PALACE OF PRIESTS ASSEMBLY (PPA) 
PRIESTS PEACE & JUSTICE (PPJ) INITIATIVE 
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NEWSLETTER

PPA HOLDS 2ND GENERAL OVERSEEERS SUMMIT IN LAGOS

MOUNTAINS OF HOPE FOUNDATION COLLABORATES WITH PPA TO MARK INT'L WOMEN'S DAY 2023

PPA DEPLOYS OVER 600 OBSERVERS FOR THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS

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www.priestsassembly.org/www.ppj.priestsassembly.org
Pastor Mrs Esther Ehinosen Ileogben, Convener of Youth of Wonders Worldwide (YOWW), has been collaborating with Priests, Peace and Justice Initiative (PPJ) and the Frontline Youth Creativity Initiative (FYCI) on the Shun Corruption project to establish Shun Corruption Clubs in both Primary and Secondary schools in Lagos. She has also been organizing inter-school quizzes and essay competitions that discuss corruption, its meaning, its effects, its causes, and its eradication in the lives of students, society, and the country at large in areas such as Ajao, Ikotun, Ejigbo/Isolo, Okota, and Mushin. Plans are in the works to reach Festac, Surulere, and other Lagos cities and towns.

Establishing anti-corruption clubs in schools is a crucial step toward building a generation of ethical leaders who are equipped to combat corruption effectively. By raising awareness, promoting ethical leadership, fostering integrity, encouraging collaboration, and nurturing active citizenship, these clubs play a pivotal role in shaping students' attitudes and behaviors.

Anti-corruption clubs in schools serve as catalysts for promoting a culture of integrity among students. By organizing integrity campaigns, competitions, and workshops, these clubs instill values of honesty, fairness, and transparency. Through peer-to-peer interactions, students inspire and support each other in upholding these values, creating a positive and ethical atmosphere within the school community. This fosters a long-term commitment to fighting corruption, both in personal and professional lives.

Anti-corruption clubs provide a valuable opportunity for students to learn about the detrimental effects of corruption on society. By organizing discussions, workshops, and awareness campaigns, these clubs help students understand the various forms of corruption, such as bribery, embezzlement, and nepotism. Through educational activities, students can grasp the ethical principles necessary for fostering transparency, accountability, and integrity.
PPJ ANTI-CORRUPTION CHAMPION OF THE MONTH!

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Various schools induction for Shun Corruption Club for this term, and still counting
The Priests Peace and Justice Initiative (PPJ) the social arm of the Palace of Priests Assembly (PPA) in Collaboration with the Catalyst for Global Peace & Justice (CPJ) and the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) South/West Zone, will on Thursday, March 30, 2023, hold a Summit for Pentecostal General overseers in Lagos. The annual summit of General Overseers (GOs) will be held on operationalizing the social arm of the Church and setting an anti-corruption agenda for the incoming administration as well as how Pentecostal leaders can identify, learn about and address corruption and take action to shun, speak and stand up against corruption. The summit will also address and establish guidelines for Pentecostal engagements within the incoming administration.

In a statement issued in Abuja, the Programme Manager, Dr. Agbaji Orinya said “the Summit is aimed at deepening and broadening the understanding of Church leaders on the need to operationalize the social dimension of the church and to promote the establishment of the social arm of the church as an instrument for fighting corruption and adopting accountability framework for Pentecostal churches”. According to him, “it is crucial that Church leaders have an improved understanding of the challenges of social injustice in the country and use it as a basis for contributing to the governance process, providing solutions for the vulnerable and marginalized citizens in the country”.

Dr. Agbaji explained that Nigeria is still among the most corrupt countries in the world and the country cannot continue in the way it is presently being corruptly run without fatal economic, social, and political consequences. This year’s Summit would provide Church leaders with the opportunity of setting a Pentecostal Anti-Corruption Agenda for the incoming administration and establish guidelines for Pentecostal engagements within the incoming administration. The summit will also provide Church leaders with the opportunity for identifying and familiarizing themselves with national, regional, and international instruments and mechanisms that can be
deployed to ensure that structures or human actions within society that result in people being treated unfairly or unjustly are challenged by the Church.

He said the content of the summit is part of the dual mandate of Christ to which the Pentecostal Church must subscribe and uphold in propagating the gospel of salvation to a nation in need of relief from inequity, inequality, and unjust government policies that contribute to the oppression of some people in the country.

The summit will also highlight the most effective approaches in the establishment of the social arm of the church, how a local church can establish and operationalize the social arm and indicate the role of PFN and PPJ in operationalizing the social arm of the church.

The time has come for the Pentecostal Church to amplify the Social dimension of the church among its members. He also invited other Pentecostal Church leaders and members who are interested in building a formidable social arm of their Church to follow the conversation through the PPJ social media handles on Twitter: @PeacePriests, Instagram: @Priestspeaceandjustice and on Facebook: @PPJInitiative and on the website: www.priestsassembly.org or connect via zoom

https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81549768525?pwd=RGpvNTkxM1Ftam1wWDIjSUHaE9DZz09

Meeting ID: 815 4976 8525
Passcode: 091394

For further information:
Dr Agbaji Orinya
E-mail: aorinya@priestsassembly.org
Tel: 08068455697
The Priests Peace and Justice Initiative (PPJ) - the social arm of the Palace of Priests Assembly (PPA) in collaboration with Catalyst for Peace & Justice (CPJ) and Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) Southwest zone held its second annual summit for Pentecostal General Overseers in Lagos while GOs from the Northern and South-Eastern regions of the country were well represented. The summit was organized with support from the MacArthur Foundation as part of the second phase of the SHUN Corruption project also known as Mobilising Christians Against Corruption (MOCAC 2.0). The objectives of the meeting included the following:

i. To deepen the understanding of General Overseers on their role in the establishment of the social arm of the Church to promote the social mandate of the Church.

ii. To support General Overseers in strengthening the fight against corruption in Nigeria.

iii. To create a functional means of regular and consistent engagement between General Overseers and the shun corruption project.

iv. To set a Pentecostal Anti-Corruption Agenda for the incoming administration and establish guidelines for Pentecostal engagements within the incoming administration.

The program was held on Thursday, March 30th, 2023, at Presken Hotel Ikeja by Opebi Salvation bus stop Lagos, starting at about 9 am with participants registration and welcoming of the guests. Dignitaries in attendance at the event are: the National Secretary of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) and General Overseer of the Charismatic Renewal Ministries - Rev Cosmas Ilechukwu; the Southwest PFN Chairman - Archbishop John Osa-Oni was represented Bishop Tunde Akinola due to another pressing need that came up in Ekiti state, part of the distinguish attendees are the number one citizen of PFN in Lagos State PFN Chairman Lagos State Apostle Eyinaya Ukwuonu, Deputy Chairman of PFN Lagos State Chapter Pastor Oluleke Akinola, Prof James Nda Jacob, the PFN National director of research and strategy & former Pro-chancellor MacPherson university who gave the Keynote Address, PPJ Program manager Dr. Agbaji Orinya, Dr. Godwin Madu PFN Empowerment Directorate, Adamawa PFN Chairman Bishop Japheth Thomas, Kano PFN Chairman Rev. Elkanah Enweluzor, Secretary PFN Lagos, Apostle Akinyele Akintoye, the host Dr. Ejiofor Igbozor and Dr. Otive Igbozor, Dr. Joe, Dr. Elebute, Dr. Eric Igbozor, Bishop Soleye, Dr Dave Oti Ikeja province Dr Tope Ilesanmi while Bishop Eromaka joined online and a host of other leaders in the Pentecostal community in Nigeria.

In his Welcome address, Apostle Eyinnaya Ukwuonu - Chairman of Lagos PFN gave a brief acknowledged participants, and spoke about a publication by the PPA/PPJ titled “Advocacy Brief”. He recommended the publication for every Pentecostal GO in attendance stressing that it will serve as an eye-opener and encourage them to truly get involved in eradicating corruption in Nigeria. In addition, he expressed his unwavering support to the fight against corruption and corrupt practices within the household of God which will put church leaders in a better position to take the fight to the society as a whole. Apostle Ukwuonu closed his address by urging participants to see themselves as change agents as they listen to what the organisers have to offer.

Goodwill messages were presented at the summit by:

- PFN Lagos Chairman - Apostle Eyinaya Ukwuonu
- PFN National Vice President, South West Zone – Represented by Bishop Tunde Akinola
- Representative of MacArthur Foundation - Dr. Kole Shettima

In their respective messages, they appreciated PPJ/PPA for initiating the SHUN Corruption programme and pledged their support towards it. Bishop Akinola who read a speech prepared by the PFN National Vice President, South West zone decried Nigeria’s ranking as 150 among 180 countries after scoring 24 out of 100 points on the 2022 Corruption...
Perception Index released by Transparency International. He expressed optimism that corruption can be eradicated in Nigeria or brought to the barest minimum if leaders and followers agree to be selfless and patriotic. On his part, Dr. Kole Shettima gave an account of the MacArthur Foundation’s stewardship and commitment to helping fight against corruption in Nigeria through Investigation support, CSOs support, Justice system support, and Workaround behavioral change. He stated that MacArthur Foundation will appreciate it if PFN and other faith-based organizations as a whole could take a look into why corruption persists and how they can interact with the government to eliminate corrupt practices around institutions/sectors like Police, Medical officers in the hospital, Contractors, among others.

The Shun Corruption project was briefly presented as part of the On Nigeria Anti-Corruption project funded by MacArthur Foundation. It is about using the 3s outcome model to fight corruption which include:

- Shun Corruption.
- Speak Up against Corruption.
- Stand Up against Corruption.

The Programme Manager - Dr. Agbaji Orinya who facilitated the session explained to participants, the stages the project has passed through including where it is at the moment. Specifically, he explained the different Stages of Shun Corruption project as follows:

Stage 1: Pre-Contemplation: This is a preliminary stage in which people are generally not contemplating change. Many are in denial; they claim that their behavior is not a problem. At the launch of the project and during initial capacity building, we encountered a variety of 'persons in denial'. Persons who did not understand that their behavior was damaging Persons under-informed about the consequences of their actions, Persons who did not believe that using Church money without transparent approvals amounted to corruption; some were angry that facilitators alluded to that & Persons who did not believe that corruption could ever be reduced or eliminated

Stage 2: During this stage, beneficiaries became more and more aware of the potential benefits of making a change; the costs of making any change also became more apparent, thus creating a conflict and a strong sense of ambivalence about changing.

The contemplation stage lasted a few months to a year, depending on individuals because it was fraught with indecision and the fear of the consequences of change.

Stage 3: Preparation stage: According to him, Early in Phase One, engagements sought to prepare beneficiaries for actual change by reinforcing key messages in a variety of ways: with IEC/BCC materials, constructive text-based engagements (including a training manual, and an advocacy brief) on the WhatsApp platforms, among other forms of engagements.

These engagements prepared beneficiaries by building their knowledge and skills to begin to make small changes preparatory to a larger life change

Stage 4: Action stage where Pentecostals across start to utilize knowledge gotten for a change to Shun, Speak, and Stand against Corruption.

Stage 5: The maintenance stage is the point of reinforcement by peer-peer support, vigilance, and demand for accountability.

In year one of the project's second phase, research was conducted on drivers of corruption within and outside the church. The study showed that corruption within the church is driven by blind followership by congregants, erroneous belief by some church leaders that they are only accountable to God, lack of income generation by some Pentecostal leaders, and absence of administrative and accounting systems and structures in many Pentecostal churches.

The study also showed that corruption is seen as normal outside the church and thrives because of a lack of sanction, greed, and indiscipline.

More importantly, the study showed that Pentecostal churches can tackle corruption through the promotion of biblical teaching on corruption, the promotion of Christian values of transparency and accountability everywhere (within and outside the church), the establishment of the social arm of the church committed to social issues and fighting corruption and participation in politics and governance

The PM added that the drivers of corruption study also identified perceived roles of Pentecostal churches in tackling corruption including:

- Focus on biblical teachings to tackle corruption,
- Establishment of the social arm of the church,
- Church engagement in politics
- Connecting life in the church to life outside the church in matters involving transparency and accountability.

Dr Agbaji noted that the project's overarching goal at the second phase is to promote zero tolerance to corruption among Pentecostal churches.
To activate Pentecostal campaign platforms visibly taking collective action against corruption.

He concluded that the second phase of the project which is aimed at consolidating the SHUN Corruption Project, focuses on grounding the norms and practices and elevating the motivation for changing individual and group behavior so that more churches will establish social arms to address social issues and fight against corruption.

Keynote Address: The Pentecostal Church in Nigeria and the National Anti-corruption Strategy.

The keynote address at the summit was presented by Prof. James Nda Jacob (PFN National Director of Research and Northern Regional Overseer, Foursquare Gospel Church in Nigeria). He commended the conveners of the summit and recognized the presence of PFN leaders at the meeting. He observed that PFN is a good arm to aid the fight against corruption stressing that PFN and CAN should play an active role to eradicate corruption in the country because:

- They are at the forefront of the affairs of the country as they stand out in morals, beliefs and many other aspects of people’s life;
- They have a large audience or gathering which could be used as an avenue to pass the moral message across;
- They are financially strong. So, bringing their leaders in will help to fight against corruption.

He further pointed out that God ordained Anti-corruption law as reflected in the law of Moses which have sanctions for defaulters. The PFN National Director of Research decried the fact that sanctions against corruption have not been effective in Nigeria unlike in places like Japan where a corrupt person kills himself if caught in the act or China where the person will be executed. On the role of the Pentecostal church in developing a National Anti-Corruption Strategy, Prof Jacob highlighted the following:

- The strategy must be derived from the bible. This is because any anti-corruption strategy that is not anchored on the teachings of the church on corruption-related issues will not stand the test of time as previous anti-corruption strategies have failed.
- The Pentecostal church must come up with a common stand on how to deal with or punish incidences of corruption in the country.
- The Pentecostal church community should be involved in the formulation and implementation of an anti-corruption strategy so that the church will not be left out in the scheme of things.
- The Pentecostal church must inculcate the reward for hard work which the Bible strongly supported in 2 Thes 3:10 - “We have told you before that if a man did not work let him not eat”.
- The Pentecostal church should also be involved in the review or evaluation of the national anti-corruption strategy in line with modern realities that do not undermine the teachings of the Bible.
- The Pentecostal church should have a steering review committee that will serve as a watchdog in evaluating the performance or progress of the national anti-corruption strategy.

The presenter decried some shameful situations where Pentecostal pastors were found to be corrupt and stressed that such situations hinder the ability to fight or speak against corruption in the larger society, hence PFN needs to internalize the fight against corruption. He listed three critical things destroying Nigeria including Corruption, Insecurity, and a Bad economy. As regards the way forward, Prof Jacob charged PFN executives and GOs to do the following:

- To speak up against corruption as a respected body.
- Not to indulge in clapping for whoever is corrupt by rejecting the unknown source of offering to the church, requesting that church leaders should ask where the members get monies donated to the church.
- Removing corrupt practices within the church to create the right standing to correct corrupt practices outside the church.
- Correct abusive use of office by some General Overseers.
- Revisit the teachings of the Bible anchored on contentment and holiness.
Punishment as a penalty for corrupt practices should be spelt out.

Reward those that stand against corruption.

Formulation and implementation of laws that govern PFN action where members are involved.

Teach members the theory of hard work and diligence.

Set up a committee to act as watchdog in accountability to checkmate members’ activities, especially those that run independently without guidelines.

Establishment of the rules that govern each church to act as checks and balances against General Overseers.

