Latest News

- Student Christian Movement (SCM) of Nigeria collaborates with PPA to hold Anti-Corruption Rally & Symposium in Calabar on International Youth Day
- PPJ Project Manager Discuss the Shun Corruption Project on the Cross River Broadcasting Corporation (CRBC)
- Evangelical Christianity & the Anti-corruption Campaign in Nigeria
- Corruption & Examination malpractice
- Prosperity Formula

Sermon of the month: "Triumph"

Pastor (Dr.) Otive Igbuzor
General Overseer
Palace of PRIESTS ASSEMBLY

PPJ TRAINS STAFF AND PPA WORKERS ON DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

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PPJ ANTI-CORRUPTION CHAMPION OF THE MONTH
NETWORKING THE ANTI-CORRUPTION MESSAGE

Reverend Nancy Iheduru is an ordained and internationally licensed minister of the gospel working also in the Civil Society Space where she is making a commensurate impact as the Executive Director, Centre for Creative Development Strategies, a women and youth-focused non-governmental organization. She is based in Port Harcourt where she doubles up as the Associate Pastor of Fruitful Vine Christian Assembly Intl supporting her husband, Reverend Regis Iheduru.

Shortly after the training of Pentecostal Pastors in Port Harcourt in June 2022, Reverend Nancy Iheduru took the passion to fight corruption to another level. She inspired the leadership of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, (PFN)17 to fully join the fight against corruption and worked with them to celebrate the African Anti-Corruption Day 2022. Thereafter most of the Pastors such as Reverend Gods power of the Embassy of Grace International Church (TEGIC) kickstarted their own social arm and involved the youth of his ministry in the fight against Corruption. Also, Nancy motivated a fast-growing theater group, His Grace theatre to create short playlets on anti-corruption messages which were played in the church with very outstandingly clear messages on the need to stand up, speak up and stop corruption in the church.

As the Youth Pastor of Evergreen Youth Church, she declared and dedicated a full-service day to preach against corruption and has since then ensured that themes and teachings are synched to encourage them to live up to expectations wherever they and whatever they do. Nancy Iheduru also actively participated in a two-day workshop organized by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and has since encouraged the Pastors to ensure proper documentation of their ministries and compliance with regulatory bodies as we are expected to live by example. Through her Smart Parenting program, an online Facebook community group where she encourages parents to build integrity and model the values for their children through Facebook live shows. She has integrated the message of anticorruption in most of her speaking and preaching engagements, especially in the recent teen and youth camps and programs ongoing in various ministries. According to Reverend Nancy Iheduru, the anticorruption message should form a kind of evangelism of brethren within and outside the church and handled like the network marketing model where “you tell someone to tell someone to tell someone”. Better still, tell ten people to tell ten people, disciple them to become anti-corruption champions. By so doing, our light will so shine that the world will see our good works and glorify our heavenly father.
Student Christian Movement (SCM) of Nigeria in Collaboration with the Priests Peace & Justice Initiative (PPJ) marks 2022 International Youth Day with a March Against Corruption & a Symposium in Calabar Nigeria

The Student Christian Movement (SCM) of Nigeria from Thursday 11th through Sunday 14th August 2022 held her biennial All Tertiary Institutions Conference (ATIC 2022) in Calabar, Cross River State. The SCM as part of her activities held a March Against Corruption in collaboration with the Priests Peace & Justice Initiative (PPJ), the social arm of the Palace of Priests Assembly to join the rest of the World to celebrate the International Youth Day 2022 with a call on the Federal Government to Build Leadership for the Next Century and enforce anti-corruption legislation and prosecute those involved in corruptible transactions.

The theme of the International Youth Day 2022 is “Intergenerational solidarity; seeks to leverage the full potential of all generations. Solidarity across generations is key for sustainable development. By 2014, Nigeria was one hundred years old. There is consensus that Nigeria has not utilized its potential to the fullest. Indeed, the pervading Corruption, poverty, insecurity, and poor development indices have been blamed squarely on leadership. For the past one hundred years, Nigeria has not witnessed the kind of dynamic, strategic, and visionary leadership that can turn the potential of the country into real opportunities for the people.
The old is refusing to give space to the Young. Meanwhile, young people face enormous peer pressure. The standards of the world are confronting young people every minute through the promotion of sinful practices, the negative impact of the media, fashion, tastes, and depraved songs. It is very clear that the context of the past one hundred years will be quite different from the context of the next one hundred years. The amount of information available to leaders is going to continually increase in the next one hundred years. Future leaders will therefore have to develop the ability to access the most relevant information and differentiate them from irrelevant information. Similarly, the market has affected every facet of life in very fundamental ways in the last one hundred years. Future leaders will need to understand clearly the market and how the ideology of free market and deregulation has affected politics, the economy, and every facet of life. The world is undergoing rapid changes in every facet. This is why it is necessary to build the kind of leadership to accelerate the development of the country in the next one hundred years and ensure "no one is left behind".

The aim of IYD 2022 is to shed light on the need to enable the engagement of youth by making local, national, and global institutions more inclusive for the purpose of strengthening their capacity (and relevance) to achieve global action.
Student Christian Movement (SCM) of Nigeria in Collaboration with the Priests Peace & Justice Initiative (PPJ) marks 2022 International Youth Day with a March Against Corruption in Calabar Nigeria

Calabar, Wednesday, August 10, 2022.

There is the need to build the character of young persons in the formative years so that they can overcome the challenges confronting young people. The world is degenerating. Values are down. Leadership with character and vision is lacking and God is looking for young people who will be faithful to be called to lead the revival in this end time.

A statement jointly signed by the President of the Student Christian Movement (SCM) of Nigeria, Mrs. Ebere Ubesie, and the Program Manager of PPJ, Dr. Agbaji Orinya, said that young people are the greatest asset and future of any nation and serve as the bridge that links the present to future generations.

