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CASON



*Beyond Attendance:
Are We Making Members
Or Making Disciples?*

*A Changing Culture,
an Unchanging Gospel.*

*Programs To Systems:
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Decision-Making in Ministry*

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President's Address

CHURCH SHIFT:

Church Administration in the Digital Age

Distinguished members of the CASON Governing Council, our esteemed speakers and facilitators, pastors and ministry leaders, church administrators, professionals, partners, invited guests, ladies and gentlemen:

It is my great privilege to welcome you to the **2026 Annual Conference of the Church Administrators Society of Nigeria**.

Our theme is timely, urgent, and prophetic:

CHURCH SHIFT: Church Administration in the Digital Age.

We are living through one of the most significant periods of change in modern history. Technology is changing how we communicate, work, learn, give, recruit, manage information, engage people, and make decisions.

Artificial Intelligence is accelerating that change. And the Church is not outside this transformation. The question is no longer:

"Will technology change the Church?"

It already has.

The more important question is:

"Is the Church administratively prepared for the world that technology is creating?"

That is the question behind **Church Shift**.

THE SHIFT IS BIGGER THAN TECHNOLOGY

When we talk about the digital church, our minds often

go immediately to livestreaming, social media, online giving, websites, mobile apps, church-management software, and now Artificial Intelligence.

These are important.

But Church Shift is bigger than technology.

Moving a bad process from paper to a computer does not make it a good process.

Putting a dysfunctional system online does not make it effective.

Buying sophisticated software without developing competent people will not transform an organization.

And adopting Artificial Intelligence without governance may simply enable us to make mistakes faster.

So, Church Shift is not primarily about acquiring more technology.

It is about developing a new administrative mindset for a new ministry environment.

I believe the Church must make **five critical shifts**.

SHIFT ONE: FROM ACTIVITY TO STRATEGY

Churches are very good at activities.

We hold conferences. We organize programs. We conduct meetings. We launch projects. We create departments.

But activity is not necessarily effectiveness.

The administrator of the digital age must ask more strategic questions:

Why are we doing this?

How does it advance our mission?

What result are we expecting?

What will it cost?

How will we measure success?

And perhaps most importantly: **What have we learned?**

The church administrator must move from merely **organizing activities** to building **organizational capacity for mission**.

That is a shift.

SHIFT TWO: FROM MANAGING PEOPLE TO DEVELOPING PEOPLE

The second shift concerns our people.

Our employees and volunteers are not simply human resources for accomplishing church programs.

They are people entrusted to our stewardship.

We cannot say that people matter spiritually while treating them poorly organizationally.

The next-generation church must become intentional about recruitment, orientation, training, coaching, performance management, recognition, wellbeing, succession, and continuous development.

We must build leadership pipelines that intentionally move people from:

Member → Disciple → Volunteer → Ministry Worker → Team Leader → Ministry Leader → Multiplying Leader.

A church's future strength will not simply be determined by how many people it attracts.

It will increasingly be determined by **how many people it develops.**

SHIFT THREE: FROM PERSONALITIES TO SYSTEMS

We thank God for gifted leaders.

We thank God for visionary pastors.

We thank God for highly committed administrators.

But sustainable churches cannot be built around one indispensable person.

If everything stops because one person travels, we do not yet have a system.

If nobody understands a process because the person who designed it has resigned, we do not have institutional knowledge.

If financial accountability depends entirely upon the integrity of one person, we do not have adequate governance.

And if succession planning begins only when the leader leaves, we have started too late.

Hear me clearly: **Strong leaders must build strong institutions.**

The next-generation church needs documented processes, policies, accountability structures, leadership pipelines, succession plans, risk management, performance systems, and institutional memory.

We must move from **personality-dependent churches to system-enabled churches.**

SHIFT FOUR: FROM TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION TO TECHNOLOGY GOVERNANCE

This shift is particularly important.

Artificial Intelligence presents extraordinary opportunities for church administration.

AI can assist us with research, communication, training, data analysis, administrative processes, content development, and productivity.

But just because we **can** use technology does not always mean that we **should** use it without boundaries.

We must begin asking:

Who owns our members' data?

Who has access to confidential information?

Should pastoral counselling information be entered into an AI platform?

How do we protect HR and financial data?

What happens when AI generates false information?

How do we respond to deepfakes and digital misinformation?

What decisions should never be delegated to a machine?

And who remains accountable when technology gets something wrong?

These are governance questions.

Therefore, the Church does not merely need digital tools. The digital Church needs digital governance.

Our principle must remain: **Technology must serve ministry; ministry must never become captive to technology.**

Artificial Intelligence may increase our capacity.

But it must never replace **human responsibility, pastoral presence, spiritual discernment, ethical judgment, or accountability.**

SHIFT FIVE: FROM ADMINISTRATION TO STEWARDSHIP

This brings me to what I believe is the most important shift of all.

Church administration is ultimately **stewardship.**

Paul writes in **1 Corinthians 4:2:**

“Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.”

We are stewards.

We are stewards of **people.**

We are stewards of **money.**

We are stewards of **buildings and equipment.**

We are stewards of **information and data.**

We are stewards of **technology.**

We are stewards of **influence.**

We are stewards of **opportunities.**

And ultimately, we are stewards of **God's mission.**

Joseph gives us a powerful biblical picture.

In Genesis 41, Joseph did not merely interpret Pharaoh's dream.

He translated revelation into **strategy.**

He developed a **plan.**

He established a **system.**

He managed **resources.**

He prepared for **risk.**

He implemented the plan.

And he preserved resources for the future.

Joseph shows us that: **Spiritual discernment and administrative competence are not enemies.**

Indeed, excellent administration can become an expression of faithful stewardship.

THE CHURCH SHIFT FRAMEWORK

Ladies and gentlemen, I want you to remember four

words from this conference:

PEOPLE. SYSTEMS. TECHNOLOGY. GOVERNANCE.

People provide capacity.

Systems provide consistency.

Technology provides leverage.

Governance provides accountability.

But there must be something at the centre of all four:
MISSION.

Without competent people, technology will be underutilized.

Without systems, good people become exhausted.

Without governance, technology and authority can be abused.

Without technology, our systems may struggle to meet the realities of a changing world.

But without mission, we may build an efficient organization that has forgotten **why it exists.**

Our goal is therefore not simply to build digitally sophisticated churches.

Our goal must be to build churches that are:

Spiritually vibrant. Administratively competent. People-centred. System-driven. Technologically responsible. Governance-conscious. And missionally effective.

THE CASON MANDATE

This is where CASON must lead.

The Church Administrators Society of Nigeria must continue to bridge the gap between **ministry and management, spirituality and systems, calling and competence, vision and execution.**

We must develop a new generation of church administrators.

Administrators who understand Scripture—and understand systems.

Who understand ministry—and understand management.

Who understand people—and understand performance.

Who understand technology—and understand governance.

Who can pray—and plan.

Who can discern—and execute.

Who can preserve the spiritual identity of the Church while building the organizational capacity required for its mission.

That is the administrator of the future.

And that is the administrator CASON must help develop.

THE SHIFT STARTS WITH US

As I conclude, I want to leave every leader and administrator here with five questions:

What must we stop doing?

What must we start doing?

What must we do differently?

What should technology help us do better?

And —

What must we never surrender to technology?

Ladies and gentlemen, **Church Shift is not coming.**

Church Shift is already here.

The Church must not fear the digital age.

But neither must the Church follow it blindly.

We must enter it with **wisdom.**

With **competence.**

With **discernment.**

With **accountability.**

And with **faith.**

Technology will continue to change.

Methods will continue to change.

Platforms will change.

Artificial Intelligence will change.

But our responsibility remains:

To faithfully manage what God has entrusted to us to advance His Kingdom.

Welcome to **CASON 2026.**

Welcome to **CHURCH SHIFT.**

Welcome to the next chapter of **Church Administration in the Digital Age.**

The Church is changing. The environment is changing. Administration must change.

But our mission remains eternal.

Thank you.

God bless CASON.