Having accountability partners within the church to correct the General Overseers’ actions and prevent them from derailing.

He concluded by analyzing the report of an anti-corruption agency released November 17, 2022. The report released by NBS indicates that, an anti-corruption agency with a recovery target of N81B actually recovered N475B between 1999 and 2022. The report according to the presenter, added that about 12% of the people are enjoying the proceed from corruption while the majority live in abject poverty. He urged PFN leaders to work with government to reinvest the recovery back to the system to help in fighting poverty which could eventually lead to corruption later if neglected. The keynote address was concluded by encouraging GOs to stand out in their engagements and emulate the exemplary conduct of Prof Oti Nnena, the current Vice Chancellor of the Federal University of Technology, Owerri who served uprightly as a Returning Officer during the just concluded election in Abia State.
OPERATIONALISING THE SOCIAL ARM OF THE CHURCH AND SETTING THE ANTI-CORRUPTION AGENDA FOR THE INCOMING ADMINISTRATION

(LESSONS LEARNT AND OPPORTUNITIES)

By Pastor (Dr) Otive Igbuzor

General Overseer, Palace of Priests Assembly

INTRODUCTION

Corruption is deep, systemic, and widespread in Nigeria. The country has been consistently rated by Transparency International (TI) to be among the most corrupt countries in the world in its Corruption Perception Index. Several probes by the National Assembly (parliament) indicate that there is a high level of corruption in the country.

Several governments in Nigeria have launched anti-corruption programme since 1966 when corruption was mentioned as one of the reasons for the military to overthrow the civilian government. Despite the plethora of legislations and agencies fighting corruption in Nigeria, corruption has remained widespread and pervasive partly because the norms and behaviour of citizens have remained unchanged.

The Church has a big role to play in shaping norms and values in society. The Church can only play this role effectively if it establishes and operationalises a social arm of the Church. Historically, the Church has operated a dual mandate. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ operated a dual mandate ministering to the spiritual and physical needs of the people.

In the past (about three Centuries ago), there has been decline in the social arm of the Church. However, there is a new recognition of the need to return to the dual mandate of the church and operationalise the social arm of the Church. One key area that the social arm must engage is the issue of corruption. Meanwhile, corruption has been one of the biggest challenges to the development of Nigeria. Several administrations in the past have programmes to deal with corruption. Unfortunately, the challenge remains. As we prepare for a new administration in May, 2023, it is necessary to set an agenda for the incoming administration.

In this paper, we set an anti-corruption agenda for the new administration. But first we examine the need to operationalise the social arm of the Church.

OPERATIONALISING THE SOCIAL ARM OF THE CHURCH

Christianity is over 2,000 years and has a rich history. According to Bruce L. Shelley, one of the more remarkable aspects of Christianity today is how few…professed believers have ever studied the history of their religion. In the first three centuries, church growth was accelerated by the persecution of the church. In the fourth century, Christianity became the official Roman religion. In the seventh century, Islam was founded. By the tenth century, 50 percent of former Christian areas were under Islam. By the 14th century, John Wycliffe translated the Bible into English and emphasized the sole authority of the scriptures and the priesthood of all believers. In the 16th century, the years of reformation promoted by Martin Luther King and others emphasized justification by faith and priesthood of all believers. The protestant reformation was anchored on three key issues:

1. The sole authority of the scriptures,
2. Justification by faith and
3. Priesthood of all believers.
In the 18th and 19th centuries, the emphasis was on revival, missions, and holiness. In the 20th century, the emphasis was on Pentecostalism—Holy Ghost baptism and empowerment. With the rise of Pentecostalism, there was emphasis on material prosperity, loyalty to the nation state and individualism and social dimension of the church decreased immensely. This has led to the public perception today that is a challenge to all true Pentecostals. This public perception has led to the non-recognition of Pentecostal Charismatic social contribution of goods and services valued at more than 2.3 billion US dollars and with more than 250 million people in over 100 countries since 1980.

The perception is that Pentecostals are only interested in prosperity and not concerned about social issues in society. The Pentecostal Movement is characterised by emphasis on baptism of the Holy Spirit and the manifestation of the gifts of the spirit. Christian Historians have characterised the Pentecostal movement into three waves[i]:
1. First wave beginning in 1901 with a rediscovery of and a new experience of the supernatural with a powerful and energising ministry of the Holy spirit.
2. Second wave starting in the mainline churches in 1960 with Christians affiliated to non-Pentecostal denominations (Anglicans, Protestants, Catholic, Orthodox) experiencing baptism in the Holy Spirit.

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2. Second wave starting in the mainline churches in 1960 with Christians affiliated to non-Pentecostal denominations (Anglicans, Protestants, Catholic, Orthodox) experiencing baptism in the Holy Spirit.
Scholars have pointed out that between Pentecost in Acts Chapter 2 in AD 100 and 1901 when the first wave started is 1,800 years. Some have argued that the 1,800-year period can be regarded as spiritually dead. But others point out that there was a range of spirit activity during this period ranging from hundreds of cases of prophesy to discernment of spirits and divine healing.[i]

The Pentecostal movement has grown from a handful of believers in the early twentieth century to a global movement now numbering over 600 million people, and those who embrace the Holy Spirit and His gifts are now the fastest growing religious group in the world.[ii] It is continuing to grow especially in Africa, Asia and Latin America.


Pentecostals need to create the social arm for the church to delineate and popularize the social teachings of the Church. This is well developed in Catholic Church. The Social Teachings of the Catholic Church cover issues of Life of Dignity and Human person; call to Family, Community and Participation; Preferential option for the poor (In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition instructs us to put the needs of poor and vulnerable people first); the Dignity of work and the rights of workers (Economy must serve people) and Solidarity. The Pentecostal Church need to develop the social teaching of the Pentecostal Church.

In the recent past, Pentecostal Churches have embraced the dual mandate and many Churches now have social arms. Any Pentecostal Church that wants to establish and operationalise the social arm of the church can do that easily by identifying believers in the Church that have experience on social issues advocacy and forming a team to get a name and management team. The church registration can serve for the social arm or you may decide to register it separately. The programmatic focus should be on issues of democracy, peace building, emergency and humanitarian services, education, health and social justice. There is the need to formulate and adopt the social teaching of the Pentecostal Church. It will be great for PFN to encourage all its members to operationalise the social arm of the Church.

CORRUPTION AND ANTI-CORRUPTION AGENDA IN NIGERIA

Corruption is undoubtedly one of the greatest challenges of Nigeria, a challenge that is not only leading to impoverishment and loss of lives but also threatening the stability of the country. In an opinion poll conducted by the Guardian Newspapers, Nigerians picked corruption, unemployment and bad leadership as the worst problems hindering the country’s development. 761 respondents or 70 percent of the respondents out of the total sample of 1,080 people picked corruption as one of the worst problems hindering the nation’s advancement.[i] Corruption in Nigeria is widespread. According to the Executive Director, Office of Drugs and Crime at the United Nations, Dr. Antonio Maria Costa, about US $400 billion was stolen from Nigeria and stashed away in foreign banks by past corrupt leaders before the return to democratic rule in 1999.[ii] But according to the Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Mallam Nuhu Ribadu, as at 2008, Nigeria’s previous leaders stole about 64 trillion naira (about US $507 billion) from public coffers. When benchmarked against the 2008 proposed budget of N2.456 trillion naira, this translates to twenty-six years budget. Corruption has been identified as one of the main spoilers of Nigeria’s ambition to achieve development and lift people out of poverty.[i] In the recent past, there has been a renewed effort to wage war against corruption all over the world. In fact, the war has taken international, regional and national dimensions. In September, 1997, citizens from 93 countries gathered in Lima, Peru at the 8th International Conference against corruption and adopted what is now known as Lima declaration against corruption.
Similarly, in November, 1997, civil society organizations (CSOs) meeting under the auspices of the Global Coalition for Africa in Maputo, Mozambique declared corruption as “a crime against humanity.” One month later the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention was adopted. In 2003, the UN Convention on Corruption was adopted. The same year, the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption and Related offences was adopted in July at the second ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union.

In the past two decades, nearly all African governments have some policies and strategies in place to fight corruption. They have clear institutional frameworks to fight corruption. Dr. Specioza Wandira Kazibwe outlined the framework in Uganda as follows:

In Uganda, a number of institutions to fight corruption have been in place for a long time, but the country is still bedeviled with corruption. This has led into a deeply held perception in the general populace that the government has almost lost the battle against corruption.

The institutions charged with the task of fighting corruption are the Presidency, the people of Uganda, the parliament, and the judiciary. In addition, there exist constitutional agencies specifically charged with this task. These are the Inspector General of Government (IGG), the Auditor General (AG), the Department of Public Prosecutions. The office of the Vice-President co-ordinates these agencies as well as all anti-corruption activities and integrity building activities in the country. An anti-corruption unit was established within the office of the Vice President, to assist the Vice-President with these task.

The constitution also guarantees the autonomy of the IGP, DPP and Auditor General. It provides for a Leadership Code of Conduct and punitive measures. In addition to the Constitution, there are other laws in place to combat corruption. These include the Prevention of Corruption Act, the Penal code and its amendments and the Local government Act. Other measures to combat corruption have also been taken by the National Resistance Movement Government. These include: The Economic reform and Liberalisation, the Civil Service Reform, Decentralization and the improvement of remuneration of judicial officers, top civil servants and political leaders.

South Africa has a National Anti-Corruption Strategy (2020-2030) which is a whole-of-society effort that envisions an ethical and accountable State, business and society characterised by high levels of integrity and respect for the rule of law.

The Strategy has objectives to:

[i] Republic of South Africa, National Anti-Corruption Strategy 2020-2030

a. Promote and encourage active citizenry, whistleblowing, integrity and transparency in all spheres of society.
b. Advance the professionalism of employees to optimise their contribution to create corruption free workplaces.
c. Enhance governance, oversight and accountability in organisations in all sectors.
d. Improve the integrity, transparency and credibility of the public procurement system.
e. Strengthen the resourcing, coordination, transnational cooperation, performance, accountability and independence of dedicated anti-corruption agencies.
f. Protect vulnerable sectors that are most prone to corruption and unethical practices with effective risk management.

The war against corruption in Nigeria dates to a very long time. Every community in Nigeria has mechanisms for dealing with corruption with appropriate sanctions for corruption. The fight in the public sector came to the limelight in 1966 when the military identified corruption of the politicians as one of the reasons for taking over. Experience later showed that the military is probably more corrupt than civilian politicians. The military ruled Nigeria from 1966-1979 and handed over power to Alhaji Shehu Shagari administration in 1979. But barely four
years later, the Shagari administration was overthrown by the Buhari/Idiagbon regime. The Buhari/Idiagbon regime launched a war against corruption, tried and jailed many politicians and dismissed many civil servants. But when the Ibrahim Babangida regime overthrew the Buhari regime, it released many of the politicians that were jailed by the Buhari regime and reduced the sentences of others. In fact, it has been argued that “Babangida’s government was unique in its unconcern about corruption within its ranks and among public servants generally; it was as if the Government existed so that corruption might thrive.

There is no doubt that Scholars are in agreement that corruption reached unprecedented levels in incidence and magnitude during General Ibrahim Babangida's regime. It is ironic that the regime also had its own reorientation and anti-corruption program christened MAMSER. By the time President Olusegun Obasanjo came back to power as a civilian President in 1999, corruption has reached an unprecedented proportion that it formed a major portion of his inaugural speech.

In Nigeria, there are a number of legislations in addition to specific programs such as the ethical revolution of the Shehu Shagari administration, the War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC) of the Buhari/Idiagbon regime, and the MAMSER of the Babangida regime. The legislation includes:

- The Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal Act
- The Bank and Other Financial Institutions Act No 25 of 1991
- Failed Bank Act No 16 of 1996
- The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency Act
- Money Laundering Act No 3 of 1995
- The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act of 2000
- The Economic and Financial Crimes Act 2004
- The Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence unit
- The Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) Act

When President Olusegun Obasanjo was sworn in in May 1999, he made it clear in his inaugural speech that fight against corruption will be one of his major programs. In his speeches and carriage, he has continued to sing the anti-corruption song. One of the first bills initiated by the executive was the one on anti-corruption. The bill has been passed into law as the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act, of 2000. In 2002, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) was established. The former President’s anti-corruption campaign has received a lot of criticism. Some argue that it was a one-man campaign, which was bound to fail. Others contend that the president was not sincere with the anti-corruption crusade. According to the former Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriation, Alh. Idris Abubakar, “the president knows quite a number of corrupt officials in the three arms of government. But rather than prosecute them, he is using the dossier collected on them to blackmail them to support his government.”[i] Some critics have also argued that the former president’s campaign lacks seriousness. According to Scrutiny, there are six questions that should test the seriousness of any anti-corruption crusade. These are: Is it systematic? Is it comprehensive? Is it consistent? Does it have focus? Is it well publicised? Does it carry people along? The Obasanjo`s crusade is said to have failed the entire test except the one on publicity. Scrutiny concludes that the president is merely using the anti-corruption crusade “as a platform for public posturing, some sort of grandstanding.” Consequently, it has been documented that Nigerians are yet to feel the impact of the anti-corruption crusade of President Olusegun Administration Over the years, scholars, activists and international organizations have identified elements which when present can assist in winning the war against corruption.
These elements include:

a. Legislative Framework for transparent and accountable government and for fighting corruption including the Freedom of Information Act (FOI Act), Budget law, Fiscal responsibility law, Whistleblowers Act, etc.
b. Political will and commitment to fight corruption
c. Comprehensive strategy that is systematic, comprehensive, consistent, focused, publicized, non-selective and non-partisan
d. Protection of Whistleblowers
e. Political Reform to curb political corruption
f. Reform of substantive programs and administrative procedures
g. Mobilisation for social re-orientation with the participation of civil society and faith-based organizations
h. Effective parliamentary oversight through the Public Accounts Committee
i. Independent media
j. Adequate remuneration for workers to reflect the responsibilities of their post and a living wage
k. Code of ethics for Political office holders, business people, and CSOs
l. Independent institutions
m. Movement for Anti-corruption.

According to Scrutiny, there are six questions that should test the seriousness of any anti-corruption crusade. These are: Is it systematic? Is it comprehensive? Is it consistent? Does it have focus? Is it well publicized? Does it carry people along? The Obasanjo’s crusade is said to have failed the entire test except for the one on publicity. Scrutiny concludes that the president is merely using the anti-corruption crusade “as a platform for public posturing, some sort of grandstanding.” Consequently, it has been documented that Nigerians are yet to feel the impact of the anti-corruption crusade of President Olusegun Administration. Over the years, scholars, activists and international organizations have identified elements that when present can assist in winning the war against corruption. These elements include:

a. Legislative Framework for transparent and accountable government and for fighting corruption including the Freedom of Information Act (FOI Act), Budget law, Fiscal responsibility law, Whistleblowers Act e.t.c.
b. Political will and commitment to fight corruption
c. A comprehensive strategy that is systematic, comprehensive, consistent, focused, publicized, non-selective, and non-partisan
d. Protection of Whistleblowers
e. Political Reform to curb political corruption
f. Reform of substantive and administrative procedures
g. Mobilisation for social re-orientation with participation of civil society and faith-based organisations
h. Effective parliamentary oversight through the Public Accounts Committee
i. Independent media
j. Adequate remuneration for workers to reflect the responsibilities of their post and a living wage
k. Code of ethics for Political office holders, business people and CSOs
l. Independent institutions
m. Movement for Anti-corruption.
It is important to point out that corruption is as old as society itself and cuts across nations, cultures, races and classes of people.[i] It is necessary to understand the explanations for the causes of corruption in order to be able to design a mechanism to fight corruption. Several explanations have been given to explain the causes of corruption:

1. Robert Klitgaard formula: Corruption=(Monopoly + Discretion) –(Accountability + Integrity + Transparency). This formula indicates that wherever there is monopoly and discretion combined with lack of accountability, integrity and transparency, corruption will thrive.