Any serious country should devote a lot of energy and resources to building the youth to be productive. Any country that refuses to develop its youth will endanger its future. When the leadership potentials of young people are not developed, the seeds of failure are being sown. We cannot really talk about democracy and development without the participation of citizens including young people.

The development of the youth requires the active participation of the family, community, schools, religious organizations, and government.
Student Christian Movement (SCM) of Nigeria in Collaboration with the Priests Peace & Justice Initiative (PPJ) marks 2022 International Youth Day with a March Against Corruption in Calabar Nigeria
Calabar, Wednesday, August 10, 2022.
Priests Peace & Justice Initiative Partners with the Student Christian Movement (SCM) of Nigeria to hold Anti-corruption rally and a symposium in Calabar on International Youth day 2022

Professor. Angela Oyo-Ita, Deputy Vice Chancellor, (DVC) of the University of Calabar during the symposium on Saturday said corruption in Nigeria is more infectious than the dreaded and highly infectious COVID-19.

Oyo-Ita gave the statement at an anti-corruption symposium organised by the Students Christian Movement, (SCM) of Nigeria and Priests Peace and Justice (PPJ) Initiative, with support from the MacArthur Foundation, in Calabar.

The Professor of Community Medicine said corruption had become pervasive in the nation because of the “others are doing it and the prospering syndrome” that had eaten into different facets of the nation.

She told the youth who were using the programme to commemorate International Youth Day that they still had the power to choose not to be corrupt, and to save the future of the nation.

“Nigeria is 154th in the World Corruption Perception Index out of 180 nations with a 24 per cent rate of transparency, this gives the nation a bad image, and we must change the trend.

“Despite the situation, the Bible is replete with young men and women who refused to be corrupted even though they were in corrupt foreign lands where they were not being monitored by their parents or government.

“The choice to be corrupt or not lies with us as a people but if we must save the soul of this nation for the future generations, we need to choose the latter,” she said.

While appealing to youths, Oyo-Ita said they were the hope of the future, adding that they needed to know where the older generation failed and what to do to put the nation back in the right direction.

On his part, Dr Agbaji Orinya, Programme Manager of PPJ in a lecture titled “The Role of Religion in the Fight Against Corruption”, said it had become endemic in Nigeria and if nothing was done today, our children would suffer.

Orinya said corruption in Nigeria had become systemic, adding that we must continue to strive that our children do not grow up to see corruption as normal due to eroded value system.

“The church must not leave the fight against corruption in the hands of the government, it must continue to persuade people and preach against it if we must save Nigeria.

“As a church, we must promote the three ‘s’ model which is to shun, speak and stand against corruption in our politics, educational system and even in the church to save our nation.

The programme commenced with an anti corruption rally from the Federal Government Girls College, Calabar to the University of Calabar with many youths wielding banners written “shun corruption,” “corruption kills,” “speak against corruption.”
The Potential Means by which Religious Organizations Can Fight Corruption. 
Excerpts from the paper titled "The Role of Religion in Reducing Corruption and Combating Pass-mark Bribery in Nigeria"
By Dr. Agbaji Orinya

In Nigeria, religious organizations are crucial to the fight against corruption. Through their teachings, they attempt to touch the conscience of their followers, which has the power to alter how they act and how they view corruption.

The verses that denounce corruption can be found in both the Christian and Islamic sacred texts. Therefore, corruption is considered a sin by Christians and Muslims, yet it is forbidden or considered a sin against the earth goddess in traditional African religion.

According to the Bible, covetousness and greed cause corruption. It was observed that corruption, whether moral or political, is a sin and everyone who engages in it is under the yoke of sin.

The preceding is predicated on the idea that life's essence is independent of one's plenty of possessions.

The logical conclusion of corruption is greed.

A person has a high propensity to turn corrupt in order to succeed in getting all he wants when he wants to possess or own everything.

The following is a proposal for a solution to Nigeria's corruption issues.

**God as the Sole Source of Right Riches**

When people begin to believe that God is the only source of right wealth, corruption will be lessened. What a person should possess is what God gives them, not money that was obtained illegally. In support of the aforementioned, it was stated that everyone seeing God as the source of prosperity is the religious cure to corruption.
This leads to the conclusion that corruption would decrease if leaders and followers both saw God as the source of wealth creation. One must walk patiently with God in order to see God as the ultimate source of good wealth. People wouldn't be driven by greed to engage in immoral behavior in order to benefit themselves. The giving and taking of bribes would be significantly decreased. Religious authorities should concentrate on imparting lessons and warnings that will cause their followers to change their minds and return their attention to God.

Upholding Religious Principles

Any form of corruption is condemned by the religious organizations in Nigeria according to their precepts of faith. When religious leaders and followers put what they preach and hold to be their belief into practice, corruption in Nigeria would be effectively combated. This entails abiding by moral ideals, respecting human life, loving one another, pursuing peace, etc. Because Nigeria's religious population does not follow the rules laid out in their religion's holy book, corruption is encouraged to grow and persist.

God as the proper source of Power and Position.

The struggle for positions in government and the high level of corruption in Nigeria's politics are two major stress points for corruption. These people are so desperate for power that they engage in and commit unspeakable acts. Politicians and candidates for leadership positions would not care about whom they trampled on in order to achieve their goals. A high level of corruption is shown during this process. For ritual purposes and to help one person gain control, people are abducted and slaughtered; public funds are also stolen would be significantly decreased. Religious authorities should concentrate on imparting lessons and warnings that will cause their followers to change their minds and return their attention to God. to pay for election rigging, etc. Religion could offer remedies by guiding its followers' thoughts in the direction of realizing that the best source of authority and position comes from God. They should continue emphasizing in their teaching and preaching that assuming positions of authority through coercion, manipulation, murder, or sorcery is against God and will always backfire. Forcefully assuming authority has negative effects that affect the culprit, his children, and potentially future generations. Corruption would result if this emphasis were consistently placed in houses of worship. The fight against corruption would be successful. However, corruption would be decreased if politicians were persuaded to understand that their positions of authority come from God.