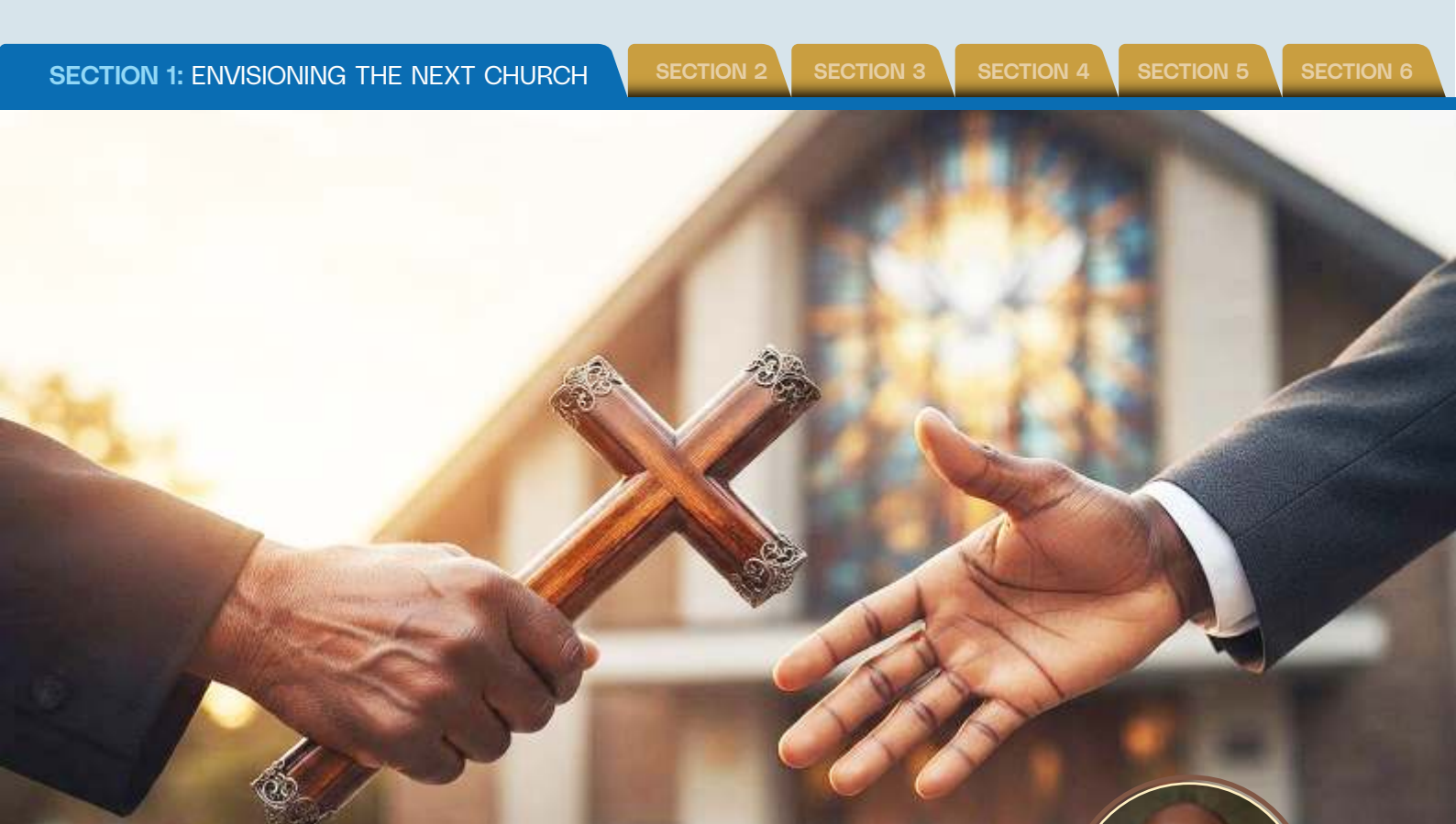
God bless the Church in Nigeria.

And God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.



'Seyi Oladimeji

President, Church Administrators Society of Nigeria (CASON)



THE NEXT CHURCH



Pastor Seyi Oladimeji

Lead Consultant (CMC)
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Consultant & President, CASON.

What Must Change, What Must Never Change *Rediscovering an Unchanging Gospel for a Rapidly Changing World*

The Bible remains the Church's final authority for faith, doctrine, ethics, and practice. Cultures may redefine morality, but God's Word does not change.

Introduction: The Church at a Crossroads

Every generation of the Church faces a defining question: How do we remain faithful to an unchanging God while ministering in an ever-changing world? Throughout history, the Church has continually adapted its methods without compromising its message. From the house churches of the first century to the cathedrals of medieval Europe, from the printing press to livestream worship, from village gatherings to digital discipleship, the Church has repeatedly changed its forms while preserving its faith.

Today, however, the pace of change is unprecedented. Artificial intelligence, digital communities, demographic shifts, economic uncertainty, changing family structures, globalization, and post-pandemic realities have

fundamentally altered how people live, work, learn, and relate. The Church can no longer assume that yesterday's models will effectively reach tomorrow's generation.

The challenge before us is not whether the Church should change, but what should change and what must never change. Churches that fail to distinguish between eternal truths and temporary traditions risk either compromising the Gospel or becoming increasingly irrelevant. The Next Church must learn to hold firmly to biblical convictions while courageously embracing innovation where Scripture permits.

The Church's Unchanging Foundation

The Church is not a human invention; it is God's divine institution. Therefore, its foundation is non-negotiable.



While cultures evolve and societies change, God's truth remains constant. Jesus declared, "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." (Matthew 16:18) Notice that Jesus promised to build His Church, not our preferences, traditions, or organizational systems. The Church belongs to Christ, and its identity is rooted in Him. Several elements must therefore remain unchanged. Elements such as:-

1. The Gospel Message

The message of salvation through Jesus Christ is eternal. Humanity's greatest need remains reconciliation with God through the death and resurrection of Christ.

Paul declared, "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:2). Methods may evolve, but the Gospel cannot.

2. The Authority of Scripture

The Bible remains the Church's final authority for faith, doctrine, ethics, and practice. Cultures may redefine morality, but God's Word does not change. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." (Matthew 24:35)

3. The Great Commission

The mission remains unchanged:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 28:19-20)

The Church exists to make disciples, not merely gather crowds.

Attendance is not the mission. Transformation is.

4. Worship

The forms of worship may differ across cultures, but worship itself remains central to the Church's identity. God still seeks worshippers. (John 4:23-24).

5. Prayer

Every revival in history has been birthed through prayer.

Technology cannot replace dependence upon God.

Prayer remains the Church's greatest source of power.

6. Biblical Community

People still long for authentic relationships.

Acts 2 demonstrates that the early Church devoted itself to fellowship, breaking bread, generosity and mutual care. Community remains essential.

What Must Change?

Although the message must remain constant, the methods cannot remain static. The Apostle Paul provides a timeless model. 1 Corinthians 9:22 says, "I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some." Paul never changed the Gospel although he continually changed his methods.

Change must of necessity happen in the following areas:-

1. Leadership Models

The Next Church requires leaders who are:

- collaborative rather than authoritarian,
- coaches rather than controllers,
- multipliers rather than performers &
- servant-leaders rather than celebrity leaders.

Leadership is shifting from hierarchy to empowerment. Healthy churches develop leaders at every level rather than concentrating influence in one individual.

2. Church Structures

Many traditional church structures were designed for a different era. As ministries grow in complexity, they require clearer governance, stronger accountability, defined roles, effective committees and succession planning. Churches should move from personality-driven systems to principle-driven systems because healthy structures support ministry rather than restrict it.

3. Discipleship Models

The future Church cannot rely solely on Sunday services.

Discipleship must become relational, intentional, digital, intergenerational & community-based. Small groups, mentoring, coaching, and online learning should complement corporate worship.

4. Ministry Systems

Good systems release ministry rather than hinder it. Unfortunately many churches still operate informally. The Next Church however requires:-

- documented processes,
- ministry manuals,
- volunteer systems,
- leadership pipelines,

- financial controls,
- safeguarding policies &
- performance measurement.

5. Digital Ministry

Digital ministry is no longer optional. The Church must engage people where they already gather. The mission field now includes both physical and digital spaces. People now encounter churches through websites, social media, podcasts, YouTube, livestreaming and online communities.

6. Generational Leadership

The Church must intentionally prepare future leaders. Leadership succession is not replacing older leaders; it is ensuring that God's work continues faithfully from one generation to the next. As Psalm 145:4 reminds us, "One generation commends your works to another."