2. People engage in corruption when the benefit exceeds the utility they can get by using their time differently and there is little or no risk of detection and penalty.

3. The Fraud Triangle explanation: An individual becomes corrupt when there is perceived pressure combined with opportunity to commit corruptible transaction and the perpetuator can justify it.

From the above, it is clear that the causes of corruption is multifactorial. Therefore, fighting corruption has to be comprehensive ranging from prevention, education and enforcement (sanction):

a. **Addressing Corruption**: A framework for addressing corruption is to tackle the issues in the triangle namely pressure, opportunity and rationalisation.

1. **Addressing Motivation**: The need for implementation of code of ethics, punish those who do wrong, good conditions of service and good environment of work.

2. **Addressing Opportunity**: To create systems, mechanisms and procedure that make corruptible transactions difficult. This will include financial guidelines, internal controls, due process and whistle blowers. All these help to increase the capability of the organisation to prevent corruption.

3. **Addressing rationalisation**: through education and re-orientation.

   1. **Instituting an Integrity System**: Integrity plan is meant to address the causes of corruption and put in place a system that can reduce or minimize corruption through prevention, detection and sanction. The starting point in instituting an integrity system is to conduct a corruption risk assessment. Corruption risk assessment will identify key corruption and fraud related risks in the institution. [i] It will identify the political factors influencing integrity; the economic factors influencing integrity; the social factors affecting integrity; the technological factors affecting integrity and the legal factors influencing integrity in the institution. Based on the assessment, recommendations will be made to improve integrity of the institution.

   2. **Enforcement of anti-corruption legislation and punishing those involved in corruptible transactions.** As the DfID Nigeria new approach has indicated, there is the need for sanctions through better enforcement of laws; better systems that close spaces for corruption and for society to change its expectations and attitudes towards corruption.[i]

Nigeria has an anti-corruption strategy. On 5th July 2017, the Federal Executive Council approved the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) for the first time in the history of Nigeria as a nation.[ii] The National Anti-Corruption Strategy is built on five pillars of prevention, public engagement, ethical re-orientation in the public and private sectors, enforcement and sanction and recovery and management of proceeds of corruption.
As noted above, corruption is one of the greatest obstacles to the development of Nigeria. The incoming administration must therefore prioritize the implementation of an anti-corruption agenda.

a. Setting the tone at the top that the administration will implement an anti-corruption agenda and create an environment of justice, fairness, and equity. Setting the tone at the top must go beyond declarations and speeches that the administration will have zero tolerance for corruption. The behavior and actions of the President and Senior government officials must indicate that the administration will not tolerate corruption. Setting the tone at the top should include redressing some perceived injustices by sections of the country such as those from the eastern region and Christians who felt excluded by the Muslim-Muslim ticket of the incoming administration.

b. Learn lessons from past failures of anti-corruption agenda and avoid the errors of the past. The new administration must learn lessons from the failure of anti-corruption agenda in the past. First, Nigeria has not utilized universally accepted and time-tested strategies. In most cases, the policies and strategies utilized in fighting corruption are not holistic and comprehensive containing the elements mentioned in the section above. In Nigeria, there are laws, strategies and policies for fighting corruption. Perhaps, what is missing is a freedom of Information regime and protection of whistle blowers. In addition, political will and commitment of a critical mass of people (both leaders and followers) is lacking. Secondly, there is a disconnect between the utterances of the warriors of the fight and their conduct. For instance, the former Inspector General of the Nigeria Police Force Mr. Tafa Balogun, posing as an anti-corruption crusader once emphasized that:

The evil that corruption has brought to the Nigerian society is very much. Corruption has become a culture in our society today. That is why we have to fight against it so that we would be able to improve our image. We intend to commence an in-house cleaning in the Nigeria Police Force.[i]

Barely two years later, Mr. Tafa Balogun was accused of corruptly enriching himself to the tune of over N13 billion, and was removed from office and convicted. For any crusade to succeed, the leaders of the crusade must match their actions with their words. Thirdly, for any war to be won, soldiers are required. In Nigeria, those who should be playing the role of soldiers for the war (the judiciary, legal enforcement institutions, police and other such official legal bodies) are the biggest part of the problem of corruption rather than the solution.[ii] Therefore, winning the war against corruption will require struggle for societal transformation. We have argued elsewhere that for change to occur in any society requires the presence of objective and subjective conditions. Objective conditions exist when situations are evidently abnormal with huge contradictions which can only be resolved by change. The subjective conditions are the organizational preparations required to bring about change. In our view, the objective condition for a full scale war on corruption is ripe in Nigeria. The level of corruption in the country is unacceptable. Nigeria was rated by Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index as the most corrupt country in 2000, the second most corrupt country in 2001, 2002 and 2003 and the third most corrupt country in the world in 2004. Although there is slight improvement in the rating, Nigeria is still among the most corrupt countries in the world. The country cannot continue in the way it is presently being corruptly run without fatal economic, social and political consequences. Unfortunately, the subjective conditions for winning the war are absent. There is no virile political party or movement that is committed to the war against corruption. There are no well organized democratic and popular organizations that are committed to anti-corruption crusade. Although, there are individuals and organizations committed to fighting corruption the organizational support, followership and doggedness required for sustainability and great impact is lacking. The challenge is to build the organizations especially with dynamic and visionary leadership as well as a committed followership that is dedicated to fighting corruption. For the war to be won, such organizations must engage in concrete anti-corruption programmes beyond the mere holding of workshops. As TI has argued:

Containing corruption in a sustainable way will not be achieved through one-off seminars and workshops. Mere talks shops are not going to change anything. Still less is going to be achieved through partnerships between agencies and governments alone. Almost invariably, these are seen as self-serving party exercises, conducted by and for the benefit of those (rightly or wrongly) already viewed as deeply implicated in the processes we are working to contain. Unless civil society is a fully independent partner and fully supportive of the processes under way, these exercises and action plans will lack legitimacy and they risk being little more than flannel. Concrete programming against corruption will involve advocacy for effective regime for the anti-corruption crusade, actual monitoring of public and corporate finance, exposure of corruptible transactions, enforcement of anti-corruption laws, whistle blowing and advocacy. Moreover, the fight must address the international dimensions including the complicity of developed countries.
It has been documented that one of America’s oldest banks, Riggs, was brought down because it held the bank accounts of Augusto Pinochet, and the oil revenues of Equatorial Guinea which was controlled exclusively by President Obiang. Despite this, the United States turns a blind eye to the corruption of and human rights abuses that typify Obiang’s rule.[i] Similarly, the British Government regards itself as a world leader in the fight against corruption, as evidenced by establishing the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI). However, it has seriously undermined its own credibility in this regard, and in turn the international case, by its calling off of a police investigation into allegedly corrupt arms deal between BAE systems and Saudi Arabia, which sends a clear signal that Britain will tolerate corruption for political reasons. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, the fight against corruption in many African countries is not located within the broader paradigm of fighting for the transformation of society in a way that will deal with the multi-factorial causes of corruption. Therefore, policy options and strategies for winning the war against corruption must address these issues. The strategy must be comprehensive and holistic. Government should not be fighting corruption and at the same time engaging in political corruption (through election rigging) or implementing policies that would exacerbate corruption. For instance, as we have argued earlier, when the salaries of workers cannot sustain them, there is the tendency to engage in petty corruption. If government is fighting corruption and at the same time implements unbridled neoliberal policies that further impoverish the people, then the fight against corruption cannot be won. Government cannot pay police officers wages that can hardly pay for increased transportation cost (as a result of increase in petroleum price) and expect them to be honest in the discharge of their duties. In the same vein, if government is engaging in political corruption through rigging of elections, imposition of party officials, brazen distribution of political patronage[i] and selective prosecution of corrupt officials, then the war cannot be won. Furthermore, when government officials spend money recklessly in the midst of poverty, it is difficult to deal with corruption. For instance, the hotel bill of the former Managing Director of NNPC(Mr. Gaius Obaseki) was alleged to be at the rate of N155,000.00 per night which come to about N4.7million in a month and N56.6million per annum.[ii] Finally, the fight against corruption should be a part of the fight to transform society. It should be a fight for humanity. It should be a fight that will challenge power relations, institutions, mechanisms and systems that promote corruption. It should be a fight against political corruption and a fight for empowerment of citizens to enlist them in the war against corruption. It should be a fight against a system of mediocrity that produces emergency millionaires from being commissioned agents, currency speculators and contractors. It should be a fight for value re-orientation where Nigerian citizens will begin to see government as their own and not alien and when they will begin to protect government property as they currently protect community property. Fighting corruption should neither be an isolated event nor should it be an end in itself. It must be part and parcel of transforming society and enthroning a just, equitable, efficient and fair system in the world. The Buhari administration started well in combating corruption by setting the tone at the top. It set up a Presidential Committee on anti-corruption headed by a renown legal icon, Prof Itse Sagay. In the years 2015-2019, there is a remarkable record of convictions, asset recovery and forfeitures.[i] EFCC secured 943 convictions including two former governors who are members of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC). In addition, EFCC recovered billions of naaira, foreign currencies and properties including $8.4 million and N2.4 billion from Mrs. Patience Jonathan; six choice properties and $1 million from Alex Badeh, former Chief of Defence Staff. But as we have consistently argued, the fight against corruption must go beyond sanction to include concrete strategies to improve the system and ensure that society abhors corruption. Unfortunately, towards the end of its administration, the Buhari administration has destroyed all its gains with increasing poor rating by Transparency International and granting pardon to former Governors Joshua Dariye of Plateau State and Jolly Nyame of Taraba State in April, 2022. 

**a.Launch a new anti-corruption agenda** taking into cognisance lessons from the past and addressing the issues of sanctions, systems and society. From the beginning of the administration, the President must set the tone of zero tolerance for corruption at the top. This must be followed with political will to implement the agenda. As the South African Strategy clearly stated, the realisation of anti-corruption strategy depends on the resolute political will of those who serve in public office and ethical leadership in all sectors of society.[i] In addition the agenda must be a whole-of-society approach. Corruption in Nigeria can only be dealt with if the whole of society is involved in the fight against it. Finally, the agenda must be comprehensive and integrated and combine elements of sanctions, systems and society.

1.CONCLUSION

Corruption is a huge problem in Nigeria. Despite efforts by previous governments to fight corruption, it has remained deep, widespread and pervasive in the country partly because norms and behaviour of citizens have remained unchanged. The Church can play a huge role in changing the narrative. The Church can only play this role effectively if it establishes and operationalises the social arm of the Church. As we prepare to receive a new administration in May, 2023 in Nigeria, the Church should set an anti-corruption agenda for the incoming administration. The new administration should not only set the tone of zero tolerance for corruption at the top but it should also learn lessons from failures of past anti-corruption agenda and launch a new anti-corruption agenda.
ARRIVAL AND REGISTRATION OF GUESTS AT THE
JUST CONCLUDED 2ND ANNUAL GENERAL
OVERSEERS SUMMIT 2023
A Communique issued at the Second Annual Summit of Pentecostal General Overseers in Nigeria held at Presken Hotel, Opebi, Lagos on Thursday, March 30, 2023

Preamble
The second annual summit of Pentecostal General Overseers in Nigeria held at Presken Hotel, Opebi Lagos, on March 30, 2023, was convened by Priests Peace and Justice Initiative (PPJ) in collaboration with Catalyst for Peace and Justice (CPJ) as part of PPJ’s on-going Shun Corruption project. The summit which had over 50 Pentecostal Christian General Overseers in attendance deliberated on a wide range of issues bothering on the role of the Pentecostal church and the fight against corruption in Nigeria. Specifically, a keynote address was delivered on: The Pentecostal Church in Nigeria and the National Anti-Corruption Strategy while a paper on Operationalizing the Social arm of the Church and Setting the Anti-Corruption Agenda for the Incoming Administration in Nigeria was equally presented. These were followed by a session of a panel discussion as well as a robust interaction by participants, the panel section was brought to an end with the lunch of PPA’s year one report “Pentecostals Promoting Zero Tolerance to Corruption in Nigeria”. At the close of the meeting, some key issues were identified and suggestions were proffered on the way forward as below:

The Issues Identified

1. Corruption has reached an unacceptable level in Nigeria as it has become pervasive cutting across various segments of our society including education, religion, politics, economy, business, and health among others.

2. There is a perception of Pentecostal Christianity to be synonymous with prosperity, individualism, flamboyance, and extravagance thus creating a negative impression of the church’s attitude towards corruption.

3. Unfortunately, the Pentecostal church is faced with the challenges of addressing the influence of societal corruption on its members as they are not isolated from other sections of society.

4. The Pentecostal church community in Nigeria seems not to be united enough to forge a common front on issues of corruption and bad governance in the interest of national development since we have a large number of them running. Pentecostals running an independent body that is not under PFN may pose a great issue in a matter of control, which is limiting the effort of the executives

5. Until very recently, there appears to be a lack of emphasis and prioritization of the social dimension of Christianity as the Pentecostal church relegated the place of the social arm of the church which is one key area through which it can engage the issue of corruption.

6. Despite the plethora of legislations and agencies fighting corruption in Nigeria, corruption has remained widespread and pervasive partly because the norms and behavior of citizens have remained unchanged as the country has been consistently rated by Transparency International (TI) to be among the most corrupt countries in the world in its Corruption Perception Index.
Pastor (Dr) Otive Igbuzor
General Overseer Palace of Priests Assembly (PPA)
and Project Director Priests Peace and Justice Initiative (PPJ)

A cross section of participants at the 2nd PPA Annual General Overseers Summit 2023 in Lagos
7. Efforts of the past and present administrations in Nigeria in fighting corruption seem not to be yielding the desired result because the approaches adopted have not been holistic as they were/are without the input of the Pentecostal church.

8. Some critical ingredients that seem to be missing in the fight against corruption in Nigeria include the freedom of Information regime and the protection of whistle-blowers as well as the political will and commitment of a critical mass of people both in leadership and followership.

9. Unfortunately, it has been observed that those who should be playing the role of soldiers in the war against corruption (the judiciary, legal enforcement institutions, police, and other such official legal bodies) are the biggest part of the problem of corruption rather than the solution.

10. The fight against corruption in Nigeria and other many African countries is not located within the broader paradigm of fighting for the transformation of society in a way that will deal with the multi-factorial causes of corruption.

What Should Be Done:

a) By Pentecostal Christian Community

1. Pentecostal church leaders should prioritize and emphasize teachings on holiness and godliness vis-à-vis contentment in their conduct and sermons which are the examples of our Lord Jesus and deemphasize the focus on prosperity and other worldly teachings which undermine their faith as Christians. This will give Pentecostal leaders the moral standing to effectively engage in the fight against, using God’s word the bible as an element of operational tools.

2. The existing Pentecostal Christians platform – PFN should be strengthened, united, and capacitated to engage on issues of corruption and governance and to be in a position to forge a common front in the interest of the church and national development.

3. The establishment of the social arm of the church should be expediently considered by Pentecostal churches as a formidable way to engage the issue of corruption as well as address some of its root causes which could make members vulnerable to corrupt practices, also to act as a means to step down the training received to other members. This will invariably help to fulfill the dual mandate of our Lord Jesus who ministered to the spiritual and physical needs of people, which can come in form of income generation by churches, engaging members in a form of corporative society to empower the poor ones.