However, a person's heart can be mistaken or misguided if there is a high rate of corruption as a result. The religious institutions in Nigeria, therefore, have a crucial role to play in the effective fight against corruption by correctly directing, enlightening, educating, and rehabilitating the hearts and minds of their followers for proper behavior in the church and society. Additionally, the religious function entails urging and convincing followers to abstain from evil and adopt the proper outlook.
The problem of corruption is as old as society itself and cuts across nations, cultures, races, and classes of people. It is undoubtedly one of the greatest challenges of our times leading to underdevelopment and poor service delivery. Corruption has a lot of negative consequences on every sphere of societal development whether social, economic, or political. Corruption not only leads to poor service delivery but the loss of lives. Corruption is pervasive in Nigeria with serious negative consequences. Despite the plethora of legislations and agencies fighting corruption in the country, corruption has remained widespread and pervasive because of the failure to utilize universally accepted and tested strategies; disconnect between the posturing of leaders and their conduct; lack of concrete sustainable anti-corruption programming, and failure to locate the anti-corruption struggle within a broader struggle to transform society.

Pentecostal Christians have a perspective on corruption anchored on the scriptures; energized by the Holy Ghost and the need for action. It is this Pentecostal Perspective that has informed the conceptualization of the SHUN CORRUPTION project. It is recommended that Pentecostals should use the scriptures to fight against corruption while being energized by the Holy Spirit to discern corruptible transactions. Pentecostal Church leaders should disciple believers to reject corruption; put in place mechanisms for accountability; train members to generate income; preach against corruption and create a social arm for the church to fight corruption.

References
Chatham House Collective Action Against Corruption in Nigeria The Role of Religion, Briefing Paper, March 2021, p.69
Following the massive anti-corruption rally that took place on the streets of Calabar, the Cross-River State Capital on International youth day organized by the Student Christian Movement of Nigeria in collaboration with Palace of Priests Assembly, the management of the Cross River Broadcasting Cooperation invited the National President of the Student Christian Movement (SCM) of Nigeria, Mrs. Ebere Ubesie and the Program Manager of Priests Peace & Justice Initiative, Dr. Agbaji Orinya and offered some free airtime to discuss the Shun Corruption Project on the Cross River Broadcasting Corporation (CRBC).
Introduction:
A project to examine the place of corruption in evangelical or Pentecostal Christianity is one that demands real consideration. It must examine the biblical warrant for asking Christians to commit to fight against corruption. If this world is passing away and everything in it, should we pay such a big attention to how the world is governed? This is not an academic question. Some of the indifference of Christians to the social events and crises relate to how they have answered this question. In Nigeria, many have observed that evangelicals have been missing in serious engagement with social issues like corruption and good governance. This indifference, compared with the catholic intense engagement with questions of justice and peace, demands an explanation and a new approach.

The paper reviews the landscape of social engagement by evangelical Christianity in Nigeria and argues that the lack of active engagement by evangelicals with issues of social justice, particularly corruption is a result of lack of compelling and orienting theology on church and society and absence of programmatic intervention. The paper investigates the complexity of evangelical theology that may creates an indifference to the realities of injustice in the society and offer some practical steps towards engendering intense commitment to anticorruption by evangelicals in Nigeria.

The Corruption Problematic:
Corruption now represents one of most serious challenges to human welfare and social justice in the world. Nigeria’s development failure is partly a result of failure to utilize its enormous natural resources to invest in critical human and physical infrastructure that engender economic and social development. Corruption takes away the financial resources to build infrastructure for growth and wellbeing. As important as resources are for development, utilization is more important. Waste and corruption could negate the impact of natural endowment. The resource curse is not just that abundant resource could create a perverse incentive to overlook investment in critical drivers of development, it also means that abundant resources may induce corruption. The recent Global Corruption Barometer reports that 12 out of 13 countries with the worst bribery cases are in Africa. The African Development Bank (ADFB) estimates that corruption cost Africa up to about 50% in lost revenue. The African Union estimates that about 25% of Africa’s revenue is lost to corruption yearly. That is about $148 billion. The John Hopkins University political economist, Professor Peter Lewis, in Growing Apart: Oil, Politics and Economic Change in Indonesia and Nigeria, argues that Indonesia
Evangelical Christianity and the Anti-corruption Campaign in Nigeria

achieve some significant transformation more than Nigeria because of the perverse rent-seeking amongst diverse and assorted groups of elites. Africa is the most underdeveloped continent. Even as the world has recorded massive decline in poverty, especially on account of the gigantic efforts of China to lift millions from extreme poverty in about two decades, Africa continues to post overwhelming statistics of the growth of poverty. It is arguable that if Africa has prudently utilized its abundant natural resources to upgrade its human and physical infrastructure it would have been able to achieve significant improvement in economic growth which historically results in massive reduction in poverty levels. Africa’s story of missed opportunity tells a story of the negative consequence of corruption. Nigeria is a posterchild of Africa’s failure in development. The recent report from a US policy thinktank confirms that Nigeria has overtaken India as the country with the highest number of poor people in the world. This is significant considering that Indian population is more than 8 times Nigerian population. The report also argues that Nigeria will have the fastest growth in poverty in the world in the years ahead. Clearly, whether we measure poverty in terms of income or vulnerability, Nigerian are evidently becoming poorer and poorer. The latest available statistics in Nigeria show that extreme power is between 70-60%.

