Magazines, Periodicals, Circulars, Books, Stickers or make such other publications and expressions as may be conducive to or compatible with the aims and objects herein and to print, distribute and circulate same.
- (6) To establish and own print and electronic media, make broadcasts, announcements, advertisements, publications or use any sound device and other forms of information and communication technology for the purpose of propagating Christian Faith in all its ramifications world-wide.
- (7) To organize and run training programmes, conferences and embark on missionary work for the propagation of the Gospel of Christ.

The Mission Statement of The Apostolic Church

- (a) Establish, control, promote and undertake Bible Schools/ Colleges/ Seminaries/ Universities for the training and development of Ministers and Workers of the Gospel in conformity with and pursuant to the Guiding Principles of the Church and to establish other educational or social institutions.
- (b) Co-operate and associate with or otherwise encourage and assist any person, body or organization with identical or complementary aims and objectives for the furtherance and expansion of the Gospel of CHRIST.
- (c) Ordain or permit to be ordained Officers, Pastors or Ministers of the Church and to confer or permit to be conferred on them such rights or privileges as the Church shall deem due fit in accordance with Biblical injunctions.

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- (d) Use, obtain, acquire, hold, purchase or otherwise own through all lawful means, machines, vehicles, equipment, audio visual displays, radio communication and telecommunication gadgets of all kinds for the propagation of the Gospel.
- (e) Establish and carry on relief programmes and run welfare programmes for widows, orphans, destitute, prisoners, the aged, the poor, and do all such things capable of reducing human pains and sufferings.

Expansion of The Apostolic Church in Nigeria

The Apostolic Church in Nigeria is administered as a single entity by the National Council of the Apostolic Church Nigeria with the late Pastor E. E. Okon as the then first indigenous National President. The field work is organized in five sections: The Lagos and Western/Northern Areas Territory (LAWNA); Cross River State Field; the Igbo Field; the Maritime Field; and the Akwa Ibom Field (TAC, 2020). As noted in the church profile, The Apostolic Church is a thoroughly scriptural, and spiritually healthy indigenous fellowship bounded together with an unbreakable cord of love, which fellowship has made and will yet make a very great contribution to the progress of God's work in Nigeria. As the work progressed, in line with the provisions of The Apostolic Church Constitution, The Apostolic Church in Nigeria became an autonomous body in 1983 but continues in cooperation and exchange of spiritual experience with The Apostolic Church in the United Kingdom. The Apostolic Church Glorious Vision, USA is a Field of The Apostolic Church, Nigeria.

The Social Ministry of The Apostolic Church in Nigeria

The Apostolic Church Prison Initiative

The Apostolic Church collaborates with the Prison Fellowship of Nigeria; both the Lagos Chapter and subsequently the National Prison Fellowship chapter. The main aim of the courtesy visitation revolves around the gospel message and more importantly, the provision of various basic essentials like: food, clothing and necessary materials for the systemic welfare of these people. This initiative

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has been going on for years, recently, March 8, 2024, the movement was present at Ado Ekiti Prison with palliative materials which worth more than #500000. They were also assisted with Solar Energy, so as to alleviate the danger of inconsistent electricity power supply. Some inmates are being empowered with vital exposures to various hand-on skills for their hereafter livelihood.



TACN Kirikiri, Apapa Lagos Prison Outreach (1)



TACN Ado-Ekiti Prison Outreach (2)

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Prospects and expectations to be accomplished (Challenge): There is an inevitable need for rehabilitation centres where the acquitted inmates could be rehabilitated. Half-way homes (rehabilitation centres) are essentially needed, the reason being that, immediately most of the acquitted inmates are released, the whole world changes, where there is no one to connect with and these people can still be re-entangled, but when there are half-way homes with the services of functional counsellors and psychologists. The flag of The Apostolic Church Prison Initiatives has been erected in Lagos zone, Ibadan Zone and Ekiti Zone. Meanwhile, there is an optimistic prospect of raising our flag at Abeokuta, Sokoto and Maiduguri states practically.

Widows/Widowers' Support Initiative

This arm is mainly established for alleviating unwavering poverty on the widows and widowers and this also transcends to the less privileged and the fatherless in the church. The Apostolic Church of Nigeria's Widows/Widowers' Committee was inaugurated on Sunday, April 28th, 2024, this event was graced by the National Vice President/ LAWNA Chairman, Pastor (Dr) Senior Gabriel Okpako Uyeh JP. Recently after the inauguration, on Saturday, June 22, 2024. The TACN LAWNA Widows/Widowers' Committee Support Initiative programme commemorated the International Widows Day celebration, which held at the Council Hall of the church in Lagos. The church leadership welcomed 100 widows at TACN Lagos Metropolis, and each of them was given #5000, without any iota of bias.



Lagos outreach for Widows, Widowers, The Less privileged and Fatherless (3)

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Lagos outreach for Widows, Widowers, The Less privileged and Fatherless (4)

Prospects and expectations to be accomplished (Challenge): The church longs to enlarge her territory to virtually all the widows, widowers, the less privileged and the fatherless in The Apostolic Church Nigeria and in extension to the concerned set of people in all the nooks and crannies of Nigeria. What really needs to be done as a matter of urgency is an accurate data base of the beneficiarys. Relatively, the arm seeks more buoyant financial support, so as to be able to capture wider jurisdictions.

Conclusion

The world has always been engulfed with unpleasant situations which have called for the intervention of social welfare institutions. In this regard, so many governmental and non-governmental bodies have contributed their contribution in abating these conditions. It is crucial to suggest that the involvement of the Church is of utmost important as the conscience of the society. This work has been an intensive effort to examine the roles of The Apostolic Church in contributing to changing the appalling conditions of the people. The Apostolic Church capitalises on visiting correctional centres with the gospel of Christ coupled with meeting their physical needs, also, the church has thought it really thoughtful to alleviate the unwavering poverty on the widows, widowers, the less privileged and the fatherless. These actions of compassion have highly contributed to a better society today.

The Correspondents' Portfolio

S/N	Names	Leadership Roles
1	Pastor Isaac Ogunrinola	TACN Ayegbaju Ekiti Area Superintendent
2	Pastor Benjamin O. Sanni	TACN LTC Media Assistant
3	Deaconess Oluwabunmi Bankole	Committee Member, TACN Widow Support Initiative
4	Deaconess Olufunmilayo Ajayi	TACN Prison Ministry of Nigeria Welfare Secretary

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