4. The Pentecostal church need to urgently come up with a common stand on issues of corruption in Nigeria that condemns corruption in all ramification by the church. The church should also engage in a service revival to purge it of bad eggs by calling them to repentance, which also comes with rewarding exemplary work against corrupt practices.
b) By the Incoming Administration

1. There is the need for government to give attention to issues bothering norms and values that are capable of changing the attitude and behavior of citizens in its fight against corruption. In this direction, the Pentecostal church has a role to play in building the moral and spiritual minds of members to stand, shun and speak against corruption in society.

2. The incoming administration should endeavor to learn lessons from the failure of the anti-corruption agenda in the past as well as utilize universally accepted and time-tested strategies in its fight against corruption. A formidable anti-corruption strategy that is holistic and inclusive of the input of the Pentecostal Christian community should be developed to aid the fight against corruption in Nigeria.

3. Beyond declarations and speeches that could be seen as mere lip service to the issue of corruption, the incoming administration should demonstrate its zero tolerance for corruption through the behavior and actions of the President and top government officials. This should also include redressing some perceived injustice by sections of the country in the spirit of equity, fairness, and justice which are the hallmarks of a corrupt-free society.

4. The fight against corruption should be seen as part of the fight to transform a society that will promote humanity, and challenge power relations, institutions, mechanisms, and systems that aid corruption.

5. The incoming administration’s anti-corruption agenda should adopt a whole-of-society approach as corruption in Nigeria can only be dealt with if the whole of society is involved in the fight against it. The agenda should be comprehensive and integrated combining elements of sanctions, systems, and society.

**Conclusion**

More than ever before, participants at the meeting expressed the urgent need to address the issue of corruption in Nigeria that has permeated the fabric of the society. They were equally resolute and determined to work together to use the above recommendations to engage the incoming administration toward evolving a well-articulated and holistic strategy to fight against corruption in Nigeria.
PPA HOLDS ANNUAL PROGRAMME MEETING

The meeting focused on the governance and management structure of PPA, what kind of organization/staff we need, PPA values, what we can do to uphold these values, what does it mean for our own conduct? What is it we can do to uphold these values and what is it that if we do will mean breaching of these values? The meeting also had presentations on programmes of PPA/PPJ and the strategic direction of the organization.

While discussing the outline of church history, the programme director, Dr Otive Igbuzor said this can become one of our greatest contributions to changing the narrative about how the church was established. This history is important. Human beings do things without thinking about history and our project aims to ensure the return to the dual mandate.

He stated that the Priesthood of all believers is still a huge challenge, because it democratizes power.

The change we envisage for PPJ is that we need people to serve as catalysts, e.g income generation (economic empowerment), to reign as priests and work for peace and social justice.

WHAT KIND OF ORGANIZATION
- We want to build a 2.0 organization
- to create value
- Fulfil promises, mandate and expectation
- Achieve meaningful results-any activity we want to do, ask how it will help to achieve meaningful results
- Maintain relevance
- Flexible and experimental
- Collaborative organization, work with other people
- Learning centered organization that leans from its failures
- Impact focused
- Agile on response, an organization that has speed
- Driven to reinvent
- Adaptive with customized experiences
- Democratic participation

WHAT KIND OF STAFF
- Have capacity to empower others
- Managers mindset
- Willingness to let others lead
- Willingness to negotiate
- Good internal governance
- Continuous learning etc
Education and Health is one of Priests Peace & Justice Initiative's thematic areas. PPJ collaborated with SILEC Initiative and Mountains of Hope foundation to train Christian leaders and workers on Alcohol and drug abuse counseling. Nigeria is currently witnessing an alarming increase in the rate of substance use and abuse among youths and emerging adults. The disturbing phenomenon undoubtedly constitutes a great threat to the entire society. The current health situation of Nigerian youths is disheartening and worrisome considering their engagement in hard drug abuse. Over 11 percent of the youth population in Nigeria take hard drugs like Syrup, tramadol, Diazepam, cocaine, and Shisha mix among others.

A report from United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) said around 275 million people used drugs worldwide in the last year, while over 36 million people suffered from drug use disorders, according to the 2021 world drug report released by the UNODC. As the 2018 National Drug Use Survey revealed, in Nigeria at that time there were around 14.3 million drug users of which close to three million suffered from a drug use disorder. It is a worrisome trend, considering that there are 11 million cannabis users in Nigeria, a third of whom seemed to be regular users with a need for drug counseling. Between 2010 and 2019, the number of people using drugs increased by 22 percent, owing in part to global population growth. Based on demographic changes alone, current projections suggest an 11 percent rise in the number of people who use drugs globally by 2030 – and a marked increase of 40 percent in Africa, due to its rapidly growing and young population. In Nigeria, this would signify that the country will have to grapple with approximately 20 million drug users by 2030, further deepening the public health and public security challenges.
This one-day training on drug and alcohol abuse counseling was done by the Priests Peace & Justice Initiative in collaboration with the SILEC initiative and Mountains of Hope Foundation. The 3 organizations co-facilitated the activity that had both in-person and online participants from different parts of the country.

The objective of the training is to improve the knowledge, skills, and attitude of the participants on the desirability and technical know-how of drug and substance abuse prevention and provision of rehabilitation support services to victims of drug abuse and domestic violence and build a cadre of skilled advocates and counselors with the requisite skills to counsel individuals in their Churches, communities, schools, and places of work who are having the challenges of drug and substance abuse.

This training brought together about 70 in-person participants (drawn from Churches, and schools) within the FCT in the first phase who will be trained and issued certificates as drug and alcohol abuse counselors by PPJ. Participants are expected to step down the training in their various constituencies and identify a potential alcohol or drug user with the aim of providing support in terms of guidance, prevention, and counseling for individuals who are addicts and need support to quit. Participants will be required to share their reports with the PPJ secretariat periodically for further action.

According to the 1999 Monitoring the Future study, by the time children are in eighth grade, more than 50 percent of them have tried alcohol, 44 percent have tried cigarettes, 22 percent have tried marijuana, and 20 percent have tried inhalants. Family-centered approaches train and support families who are trying to keep their children free from alcohol and other drugs. Participants will focus their step-down training targeting family programs that employ a variety of tools, including homework assignments, brochures, home study guides, workshops, and audio and videocassettes.

Recent research suggests that the most effective programs promote positive relationships between parents and children. They provide training in communication, especially as young people move into adolescence, and they work to reduce conflict, which can damage bonds between parents and children.

Family-based prevention programs incorporate the following principles:

- Reach families of children at each stage of development
- Train parents in behavioral skills to reduce conduct problems in children, improve parent-child relationships, provide consistent discipline and rulemaking, and monitor children's activities during adolescence

Three family-centered approaches that show great potential are recommended:

- Parent and family skills training:
  - Teaches parents how to build protective factors and reduce risk factors linked to substance abuse.
  - Family protective factors include close-knit familial relationships, consistent discipline, and parental supervision of children's daily activities
  - Family risk factors include communication problems, too lax or too stringent discipline, parental substance use, and child abuse or neglect. These programs can improve poor parent-child communication, child behavior, and parenting skills, and reduce family conflict.

Such interventions are directed at families with children who have no apparent risk factors for substance abuse as well as those at moderate and high risk. Programming differs depending on the target population. For example, Preparing for the Drug Free Years is a program that aims to improve parents' child-rearing techniques, parent-child bonding, and children's peer resistance skills. In-home services can also reduce youth crime rates by helping youngsters improve their social skills, anger management, school attendance, and attitudes toward authority.

Family therapy: Helps family members improve the way they communicate, manage family life, and solve problems. Programs are aimed at families with children at high risk and are designed to improve family functioning and reduce antisocial behavior among both parents and children.
The student Christian Movement of Nigeria (SCM) in collaboration with Priests Peace & Justice Initiative (PPJ) jointly organized the 2023 SIR DR. FRANCIS AKANU IBIAM LECTURE 2023. The general overseer of Palace of Priests Assembly, Dr. Otive Igbuzor delivered one of the keynote addresses during the event. The event which was held virtually had participants who joined from across the country. Dr. Otive Igbuzor, was represented by Dr. Orinyya Agbaji, the programme manager of PPJ spoke on VOTER EDUCATION AND AGENDA SETTING FOR THE INCOMING ADMINISTRATION.

The program was held on Saturday 4th February 2023. According to the SCM, There is no doubt that in the 82 years of the existence of the Student Christian Movement in Nigeria, the Movement has been a resource base for the Churches in the training of Students in schools, building up Godly model men and women, spearheading the coordination of joint campus fellowships, mission work, leadership training programs, teaching against all unrighteous vices in the society, etc. Just like our slogan says “SCM! Discipling Students for Missions and Societal Transformation.” Another general election of our dear country is coming up in a few days’ time, various political parties have presented their candidates who if elected will be saddled with the responsibility of steering the affairs of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, our beloved nation in the next four years. Hence the need for citizens to engage these politicians on their plans and program they have to foster the growth and development of Nigeria. The symposium among other things presented a charter of demands to the political parties fielding candidates in the forthcoming elections and securing the commitments of each candidate to work in the interest of nation-building and reconciliation should he/she emerge victorious at the polls.

In his presentation, Dr. Otive Igbuzor noted that Nigeria is at a critical juncture. The way that the incoming administration will address the challenges facing the country will determine the development trajectory of the country. The challenges facing the country are known. What needs to be done is known. We expect and hope that the incoming administration will address the challenges and change the narrative of our country and produce a just, peaceful and prosperous country.
A faith-based organization, Priests Peace and Justice Initiative (PPJ), the social arm of the Palace of PRIESTS ASSEMBLY (PPA) will on Thursday, November 10, 2022, in Abuja host Christian Leaders and Workers for a day of Training on voter education, electoral accountability and Election Observation in Nigeria.

The training which is part of activities in the implementation of the SHUN CORRUPTION project by the PPA/PPJ and supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation is geared towards mobilizing and empowering Pentecostal leaders and workers to participate in the electioneering process by mobilizing the church to vote and participate as election observers during the 2023 general elections.

A release by Ms. Ojonugwa Negedu, the Program Officer of PPJ said that “in the run-up to the 2023 general elections in Nigeria, the project will mobilize and empower Christian Leaders and Workers to contribute to credible, free, and fair elections.

This will include voter education, training on Election Observation: Legal Basis, Principles, and Practice, an overview of Local and International Election Observation Agencies, Reporting Election Observation: Checklists and Observation Reports”. She disclosed that the aim of the forum is to encourage and empower Christian Leaders and Workers in Nigeria to wake up to their responsibility and work together with the government to make electoral processes and elections credible, free and fair so as to rid the country of its record of post-election violence.

According to her, this training workshop will also be replicated in the six geo-political zones of the country and the workshop promises to be an eye-opening event for Christian leaders and workers drawn across the board from different churches and all twenty-five states in Nigeria where PPA/PPJ has a presence. It will enhance the Christian leaders and workers’ effectiveness to contribute to credible, free, and fair elections in Nigeria and boost Christian participation in national development in Nigeria and increase the social responsibility component of the church for the benefit of the members and the society at large.”

Stating the significance of election observation, Ms. Negedu said; “It builds trust and confidence in the democratic process, protects the rights of citizens to participate in the election, promotes peace-building and national reconciliation, guarantees rights of minority groups e.g women, youth, people living with disability, expose deficiencies in the system for possible correction and contributes to influencing the conduct of political actors”. She urged all the participants to make useful contributions and to be committed to the expected ethical conduct of being objective, transparent, and honest in discharging their task as election observers in the 2023 general elections. The statement further enjoined all Christians to join hands together to ensure that elections in Nigeria are free, fair, and credible and assist to add the voice of Pentecostals to the electoral process in Nigeria.
Election is rule based and it is important for those who are going to participate in the exercise to know the rules and laws governing the activity. These include:
The Electoral Act 2022.Guidelines, Handbooks, Manuals, Codes and Regulations published by the Electoral Management Bodies i.e. INEC and SIECs. ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance.
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
Registration Areas / Wards: 8,809.
LGA / Area Councils: 768 LGAs and 6 Area Councils (S. 3 (6) CFRN, as amended).
18 Registered political parties.
176,846 Polling Units. A total of 1,491 Electoral Constituencies are to be contested in 2023.
Governorship election will not hold in eight states (Bayelsa, Ekiti, Osun, Imo, Ondo, Anambra, Edo and Kogi) during general election in 2023.

Why do elections become violent?
Violence around elections increasingly captures the attention of donors and practitioners, who invest growing resources into enhancing the safety and security of democratic practice around the world. Concerned at continuing patterns of violence around elections, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) recently commissioned a study of the causes of electoral violence and best practices for its prevention.

Electoral violence is more likely when:
Political systems are based on patronage and clientelism. In political systems in which formal political institutions are superseded by informal relationships based on the exchange of resources and political loyalty, political supporters seem
willing to perpetrate election violence in support of their preferred candidates. Electoral management bodies, such as electoral commissions, are weak. This is due to their importance in establishing credible elections. Ongoing conflicts over land or other issues or resources go unresolved. While this relationship can have several explanations, one appears to be the tendency for politicians to adopt the grievances of conflicting factions into their campaigns. In addition, we found that international election observation missions may decrease the likelihood of pre-election violence, but may increase the likelihood of post-election violence if they expose attempts at election fraud.

Electoral violence is a significant problem in the contemporary world. When it occurs, violence can undermine participation and confidence in electoral processes, and it can derail emergent democratic institutions. The use of force at election time can also threaten fragile peace-building processes, and it can have negative consequences for the quality of life of victims. It is therefore not surprising that there has been considerable recent effort devoted to addressing this harmful phenomenon, especially by international organizations keen to sustain peace and foster democratic consolidation.
Electoral violence
understood as coercive force, directed towards electoral actors and/or objects, that occurs in the context of electoral competition – can occur before, during or after elections and it can target a variety of actors, including candidates, activists, poll workers, election observers, journalists and voters.

Interventions designed to prevent and/or mitigate electoral violence include a range of activities targeted at electoral actors: police training, security planning, electoral management body capacity building, peace messaging, codes of conduct, stakeholder fora, and grassroots peace advocacy by civil society groups.

Capacity building through training and education on the one hand, and attitude alteration through “peace messaging”, pacting, dialogue, and mediation on the other are effective ways of mitigating electoral violence.

WHAT IS UCP?
UCP is the practice of unarmed civilians providing direct physical protection to other civilians before, during, and after violent conflict, to prevent or reduce violence, and strengthen or build local peace infrastructures. The purpose of UCP is to create a safer environment.

HOW DOES UCP WORK?

Armed actors on both sides confirm that the presence of a third party ‘watching over them’, including NP [Nonviolent Peace force], has served to temper their behavior.

Frequently people ask, how would unarmed civilians be able to reduce violence and protect civilians? Rather than relying on the threat of armed forces, UCP practitioners use physical presence and visibility, networks of relations, community acceptance, and positive engagement to achieve their objectives.

While they do not resort to threats, UCP practitioners may bring attention to the costs or negative consequences of abusive behavior.

Modeling nonviolence in a high-intensity conflict creates opportunities for local actors to see alternative ways of responding to conflict or to reinvigorate traditional nonviolent conflict resolution practices.

To improve peacebuilding around election times, the multiple actors involved need to coordinate activities to avoid overlap and to identify policy gaps.

• Monitoring and education are activities that need to be carried out on a long-term basis;
• Conflict-mitigation measures should be included in the electoral process design;
• To ensure security, a balance between deterrence and confidence building has to be found.