The relationship between corruption and poverty is much nuanced. But it is clear that grand corruption- large scale theft of public finance- bears significant responsibility for extreme poverty in Nigeria. By some estimation, Nigeria has earned more than N3 trillion in oil receipts since independence. A significant part of the revenue was stolen and starched abroad on foreign banks by Nigerian rulers. Recently, the Switzerland released about $500million as part of the loot from Nigerian treasury by late military dictator, General Sani Abacha. This is just a tranche of what one Nigerian Head of State stole from the treasury. There is a clear urgency to combat grand corruption if Nigeria has any chance of exit extreme poverty and achieving sustainable economic growth to improve human welfare.

Corruption is both a sin and an injustice. As a sin it violates the divine covenant on leadership. The Bible teaches that leadership or governance is a two-sided covenant: a covenant between God and the people and a covenant between the leader and God. At the heart of this covenant is a commitment to pursue justice with the people and righteousness with God. Justice and righteousness is the heart of the leadership obligation. This is amply reflected in Deuteronomy 16:17-19 where God required the new nation (Israel) to appoint judges who will render ‘righteous’ judgement and follow ‘justice and only justice’. See also Job 37:23 and Isaiah 28:17. When a leader deals corruptly, whether by pillaging the society or abrogating the rights of the people he has violated the covenant with God and the people. So, the social contract which was powerfully articulated in Deuteronomy 17:16-20 derives from the divine contract. Corruption is also an injustice against the people. From a biblical perspective, the purpose of government is to promote the good. The ultimate good of human society is to ensure the people live in peace and prosperity so they will serve God acceptably. So, corruption leaders that deprives the people of the resources which God has bestowed on them is a violation of the rights of the people. In secular scholarship, there is a growing understanding that corruption is a violation of human rights. It has moved from a leadership misdemeanor to a fundamental human rights violation.
Evangelical Christianity and the Anti-corruption Campaign in Nigeria

By covenant, the people are entitled to good governance. The leader who God appoints must, as King David put it in 2 Samuel 23, rule justly and in the fear of God. The result of good governance is prosperity (grass will sprout). Bad governance, which is mostly represented by grand corruption, is a denial of justice to the people. It is not just a sin against God. It is also a deprivation of social and economic justice to the people.

Evangelical Christians have a responsibility to stand against corruption because corruption is a sinful social order that militates against the purpose and plan for God for governance of human society. But, unfortunately, the reality is that evangelicals and Pentecostal Christians, in fact the entire community of protestant Christianity has not stood out clearly in the anticorruption campaign and advocacy. This seeming lack of commitment to fight against corruption may stem from failure to have a balanced biblical understanding of Christian commitment to social justice and how corruption violates social justice. This paper will examine why this is so. Furthermore, the lack of commitment to an anticorruption agenda negatively impacts on the mission of the church. It has deprived the church of the credibility to evangelize effectively. This failure also affects the transformation of society.

In Nigeria today the Christian voice is not loud and clear on the questions of peace and social justice. As Nigerians and their leaders struggle with insecurity, corruption and poverty many people everywhere express disappointment at the loud silence or at best muted intervention of Christian leaders and Christian ministries. The social media is a good barometer of national disappointment with the Christian stewardship in this regard. We recall the general outrage that greeted the message of the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) at the killing of one the pastors of the church by Islamic fundamentalists in a suburb in Abuja. He has prayed that the church was more interested in the killers repenting and becoming pastors so they will preach the word of God than in justice. The statement set off wide ranging criticism of Christian leadership in many social media platforms. May alleged that Christians leaders are more concerned about the financial and numerical health of their congregations rather than on the ‘weightier matters’ of justice for the oppressed. Of course, sentiments and statements on social media should not become the measure of truth or the basis of setting an agenda for the church. But it is a good measure of the sense of disappointment of the very people that the church ought to lead to salvation. More important, many of the incensed commentators on social media who call out these generals of the church identify themselves as evangelical Christians. So, clearly, there is a general perception that the church is punching below its weight in matters of social justice and peace in Nigeria. The little kept secret is that the record of members of the church in matters of corruption, especially corrupt management of public finance has been at best depressing. We have read reports of professed Christians whose record of stealing would even shamed unbelievers. With such reputation, many believe that the church lacks the credibility to stand up for justice and good governance in Nigeria.
Evangelical Christianity and the Anti-corruption Campaign in Nigeria

But, in spite of these contradictions, evangelicals and Pentecostals have to rediscover commitment to the fight against corruption as part of the proclamation of divine sovereignty and divine justice. The message of anticorruption is part of the message of justice and peace, which ought to be the central to the message of salvation in Christ Jesus. The evangelical and Pentecostal church should not be blackmailed to abandon the work of justice and peace. We have to retrieve the tradition from the ruins of bad testimony and take the message of justice to the distraught and hopeless world. But to be steadfast in the work of justice and peace we need to ground our commitment to justice and peace in the depth of the Christian message of salvation. Why Should an Evangelical and Pentecostal Christian Care about Fighting Corruption? Does God really Care about Justice?

Is advocacy for peace and social justice central to the Christian witness? Or are Christians advocating on issues of justice and peace as ancillary commitment arising from circumstances? Is our engagement in justice and peace principled or merely strategic?