7. Financial Stewardship

The Next Church must move beyond survival budgeting toward strategic stewardship. Financial integrity strengthens public trust and supports long-term mission. Healthy churches must embrace transparency, accountability, diversified income, reserve planning, internal controls as well as responsible governance.

The Next Church Is Both Ancient and Future-Focused

Some assume that innovation threatens orthodoxy. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The early Church itself was remarkably innovative. The challenge is to ensure that innovation serves the Gospel rather than replaces it. Paul used Roman roads, he wrote letters and planted churches in strategic cities. He contextualized without compromising. Innovation has always been part of faithful mission.



Four Strategic Shifts for the Next Church

1. From Maintaining to Multiplying

The goal is no longer simply preserving institutions.

Healthy churches multiply disciples, leaders, ministries, and churches.

2. From Programmes to People

Successful churches measure more than attendance. They measure life transformation as well.

3. From Events to Ecosystems

Sunday gatherings remain important, but spiritual formation occurs throughout the week. Church becomes a lifestyle, not merely an event. Post covid taught us this lesson.

4. From Ownership to Stewardship

Everything belongs to God. Leaders are stewards, not owners.

Churches flourish when leadership is exercised with humility, accountability and a long-term perspective.

The Greatest Danger

The greatest danger facing today's Church is not change itself. It is confusing tradition with truth. Traditions are valuable, but they must never become substitutes for biblical conviction. Jesus confronted the religious leaders of His day because they elevated human traditions above God's commands (Mark 7:8-13). The Church must therefore evaluate every practice through the lens of Scripture, retaining what is biblical while releasing what is merely customary.

Conclusion: Faithful to the Gospel, Flexible in the Method

The Church of the future will not succeed because it has the newest technology, the largest buildings or the most creative programmes.

It will flourish because it faithfully proclaims the unchanging Gospel while wisely adapting its methods to reach a changing world.

The Next Church will be deeply rooted in Scripture yet responsive to culture, unwavering in doctrine yet innovative in ministry, committed to historic Christianity yet courageous enough to embrace new mission opportunities.

As Jesus declared, "No one pours new wine into old wineskins... No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved." (Matthew 9:17) The challenge before every church is clear: preserve the wine, but do not become imprisoned by the wineskin.

The future belongs to churches that are biblically anchored, spiritually vibrant, organizationally healthy, missionally focused, and courageously adaptable. These are the churches that will faithfully carry the Gospel to the next generation without losing the essence of the One who promised, "I will build My Church."



THE NEXT CHURCH



Ayo Daniels

September 28th 2026.

A Changing Culture, an Unchanging Gospel.

This present challenge requires bringing the gospel into conversations with the questions, needs, and the rising existential cries of contextualizing our faith to the ever growing civilization.

Navigating Relevance Without Compromise. How the Church can understand and engage contemporary culture while remaining faithful to biblical truth.

Introduction: In the midst of a rapidly shifting landscape of faith, the body of Christ globally faces the task of communicating the unchanging message of the gospel of Christ to people in our ever changing culture. This present challenge requires bringing the gospel into conversations with the questions, needs, and the rising existential cries of contextualizing our faith to the ever growing civilization. Yes, the church should maintain an unchanging Gospel message to a needy world while adapting our methods of communication to connect with their ever-changing culture.

The tension between the timeless truth of the gospel and shifting societal norms has challenged the faith since the beginning of the early church. We examine in this piece how this balance can work in practical ways to engage the world today.

Contextualization refers to the process of communicating in ways that are clear and compelling in any given social and cultural setting. Our focus in evangelism has always been explaining what the gospel is, but contextualization will require to also explain how and why the gospel is the good news that people need in every culture today.

The Unchanging Gospel: This reference the core message of Christianity remaining fixed because God's character and truth do not change Malachi 3:6, John 3:16-18, Romans 1:16-17.

The Core Message: The historical events of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ provide the only path to forgiveness and eternal life. Luke 19:9-10, I Timothy 2:1-7, Romans 10:8-13, Colossians 2:6-23.

The Standard: Scripture acts as a steady anchor. Truth is not adjusted to fit modern trends or public approval. John 14:6, Hebrews 13:8.

The Changing Culture: Society shifts rapidly through

evolving innovations, new technologies, media, philosophies, and daily practices of redefinition of truth among other lifestyle conversations. Ecclesiastes 3:14-15

The Shift: The conversations today are all about what people value, rising questions about individual struggles with looks and experiences, different from the past generations but there is nothing new under the sun. Ecclesiastes 1:4-10

The Needs: To reach people effectively now, the church of Jesus Christ must come into awareness of these shifts instead of ignoring them. We must effectively engage the world around us with curiosity and attention Romans 1:16-17.

People have a tendency to get willfully locked into their way of doing ministry. In doing so, we may end up just loving the particular way we do church more than the people our churches have been called to reach.

Biblical Models of Contextualization: We can learn from the masterclass of Apostle Paul. His ministry in Athens from Acts 17 is still relevant in this church age and we can apply the principles in our today's engagement of culture. This should offer us a useful framework that we can use to contextualize the gospel as we participate in the end time harvest Matthew 24.14

Examine the Culture: Luke's narration of Paul in Athens, "his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols" Acts 17:16. Paul then addressed a group of Athenians, saying, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god'" (v22-23). Paul saw, perceived, and found, in other words, he was intentional about examining the world around him.

At the cultural level, contextualization begins today when we give close attention to the news, media, politics, art, traditions, celebrations, and customs in any given setting. At a personal level, it starts with curiosity about the persons in our sphere of influence. What are they passionate about? What excites them? What burdens them? How do they spend their time, money, and other resources?

As with Paul's ministry in Athens, this examination is ultimately aimed at uncovering the core values, beliefs, and assumptions of a given culture or person. In short, we are looking for idols, the objects of their worship.

Despite recent trends in religious disaffiliation, people are still "religious" today as the Greeks. They anchor their security and significance in money, success, relationships, networks and networth but underneath these experience is a deep longing for meaning, identity, and in the words of Father Smith @the young man who rings the bell at the brothel is unconsciously

t the cultural level, contextualization begins today when we give close attention to the news, media, politics, art, traditions, celebrations, and customs in any given setting. At a personal level, it starts with curiosity about the persons in our sphere of influence.

looking for God." Instead of seeing the idols around us as nothing more than condemning evidence for the sinfulness of our culture, we should instead begin to recognize these as entryways for the gospel of Christ.

Enter the Culture: Rather than just examining Athens at a distance and people to come to him, Paul entered into the context by meeting people where they were in the synagogue and the marketplace (v.17) and sought to reason with those he encountered. Paul's evangelism was marked by genuine dialogue and mutual exchange. In this respect, Paul followed the example of Jesus, who was known not only for preaching but also for the conversations he entered into and the questions he asked people.

Too often the Church's outreach has invited people to enter our world basically by coming to church services and programs, rather than we entering their world. While church gatherings should be a place of hospitality and welcome, faithful witness requires us to meet people where they are with a willingness to ask questions, listen, and mutually engaging them.

Engage the culture: When Paul was given the opportunity to formally present the gospel in the Areopagus (vv.19-21), he started inwardly from their context, and moves outwardly to the uniqueness of Jesus. By erecting an altar "To the unknown God," the Greeks betray their concern that, despite worshipping a pantheon of gods, they might be missing something. It's here that Paul anchors his presentation of the gospel: "What therefore you worship as unknown, this I



To grow churches today, we must adapt the Paul's gospel innovations in conversations of this an increasingly resistant culture. We need to know our cultural context, engage it well, live for Christ and subvert the brokenness and arguments in a culturally relevant ways

proclaim to you" (v.23b). With this approach, Paul affirms the existential cries behind idol worship in Athens which was, the desire to avoid judgment and find security and significance through knowledge of the divine while tapping into the Athenians' admission of ignorance.

Paul affirmed but challenge the beliefs of Greek culture by connecting and contrasting them with the biblical story. In one instance, he contrasts the false gods of Athens with the true Creator God who "being Lord of heaven and of earth, does not live in temples made by human hands" (v.24). In another, he contends for God's nearness and humanity's identity as his offspring by quoting well-known Greek poets to support his point (vv.27-28). Evangelism, isn't always about proving people wrong. Instead, we can affirm aspects of the truth that appear in a culture or beliefs, while helping people recognize inconsistencies and find the fulfillment of their intuitions in the biblical story.