What the bible says
The Bible has much to say about resolving relational problems between two people.

Five Pillars of Peace Pursuit.

• God wants you to be at peace with all people.
• Your relationships with people reflect and affect your relationship with God.
• Treat everyone as a unique person created and loved by God.
• Treat everyone alike, without prejudice or partiality.

Everyone is blessed when you pursue peace biblically

Sometimes parties to a dispute cannot come to an agreed-upon resolution themselves, even after numerous attempts at peacemaking. God calls believers to resolve disputes between them outside of the secular court. Arbitration is one such alternative. Arbitration provides a definitive outcome to a dispute, oftentimes with binding, legally enforceable orders.

• Hebrews 12:14a
• Pursue peace with all. (NASB)
• Romans 12:18
• If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. (ESV)
• Romans 14:19
• Make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. (NIV)
DEBORAH SISTERS, THE WOMEN GROUP OF PALACE OF PRIESTS ASSEMBLY AND THE TIMBREL BATTALION HOLDS AN ANNUAL PRAYER AND PRAISE NIGHT TAGGED GIVE ME THIS MOUNTAIN

The programme assembled great music ministers to grace the day. The prayer and worship meeting had participants from the length and breadth of Abuja in attendance, an interdenominational gathering with ministers from the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, FCT chapter fully represented. The programme also had an online audience for participants who could not make it physically. According to the convener, Pastor Ejiro Otive-Igbuzor, the assistant General overseer of PPA, "Nigeria is at a crossroad. It is a make-or-break moment. Corruption, violence, banditry, kidnappings, fuel scarcity, inflation, hunger...these have become commonplace. Shall we fold our hands and pretend that all is well? Not at all. We have no guns or bombs, not even catapults but we have the One who created the creators of the weapons of destruction. Jesus remains head over every power, ruler, principalities and spiritual wickedness in high and low places".

She further stated that, When the Spirit of the Lord takes over, every captivity is overturned. She said the programme was meant for Christians who love to worship and praise, who know that these are weapons of warfare. No matter your denomination. The programme was held a week before the general elections in Nigeria where prayers were offered for the success of the elections.

The music Ministers lead us to connect to the Heart of the Father and our female Ministers lead us to make our case before the Lord, the statement read.
Nigeria is currently witnessing an alarming increase in the rate of substance use and abuse among youths and emerging adults. The disturbing phenomenon undoubtedly constitutes a great threat to the entire society. Priests Peace and Justice Initiative in collaboration with Mountains of Hope Foundation organized a 1-day training on alcohol and substance abuse counseling in Jos, Plateau State to mark the Valentine’s Day.

The disturbing phenomenon undoubtedly constitutes a great threat to the entire society. The current health situation of Nigerian youths is disheartening and worrisome considering their engagement in hard drug abuse. Over 11 percent of the youth population in Nigeria take hard drugs like Syrup, tramadol, Diazepam, cocaine, and Shisha mix among others. A report from United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) said around 275 million people used drugs worldwide in the last year, while over 36 million people suffered from drug use disorders, according to the 2021 world drug report released by the UNODC. As the 2018 National Drug Use Survey revealed, in Nigeria at that time there were around 14.3 million drug users of which close to three million suffered from a drug use disorder. It is a worrisome trend, considering that there are 11 million cannabis users in Nigeria, a third of whom seemed to be regular users with a need for drug counseling. Between 2010 and 2019, the number of people using drugs increased by 22 percent, owing in part to global population growth. Based on demographic changes alone, current projections suggest an 11 percent rise in the number of people who use drugs globally by 2030 – and a marked increase of 40 percent in Africa, due to its rapidly growing and young population.

In Nigeria, this would signify that the country will have to grapple with approximately 20 million drug users by 2030, further deepening the public health and public security challenges. This one-day training on drug and alcohol abuse counseling was organized by the Priests Peace & Justice Initiative in collaboration with SILEC initiative and Mountains of Hope Foundation. The 3 organizations co-facilitated the activity. The objective of the training is to improve the knowledge, skills, and attitude of the participants on the desirability and technical know-how of drug and substance abuse prevention and provision of rehabilitation support services to victims of drug abuse and domestic violence and build a cadre of skilled advocates and counselors with the requisite skills to counsel individuals in their Churches, communities, schools, and places of work who are having the challenges of drug and substance abuse.
Election observation contributes to public confidence in the electoral process
PPA SETS UP SITUATION ROOM TO OBSERVE THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS

Background: The importance of elections and election observation

An election is a process of voting to select people for public office. It also refers to the act of choosing or selecting people to represent the people in a country’s government. An election is also defined as a contest for state government power between competing political parties or groups. President, governor, legislators, and local government chairperson are among the positions for which elections are held.

Elections are critical to democratic governance because they allow voters to choose leaders and hold them accountable for their performance in office. Accountability can be harmed when elected leaders do not care if they are re-elected, or when, for historical or other reasons, one party or coalition is so dominant that voters have effectively no choice between alternative candidates, parties, or policies. Nonetheless, the ability to control leaders by requiring them to participate in regular and periodic elections helps to solve the problem of leadership succession and thus contributes to the survival of democracy. Furthermore, where the electoral process is competitive and forces candidates or parties to expose their records and future intentions to public scrutiny, elections serve as forums for public discourse. Elections serve as forums for public debate and facilitate the expression of public opinion. Elections thus provide citizens with political education and ensure that democratic governments respond to the will of the people.

Elections serve as the foundation for democratic legitimacy. They allow citizens to hold their leaders accountable by electing candidates to or from office. A credible election is distinguished by inclusivity, transparency, accountability, and competitiveness. While many people focus on election day as a single event, elections are actually a multi-step process. The public's trust in each step of the election process is critical to the election's integrity. Election data must be made available to citizens in order for them to participate in, understand, evaluate, and ultimately accept an election process and its outcome as representing their will. Over the years, a global nonpartisan citizen election monitoring movement has collectively mobilized millions of citizens worldwide to participate in their countries' democratic processes as election observers.

Election observation is a deliberate collection of information concerning electoral processes and the formulation of judgment on these processes based on the information gathered by persons not being authorized to intervene in the process. When citizens come together to observe elections, they may have a number of goals. Depending on the context, civil society might mobilize to observe an election in order to: engage citizens in the election process; deter fraud; expose problems and irregularities; provide an accurate measure of the quality of the election; promote confidence in the process and outcomes; and provide recommendations for improving the process for the next election. In the longer term, citizen election observation helps ensure electoral integrity and strengthens civil society’s capacity to promote citizen participation, engage in policy advocacy and foster governmental accountability within and well beyond the election cycle. An observer is a person sponsored by an organization and accredited by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) - to observe an election within the guidelines approved by the commission. The most widely accepted distinctions between election observation, election monitoring, and election supervision refer to the role and the mandate of the different missions in terms of the level of intervention in the electoral process: observers having the smallest mandate, monitors having slightly more extended powers, while supervisors are those with the most extensive mandate. The mandate of election observers is to gather information and make an informed judgments without interfering in the process. The mandate of election monitors is to observe the electoral process and to intervene if laws are being violated. The mandate of election supervisors is to certify the validity of the electoral process.
SIGNIFICANCE OF ELECTION OBSERVATION

1. Builds trust and confidence in the democratic process
2. Protects the rights of citizens to participate in elections
3. Promotes peace-building and national reconciliation
4. Guarantees rights of minority groups e.g. women, youth, persons with disability
5. Expose deficiencies in the system for possible correction
6. Contributes to influencing the conduct of political actors

Situation Room for Election in Nigeria: History of the situation room in Nigeria.

The Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room is a coalition of over 70 civil society organizations that monitor Nigeria’s electoral process and elections across the country. Situation Room undertakes regular analysis and dissemination of information on major developments and events relating to the conduct of elections in Nigeria. It supports coordination and synergy amongst election stakeholders. The focal objectives of Situation Room are to improve the quality of Nigeria’s electoral system and strengthen civil society organizations’ capacity to better engage and monitor the electoral process.

The Situation Room was founded in 2010 in the build-up to the 2011 Nigeria general elections. The situation Room secretariat is hosted by the Policy and Legal Advocacy Center (PLAC), a civil society organization founded by Clement Nwankwo. Situation Room provides a forum for advance planning, scenario building, evidence-based analysis, constructive engagement with various stakeholders in the electoral process, and observation of elections. It intervenes in the electoral process by promoting collaboration, proactive advocacy, and escalating incidents during elections.

Achievements of the situation room

During the 2019 general elections, Situation Room recruited, trained, and deployed about 8,000 election observers across Nigeria's 36 States and its capital Abuja, who monitored presidential, parliamentary, and State elections and sent in reports from the field to the Situation Room Election Hub located at Transcorp Hilton Hotel Abuja. For the 2019 general elections, Situation Room launched an App called Zabe which field observers used to transmit election data from Ward Collation Centres across the country to the Situation Room for analysis. In addition to the Analysts and Technical Rooms, there was a Fusion Centre in the Election Situation Room, where data clerks were stationed to receive reports from field observers deployed for the Ward Collation observation project that the Situation Room embarked on, in collaboration with the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) West Africa. Aside from the generic situation room by PLAC/AAN, there are other situation rooms such as Gender Situation room (by Women Trust Fund), the security Situation Room by CLEEN and the Women’s situation room.
The Women’s Situation Room Nigeria is a concept that was first implemented under the Angie Brooks International Centre (ABIC) during the Liberia Presidential and Legislative Elections in 2011. The WSR arose out of the realization that violence has become a norm in African elections and it became imperative that women develop a mechanism to counter this pattern. It was adopted as a Best Practice by the Gender Is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) of the AU with President Johnson Sirleaf, president of Liberia and Nobel Peace Laureate as Champion of the WSR. The Women Situation Room Nigeria (WSRN) was initiated and established by the President of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) in Nigeria and the International Vice President, Joy Onyesoh, during the February 2015 general elections in Nigeria. Following its implementation in 2015, her media launch/peace dialogue was held on the 21st June, 2016 at the Bolton White Hotels, Abuja. In attendance were 26 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), 21 Media press, and 4 partner organizations.

**Pentecostal situation room**

Historically, Christendom represented the holistic integration between the Christian religion and the various spheres of human existence both private and public. It was rooted in the belief that God governed all of life, private and public, spiritual and secular. Historically, Pentecostal leaders and workers have not been engaging in social issues in Nigeria. The visible invisibility and invisible visibility of the church in elections became a serious matter of concern. As “sojourners and exiles” (1 Peter 2:11), it can be tempting for Christians to adopt a mindset that earthly governing systems are inconsequential to the task of furthering the gospel. The coming elections seem countenanced to be different, momentous, historic, and epochal! These elections mark an important milestone in the life of our young democracy.” The conceptualization of the SHUN Corruption by the Palace of Priests Assembly/Priests Peace & Justice Initiative program address this. The major turning point was in 2019 when, through the Shun Corruption Project being implemented by the Palace of Priests Assembly, 420 Pentecostal Leaders and workers were deployed for the first time in the history of Nigeria to observe the 2019 General elections in 15 states and the FCT. Our desire is to up the game in 2023. In the run-up to the 2023 general elections in Nigeria, the project will mobilize and empower Christian Leaders and Workers to contribute to credible, free, and fair elections. This will include voter education, training on Election Observation: Legal Basis, Principles, and Practice, an overview of Local and International Election Observation Agencies, Reporting Election Observation: Checklists and Observation Reports”. The aim of the forum is to encourage and empower Pentecostal Christian Leaders and Workers in Nigeria to wake up to their responsibility and work together with the government to make electoral processes and elections credible, free and fair so as to rid the country of its record of post-election violence.

A total of 613 election observers will be deployed in 25 states including the FCT to observe the 2023 general elections. Election observers will be deployed to the nearest polling unit to them and logistics will be provided for each observer to cover the cost of data, phone calls, and refreshments during the period of observing the elections.

**Organization of the Pentecostal situation room.**

A physical Election Situation Room will be set up at the PPA HQ Auditorium as a Communication Room consisting of an Analysts’ Room, a communications/media room, and a spiritual intervention Room. The Analysts Room will consist of the project team members and Pentecostal leaders who are experts in democracy and governance issues, while the spiritual room will consist of Pentecostal Pastors and evangelists who will serve as spiritual Call Centres, a Holy-ghost-filled and charged atmosphere with members involved in spiritual exercises, identifying issues of prayers and interceding for the success of the elections. The Situation Room will deploy field observers in 25 states including the FCT for the general elections. The observers will send in reports to the Communications room, which are subsequently verified and published on Situation Room’s social media platforms. Reported Incidents will be escalated to relevant election stakeholders, usually INEC and security agencies, and followed up to ensure that they are resolved. The Situation Room will issue statements based on reports received from field observers. Its preliminary statements will focus on issues such as logistics challenges (non-availability or late arrival of electoral materials), security issues, intimidation, and inducement of voters, calling on appropriate authorities to take immediate actions to curtail such issues.
The Situation Room will also monitor the collation and transmission of election data up to the declaration of winners. An interim report will be published by the members of the situation room after the final report has been received from the field observers.

Adequate arrangements will be made for refreshments throughout the election period for members of the situation room.

Conclusion
The impact of the church before and during elections cannot be overemphasized. Considering the number of believers all over Nigeria, if the church is united in one goal to produce righteous leaders during the upcoming elections, then nothing will stand against the church. The church needs to get more involved in Politics and the Elections and “shine as Lights” (Matt. 5:16) as the Bible commands. Having a Pentecostal perspective and an all-Pentecostal observers team to observe elections in Nigeria is monumental. It builds trust and confidence in the democratic process, protects the rights of citizens to participate in the election, promotes peace-building and national reconciliation, guarantees rights of minority groups e.g women, youth, and people living with disability, expose deficiencies in the system for possible correction and contributes to influencing the conduct of political actors”. 
PHOTO STORY FROM PPA ELECTION OBSERVERS ACROSS NIGERIA

JANUARY - MARCH 2023
The Priests Peace & Justice Initiative (PPJ) joins the rest of the World to celebrate International Women’s Day (IWD) and calls on Nigerians to challenge Gender Inequality and also to call on government at all levels to promote innovation and technology for all; that will provide support for gender issues and eliminate gender discrimination in Nigeria. In a press statement issued in Abuja by Ms. Ojonugwa Negedu, PPA/PPJ Programme Officer, to commemorate this year’s international women’s Day, the organization said “Women all over the world want and deserve an equal future free from stigma, stereotypes, and violence; a future that’s sustainable, peaceful, with equal rights and opportunities for all. To get us there, Nigeria needs women at every table where decisions are being made.” Although women’s full and effective participation in all areas of life will drive progress for everyone, women are still underrepresented in public life and decision-making processes saying at the current rate of progress gender equality among Heads of Government will take another 130 years.

“When women lead, we see positive results and women, especially young women, are at the forefront of diverse and inclusive movements online and on the street for social justice and gender equality in all part of the world. Yet, women under 30 are less than 1% of parliamentarians worldwide” she said. Expressing support for this year’s theme, she said the IWD is a rallying cry for Nigerians and government at all levels to promote innovation and technological support to all especially girls and women. In the digital age, our systems and institutions are still perpetually bias towards inequality and violence in the lives of women and girls. Technological progress is still improving faster than gender equality. This is not progress for women and girls all over the world especially Africa.
Priests Peace and Justice Initiative collaborated with Mountains of HOPE Foundation and Rich-Oak LIFE Initiative to celebrate this year's international women's day by organizing a 1-day training on Financial literacy and strategic investment.