The crisis we face today is a crisis of idea. For some time now Christianity has been responding to social trend instead setting the trend. We have lost control of the intellectual leadership of civilization. Although Christian values so called are still the backbone of what we refer as western civilization, those values are no longer consciously being linked to Christianity as a religion but to universal values that are accessible to everyone who exercises the minimum functions of rationality. I will say a little bit more about this intellectual crisis at the heart of waning influence of Christianity and its failure to achieve its mission in the world. But for now it is sufficient to state that we ought to begin this discussion with a clear statement of the scriptural basis of Christian commitment to justice and peace in order to recover clarity about how the church should engage with issues of justice and peace. There is no doubt that the Christian message of salvation in Christ Jesus is rooted in peace and justice. The Catholic Church has a developed theological heritage on justice and peace. In many parishes of the Catholic Church there are functional Justice and Peace Committee, usually chaired by a priest and engaging the laity in a critical part of the apostolic work. I cut my teeth in justice and peace advocacy with the Catholics and was once the coordinator of a think-tank for Catholic Bishops to formulate ideas for justice and peace work. But mainstream evangelicals and Pentecostals have not made a structural accommodation for justice and peace as a ministry of the church. This lack is both a cause and consequence of the diminished place of justice and peace in the theology and

The starting point for retrieving the scriptural basis of commitment to justice and peace is the prophetic tradition. The Christian religion and its sister, Judaism, are unique because of the prophetic tradition. The prophets in scriptural tradition are unique personas because they bridge the gap between God and man. Unlike other wise men and priests in other religions prophets translate spiritual principles into earthly programs. God speaks through the prophets who are often referred to as ‘God’s man’. That divine privilege of prophetic proclamation gives an opportunity for divine self-disclosure.
 Evangelical Christianity and the Anti-corruption Campaign in Nigeria

The prophetic tradition in the bible takes the form of non-conformism. The prophet takes his stand on behalf of God, stands on an Olympian height, surveys the acts of nobles and commoners alike and issues a declaration that is often a denunciation. The prophetic tradition dates even as early as Moses in the scripture. Moses was the ultimate prophetic who God sent, not just to stand up against pharaoh and denounce the injustice and oppression of the people of Israel, but also to organize and lead the people into freedom and justice. The prophetic tradition has always been focused on twin pillars of freedom and responsibility. In his book, America’s Prophet: Moses and the American Story, Bruce Feiler identifies these pillars thus, “The first is freedom. In times of oppression, slavery, or pain, the story suggests, human can cry out and God will liberate them from their distress”. As God told Moses at the ‘Burning Bush’, “I have surely seen the afflictions of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters.” But, freedom is not the only pillar of the prophetic tradition starting from Moses. The second pillar is responsibility. “Freedom”, says Bruce Feiler, “must be accompanied by the second pillar of the story: responsibility. In the Bible, this notion is captured in the word, brit, or covenant, an agreement between two parties to perform and/or refrain from certain activities”. Feiler argues that the founding fathers of the United States succeeded because they seared this twin pillars into the fabric of American life. The new republic was founded on the need to protect freedom and also entrench responsibility. The prophetic proclamation is that God has bestowed freedom on mankind and have also entrusted responsibility to mankind to serve him in the spirit of freedom and righteousness.

The key point of this analysis is that the prophet is a social realist. He or she focuses on the realities that the people confront every day and brings divine perspective to define and transform the realities. The key difference between the prophet and other social commentators or critics is that whereas the latter critique or challenge the social realities with wisdom from this world, the prophet challenges earthly realities from the perspective of heaven. He condemns the evil and corruption of power on behalf of the God who rules amongst men and within nations. Daniel 5: 21.

The Sovereignty of God and the Concept of Justice:

In the prophetic tradition of the bible we see four distinctive characterizations of God. The first is the characterization of God is as a sovereign. The sovereignty of God is to some people a scandal. The British rational philosopher, Sir Bertrand Russell, has argued vehemently against the existence of God by appealing to what he considers the scandal of God who although omnipotent and all-good yet could not overcome evil. In his view, either God is not almighty and therefore has to tolerate evil in spite of himself or he is almighty but not all-good and therefore accommodates evil.

We have also seen amongst theologians an attempt to defends the existence of God in spite of evil. This branch of theology is called ‘theodicy’. Some of the philosophers of religion like John Hick and Alvin Plantinga have offered defense of God and his goodness and almightiness. One of the defenses is to argue quite persuasively that this world- in all its tragedies- is the best world God would have made and still preserved human freedom. In other words, any other possible world that would have removed the possibility of evil would need the restriction of human freedom.
Evangelical Christianity and the Anti-corruption Campaign in Nigeria

That would be a very bad world. Recently, the late atheist Christopher Hitchens tried to ridicule religion in his book, God is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything. While Hitchens focused more on the irrationality of religious beliefs generally, Bertrand Russel in his book, Why I am not a Christian, dwelt on the scandal of omnipotence. How could God be omnipotent and good and still injustice and oppression are writ large everywhere. But the Hebrew prophets have a perfect answer to him. In spite of injustice God is a sovereign. He governs even through the oppression of the wicked. The story of the exodus is an eternal message of hope that God sees all injustice and works to finally judge the oppression of the wicked. All through history God has intervened in the history of mankind to stop oppression and judge wicked oppressions. We saw that in the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. When God called Moses to organize the liberation struggle He told Moses that He has heard the cries of anguish of the oppressed Jews (Exodus 3:6-9. See the entire story of the exodus in Exodus Chapters 3-6. It was the same God that summoned the black civil rights activists to successfully challenge racism in the United States. Bruce Feiler’s book: America’s Prophet: Moses and the American Story tells the story well. The same God intervened in South Africa to end apartheid.

In Exodus, God declared “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of that land to a good and broad land, to a land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:7-8). The same God also declared that he saw oppression and there was no one to intervene and he had to intervene to reverse the course of injustice. The apparent triumph of injustice and what seems like divine impotence in the face of injustice has no place in scriptural tradition. The God of Israel, the God represented by the Hebrew prophets is better defined as the God who takes up a case against injustice. He is the God who charged us through his prophet, Micah, to ‘do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8). The sovereignty of God in the scriptures includes the important fact that he has full control over injustice. He will end the reign of terror and restore liberty to the oppressed. This is why he has anointed his son, Jesus Christ “to bring good news to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound” (Isaiah 61:1-3).