Explain the blessing of the Gospel: After describing how the true God created people to seek him (vv.26-27a) and is close to us (v.24) despite not being confined to temples and idols made by human hands (v.27b, 29), Paul turns his attention to Jesus. "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead" (vv.30-31).

Paul is explained how and why the gospel is the good news. He summarized his message as: "The unknown God wants to be known, he created you to know him, he wants you to seek and honour him, and he has revealed himself to you in Jesus, who rose from the dead." In

other words, the gospel fulfills the Athenians' deepest longings. Their desires for transcendence and to avoid divine judgment are realized through the resurrection of Jesus Christ who reveals the Creator God and makes it possible for all people to know Him. Instead of groping for the divine amid the uncertainty of idol worship, the Athenians can turn to worship their Creator and be assured in their knowledge of him.

Entrust the souls to God: Contextualization does not end with persuasion, but with entrusting the results to God. Luke recorded the various responses to Paul's message: some mocked, others were curious, and some believed (vv.32-34). As we seek to bear faithful witness to Jesus in our own context today, we will encounter rejection but when the gospel is made clear and compelling, some will want to hear more and ultimately give their devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion: Despite the present challenges of communicating eternal truth to a changing culture, when we consistently pursue the great commission responsibilities (Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-20) with a passion of service to God and the cause of humanity, we will engage this changing culture with the template of the greatest commandment (Matthew 22:38-40) and by leaning into this practice, we will come to see more of the gospel's goodness, beauty, and relevance to all people in the diverse walk of life. To grow churches today, we must adapt the Paul's gospel innovations in conversations of this an increasingly resistant culture. We need to know our cultural context, engage it well, live for Christ and subvert the brokenness and arguments in a culturally relevant ways II Corinthians 4:1-6, 10:1-6.

Today's Reflection: As we look at the culture around us now, what values, themes, mindsets, culture shifts, idols can you observe? Do you see different themes in various subcultures you are presently in contact with? For example, what values can you see in the specific age groups like the Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, Gen-Zs, Gen-Alpha's? How do you want to intentionally interact and engage these values with the Good News of Jesus?





THE NEXT CHURCH NEEDS A DIFFERENT KIND OF LEADER



Rev. Jarikre Emmanuel (M.Div. Th.)

The leadership Jesus modelled places servanthood, relationships, mission and multiplication at the centre.

Introduction

"Come, follow me..." - Matthew 4:19

Jesus' invitation in Matthew 4:19 is more than a call to discipleship; it provides a profound foundation for understanding Christian leadership. Before Jesus said, "I will make you fishers of men," He first said, "Come, follow me." The order is significant. In the kingdom of God, leadership begins with followership, following Christ before asking others to follow us.

The Next Church therefore needs leaders who are not merely powerful personalities, gifted communicators or efficient administrators, but leaders who are deeply committed to following Jesus. While the traditional model of command-and-control leadership places authority at the centre, the leadership Jesus modelled places servanthood, relationships, mission and multiplication at the centre. Robert K. Greenleaf, whose work popularised the concept of servant leadership, famously observed that "the servant-leader is servant first." His test of leadership was equally compelling: Do those served grow as persons? This resonates deeply

Adaptive leadership does not mean compromising biblical truth to accommodate culture. It means finding faithful and creative ways to communicate and apply timeless truth in changing contexts.

with the ministry of Jesus, who declared, "I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:27).

1. The Next Church Needs Adaptive Leaders

The Church is ministering in a rapidly changing world. Technology, demographics, economics, culture, generational expectations and social realities are continually changing. The Gospel does not change, but the context in which we communicate and embody it does. Ronald Heifetz's adaptive leadership framework distinguishes between problems that can be solved with existing technical expertise and challenges that require people and organisations to learn, adjust and change. The next church needs leaders who can discern the difference.

Adaptive leadership does not mean compromising

biblical truth to accommodate culture. It means finding faithful and creative ways to communicate and apply timeless truth in changing contexts. Paul demonstrated this principle when he became “all things to all people” for the sake of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 9:22). The question for the next church is not simply, “How have we always done it?” but “What is God requiring of us now?”

2. The Next Church Needs Collaborative Leaders

Jesus did not build His ministry around Himself as a one-man show. He called disciples, entrusted responsibility to them, sent them out and eventually commissioned them to continue His mission. The New Testament presents the Church as a body with many members and different gifts (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). Consequently, effective church leadership cannot be built around one personality. It must create space for the collective wisdom, gifts and contributions of God's people.

Collaborative leadership listens before deciding, consults before concluding and builds consensus where possible. It recognises that “two are better than one” (Ecclesiastes 4:9). The next church needs leaders who can say, “Let us,” rather than always saying, “I.”

3. The Next Church Needs Empowering Leaders

A leader who must personally control everything may have authority, but may not be building a sustainable ministry.

Jesus invested in people. He taught the disciples, corrected them, entrusted them with responsibility and ultimately commissioned them to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20). Empowering leadership deliberately develops people, delegates responsibility and creates opportunities for others to succeed. It asks not merely, “What can I accomplish?” but, “Who am I developing to accomplish what I cannot accomplish alone?”

Greenleaf's servant-leadership philosophy similarly emphasises the growth, autonomy and development of those being served. The greatest evidence of a leader may not be what happens when the leader is present, but what continues to happen when the leader is absent.

4. The Next Church Needs Emotionally Intelligent Leaders

Church leadership is fundamentally about people. Therefore, technical competence without emotional maturity can become destructive.

Emotionally intelligent leaders understand their own emotions, listen empathetically, manage conflict constructively and recognise what others are experiencing. Daniel Goleman argues that emotional intelligence is a distinguishing factor in effective leadership, alongside but different from technical skills and IQ.

Above all, it needs leaders whose leadership can be traced back to the Leader Himself. Jesus remains the standard.

Jesus demonstrated remarkable emotional intelligence. He wept with those who mourned (John 11:35), listened to people, showed compassion to the crowds (Matthew 9:36), confronted wrongdoing and yet restored broken people.

The next church needs leaders who can correct without humiliating, disagree without destroying relationships, and exercise authority without losing empathy.

5. The Next Church Needs Strategically Minded Leaders

Vision without strategy can become wishful thinking. Strategy without spiritual discernment can become mere management.

Jesus demonstrated strategic intentionality. He knew His mission (Luke 4:18-19), invested deeply in twelve disciples, identified key moments, withdrew for prayer and deliberately prepared His followers for the future.

Strategic church leadership asks: Where are we going? Why are we going there? What resources do we need? Who must be developed? What must we stop doing? And how will we know that we are making progress?

The next church needs leaders who can connect vision with execution, prayer with planning, and faith with responsible stewardship.

CONCLUSION: FOLLOW JESUS BEFORE ASKING OTHERS TO FOLLOW US

Ultimately, the answer to the leadership needs of the Next Church is not another leadership theory. It is a return to Jesus. “Come, follow me...” Before we lead others, we must follow Christ. Before we demand obedience, we must demonstrate obedience. Before we exercise authority, we must understand servanthood. Before we build our platforms, we must build God's people.

The Next Church needs leaders who are adaptive without being compromising, collaborative without losing direction, empowering without surrendering responsibility, emotionally intelligent without becoming people-pleasers, and strategic without becoming merely corporate.

Above all, it needs leaders whose leadership can be traced back to the Leader Himself. Jesus remains the standard.

The Next Church does not simply need better leaders. It needs leaders who follow Jesus better. And perhaps the most important leadership question for our generation is not, “Who is following me?” It is: “Am I still following Jesus?”

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PROGRAMS TO SYSTEMS

Building a Church That Can Sustain Growth



By Olatunde Kazeem

Church growth is a blessing every ministry leader desires. When people come to Christ, lives are transformed, families are restored, and the congregation increases, there is every reason to rejoice. But growth is more than a blessing - it is a responsibility.

A church can experience significant numerical growth and still lack the capacity to sustain it. Without intentional structures, the very growth a church prayed for can eventually become a source of pressure and frustration.

Many churches have become highly skilled at organizing programs but have not developed the systems required to sustain the results of those programs. A powerful conference may attract hundreds of people, but what happens after the conference? An evangelistic campaign may bring many souls into the church, but who follows them up?