In this year's International Women's Day, PPJ wants to celebrate the exceptional work of women around the world in driving digital innovation and technological advancement. From the earliest days of computing to the present age of virtual reality and artificial intelligence, women have made untold contributions to the digital world in which we increasingly live. Their accomplishments have been against all odds, in a field that has historically neither welcomed nor appreciated them. We also celebrate the Christian Women Against Corruption which is one of the campaign platforms for the Shun Corruption Project for setting a positive example, showing that women are not only victims of corruption, but also key players in the struggle against it.
Pastor Esther Dogonyaro offered the welcome address and welcomed everyone for making out time to make it to the training and pray that it will useful and create a great impact in the lives of Women in the society. The President presented her paper on Embracing Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Nigeria and it was a life changing presentation that will better the lives of women and young girls in the society.

The President taught that “‘Gender equality’ means equal outcomes for women, men and gender-diverse people. ‘Gender equity’ is the process to achieve gender equality. The word gender describes the socially-constructed roles and responsibilities that societies consider appropriate for men and women. Gender equality means that men and women have equal power and equal opportunities for financial independence, education, and personal development. Women's empowerment is a critical aspect of achieving gender equality. It includes increasing a woman's sense of self-worth, her decision-making power, her access to opportunities and resources, her power and control over her own life inside and outside the home, and her ability to effect change. Yet gender issues are not focused on women alone, but on the relationship between men and women in society. The actions and attitudes of men and boys play an essential role in achieving gender equality.”

She also taught on the ways to achieve gender equality, importance of gender equality, and further went ahead to recommend that:
1. An urgent Review of all Gender Discriminatory Laws in Nigeria:
   Nigerian government should endeavor to review all gender discriminatory laws that still exist in the pages of our statute books in order to demonstrate her total commitment to eradicate gender inequality in Nigeria.
2. Uprooting of all Obnoxious Traditional Practices that Impede the Rights of Women: The Nigerian government should collaborate with traditional rulers in Nigeria and other stakeholders to ensure that all harmful and traditional practices which target only women, are uprooted.
3. Economic Empowerment of Women:
   It is high time Nigerian government increased women’s presence at the labour market by granting women more loan to startup businesses to reduce poverty and insecurity level in Nigeria.
4. More Educational Empowerment for Women: Compulsory girl-child education which Nigeria has already adopted should be enforced and sustained.
5. More Political Appointment for Women:
   Nigerian government is called upon to beef up her political appointive positions for women. The present appointments still fall short of the international expectation, that 35 per cent of all political appointment should be reserved for women.
6. Enactment of Female Based Specific Law:
   It is apparent from this discourse that there is every need to enact gender specific laws to curb gender violence.
7. The Role of the Media: The government should use the media to devise more effective awareness raising programmes for women especially in the grassroots.
8. Establishment of More Internet Portals to Foster Dialogue for Promotion of gender equality. Questions and answer session was interesting as the women asked some questions relating to real life situations and Pastor Esther Dogonyaro answered them satisfactorily.

Goodwill Messages from our Partners, Mrs. Rachael Nuhu Birma from Africare and Mrs. Jennifer Turay from Rich Oak Aficare urged the women that power is taken not given so women need to develop themselves to get to the very top. She also encouraged that women need to support each other in all positive aspects in order for the world to support them too.
REPORT ON 1 DAY WOMEN EMPOWERMENT TRAINING
MOUNTAINS OF HOPE FOUNDATION
IN COLLABORATION
WITH PRIESTS PEACE AND JUSTICE INITIATIVES, RICH –OAK LIFE INITIATIVE & AFRICARE INITIATIVE

Held at No 6B Emerald Plaza, Zaramaganda – Rayfield Road, Jos, Plateau State Nigeria MARCH 9, 2023

The Project Manager, Queen Peterside Esq. introduced the concept of the Financial Literacy and Strategic Investment Training and also offered a little overview of the entire presentations on women's financial literacy and women's development. She said the objective of the program is to empower women with the knowledge and skills necessary to make sound and responsible decisions about spending, saving, borrowing, and investing for a promising future of economic well-being. The Program is centered on economic literacy, entrepreneurship, and asset building. We teach women to handle their money like a “pro” from a position of knowledge, confidence, and financial clarity.

In his presentation on Strategic Investment & Entrepreneurship, Dr. Orinya Agbaji stated that there is a pattern, body of principles, and plans that anyone can follow and create wealth. The beginning point is the riches you already possess: yourself; your talents; your networks; your positive mental attitude. He mentioned ten places where money hides: People; Problems; Gifts and Talents; Opportunities; Products and Services; ideas; vision; work; seed and creator. According to him, It is not how much you earn but what you do with it that determines how you end, and If you have time and little money, coupled with some financial planning, you can be rich. The three steps on the pathway to wealth are Financial intelligence, financial planning, and financial discipline. Everyone can create wealth. There are things that everyone can do and ways to behave to create wealth. Anyone that understands and follows the process of creating multiple streams of income can do it and become rich.

“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.

He also mentioned 6 ways to become rich which are through Inheritance, marriage, winning the lottery, becoming a superstar, criminality; stealing, smuggling, corruption, drug dealing etc, and savings and investment.

In her presentation, the representative from Rich-Oak Life Initiative, Jennifer Turai discussed the importance of financial literacy.

What is Financial Literacy?

- Financial literacy is your ability to understand language and issues relating to finance so that you can make informed and effective decisions
- It is the ability to know how to earn money, save, budget, spend, and invest money properly to make more money.

Needs and Wants

- Needs are things you must have to survive.
- Wants are things you would like to have to feel better.
- Before buying anything, always ask if it is a want or a need.
- Always put your needs first before your wants as this will help your survival.
- In a family, everyone’s needs count.
- Consider going for your wants only when your needs are met and there is still money left.

Financial Planning and Budgeting

- Financial planning is simply thinking and making plans on how to achieve goals(financial)for yourself, your family or your business.
- Budget is a summary of the money you expect to come in and the money you plan to spend over a period of time
- If you want to make progress, set SMART goals and make plans on how to achieve them.
- Involve your family in your budget process
- Use 20% of your energy in preparing your budget and 80% on sticking to it.
REPORT ON 1 DAY WOMEN EMPOWERMENT TRAINING

MOUNTAINS OF HOPE FOUNDATION
IN COLLABORATION
WITH PRIESTS PEACE AND JUSTICE INITIATIVES, RICH –OAK, AFRICARE FOUNDATION
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My Business Finances
• Business finances is about the money needed for the business to run, what goes into the business and what goes
out.
• Always keep records to know how much profit you are making
• Pay yourself salary from how much profit you make
• Reinvest some of your profit into your business to make it grow
• Do not take money from your business finance to spend on your personal wants as that means eating up your
future income.

Representatives of Stanbic IBTC were invited for a presentation on the various accounts the women can open while
they are doing their business to make profit without much charges. The women were introduced to some investment
accounts they can open to make up to 5% profits on the money that they deposited. Representative from micro pension
explain the benefit of having a pension account as a person. Stanbic IBTC pensions also discussed the available micro-
pensions platform for women who are into micro-businesses to onboard as part of their retirement plans.

The closing Remark given by the President of Mountains of Hope Foundation, Pastor Esther Dogonyaro.

Mrs Jennifer Turay
Representative of Rich-oak Life Initiative
We are Priests... We Make Disciples. ...Empowered People...Better Society / +234 812 710 0087, +234 706 387 9653

Abuja, Wednesday, March 7th, 2023:
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In a press statement issued in Abuja by Ms. Ojonugwa Negedu, PPA/PPJ Programme Officer, to commemorate this year’s international women’s day, the organization said “Women all over the world want and deserve an equal future free from stigma, stereotypes, and violence; a future that’s sustainable, peaceful, with equal rights and opportunities for all. To get us there, Nigeria needs women at every table where decisions are being made.”

In this year’s International Women’s Day, PPJ wants to celebrate the exceptional work of women around the world in driving digital innovation and technological advancement. From the earliest days of computing to the present age of virtual reality and artificial intelligence, women have made untold contributions to the digital world in which we increasingly live. Their accomplishments have been against all odds, in a field that has historically neither welcomed nor appreciated them. We also celebrate the Christian Women Against Corruption which is one of the campaign platforms for the Shun Corruption Project for setting a positive example, showing that women are not only victims of corruption, but also key players in the struggle against it.

She said that although women’s full and effective participation in all areas of life will drive progress for everyone, women are still underrepresented in public life and decision-making processes saying at the current rate of progress gender equality among Heads of Government will take another 130 years.

“When women lead, we see positive results, and women, especially young women, are at the forefront of diverse and inclusive movements online and on the street for social justice and gender equality in all parts of the world. Yet, women under 30 are less than 1% of parliamentarians worldwide” she said.

Expressing support for this year’s theme, she said the IWD is a rallying cry for Nigerians and the government at all levels to promote innovation and technological support to all especially girls and women. In the digital age, our systems and institutions are still perpetually biased toward inequality and violence in the lives of women and girls. Technological progress is still improving faster than gender equality. This is not progress for women and girls all over the world, especially in Africa.

Ms. Negedu also stated that; “the marginalization of women in economic development and in social and political spaces is a worldwide phenomenon; however, it is worst in developing countries. In Nigeria, despite the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in 1985 and similar local policies, such as the National Gender Policy of 2006, inequality still exists due to myriad cultural and structural challenges.”

She emphasized that this has constrained women’s participation in all spheres of life with serious implications for human resource development and, in that capacity, the economic development of the country and the general state of gender equality. Referring to research over the years she said it has shown that women lay behind men in most indicators of socio–economic development and they constitute most of the poor, the unemployed, and the socially disadvantaged. Stating the importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women, Ms. Negedu said; “Gender equality is fundamentally linked to sustainable development and is vital to the realization of human rights for all”. The overall objective of gender equality is a society in which men and women enjoy the same opportunities, rights, and obligations in all spheres of life. Gender equality benefits everyone and it has been conclusively shown to stimulate economic growth which is crucial for developing countries like Nigeria.

She urged all Nigerians to join this year’s campaign theme #Power on to create an equal future. saying today, a persistent gender gap in digital access keeps women from unlocking technology’s full potential. Their underrepresentation in STEM education and careers remains a major barrier to their participation in tech design and governance. Additionally, the pervasive threat of online gender-based violence—coupled with a lack of legal recourse—too often forces them out of the digital spaces they do occupy. At the same time, digital technology is opening new doors for the global empowerment of women, girls, and other marginalized groups. From gender-responsive digital learning to tech-facilitated sexual and reproductive healthcare, the digital age represents an unprecedented opportunity to eliminate all forms of disparity and inequality.

“This 8th March, we are calling on governments, activists, and the private sector alike to power on in their efforts to make the digital world safer, more inclusive, and more equitable. Facing a multiplicity of global crises, we have a chance to create a better future—not just for women and girls, but for all humanity and all life on Earth”. She said.

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‘Gender equality’ means equal outcomes for women, men and gender-diverse people. ‘Gender equity’ is the process to achieve gender equality. The word gender describes the socially-constructed roles and responsibilities that societies consider appropriate for men and women. Gender equality means that men and women have equal power and equal opportunities for financial independence, education, and personal development. Women's empowerment is a critical aspect of achieving gender equality. It includes increasing a woman’s sense of self-worth, her decision-making power, her access to opportunities and resources, her power and control over her own life inside and outside the home, and her ability to effect change. (Source) Yet gender issues are not focused on women alone, but on the relationship between men and women in society. The actions and attitudes of men and boys play an essential role in achieving gender equality.

Gender equity recognizes that women and gender-diverse people are not in the same ‘starting position’ as men. This is because of historical and social disadvantages. Treating women, gender-diverse people and men equally might not actually be fair. In fact, it can create further disadvantage. Gender equity measures are often needed to level the playing field.

Violence against women is serious, widespread and driven by gender inequality. Globally, women have fewer opportunities for economic participation than men, less access to basic and higher education, greater health and safety risks, and less political representation. Guaranteeing the rights of women and giving them opportunities to reach their full potential is critical not only for attaining gender equality, but also for meeting a wide range of international development goals. Empowered women and girls contribute to the health and productivity of their families, communities, and countries, creating a ripple effect that benefits everyone.

WAYS TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY

Education is a key area of focus. Although the world is making progress in achieving gender parity in education, girls still make up a higher percentage of out-of-school children than boys. (Source) Approximately one quarter of girls in the developing world do not attend school. Typically, families with limited means who cannot afford costs such as school fees, uniforms, and supplies for all of their children will prioritize education for their sons. (Source) Families may also rely on girls’ labor for household chores, carrying water, and childcare, leaving limited time for schooling. But prioritizing girls’ education provides perhaps the single highest return on investment in the developing world.
An educated girl is more likely to postpone marriage, raise a smaller family, have healthier children, and send her own children to school. She has more opportunities to earn an income and to participate in political processes, and she is less likely to become infected with HIV.

2. Women's health and safety is another important area. HIV/AIDS is becoming an increasingly impactful issue for women. (Source) This can be related to women having fewer opportunities for health education, unequal power in sexual partnership, or as a result of gender-based violence. Maternal health is also an issue of specific concern. In many countries, women have limited access to prenatal and infant care, and are more likely to experience complications during pregnancy and childbirth. This is a critical concern in countries where girls marry and have children before they are ready; often well before the age of 18. Quality maternal health care can provide an important entry point for information and services that empower mothers as informed decision-makers concerning their own health and the health of their children.

A final area of focus in attaining gender equality is women's economic and political empowerment. Though women comprise more than 50% of the world's population, they only own 1% of the world's wealth. Throughout the world, women and girls perform long hours of unpaid domestic work. In some places, women still lack rights to own land or to inherit property, obtain access to credit, earn income, or to move up in their workplace, free from job discrimination. At all levels, including at home and in the public arena, women are widely underrepresented as decision-makers. In legislatures around the world, women are outnumbered 4 to 1, yet women's political participation is crucial for achieving gender equality and genuine democracy.

IMPORTANCE OF GENDER EQUITY

Why is gender equity important? Does empowering and educating women really make a difference? Research on gender equity in the past few decades is unequivocal: when women are educated through secondary school, everyone in society benefits. Infant and child mortality and malnutrition all decline, and fertility is reduced. But this is just the beginning of the benefits of gender equity.

Many studies around the world have demonstrated the strong, positive linkages between women’s empowerment, economic growth and the democratization process. A World Bank study of one hundred developing countries found that countries that promote women’s rights and increase their access to economic resources and education grow faster, have less inequality and less corruption than countries that do not support women’s rights.

Moreover, additional research has discovered that having more women in government is associated with lower levels of corruption. More women in government and politics equal more honest government. In fact, increasing women’s participation in political life, and improving their access to education and health care are so interlinked that scholars now consider them the key elements in building successful, sustainable democracies. They then looked at the World Bank data on maternal mortality which measures the number of women who die in pregnancy and childbirth per 100,000. Nigeria’s maternal mortality rate is 917; Ethiopia is next at 401, followed by Kenya at 342, Rwanda at 248, then South Africa has the lowest at 119.
Urgent press release
Abuja, Nigeria
24th February 2023

PALACE OF PRIESTS ASSEMBLY DEPLOYS OVER 600 ELECTION OBSERVERS IN 25 STATES AND THE FCT FOR THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS

A select group of Pentecostal leaders and Church workers under the Priests Peace and Justice Initiative (PPJ), the social arm of the Palace of Priests Assembly (PPA) are to be deployed as observers in twenty-five States across the six geopolitical zones of the Country. The observation exercise will be carried out with an observer strength of Six hundred and thirteen members deployed in Akwa-Ibom, Adamawa, Benue, Borno, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Cross-River, Delta, Ebonyi, Edo, Enugu, Gombe, Imo, Kaduna, Kano, Kogi, Kwara, Lagos, Nassarawa, Niger, Ondo, Oyo, Plateau, Rivers, Taraba and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) in the 2023 general elections. This observation is facilitated by the McArthur Foundation under the Mobilizing Christians against Corruption in Nigeria (MOCAC 2.0) A.K.A the Shun Corruption Project and marks the second in the history of election observation in Nigeria that the Pentecostals would be actively participating. The observation of the 2023 General elections is done with the expectation that the voice of the Pentecostal Church will contribute significantly to incorporating a non-secular perspective into the electoral process and also contribute to the electoral credibility and integrity of elections in Nigeria.