The Justice of God and the Scandal of Injustice:

As Christians we need to appreciate another important characterization of God: his justice. Justice is not just what does engages in. It is his nature. When God disclosed himself to Abraham, he could not hide this aspect of his personality. He announced himself as the God of justice. He is the God who gives everyone according to the work of their hand. He is God who does not show partiality. God is a God of justice (Isaiah 30:18). By him actions are weighed. This disclosure of God as a God of justice is so authoritative that when Abraham wanted to remonstrated with God on the planned destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, he chided God by the attribute of justice. Abraham wondered whether the God of all the earth will not do justice. God had to justify his name as God of justice (Genesis 18:23-25). The scandal of injustice will not last because God is a God of justice. God’s commitment against injustice is a matter of proving his nature. To know God is to know his love for justice. God sovereignty and rule over the earth is based on the principle of justice. Justice is the measure and essence of divine sovereignty (Isaiah 28:17).
For the gospel to have a discernible inroad into the heart of the people and affect their mindset in a positive way, its social edge much be sharp. For the church to represent Christ and His interests on earth fully, she must pay serious attention to her social responsibilities and create structures that will enable her to respond to the growing needs of the society, especially as it concerns the social implications of the Christian ministry.

The Palace of Priests Assembly Youths (Kingdom Ambassadors) held some activities to mark this year’s Youth Week on the 12th – 14th August 2022 with the theme “Living Triumphantely”.

There was a talk show on the Friday with the guest speaker Pastor Dr. Ejiro Otive Igbuzor. The following day Saturday, the Youths paid a visit to an orphanage home (Darlez Care Orphanage Home) at Area 8, Abuja and some gift items were donated to the orphanage home. The highlight was on Sunday, where the youths took charge of the service activities.

Our world surfeits with needy people of different categories, which God demands the church to cater for. The needy would include but not be limited to the following: orphans, widows, prisoners, destitute, homeless, sick, those in need of justice, etc.

God expects Christ’s followers to be socially responsible and responsive to the needy around them.

It is totally unacceptable to God for the church to ignore the plight of people suffering hunger, thirst, nakedness, homelessness, sickness, or imprisonment.

Speaking in defense of the hungry throng that once milled around Him at a late hour in the wilderness, our Lord directed His disciples, “You give them something to eat” (Luke 9:13). The church must follow the example of her Master and step up her game in caring for the needy.
PPA YOUTH VISIT THE KABUSA BRANCH ON INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY
Training of PPJ staff and workers on developing leadership competencies

Defining competency

Many definitions have been advanced in the last two decades explaining competency and what it constitutes of. Despite all these, there has not been one universally accepted definition of the concept. The most used one defines competency as: “A cluster of knowledge, skills and personal attributes that affects a major part of one’s job that correlates with performance on the job; can be measured against well-accepted standards, and can be improved via training and development” (Parry 1998) Other definitions include:

Competency is a measurable pattern of knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics that an individual needs to perform work roles or occupational functions successfully. Rodriguez et.al (2002)

A set of skills, related knowledge, and attributes that allow an individual to perform a task or an activity within a specific function or job (UNIDO 2002)

What is leadership

A study and analysis of the popular definitions on leadership reveal that most definitions tend to focus on individual traits and characteristics. Eminent personalities had their own views and hence have defined leadership.

Some of the definitions of leadership are as follows:

Leadership is an influence process that enables managers to get their people to do willingly what must be done and do well what
Training of PPJ staff and workers on developing leadership competencies

Leadership is defined as the process of influencing the activities of an organized group toward goal achievement. (Rauch & Behling.)
Leadership is discovering the company's destiny and having the courage to follow it. (Joe Jaworski - Organizational Learning Center at MIT.).
Leadership is interpersonal influence, exercised in a situation, and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals. (Tannenbaum, Weschler & Massarik).

Leadership competencies are leadership skills and behaviours that contribute to superior performance. By using a competency-based approach to leadership, organizations can better identify and develop their next generation of leaders.

These skills include:
1. Social intelligence
2. Interpersonal skills
3. Emotional Intelligence
4. Prudence
5. Courage
6. Conflict management
7. Decision making
8. Political skills
9. Influence skills
10. Area competence/Expertise.
Training of PPJ staff and workers on developing leadership competencies

Key leadership competencies include 1. social intelligence, 2. conflict management, 3. interpersonal skills, 4. (learning) agility, 5. decision-making, 6. being a good coach, 7. emotional intelligence, 8. industry expertise, 9. change management, 10. sharing a compelling vision, 11. courage, 12. managing yourself, 13. inclusiveness, 14. organizational citizenship behavior, and 15. people management.

Management Competency

Management competencies are the skills, habits, motives, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to successfully manage people. When developed, management competencies promote better leadership and contribute to business success.

These competencies include:
1. Driving and managing change
2. Strategic thinking
3. Making quality decisions
4. Building partnerships
5. Leading and empowering others
6. Managing performance

Each competency cluster is composed of hard and soft skills, detailing the knowledge, skills, and abilities that result in positive performance outcomes.

Once you find yourself in a leadership position in an organization, the absence of these vital competencies becomes a source of concern for that leader or manager. It is therefore necessary for organizations to map and identify such competencies and make plans on how those gaps would be filled. This is to ensure that the company does not lose its business position to competitors and have its bottom lines impacted.
Training of PPJ staff and workers on developing leadership competencies
The newsletter

Introduction
The month of August is our month of Triumph (2 Cor 2:14). To triumph is to win, succeed and be victorious in a spectacular way. It can also mean to conquer e.g. to triumph over enemies or triumph over evil.