A leadership programme may inspire people, but what structure ensures that those people are trained, mentored and deployed?

The challenge before the contemporary Church is

therefore not simply how to organize more programs, but how to build systems that sustain ministry impact.

Beyond the Next Program

A program is an activity designed to achieve a particular objective within a specific period. A system, however, is an intentional, structured and repeatable process designed to produce consistent results.

Programs create moments; systems create continuity.

Programs are important. Conferences, crusades, retreats, seminars, worship services and special events can become powerful instruments in God's hands. However, programs should operate within systems that help people move from one stage of their spiritual journey to another.

A growing church must ask:

What happens before the program? What happens during the program? And, most importantly, what happens after the program? The answer to these questions determines whether the impact of a program will be temporary or sustainable.



Programs can produce temporary growth, but systems create sustainable and reproducible growth. The Church of the future must therefore move from programs to systems, from events to processes, from dependence on personalities to development of people, and from addition to multiplication.

1. Building a System for Assimilation

Getting people into church is only the beginning. The church needs an intentional process that helps first-time guests become connected members and eventually active participants. This requires a clear pathway for welcoming visitors, collecting their information, following them up, introducing them to the church family and helping them discover their next step.

Technology can strengthen this process through digital registration forms, QR codes, automated welcome messages, church-management platforms, WhatsApp communication and follow-up databases. The principle is simple: Nobody should attend church, give their details and disappear without someone noticing.

2. Building a System for Retention

Attendance does not automatically translate into commitment. People remain connected when they experience belonging, meaningful relationships, spiritual growth and genuine care. A retention system enables the church to identify members who are becoming disconnected and respond intentionally. Attendance records, small groups, pastoral follow-up, member-care teams, birthday and anniversary reminders, and digital communication can help maintain connection.

Yet technology must never replace relationships. A database can tell us that someone is absent; only people can discover why.

3. Building a System for Discipleship

Jesus commanded the Church not merely to make converts but to make disciples (Matthew 28:19–20). Every church needs a clear discipleship pathway. A new believer should know what comes next—foundational teaching, Bible study, spiritual development, fellowship,

service, leadership and eventually multiplication.

Discipleship should not be restricted to the physical church building. Online Bible studies, recorded teachings, podcasts, digital courses, virtual classes and online communities can supplement physical discipleship and help the Church reach people wherever they are. The goal is not simply to increase attendance but to produce mature, committed and reproducing disciples.

4. Building a System for Pastoral Care

As a church grows, the pastor cannot personally attend to every member. This is not a failure of pastoral ministry; it is an indication that ministry must become more organized. A healthy pastoral-care system establishes teams and processes for visitation, prayer, counselling, hospital care, bereavement, marriage and family support, crisis intervention and other areas of need.

The pastor remains the shepherd, but the shepherd must develop structures through which the care of the flock can be effectively extended. A growing church requires more than a great pastor; it requires a pastoral-care system that multiplies care.

5. Building a System for Communication

Communication becomes increasingly complex as a church grows. Churches can no longer depend entirely on pulpit announcements. Members receive information through WhatsApp, email, SMS, social media, websites, church applications and livestream platforms.

The challenge is not simply to communicate more information, but to communicate the right information to the right people, through the right channel, at the right time. Clear communication protocols help ensure that information is accurate, consistent and coordinated. Technology has made communication faster, but it has also created information overload. Therefore, churches must learn to communicate with clarity, consistency and purpose.

6. Building a System for Volunteer Management

A growing church needs more workers, but recruiting people is only the beginning. There should be systems for identifying people's gifts, recruiting them, onboarding, training, scheduling, supervising, evaluating and appreciating them.

People should not simply be told, "Come and help." They should understand the vision, their responsibilities, who they report to and how their service contributes to

the mission of the church. Volunteers should not merely fill positions; they should fulfil purpose. When people understand their assignment and see how their contribution connects to the larger vision, service becomes more meaningful and effective.

7. Building a System for Leadership Development

A church becomes vulnerable when everything depends on one pastor or a small group of leaders.. Sustainable churches intentionally develop leaders. Potential leaders must be identified, mentored, trained, given opportunities to serve, evaluated and gradually entrusted with greater responsibility.

Leadership development must move beyond occasional seminars. It should become a continuous process of identifying, equipping, deploying and multiplying leaders. The question should not only be, “Who can help us today?”it should also be: “Who are we preparing to lead tomorrow?” A leader’s greatest legacy is not simply what he or she accomplishes, but the leaders they develop who can continue the mission.

8. Building a System for Multiplication

The ultimate evidence of healthy leadership is multiplication.

Jesus invested in twelve disciples who would continue His mission. Paul instructed Timothy to commit what he had learned to faithful people who would teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2).

Churches must therefore build systems that make multiplication possible. Ministries should be reproducible. Leaders should develop other leaders. Disciples should make disciples. Small groups should be capable of reproducing, and churches should develop structures for church planting and expansion.

When systems are documented and transferable, ministry does not remain dependent on one personality.

The vision should be bigger than the visionary.

Embracing the Technological Shift

The Church is ministering in a rapidly changing world. Artificial intelligence, social media, digital communication, online learning, livestreaming, mobile applications, church-management platforms and data analytics are changing how people learn, communicate and connect.

The Church should neither fear technology nor become controlled by it.

Technology is a tool, not the mission. Artificial intelligence can assist with administration, content development, communication and data organization. Digital platforms can extend discipleship beyond geographical boundaries, while online communities can help maintain connection when physical gatherings are difficult. But technology cannot replace prayer, Scripture, genuine fellowship, pastoral sensitivity or the

transforming work of the Holy Spirit. The future-ready Church will combine spiritual depth, relational ministry, organizational excellence and technological wisdom.

From Addition to Multiplication

The Church must begin to think beyond addition. It is wonderful to count how many people attended a program, gave their lives to Christ or joined the church. But sustainable growth requires us to ask deeper questions:

- 1) How many people were assimilated?
- 2) How many were retained?
- 3) How many became disciples?
- 4) How many were equipped to serve?
- 5) How many leaders were developed?
- 6) How many disciples are now discipling others?

The goal is not merely to gather a crowd, but to build a growing community of disciples who can reproduce the mission.

Conclusion: Building Beyond the Next Program

The question every growing church must ask is not simply: “What program are we organizing next?” The deeper question is: “What system must we build today to sustain the growth God is giving us tomorrow?”

While programs can attract people, systems assimilate them. Programs can create excitement, but systems create continuity.

Programs can produce attendance, but systems develop disciples.

Programs can gather volunteers, but systems develop leaders.

Programs can produce temporary growth, but systems create sustainable and reproducible growth. The Church of the future must therefore move from programs to systems, from events to processes, from dependence on personalities to development of people, and from addition to multiplication.

When intentional systems are built around assimilation, retention, discipleship, pastoral care, communication, volunteer management, leadership development and multiplication, the Church becomes better positioned to steward growth—not just for today, but for generations to come.

We should not only build a church that can grow. We must build a Church that can sustain growth. And ultimately, the measure of healthy church growth is not merely how many people we can gather, but how many people we can develop, retain, disciple, deploy and multiply

2025 CONFERENCE







THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE MINISTRY HAPPEN

The Future of Church Human Resources

Building Churches That Value, Develop and Steward People Well

Pastor Seyi Oladimeji

Lead Consultant (CMC)
Author | Certified Church & Ministry
Consultant & President, CASON.



"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field." — Matthew 9:37–38

Introduction: The Greatest Asset of the Church

For decades, churches have described people as their "greatest asset." Yet, in practice, many churches invest more intentionally in buildings than in leaders, more in programmes than in people, and more in events than in employee and volunteer development. This imbalance has produced predictable consequences such as pastoral burnout, volunteer fatigue, unclear expectations, leadership conflicts, high staff turnover,

succession crises and ministries that depend too heavily on a few gifted individuals.

The Next Church must recover a biblical truth, that people are not simply resources to be managed but are image-bearers of God to be stewarded, developed and released into their calling. Jesus invested most of His earthly ministry not in constructing buildings or developing institutions but in forming people. He recruited ordinary fishermen, trained them intentionally, entrusted them with responsibility, corrected them with grace, and ultimately released them to transform the world. The future of church ministry will likewise depend on churches that build

healthy people systems rather than relying on extraordinary personalities.