The program manager of PPJ and the Executive Secretary of PPA, Dr. Agbaji Orinya who spoke on the importance of the observation by the Pentecostal Church described it as a step of getting the Pentecostal Church involved in not just the electoral process but in the entire political system in Nigeria. According to him, "the only way that the Pentecostal Church can influence policy and make an impact in the affairs of the nation is to be active participants in the politics of the Country. To kindle the interest of the Pentecostal Church in politics and ensure that we fulfill our civic responsibilities, the believer must be in the center of the political development of the nation". He said it is very important that members of the Pentecostal Church wake up and prepare for their role in the political leadership of this nation saying that one way that the Pentecostals can fulfill the divine mandate of dominating the earth is to be serious political actors.

He described the 2023 election as a defining moment for Church Participation in politics in Nigeria. He added that a pre-election survey conducted by the Initiative with over 500 respondents across the 25 States and the FCT where PPA has a presence showed that Nigerians are highly motivated to participate in this year’s election when compared with previous Elections held in Nigeria, and respondents are satisfied with the security arrangements to ensure hitch-free elections in the country. The survey further revealed that many electorates have collected their PVCs and are eagerly waiting to cast their votes on election day. Furthermore, majority of the respondents have seen a copy of the electoral act 2022 and have read it to close their knowledge gap about electoral processes in Nigeria.

Dr. Agbaji called on all Pentecostals as well as other Christians to vote for credible leaders. He referred to Proverbs 29:2 which says that "when the righteous are in power the people rejoice but when the wicked man rules the people mourn".

While praying for the safety of all election stakeholders, he urged all observers to strictly abide by the code of conduct and ensure that their report meets the highest standard of integrity befitting the position of the Church as the bastion of righteousness.

For further details call:
Dr Agbaji Orinya,
Programme Manager
Tel: 08068455697 & E-mail: agbaji2016@yahoo.com

www.priestsassembly.org/www.ppj.priestsassembly.org

Introduction

This is the interim report of the elections held on February 25, 2023. Palace of Priests Assembly deployed a total of 613 election observers in 25 states (Benue, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Ebonyi, Bauchi, Akwa-Ibom, Borno, Rivers, Nassarawa, Niger, Enugu, Adamawa, Ondo, Lagos, Taraba, Gombe, Kano, Kaduna, Plateau, Imo, Kogi, Oyo, Edo, Kwara, and the Federal Capital Territory)

Palace of Priests Assembly (PPA), one of the accredited observer organizations based in Abuja, observed the elections in collaboration with the Priests Peace and Justice Initiative (PPJ)- the social arm of PPA. The general impression about the observation is captured below:

Voter Turnout

In most of the polling units visited across the 25 states and the FCT where PPA deployed observers, there was high voter turnout with young men and women, the aged, and nursing mothers expressing eagerness to cast their votes. Voter apathy is low compared with other elections in the past. In some polling units in the FCT, voters were already gathered as early as 6:30 am. Polling unit 082 by Bristol Academy, FHA Phase 2 Karu FCT had 229 accredited voters.

INEC Logistics arrangement

INEC logistics arrangement had mixed reactions from across the states where our observers were deployed. From the late arrival of INEC officials and late commencement of the voting process to the inadequacies in the number of BVAS in most of the polling units especially where there are a high number of voters, the logistics arrangements are generally poor. Kits and non-sensitive materials were properly arranged when the officials arrived but INEC officials and voting materials did not get to all the polling units visited early. Reports across the 25 states indicated that the average time of arrival of INEC officials was about 10:30 am while the average time of commencement of voting was 11:15 am. In Omoto/Urhie street Pulling unit code 031 Election materials were yet to arrive at 12:09 when our observer reported, and no security and no INEC officials were sighted. In Orogun Ward 1, unit 5, Delta State Voting materials arrived at 10:50 am. Accreditation of voters and voting started at 11:10 am. In PU 172 In Borno State, Maisandari Ward, the officials arrived at 12.15. The case was different in some locations such as ARABIC School PU014, Kwara Ilorin west Oko – Erin PU040 and Polo Park 2 PU 14-04-07-006 where INEC officials and materials arrived before 9.30 am. In Calabar municipality Ward 10, Polling unit 15, Polling unit code 015, officials arrived at 8:11 am, while accreditation and voting commenced by 9:00 am. In Takum LGA, Taraba State Gahwetun ward Henry Porter polling unit 002, INEC officials arrived at 11:50 am but the BVAS couldn't be configured and the INEC officials had to return to the INEC office. At 1:46 pm, our observer at Epie III, ward 6, beside MTN mast, with 024 polling unit number, INEC Road, Kpantsia Yenagoa LGA, Bayelsa state, said they have not sighted any electoral official and there was no security personnel either.

The voters register was not pasted on the walls of most of the polling units observed when voters arrived early in the morning before the arrival of the INEC officials, and this caused some level of agitation. Our observers reported across the states that voters were already present in most of the polling units as early as 6:30 am. Special arrangements were made for persons with disability (PWDs) within the FCT. Some of our observers across the states also noted that voters struggled to identify a particular political party they wanted to vote. All other parties had their names and logos on them, but, the Labour party had only the logo, no initials. People who want to vote for LP without being familiar with the logo find it difficult to identify it and have to solicit the help of the preceding officers to identify it.
Accreditation and Voting Process
Set up was not concluded before 8.30 am when voting was supposed to commence in 90% of the polling units visited across the 25 states. The Polling Officials were absent in most polling units visited at 8:30 am. Although the electoral body had said the accreditation and voting will commence by 8:30 am, most of the polling units did not open even at 9:30 am. At PU 172 In Borno State, Maisandari Ward the officials arrived at 12.15 pm. The exercise was scheduled to end when the last person in the queue at 2:30 pm have been accredited and voted, but some polling units in Nassarawa LGA of Nassarawa State had no INEC official present at 2:41 pm. In Taraba/Kona/Jalingo Jauro Gadi primary school PU 050 Voting Commenced by 11:00 am while in the Polling unit 002 Garin Magami voting commenced by 10.30 am. In Benue state, Wailomayo Polling unit 002 voting commenced by 10 am, and in Alijo/ Yandev ward Pu Unit 034 Voting started by 11.55 am. Our observers in Imo state/owerri west/ obinze ward/primary school azudo 1 Pu 011 reported that voting started by 9:58 am. The case was however different in Mushin Papa Ajao ward 09 Polling Unit Adetula/037 where our reporter observed that INEC Officials arrived at 7.30 am and accreditation and voting started simultaneously at 8.30 am and ended at 2.30 pm. Sorting and counting of votes ended at 4.20 pm and in IFAKO 02 - SOLUYI/ KOSOFE LGA of Lagos State, Polling unit 18 Akinwunumi Street, Ifako PU 034 accreditation and voting commenced by 8:54 am. The BVAS thumb verification did not work so facials identification was used for the accreditation and the BVAS worked perfectly throughout.

Our observers across the 25 states where PPA deployed reported that elderly people, pregnant women, and nursing mothers were given consideration during the accreditation and voting process. However, in some polling units in Sunny Vale Estate and Garki model market Abuja, our observers reported that the process for accreditation and voting was not done simultaneously and did not follow the INEC guideline as the process was meant to be carried out simultaneously. Voters were accredited and asked to join another queue where a second stage of verification was carried out. Our observers also reported that voting did not take place at Itohan Girls Grammar school, ward 6, Ikpoba-Okha LGA of Edo state due to the non-availability of materials and INEC officials.

Our observer in Ajah, Lagos State was injured while running for safety when armed men at about 1:40 pm disrupted the elections but more security agents were deployed to the area and elections resumed and were concluded peacefully thereafter. In Kosofe kasunmu junction in Shangisha polling unit 007, our observers reported that the election was peaceful from morning hours but things took a twist when the counting process began. Some party did not agree to the void votes and this led to the snatching and destruction of ballot boxes and the process was disrupted.

Vote Buying
Our observers did not report the physical buying of votes at the time of reporting. However, some observers in some polling units reported a few incidents where some party agents were seen collecting voters' phone numbers and account details. At Girei LGA, Modire ward 02-04-98-002, Njouro Buba-002 in Adamawa, Ikoba Okha LGA, ward 6, PU44, and at Goretti ward 6 PU80 in Edo state. Also, our observers reported generally that Voters were not prevented from going into the voting cubicle with their phones.

Security of the process
The Nigeria Police Force had initially reported a massive deployment of their personnel to maintain law and order across the country, there was an average of 3 police officers in most of the polling units visited alongside other security agents while a good number of them were seen at the checkpoints within the state capitals. Beyond this, as the voting processes progressed in some of the locations, armed men in security outfits moved from polling unit to polling unit ensuring law and order. Voters have been reported to be conducting themselves peacefully.
Functionality of the BVAS
The BVAS in most of the polling units worked perfectly and without challenge. The INEC officials were knowledgeable in the operation of the BVAS and were able to manage the process. However, there were pockets of reports from across the states in a few polling units where the BVAS did not work perfectly. In Polling unit 18 Akinwunmi Street, Ifako PU 034 it was reported that the BVAS thumb verification did not work but the facial identification and verification were used. This was the situation in other polling units across the states where our observers reported.

Challenges
1. Splitting the polling units was a big challenge for many voters thereby presenting themselves at the wrong polling units. Observers reported that voters had difficulty in identifying their polling units despite the sensitization by INEC for voters to identify and know their polling units before the day of the elections. This led to the overcrowding of some of the polling units and delayed accreditation and voting exercise.
2. Vote buying: Although not generally reported, some party agents in pockets of locations were seen collecting account details and phone numbers of voters.
3. Violence in some parts of the country: the major event that lead to pockets of violence is the delay in uploading results at the end of the voting exercise. This caused some level of agitation resulting in violence in some locations.
4. Late arrivals of ad-hoc Staff and electoral materials.

Recommendation
The challenges that lead to the delay in the arrival of officials and the delay of commencement of voting reported in many states across the country must be identified and dealt with before the next elections. INEC should mandate their officials to paste the voters register in all polling units a day before the elections. There is a need for more sensitization of the electorate about how to locate their polling units before election day.

INEC should improve the credibility and outcome of elections in order to restore the confidence of Nigerians in the electoral process and address the issues of delay and or refusal of electoral officers to upload the results on the Irev as stipulated by the law in every polling unit at the end of the voting exercise.

Conclusion
Overall, voter turnout was impressive. INEC deserves commendation for making improvements in certain areas, particularly in the deployment of technology (BVAS) and the observance of priority voting for PWDs, the aged, pregnant, and nursing mothers. Also, availability and the distribution of kits and non-sensitive materials were impressive. However, the commission should make efforts to address the challenges mentioned above, especially the late arrival of INEC staff, the late commencement of accreditation, and the non-compliance of some INEC staff with the regulation to conduct accreditation and issuance of ballot papers simultaneously and the uploading of election results at the polling units.

Dr. Orinya Agbaji Orinya
Program Manager, PPA/PPJ
aorinya@priestsassembly.org
There is a need for INEC to work closely with security agencies to ensure and enforce the arrest and prosecution of all those involved in vote buying during this election to serve as deterrence to others. INEC should give attention to physically challenged persons across the Federation by ensuring that facilities to aid their participation in the voting exercise are provided.

**Conclusion**

Overall, voter turnout was low. But INEC deserves commendation for making improvements in certain areas, particularly in the deployment of technology (BVAS) and the observance of priority voting for PWDs, the aged, pregnant, and nursing mothers. Also, the polling officials reportedly managed the electoral process better, and the distribution of kits and non-sensitive materials was impressive. However, the commission should make efforts to address the challenges mentioned above, especially voter apathy. Although the exercise was generally peaceful in the units observed, the apathy that characterized the elections, suggests that citizens are increasingly losing faith in the electoral process. INEC, therefore, should brace up and take the recommendations above into focus and improve its processes and procedure in future elections to encourage increased citizen participation in elections.

**Dr Orinya Agbaji Orinya**

Program Manager

Priests Peace & Justice Initiative (PPJ)

aorinya@priestsassembly.org
Palace of Priests Assembly (PPA), one of the accredited observer organizations based in Abuja, in collaboration with its social arm, the Priests Peace and Justice Initiative (PPJ), is pleased to present the interim report of the Presidential and National Assembly elections held on February 25, 2023. Palace of Priests Assembly currently implements the Mobilising Christians Against Corruption Project, aka the SHUN Corruption Project, with the support of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. PPA engages Pentecostals through skill building, collaboration, and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) to facilitate their involvement in politics and governance and the fight against corruption in Nigeria.

PPA deployed a total of 613 Pentecostals to serve as election observers in 25 states across the six geopolitical zones (Benue, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Ebonyi, Bauchi, Akwa-Ibom, Borno, Rivers, Nassarawa, Niger, Enugu, Adamawa, Ondo, Lagos, Taraba, Gombe, Kano, Kaduna, Plateau, Imo, Kogi, Oyo, Edo, Kwara, and the Federal Capital Territory). This is a synchronized summary of reports submitted by observers.

Voter Turnout

In most of the polling units visited across the 25 states and the FCT where PPA deployed observers, there was high voter turnout with young men and women, the aged, persons with disabilities (PWD), and nursing mothers expressing eagerness to cast their votes. Voter apathy was low compared with other elections in the past. In some polling units across the 25 states, voters were already gathered as early as 6:30 am.
INEC Logistics Arrangement

INEC logistics arrangement had mixed reactions from across the states where our observers were deployed. From the late arrival of INEC officials and late commencement of the accreditation and voting processes to the inadequacies in the number of BVAS in most of the polling units especially where there were a high number of voters, the logistics arrangements were generally poor. Kits and non-sensitive materials were properly arranged when the officials arrived but INEC officials and voting materials did not get to most of the polling units visited early. Reports across the 25 states indicated that the average time of arrival of INEC officials was about 10:30 am while the average time of commencement of voting was 11:15 am. Instances include:

In Omoto/Urhie street polling unit, code 031, election materials were yet to arrive at 12:09 pm when our observer reported, and no security nor INEC officials were sighted.

In Orogun Ward 1, unit 5, Delta state, voting materials arrived at 10:50 am. Accreditation of voters and voting started at 11:10 am.

In PU 172 in Borno state, Maisandari Ward, the officials arrived at 12.15 pm.

In Takum LGA, Taraba state Gahwetun ward, Henry Porter polling unit 002, INEC officials arrived at 11:50 am but the BVAS could not be configured and the INEC officials had to return to the INEC office.

At 1:46 pm, our observer at Epie III, ward 6, beside MTN mast, PU 024, INEC Road, Kpansia Yenagoa LGA, Bayelsa state, had not sighted any electoral official nor security personnel. The case was different in some locations such as Arabic school PU 014, Kwara Ilorin west, Oko – Erin PU 040, and Polo Park 2 PU 006 where INEC officials and materials arrived before 9.30 am. In Calabar municipality Ward 10, Polling unit 15, officials arrived at 8:11 am, while accreditation and voting commenced by 9:00 am.