2 Cor 2: 14 - Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. (KJV)

- Paul was describing a parade of victory akin to familiar Roman victory procession when Roman Soldiers march through the streets in Triumph.

- Jesus leads us always in triumph
Triumph is winning, success and victory. Triumph brings joy, happiness and satisfaction. Jesus Christ will always lead us to triumph.

Col 2:15 - And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. (KJV).

- Jesus has power over the forces of spiritual darkness
- Jesus’ power brings victory over spiritual evil

Assurance of Triumph
The word of God assures us that as Children of God, we will triumph ultimately. In spite of the challenges that we have faced in the past, or facing at present or even in the future, we will triumph.

- Whatever suffering you have gone through or may be going through cannot be compared to the glory that is to come at the second coming of Jesus Christ.

John 16: 33 - These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. (KJV)

- Whatever trials you have faced or facing, you can go through with peace and purpose because Jesus has overcome the world.

How do we know that we have assurance?

1. By the promises of the scriptures: The Bible assures us that we will triumph. The word of God cannot lie. It will surely be fulfilled.
Sermon of the Month: **Assurance Of Triumph** (John 16: 33; Rom 8:18) Pastor (Dr.) Otive Igbuzor

• Whatever suffering you have gone through or may be going through cannot be compared to the glory that is to come at the second coming of Jesus Christ.  
John 16: 33- These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. (KJV)
• Whatever trials you have faced or facing, you can go through with peace and purpose because Jesus has overcome the world.  
How do we know that we have assurance?
1. By the promises of the scriptures: The Bible assures us that we will triumph. The word of God cannot lie. It will surely be fulfilled.
2 Cor 1: 17- There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape.
2. The mission and work of Jesus Christ is to give us this assurance: The birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is to give us assurance.
2 Cor 2: 14 – Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. (KJV)
3. By our own testimonies: In our own personal journeys in life as individuals or as a church, we have experienced victories.
Matt 24:13- But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. (KJV)
- At individual level, we have experienced victories over sin, satanic attacks, sicknesses, accidents etc.
- At the global church level, the church has experienced victories over paganism, false prophets and experienced reformation and revivals.
- At the local church level, we have experienced victories over blackmail, attacks and exigencies of our time (COVID–19).
Rev 12: 11–And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. (KJV)
1 John 2:13 -I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. (KJV)

**Effect of the Assurance**

The assurance of triumph should make us to face the Christian journey with:
- Confidence and Courage: No matter what happens, we will triumph.
- Zeal and determination: We know the end result. There is nothing to fear.
- Persistency: We should continue doing good. We should continue the worship of God.

We should continue service to human kind. No matter the delays. No matter the discouragements. No matter the partial failures. At the end, we shall triumph.

**Challenge**

Have you given your life to Jesus? Have you faced challenges in the past? Are you facing challenges now? What is your response to the promises of the scriptures? Have you ever shared any testimonies of victory? Are you facing life with confidence and courage? Do you worship God with seal and determination? Are you persistent? Do you know that you have assurance of triumph?

**Conclusion**

As children of God, we have assurance of triumph. In spite of the challenges we have faced in the past, at present or even the challenges that we will face in the future, in the final analysis, we will triumph. Jesus Christ has completed the work of our triumph and our testimonies point to our triumph. We must therefore face life with confidence and courage: zeal and determination; and persistency being fully persuaded that at the end, we will triumph.

Father, help me to live a triumphant Christian life.
There is one thing you must understand about the elections.

All the Presidential Candidates in the major political parties: APC, PDP, Labour and SDP are eminently qualified to hold the position they seek. All them of have made contributions at different levels towards national development. This we must recognize and acknowledge.

As an electorate, your duty is to interrogate these qualified candidates to ascertain the one that meets your aspiration for the future.

In examining them, you need to take a view of what each had done in the past, what they had said in the past, how they had responded to issues of public interest.

Never be blinded again by issues of ethnicity and religion which the elite have used to divide the nation.

You must move away from your tribe or religion, not because your tribe or religion is not important, but because they have been abused. Instead of harnessing religion and ethnicity as instruments of cohesion and advancement of moral values, the Nigerian political elite have made them to become the albatross of national development.

I don't have problems with whoever you decide to support or vote for, but please don't begrudge another person for making a choice different from yours.

At the end of the day, whoever wins, Nigeria continues.

Please let us be tolerant of divergent views. Very soon, the whistle will be blown by INEC for official campaigns to begin.

If anyone says something negative about your candidate, don't get personal and aggressive in your response. Refute any statement with evidence where available and do your best to focus on verifiable evidence to counter or validate your position.

Nigeria belongs to all of us, even though we know that we don't all enjoy the benefits of being a Nigerian equally. Some enjoy more than others, which is one of the reasons for agitations and social disquiet.

We have to face issues head-on. No sentiments. No emotional blackmail. No need to feel threatened. The months ahead will be tough.

The internet will be set on "fire". People will dig up things against and in favour of your candidate. Be ready to absorb the shock that will follow when such things emerge. Some of them will counter what you had known about your candidate. Instead of fighting those who bring them up, find good reasons to help them see things differently.


Get ready for one of the most thrilling electioneering seasons in Nigeria's democratic history.
No one will plan your future for you if you don’t plan it for yourself.” Many people are poor not because money has not passed through their hands but because they lack Strategic investment and investment mentality. They either waste or spend any money that comes their way. It is all about mindset. Some people have a toxic mentality that is harmful to investing.