A Theology of People Stewardship

The Bible begins with people, not programmes. Humanity is created in God's image (Genesis 1:26–27), giving every person inherent dignity and value. Churches therefore have a sacred responsibility to steward people well. Paul describes the Church as a body in which every member has unique gifts and functions (1 Corinthians 12). Healthy churches recognize that ministry effectiveness depends on helping every believer discover, develop, deploy, and sustain those gifts. Human resource management in the Church is therefore not merely administrative but profoundly theological. It is about aligning God's people with God's purposes. People are the living stones with which He is building His church today.

Church HR is not secular management baptized with Christian language. It is Kingdom stewardship expressed through wise leadership, healthy systems and genuine care for people.

The Future Church Requires a New People Strategy

The Church cannot continue relying on informal structures that worked in smaller ministries but have become unsustainable as the organizations grew. The future Church requires intentional systems that honour people while strengthening ministry. Systems around:-

1. Recruitment: Calling before competence

Every ministry begins with people. Yet many churches recruit based on urgency rather than discernment. The Next Church recruits people based on three questions:

- a) Calling:** Has God gifted and burdened this person for this ministry? Calling must be discerned.
- b) Character:** Does this person's life reflect Christ? Character must be cultivated.
- c) Competence:** Does the individual possess - or can they develop - the necessary skills? Competence can be taught.

Healthy recruitment includes clear ministry descriptions, interviews, reference checks where appropriate, safeguarding procedures, orientation and prayerful discernment. Churches should never recruit merely to fill vacancies but to fulfill Kingdom assignments.

2. Onboarding: Every first day shapes the future

Many churches celebrate new workers publicly but leave them to "figure things out" afterwards. Effective onboarding communicates the church's mission and vision, core values, ministry culture, expectations, reporting relationships, policies, available resources and spiritual responsibilities.

A structured orientation helps new staff and volunteers feel welcome, equipped and confident. Pairing new

Church HR is not secular management baptized with Christian language. It is Kingdom stewardship expressed through wise leadership, healthy systems and genuine care for people.

workers with experienced mentors accelerates integration and reduces early frustration.

3. Role Clarity: Confusion is the enemy of effectiveness

One of the greatest sources of ministry conflict is role ambiguity.

When people do not know what they are responsible for, who they report to, how success is measured or where authority begins and ends,

conflict inevitably follows. Every ministry role should have a written description outlining purpose, responsibilities, authority, reporting lines, required competencies and expected outcomes. Clarity empowers people to serve confidently and collaborate effectively.

4. Leadership Development: Growing people & not just fill positions

The Next Church understands that leadership development is continuous. Every leader should be both a learner and a mentor.

Churches should create intentional pathways that include biblical formation, leadership training, coaching, mentoring, practical ministry experience and regular feedback.

Leadership is about multiplying future leaders and not merely about replacing current leaders. Healthy churches measure success not by attendance but by the number of leaders they are developing.

5. Performance Management: Accountability with grace

Performance conversations are often neglected in ministry because leaders fear appearing unspiritual. Yet Scripture demonstrates the importance of encouragement, correction and accountability.

Healthy performance management asks critical questions like:-

- a) Are we fulfilling our calling?
- b) Are we serving people effectively?
- c) Are we stewarding resources wisely?
- d) How can we grow?

Regular reviews should include celebration, coaching, development planning and mutual feedback. Accountability is not about punishment but about helping people flourish in their God-given assignments.

6. Compensation and Welfare: Honouring those who serve

Scripture teaches that "the worker deserves his wages"



(Luke 10:7). Churches should therefore strive to compensate employees fairly within their financial capacity. Welfare is beyond salaries though and includes pastoral care, healthcare support, rest and sabbaticals, professional development, family-friendly policies and emotional wellbeing. Compensation should reflect stewardship, fairness, transparency, and sustainability rather than comparison or favouritism.

Churches that care for their people build healthier ministries.

7. Building a Healthy Ministry Culture

Culture is what people experience when no one is watching. Culture is not created by slogans on walls but by behaviours consistently modelled by leaders.

Healthy ministry cultures are characterized by trust, humility, collaboration, excellence, accountability, generosity, learning and honour. Leaders shape culture through what they celebrate, what they tolerate and what they correct.

8. Conflict Management: Protecting unity

Conflict is inevitable wherever people serve together. The issue is not whether conflict exists but how it is handled. Healthy conflict management preserves relationships, strengthens trust, and protects the witness of the Church.

The Next Church addresses conflict early, respectfully, biblically, privately where appropriate and redemptively. Matthew 18 provides a framework for restoration rather than retaliation.

9. Healthy Exits: Ending well matters

Every ministry relationship will eventually end through retirement, relocation, resignation, completion of assignment or transition to another calling. How people leave often determines how others perceive the church. Churches should release people with gratitude rather than bitterness whenever possible.

Healthy exits include honest conversations, knowledge transfer, appreciation, exit interviews, prayer and blessing.

The Church as an Employer of Choice

The Next Church should become known as one of the

healthiest places to serve. It should attract people not because it offers the highest salaries but because it provides meaningful work, godly leadership, healthy relationships, opportunities for growth, clear expectations, accountability and genuine care. When churches steward people well, they become environments where gifts flourish, leaders mature and ministries multiply.

A Church Human Resources Framework

The future Church should intentionally build a people lifecycle:

Pray → Recruit → Select → Onboard → Equip → Coach → Empower → Evaluate → Reward → Care → Resolve Conflict → Succession → Honour → Release

This cycle is continuous. It reflects the rhythm of Jesus' ministry, who continually called, equipped, sent, and multiplied disciples.

Conclusion: People Before Programmes

The future of the Church will not ultimately be determined by technology, buildings, budgets, or branding. It will be determined by the quality of the people it raises and the faithfulness with which it stewards them.

The Next Church recognizes that every volunteer, every administrator, every pastor, every worship leader, every teacher, every usher and every staff member is part of God's redemptive work. Ministry happens because people say "yes" to God's call and serve faithfully. If the Church is to thrive in the decades ahead, it must shift from merely managing people to shepherding, developing and empowering them. For when people flourish, ministries flourish. When leaders multiply, churches multiply. And when God's people are stewarded well, the Church becomes what Christ intended - a healthy body where "from Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Ephesians 4:16).

The future belongs to churches that understand this simple but profound truth: the greatest investment any church can make is not in its facilities—it is in its people.



Measuring What Matters: Data, Metrics and Decision-Making in Ministry

Wealth Olajide
Benjamin



Introduction

Church ministry is fundamentally spiritual, but effective ministry also requires responsible stewardship, wise planning and informed decision-making. Jesus taught the importance of counting the cost before undertaking a project (Luke 14:28), while Paul emphasized that stewards must be found faithful (1 Corinthians 4:2). In this context, data can help churches understand what is happening in their congregations and communities and make better decisions about ministry.

However, data should serve ministry, not replace spiritual discernment. Attendance figures, financial records and programme statistics cannot fully measure faith, spiritual maturity, love, obedience or the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, churches should use metrics as indicators that support prayer, pastoral wisdom and biblical evaluation.

What Matters?

The first step is to determine what the church is trying to accomplish. A church should not collect data simply because technology makes it possible. Each metric should answer a ministry question.

For attendance, churches can monitor average weekly

attendance, first-time visitors, return visits and attendance trends. Instead of simply celebrating a large crowd, leaders can ask why attendance is increasing or declining and whether people are becoming meaningfully connected to the church.

Engagement can be assessed through participation in small groups, Bible studies, prayer meetings, online activities, outreach programmes and other ministries. Engagement provides a broader picture than Sunday attendance alone.

Retention measures whether people remain connected over time. Churches can examine how many first-time visitors return, how many new members remain active after six or twelve months, and where people tend to disengage. Such information can help leaders improve follow-up and pastoral care.

Discipleship requires more careful measurement because spiritual growth is not merely numerical. Churches can track participation in discipleship classes, Bible-reading programmes, mentoring relationships, service opportunities and leadership development. Qualitative testimonies, interviews and spiritual-growth assessments can complement numerical data.

However, data should serve ministry, not replace spiritual discernment.

Attendance figures, financial records and programme statistics cannot fully measure faith, spiritual maturity, love, obedience or the work of the Holy Spirit.