The voter register was not pasted on the walls of most of the polling units observed when voters arrived early in the morning (some as early as 6:30 am) before the arrival of the INEC officials, and this caused some level of agitation.

Accreditation and Voting

Accreditation and voting were generally delayed, with a few exceptions. Set up was not concluded before 8.30 am as Polling Officials were not present at that time in 90% of the polling units visited across the 25 states. The electoral body had said that accreditation and voting would commence by 8:30 am but as noted above, most of the polling units were not open even at 9:30 am. The exercise was scheduled to end at 2:30 pm but everyone in the queue by this time was meant to be given the opportunity to vote, but some polling units in Nassarawa LGA of Nassarawa State had no INEC official present at 2:41 pm. In Taraba/Kona/Jalingo Jauro Gadi primary school PU 050, voting commenced by 11:00 am while in polling unit 002 Garin Magami voting commenced by 10.30 am. In Makurdi Benue state, Wailomayo Polling Unit 002, voting commenced by 10:00 am, and in Alijo/Yandev ward PU 034, voting started at 11.55 am. Our observers in Imo State/Owerri West/Obinze Ward/Primary School, Azudo 1, PU 011 reported that voting started at 9:58 am. The case was however different in Mushin Papa Ajaio Ward 09 Polling Unit Adetula/037 where our observer reported that INEC Officials arrived at 7.30 am and accreditation and voting started simultaneously at 8.30 am and ended at 2.30 pm while sorting and counting of votes ended at 4.20 pm. Also, in Ifako ward 02 - soluyi/ kosofe LGA of Lagos State, Polling unit 18 Akinwunmi Street, and PU 034, accreditation and voting commenced by 8:54 am.
However, in some polling units in Sunny Vale Estate and Garki Model Market, Abuja, our observers reported that the process for accreditation and voting was not done simultaneously and did not follow the INEC guideline as the process was meant to be carried out simultaneously. Voters were accredited and asked to join another queue where a second stage of verification was carried out. Our observers also reported that voting did not take place at Itohan Girls Grammar School, Ward 6, Ikpoba-Okha LGA of Edo state due to the non-availability of materials and INEC officials.

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The BVAS in most of the polling units worked perfectly and without challenge. The INEC officials were knowledgeable in the operation of the BVAS and were able to manage the process. However, there were pockets of reports from across the states in a few polling units where the BVAS did not work perfectly. In Polling unit 18 Akinwunmi Street, Ifako PU 034 it was reported that the BVAS thumb verification did not work but the facials identification and verification were used. This was the situation in other polling units across the states where our observers reported.

Challenges
i. Splitting the polling units was a big challenge for many voters thereby presenting themselves at the wrong polling units. Observers reported that voters had difficulty in identifying their polling units despite the sensitization by INEC for voters to identify and know their polling units before the day of the elections. This led to the overcrowding of some of the polling units and delayed accreditation and voting exercise.
ii. Vote buying, although not generally reported, some party agents in pockets of locations were seen collecting account details and phone numbers of voters.

iii. Violence in some parts of the country: The major event that led to pockets of violence is the delay in uploading results at the end of the voting exercise. This caused some level of agitation resulting in violence in some locations.

iv. Late arrivals of ad-hoc Staff and electoral materials.

Recommendations

INEC needs to urgently identify the logistical and other challenges that led to delays in the arrival of officials and commencement of voting reported in many states across the country before the next elections. Also, INEC should mandate their officials to paste the voters register in all polling units a day before the elections. There is a need for more sensitization of the electorate about how to locate their polling units before election day.

It is important that INEC implements its own commitments to making special/appropriate arrangements to support PWDs, depending on their disability type, to facilitate their full inclusion in the process.

The integrity of the February 25 2023 elections has been marred by the failure of INEC officials to upload the results on the IREV portal at the polling units as stipulated by the electoral act, 2022. We recommend that INEC ensures that the stated procedure is followed to the letter in the upcoming Governorship and Houses of Assembly elections.

Conclusion

Overall, voter turnout was impressive. INEC deserves commendation for making improvements over previous elections in certain areas, particularly in the deployment of technology (BVAS) and the observance of priority voting for PWDs, the aged, pregnant, and nursing mothers. Also, availability and the distribution of kits and non-sensitive materials were impressive.

Dr. Orinya Agbaji Orinya
Program Manager, PPA/PPJ
aorinya@priestsassembly.org
Introduction

The Pentecostal church in Nigeria is an important and influential arm of the church in Nigeria; most of the numerically large and financially strong churches are within the Pentecostal family in the Nigeria Church, the Nigerian church is under the umbrella of the Christian Association of Nigeria which has five blocks namely; CCN, OAIC, CPN/PFN, Catholic Secretary, ECWA/Tekan. Among these blocks of CAN the most vibrant and the fastest growing numerically and financially are the Pentecostal churches. The largest denominations and independent churches in Nigeria are also the Pentecostal churches. Available statistics shows that out of the population of over two hundred million Nigerians, over fifty million are Pentecostals, cutting across the several Pentecostal churches in the Nigerian state,

These Pentecostals are playing prominent and influential roles in different sectors and sections of the country; we find them in education, healthcare, agriculture, politics, exetra.

To be sure because of the strategic position of the Pentecostal church in Nigeria, we need to play a strategic role in curbing of the menace of corruption which has become a tragedy. The Bible which is our ground norm as a church has a lot of says about corruption and how to deal with it.

1. The role of the church in curbing corruption has attracted global attention, going by the fact that most national policies that are geared towards curbing corruption are beginning to fail in recent years due to a multiplicity of factors that are gradually eroding societal norms and values. 2. One section of the church that the world is looking to in addressing the problem of corruption is the Pentecostal church. That is because the Pentecostal church doctrine are founded on the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-6), which is largely believed will help to change or transform the human mind that is corrupt into a good mind. Man is born into corruption and it is the person of the Holy Spirit that can transform a corrupt person. Besides, the impact of corruption in todays world cut across various strata of human society be it educational, religion, political, economic, health just to mention a few. It is truism that the church today can not escape the negative consequences of corruption especially the Pentecostal church(es) as its members are not isolated from other sections of the society. Hence, Pentecostal church(es) have enormous role to play in sterming the ragging tide of corruption that has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian State and its antecedent consequences affecting the Pentecostal church especially in Nigeria. 3.Furthermore, I want to thank the organizers for choosing this topic “The Pentecostal church in Nigeria and the national Anti-corruption strategy” at a time like this that the Pentecostal church is faced with the challenges of addressing the influence of societal corruption on it members. In addition, I want to thank the organizers for counting us worthy to speak on this subject matter as I believe the Holy Spirit will help us to speak to our heart in Jesus Name (Amen).

Pentecostal Church in Nigeria and Anti-National Corruption Strategy There is no doubt corruption is multi-dimensional and studies have shown that corruption is injurious to human society generally. Momoh (2013) in his book titled “Faces of Corruption in Nigeria” rightly observed that “If you are not infected with corruption ‘you will be affected by it’ hence no body today, especially in Nigeria live in isolation of corruption. In today’s world especially in Nigeria where majority of the citizens are living in poverty in relative terms and the society remained underdeveloped. To begin with what is the major thrust of Pentecostal church, what are the likely roles of the Pent-
ecostal church in the national anti-corruption strategy remain the focus of this address. First, Pentecostal church is
anchored on the Holy Spirit according to Act 2:1-10. It means, once you take the Holy Spirit out of the
Pentecostal church there wouldn’t be Pentecostal church. Today, Pentecostal church is linked to the experience of
the Disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts. The second aspect of this paper,
primarily focus on the role of Pentecostal church in the national Anti-corruption strategy. Let me begin by saying
that one of the responsibility or if you like call it, the role of the Holy Spirit is to convict sinners and sin is the
foundation of corruption. It is important to note that until sinners are convicted of their sins there will be no
repentance. Hence, the Pentecostal church that depend largely on the Holy Spirit since we are in the dispensation
of the Holy Spirit is important in the development of a national anti-corruption strategy particularly in Nigeria
where corruption in endemic.

Nevertheless, in Nigeria today, it is a known fact that corruption is evident in various strata of the Nigerian
society like education, health, agriculture, religion, government, our electoral process, etcetera which has eroded
state institutions and capacity to deliver the dividend of democracy. This takes us to the next question, what is the
role of Pentecostal church in national anti-corruption strategy. It is pertinent to state that Pentecostal church
especially in Nigeria has enormous role to play in the development of national corruption strategy. The question
is, what is corruption?

According to World Bank (2006) Corruption is the use of Public office for private gain. By extension, corruption
is the use of Public Space, assets, opportunity of resources or societal resources for personal or group interest.
Corruption is abuse of office even the General overseer can abuse his office.

In today’s Nigeria corruption is celebrated in some quota. For instance, an individual who steal billions or
millions from public pulse often hide under the umbrella of their religion or ethnic group to cry for victimization,
such individuals are even celebrated in churches unfortunately. Therefore, the Pentecostal church must come up
with a common stand on issues of corruption in Nigeria. Firstly, corruption must be condemned from all
ramification by the church, second, the church must engage in service revival to purge the church of bad eggs by
calling them to repentance. Thirdly, the church must revisit it’s teaching on holiness and godliness vis-à-vis
contentment. Once all these are well addressed the Pentecostal church will now have the moral standing to speak
on developing the needed national corruption strategy for Nigeria.

**ROLE OF PENTECOSTAL CHURCH IN NATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION STRATEGY**

For Pentecostal church to be able to develop a well acceptable national Anti-corruption strategy for Nigeria, the
following roles are key:

1. The nation anti-corruption strategy must be derived from the bible. This is because any anti-corruption strategy
   that is not anchored in the teaching of the church on corruption related issue will not stand the test of time as
   previous anti-corruption strategies have failed. Therefore, the Pentecostal church must bring to bear the core
   values or position of the Bible in dealing with issues of corruption.

2. The Pentecostal church must also come up with a common stand on how to deal or punish indices of corruption
   in the country.

3. The Pentecostal church involvement in the formulation and implementation of anti-corruption cases must
   involve member(s) of the Pentecostal church so that at the end of the day, the church will not be left out in the
   scheme of things.

4. The Pentecostal church must inculcate the reward of hard work which the Bible strongly supported in 2 Thes
   3:10 “We have told you before that if a man did not work let him not eat”.

5. The Pentecostal church should also be involved in the review of evaluation of the national anti-corruption strate-
ROLE OF PENTECOSTAL CHURCH IN NATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION STRATEGY

In line with modern realities that does not undermine the teaching of the Bible.

6. The Pentecostal Church should have a steering review committee that will serve as a watch-dog in evaluating the performance or progress of the national anti-corruption strategy.

With all these roles in place, we strongly believe that the Pentecostal church will make significant contribution in the national Anti-corruption strategy in Nigeria and not only that the Pentecostal church in Nigeria will not be relegated to the background especially when it has to do with issues of combating corruption in Nigeria. Once more, I want to thank the organizers for giving me this opportunity to speak on this subject matter. I also want to thank every participant here for listening to us. God bless you all.
UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

BCTSMMA
EXPLOITS IN MINISTRY
CONFERENCE 2023

Thur. 25th - Sat. 27th, May
Thur. 4 pm dot. (Arrival Day). Frid & Sat. At 9:00 Am

THEME: MANTLE OF RELEVANCE

VENUE:
RESURRECTION GOSPEL FAITH INT'L MINISTRY
No. 4, New Market Road, Off Aker Junction,
Rumuolumi Port-Harcourt
bischarisglobalcouncilofchurch@gmail.com
+2348068368514

Bish. Prof. Michael Urangikor
Bish. Prof. Anthony U.
Rev. Dr. Nnamdi U.
Dr. Agbaji Orinya

OTHER THINGS TO EXPECT:
Certificate Of participation
Ordination and Certification
International Ministerial licensing
Honorary Doctorate Award Presentation

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UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

1- Day Training on Christianity, the Fight Against Corruption and Income Generation for Ministers
Venue
Sanctuary of Love, Opposite Karu Secondary School, Abuja
12th April, 2023
9:00am

CHRISTIAN MINISTERS CARE INITIATIVE (CMCI)
in collaboration with
Priests Peace & Justice Initiative (PPJ)
PRESENTS
THE SHUN
CORRUPTION PROJECT
1-DAY TRAINING ON CHRISTIANITY, THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION & STRATEGIC INVESTMENT FOR MINISTERS
14TH APRIL, 2023
9:00AM
VENUE: Cathedral of Life, 2 Odozi Street, Oremeta Junction, Berger Bus Stop, Ojodu, Lagos State

www.priestsassembly.org/www.ppj.priestsassembly.org
PALACE OF PRIESTS ASSEMBLY (PPA)
PRIESTS PEACE & JUSTICE (PPJ) INITIATIVE NEWSLETTER

JANUARY - MARCH 2023

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UPCOMING EVENTS

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No. 4, New Market Road, Off Aker Junction, Rumunagho Port-Harcourt

OTHER THINGS TO EXPECT:
Certificate of Participation
Oration and Retreats
International Ministerial Evening
Ministry Council Annual Peace Conference

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Introduction

We are passing through difficult times in the country. The economy is bad. Money is not available. Those who have money in banks cannot access it.

This is an election year. Many people were very hopeful that the election will bring about monumental changes. The Presidential elections were held three weeks ago and many people were disappointed with the process and outcome. Yesterday was the gubernatorial elections and it is not better. In Delta State, two persons were killed. One person was shot. Several houses were burnt in Mosogar.

In spite of all of these, my charge to you is not to lose hope.

2 Chron 15:7  But as for you, be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded.(NIV)

If you have given your life to Jesus and you are born again; you are born into a living hope; you have an inheritance and you should rejoice always. This is our year of celebration and nothing can change it.

1 Peter 1:3-6 3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. (NIV)

Three things to Note

1. In this world, you will have tribulations and trouble

John 16: 33 “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”(NIV)

2. Whatever you are going through is common to mankind

1 Cor 10:13 No temptation[a] has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted[b] beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted,[c] he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. (NIV)

3. Glory awaits you

2 Cor 4: 17-18 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (NIV)

How to avoid losing Hope

1. Always reflect on the situation you are going through: Most times, people are the architect of their own problems. At other times, it is as a result of poor response. Think about who you are as a child of God and respond as a Priest and King (Rev 1:6. Rev 5:10).

It is sheer ignorance to put your hope on the ruling political elite the way they are constituted.
2. Have a heart of gratitude: Go to the hospital and visit the sick and you will appreciate your health more. Visit the prison and you will appreciate your freedom more. Lack of gratitude opens the door for enemy to attack (Deut 28: 47-48). Lack of gratitude attract curses Mal 2:1-3. Count your blessings. Name them one by one and you will be surprised of what God has done for you.

3. Seek for counsel and support: In the multitude of counsel, there will be success (Prov 15: 22). There are still many good people in the world. Seek for support instead of taking your life.

4. Avoid fantasy and be diligent Prov 12:24

5. Have faith: Where there is faith, there is hope.

6. Come to Jesus and you will receive rest: Matt 11:28  Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (KJV)

Conclusion
We are passing through a very challenging time. Things may be bad. But do not give up. God is faithful and He will show up on your behalf. Do not lose hope.
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Website: www.priestsassembly.org
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2023 Celebration
MAY IS OUR MONTH OF
ENJOYING THE
GOODNESS OF GOD
(Jer 30:29; Phil 4:4-7)

Editors
• Dr. Agbaji Orinya
• Isaac Ogah