Prosperity formula

- (Physical seed-Businesses, Paper asset & Real Estate plus Spiritual seed –Tithe, Offering and Giving) • Physical Seeds: Businesses (Gal 6:7; Gen 8:22) + Portfolio (Paper assets) Prov. 20:13 + Real estate (Prov 22:29)

“If you don’t know where you are going to, you will not know when you get there.” The vehicle is the strategy or type of investment one chooses to operate. The vehicle you choose will determine how fast you go; how much effort you put in; how much returns you get etc. In a physical vehicle, your choice of aeroplane or car will determine how fast you go.

Vehicles to Wealth Creation

1. Paid Employment: Paid employment with investment mentality is a powerful vehicle that can help you move from earned income to portfolio or passive income. “Every enduring financial fortune is built on a foundation of saving.” “Earning is not going to make you a fortune if you don’t save.” Saving is what you pay yourself. It is the seed of your labour, which you sow for your future. Save at least 10 percent of your monthly income.
2. Inheritance or wealth transfer: Less than 10 percent of those who are super rich inherited their wealth. Over 90 percent of children of successful people end up as failures. “Inheriting millions is not going to keep you wealthy if you don not save.” - Hauwa M. Audu
3. Money market: Financial instruments such as savings account, current account, fixed deposits, call deposit and treasury bills.
4. Money market: Investment vehicles that work in the long run e.g Stocks, mutual funds, government bond. Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase Prov 13:11 Time is money: Invest N600 monthly at 10 percent gives N1m in 27 years. Invest N1,500 monthly at 25 percent for 20 years gives you N6.3m. Invest N5,000 monthly for 30 years at 25 percent gives you N193.9m.
5. Real Estate: Real estate is real investment. It is a very powerful vehicle of wealth creation and preservation. Land may not increase in size but continues to increase in value.
6. Businesses: Starting and owning your business is one of the most powerful vehicles of wealth creation. 98 percent of millionaires, billionaires and trillionnaires of the world have their own businesses.
7. Intellectual property: Musicians, authors, actors, footballers, boxers, sportsmen and women etc.
Prosperity formula by Pastor Otive Igbuzor

8. Network/Multi level marketing: GNLD, Forever living product etc
9. Internet business: bloggers, app developers, e.g Linda Ikeji, Konga
10. Information business: package information and sell e.g books, tapes, CD, VCD, training seminars and courses.
11. Precious Gems: Trading or investing in precious gems like gold, silver, diamond etc
12. Painting and Art work e.g an art work was sold for N38 million recently in Nigeria.
13. Commodities trading- Coffee, cocoa, beans, grains, groundnut etc
14. Agriculture and animal husbandry

TYPES OF INCOME
1. Earned Income: This is the income derived from salaried jobs, paid or contract employment or some form of labour.
2. Portfolio income: Income derived from paper assets such as stocks, bonds, mutual funds etc
3. Passive income: income generally derived from real estates and royalty. Your financial plan must then focus on how to convert earned income into portfolio and passive income as efficiently as possible.

Why Diversify and Have Multiple Streams?
1. It is the wisest thing to do: If anything goes wrong with a single stream, you are in trouble. Wisdom demands that you do not put all your eggs in one basket.
2. It increases your earning potential
3. It reduces your risks and spreads it
4. It gives you greater security
5. It is the secret of unending wealth

Strategies for Creating Multiple Streams
1. Discover your primary and dominant stream: Is it paid employment? Career or business?
2. Use financial intelligence and investment mentality to develop other streams by diversification
3. Consolidate each stream and keep expanding
Happy Birthday to Pastor. (Dr.) Otive Igbuzor @ 59!

Your spiritual and all round leadership is impeccable! May you continue to experience God’s abundant blessings.
Urgent press release
Abuja, Nigeria
September 3, 2022
Igbuzor rolls out the drum as he clocks 59
Activities to herald the 59th birthday celebration of the Founding General Overseer of the Palace of Priests Assembly and founding Executive Director of the African Centre for Leadership, Strategy & Development (Centre LSD), Dr Otive Igbuzor has begun.
A statement issued by Mr. Itia Otabor on behalf of the Birthday Planning Committee said there will be a Public Presentation of the book titled “Contemporary Issues on Development and Change in Nigeria” written by Otive Igbuzor, PhD to mark the birthday celebration. According to Mr Otabor, the book presentation will be Under the distinguished Chairmanship of Comrade John Odah, mni, Former General Secretary, Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC). The Chairperson of the occasion will be Dr Jummai Umar-Ajijola, Board Chair, ActionAid Nigeria, and the book Reviewer is Iroro S. Izu, PhD, DAP, MNPSA, FIBAKM, Department of Political Science and International Relations, University of Abuja, Nigeria. The event is scheduled to take place on Monday 5th September 2022 by 2.00 - 4.00 pm. It enjoined all Abuja residents, friends and well-wishers to register in advance for this meeting and join the event virtually using the link provided below. 
https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZErce6rpzIsGNFCjGalN-vUbfx1-X8If6hK
R. S. V. P
Mr. Itia Otabor, FSM (08033280242 )  
Dr. Orinya Agbaji (08068455697)

The Organising Committee
Welcome you to the
59th Birthday &
Public Presentation of the book titled:
Contemporary Issues on Development and Change in Nigeria
Chairman:
Comrade John Odah, mni
Former General Secretary, Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC)
Dr. Jummai Umar-Ajijola
Secretary:
Board Chair, ActionAid Nigeria
Iroro S. Izu, PhD
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UPCOMING EVENTS

Book Reading
BREAKFAST
with
Dr. Otive Igbuzor
RELOADED

Wednesday
7th September, 2022
7:30 a.m.

Palace of PRIESTS ASSEMBLY
Auditorium,
Ebenezer Place
Abuja.
Happy Birthday to you

Sis. Aghogho Ibekwe

30th August

May all your dreams come true in Jesus’ name.
Happy Birthday
Dr. Amina J. Mbuka
PROJECT OFFICER, PPJ
August 31