Giving can be evaluated through trends in income, giving participation, designated versus general giving, and the relationship between income and ministry expenditure. Financial metrics should promote accountability rather than manipulate members. The goal is faithful stewardship, not simply increasing revenue.

Volunteer health is another important area. Churches can monitor the number of active volunteers, volunteer retention, hours of service, training participation and workload. Leaders should also ask volunteers whether they feel valued, supported and spiritually refreshed. A ministry that continually produces exhausted volunteers may be growing numerically while becoming unhealthy organizationally.

Community impact can be measured through the number of people served, educational programmes, welfare interventions, evangelistic contacts, community partnerships and beneficiaries of outreach. More importantly, churches should evaluate outcomes: Did people's circumstances improve? Were relationships established? Did the ministry address a genuine community need?

From metrics to decision-making

Good data becomes valuable when it leads to action. Churches can establish a simple cycle: collect, analyse, interpret, decide, act and review.

For example, if attendance data shows that young adults are consistently declining, leaders should not immediately conclude that young people are spiritually uninterested. They should combine attendance data with interviews, surveys and conversations to discover possible causes. The resulting evidence may lead to changes in discipleship structures, communication, worship services or community-building activities.

Similarly, if a ministry has many participants but few measurable outcomes, leaders can examine whether its activities are actually producing the intended results.

Church leaders should distinguish between leading indicators and lagging indicators. Attendance may be a lagging indicator of engagement, while participation in small groups, follow-up contacts and volunteer involvement may provide earlier signals of connection or disengagement.

Responsible and ethical use of data

Churches handle sensitive information, including names, telephone numbers, addresses, giving records, pastoral information and sometimes information about

children and vulnerable people. Consequently, data must be handled confidentially and securely.

In Nigeria, churches should take the Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023 seriously. The Nigeria Data Protection Commission emphasizes lawful, fair and transparent processing, purpose limitation, data minimization, accuracy, appropriate retention and security. Churches should therefore collect only information they genuinely need, explain how it will be used, restrict access and avoid unnecessary disclosure.

Churches should also establish clear policies concerning data ownership, access, storage, retention and deletion. Data should never be used to embarrass, discriminate against or manipulate members.

The disadvantage of measuring the wrong metrics

One of the greatest dangers of metrics is confusing activity with effectiveness. A church may conduct many programmes without producing meaningful transformation. A large attendance does not necessarily indicate strong discipleship, and a large budget does not necessarily indicate effective stewardship.

Therefore, quantitative measures should be combined with qualitative evidence. Surveys, interviews, testimonies, pastoral observations and community feedback can reveal realities that numbers alone cannot capture.

The ultimate question is not, "How many?" but "What difference is being made?"

Conclusion

Data can become a powerful instrument for ministry when it is used with wisdom, humility and integrity. Churches can use metrics to understand attendance, engagement, retention, discipleship, giving, volunteer health, community impact and ministry effectiveness. Nevertheless, numbers must remain servants of the church's mission.

The healthiest approach combines data, Scripture, prayer, pastoral discernment and the leading of the Holy Spirit. When churches measure what truly matters, they are better positioned to identify needs, steward resources, strengthen discipleship, care for people and fulfil their God-given mission.

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Funding the Future:

Building Financially Sustainable Churches



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A church may have a compelling vision, gifted leaders, committed members and a powerful ministry mandate, yet still struggle to fulfil its calling because of weak financial foundations. Financial sustainability is therefore not merely an administrative concern; it is a stewardship responsibility. The question is not simply, “How much money does the church have?” but rather, “How faithfully, wisely and strategically is the church managing the resources entrusted to it?”

Jesus taught that faithfulness in handling resources is connected to faithfulness in greater responsibilities: “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much” (Luke 16:10). For the contemporary church, financial sustainability means developing systems that enable today’s resources to support today’s ministry while preparing the church to fulfil tomorrow’s mission.

1. Strengthen the Theology and Practice of Stewardship

Sustainable church finance begins with a healthy theology of stewardship. Scripture presents God as the

ultimate owner of everything: “The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof” (Psalm 24:1). The church therefore does not own its resources in the ultimate sense; it manages resources belonging to God. We must deliver ourselves from the ownership mentality and embrace and imbibe stewardship mentality.

This understanding changes the conversation about money. Giving should not be reduced to fundraising, nor should stewardship be limited to receiving offerings. Biblical stewardship encompasses how believers earn, give, spend, save and invest—and how the church manages everything entrusted to it. As managers, the church is not just to keep the money, but seek ways to multiply it. Management is not merely maintenance, it is about multiplication. Remember, he said to the one that produced five additional talents “well done though good and faithful servant”. So, real resource management is resource fruitfulness.

Paul’s teaching concerning the collection for believers in Jerusalem demonstrates the importance of integrity in financial administration. He deliberately arranged for

accountability so that the gift would be handled honourably “not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men” (2 Corinthians 8:20–21).

Churches should therefore teach stewardship consistently while creating financial systems that demonstrate the principles they preach.

2. Build Budgets Around Mission, Not Tradition

A church budget should be more than a list of anticipated income and expenses. It should be a financial expression of the church's mission and strategic priorities.

Too many churches prepare budgets by asking, “What did we spend last year?” and adding a percentage for inflation. A sustainable church asks different questions: What has God called us to accomplish? What resources will that require? Which ministries are producing meaningful kingdom impact? What must we stop, start or strengthen?

Proverbs 21:5 reminds us that “the plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance.” Budgeting should therefore involve realistic revenue projections, expenditure priorities, capital requirements, ministry objectives and contingency planning.

The church therefore does not own its resources in the ultimate sense; it manages resources belonging to God. We must deliver ourselves from the ownership mentality and embrace and imbibe stewardship mentality.

Churches should also use rolling forecasts rather than waiting until the end of the financial year to discover that actual income has diverged significantly from the budget.

3. Establish Adequate Financial Reserves

Faith does not eliminate the need for preparation. Joseph's administration in Egypt provides a powerful biblical illustration: during years of abundance, resources were deliberately stored in preparation for years of scarcity (Genesis 41:33–36).

Churches should establish a formal reserve policy specifying how much should be maintained, when reserves may be used, who can authorize their use and how depleted reserves will be replenished.

There is no universal reserve level suitable for every church. The appropriate amount depends on factors such as the church's size, income stability, staffing structure, debt obligations, property requirements and ministry commitments. Nonprofit financial-management guidance commonly emphasizes the importance of maintaining liquid operating reserves, while ECFA recommends that churches intentionally budget for additions to reserves rather than simply hoping that surplus cash will remain at year-end. (ECFA) Importantly, restricted or designated funds should not

Strategic planning should connect ministry objectives with financial capacity.



casually be treated as operating reserves. ECFA specifically cautions churches against using designated balances to finance ordinary operations. (ECFA)

4. Manage Assets as Strategic Resources

Financial sustainability involves more than cash. Churches often control valuable assets—land, buildings, vehicles, equipment, technology, investments, intellectual property and other resources.

Every significant asset should have an owner, custodian, maintenance plan, insurance coverage, replacement cycle and appropriate accounting record. A church should know not only what it owns, but also what condition those assets are in, what they are worth, what they cost to maintain and when they will need replacement.

A church building may be fully paid for but still represent a substantial future financial obligation if its roof, electrical system, air-conditioning, sound equipment or structural components are approaching the end of their useful lives.

Asset management should therefore be incorporated into long-term financial planning.

5. Develop Long-Term Financial Plans

Annual budgets are necessary, but they are insufficient. Sustainable churches think in five-, ten- and even twenty-year horizons.

Long-term financial planning should consider projected membership and attendance, giving patterns, staffing costs, property development, technology, debt repayment, ministry expansion, succession planning, economic conditions and major capital expenditure.

The goal is to prevent the church from repeatedly making short-term financial decisions that create long-term problems.

The objective is to build sufficient financial strength to withstand uncertainty, respond to opportunities, protect ministry continuity and serve people effectively.



Strategic planning should connect ministry objectives with financial capacity. The National Council of Nonprofits similarly emphasizes strategic planning should identify how resources can best advance mission and establish measurable goals that are periodically reviewed.

6. Make Accountability Non-Negotiable

Trust is one of a church's most valuable financial assets. Once trust is damaged, rebuilding it can take years.

Financial accountability requires clear authority structures, segregation of duties, documented approvals, regular reconciliations, independent reviews and transparent reporting. No individual—regardless of position, title or spiritual authority—should have unrestricted control over the church's finances.

Basic internal controls can include dual authorization for payments, separation of cash collection from recording and depositing, independent review of bank statements, documented expense approvals and periodic audits or financial reviews. The National Council of Nonprofits identifies segregation of duties, authorization procedures and independent review as fundamental safeguards against misuse and misappropriation of assets.

ECFA's standards similarly emphasize governance, financial oversight, accurate financial statements, responsible use of resources and transparency. (ECFA)

Accountability should not be viewed as an expression of suspicion. It is an expression of wisdom.

7. Create a Culture of Financial Transparency

Church members are more likely to give confidently when they understand how their resources are being

used. Transparency does not mean publishing every transaction or exposing confidential donor information. It means providing appropriate information about the church's financial health, priorities, achievements and challenges.

Leadership should communicate regularly about income, expenditure, major projects, reserves, liabilities and ministry outcomes. Financial reporting should answer the question behind the numbers: What difference did these resources make?

The objective is not merely financial reporting; it is financial storytelling—connecting money received with ministry accomplished.

8. Pursue Sustainability Without Losing the Mission

Financial sustainability must never become financial accumulation for its own sake. The church exists for mission, not for the preservation of bank balances.

The objective is to build sufficient financial strength to withstand uncertainty, respond to opportunities, protect ministry continuity and serve people effectively.

Paul's principle remains relevant: "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40). Good financial systems create order. Wise reserves create resilience. Strategic asset management creates capacity. Transparent reporting creates trust. Disciplined budgeting creates focus.

Ultimately, a financially sustainable church is not simply one that has money. It is one that can faithfully translate resources into mission—today, tomorrow and for generations yet unborn.

The church must therefore move from **surviving financially to planning financially; from reacting to anticipating; from merely receiving resources to stewarding them strategically; and from funding today's activities to financing tomorrow's mission.**

The future of many churches will depend not only on how much they receive, but on how wisely they prepare to steward what God places in their hands.

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Safeguarding the Vulnerable:

Why Every Church Needs a Protection Policy



Rev. Abidemi Soneye CCA, FCA

For the Church to truly become fit for the future,...It cannot rely solely on the good character or intentions of the people who serve within it. Where vulnerable people are involved, deliberate systems are needed to protect them from harm.

The Church has been called to be a place of refuge and hope. However, the Church does not exist outside the realities of the society it serves. Across Nigeria, children and vulnerable people face risks of abuse everyday.

UNICEF reports that six in ten Nigerian children experience some form of abuse, with one in four girls and one in ten boys experiencing sexual violence before age 18. This survey found that violence is often perpetrated by people children already know and can occur in places where children should feel safe.

The NHRC's 2024 Human Rights Situation Dashboard recorded 52,932 child sexual assault complaints between January and December 2024. These statistics are not distant abstractions, they represent lives entrusted to our care.

For the Church to truly become fit for the future, it must confront this reality head-on. It cannot rely solely on the good character or intentions of the people who serve within it. Where vulnerable people are involved, deliberate systems are needed to protect them from harm.

Every church, regardless of size or denomination, needs a defined safeguarding policy. This is not just a bureaucratic exercise, but it is a spiritual and moral duty.

Why Churches Have a Particular Safeguarding Responsibility

Churches occupy a unique position in the lives of many Nigerians. They are places where children attend Sunday school, youth programs and other activities, and where members get counselling, spiritual guidance and practical support.

In these settings, clergy, ministry leaders, teachers and volunteers have significant access to children and vulnerable adults. They may also hold positions of considerable authority. These relationships can create opportunities for abuse where appropriate boundaries and reporting systems are absent.

Why a Written Policy Matters

A safeguarding policy is a church's public commitment to the welfare of children, young people, and vulnerable adults. It declares that abuse will not be tolerated and that systems are in place to prevent it, respond to it and report it.

Nigeria already provides the legal framework for this. The Child Rights Act of 2003 and the Violence Against



Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act of 2015 hold accountable anyone who commits offenses against minors; including clergy and church workers.

As one Catholic leader recently reminded Nigerian chaplains “Church personnel who commit an offense against a minor are not only answerable to ecclesiastical authorities but also accountable under Nigerian law”. The Enugu Anglican Diocese has declared zero tolerance for gender-based violence, warning that any clergy or laity found guilty will face suspension, defrocking, and prosecution.

However, while the law tells us what is prohibited, a safeguarding policy tells an organization how it will prevent, identify, and respond to harm.

Core Elements of a Protection Policy

Volunteer Screening

Anyone working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults must undergo background checks. This should include national criminal database searches and sex offender registry checks. Churches must also conduct periodic rechecks every 12 to 24 months.

Codes of Conduct

Clear behavioral expectations must be established for all personnel. Policies should address private meetings, transportation, overnight activities, communication with minors and the use of social media. They should also enforce the "Two-Adult Rule" ensuring that interactions with children and at risk individuals occur in transparent settings.

Reporting Mechanisms

Survivors and witnesses of any form of abuse need confidential channels to report concerns. A good example of this is the Anglican Diocese of the Carolina's Reporting Portal that allows individuals submit a confidential report to the Diocese. Similarly, the Diocese of Nnewi's "ADON Connect" app allows users drop anonymous complaints to the church authorities.

Confidentiality should be respected, but churches must not promise absolute secrecy where certain actions have to be disclosed to appropriate authorities.

Incident Response

Policies must spell out what happens when an

allegation is made. These include how to protect the survivor, preserve evidence, notify civil authorities, and provide pastoral care. The welfare of the individual must always take precedence over institutional reputation.

Finally, no person should be exempt from the safeguarding procedures because of their position, reputation or contribution to the church.

Creating Safe Ministry Environments

A policy is only useful if people remember and follow it. This looks like regular training for all staff and volunteers, annual public reading of the policy, and integration of safeguarding into membership and ordination classes.

Churches must also partner with government agencies, health professionals, counselors, and legal services. Internal church procedures cannot be used to prevent cooperation with civil authorities. Religious titles must not shield abusers.

A Call to Action

The Church Administrators Society of Nigeria (CASON) is uniquely positioned to lead this transformation. As church administrators, we oversee the systems, structures, and personnel that either protect or endanger the vulnerable. The Next Church must be a church where everyone can worship without fear of abuse or exploitation.

Let this be our legacy- that we not only built beautiful sanctuaries but ones with unshakeable systems of protection. Let us ensure that when the world looks at the church, it doesn't see a place of hidden wounds, but a place of safety and hope.

The time to act is now. The Next Church demands it.

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THE CYBERSECURITY THREAT CHURCHES CAN NO LONGER IGNORE



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It is a conversation about protecting people because behind every record is a real person who has trusted the church with their information. That trust carries responsibility.



There was a time when protecting a church meant locking the doors, securing the offering and keeping important documents in a cabinet. Those days are gone. Today, a church can be securely locked from the outside and still be completely exposed.

A pastor can preach from a pulpit on Sunday while, somewhere in the digital world, someone is attempting to gain access to the church's email account. A church administrator can carefully reconcile the accounts while a fraudulent payment request is being prepared through a compromised staff account. A church can faithfully collect members' information for pastoral care, communication and follow-up, while that same information sits in a database that nobody has properly secured.

The church has entered the digital age and the threats have come with it.

Cybersecurity is no longer simply an IT issue. It has become an important part of church leadership, administration, governance and stewardship.

What Exactly Are We Protecting?

Churches hold more sensitive information than many leaders realise.

Think about the information contained in a typical church management system: names, phone numbers, addresses, family information, attendance records, membership details, volunteer records and sometimes

information shared for pastoral care. Then consider the financial side- giving records, banking information, accounting systems, payroll, donor databases and digital giving platforms. Add the church's website, domain, social media accounts, email systems, cloud storage, computers, smartphones, livestreaming platforms and online registration systems. Suddenly, cybersecurity is no longer an abstract conversation about technology. It is a conversation about protecting people because behind every record is a real person who has trusted the church with their information. That trust carries responsibility.

The Greatest Vulnerability May Not Be Technology

It is tempting to think that cybersecurity is primarily about buying better software, installing antivirus programmes or hiring an IT specialist. Those things matter, but technology alone cannot protect a church from every threat.

Sometimes the problem is a simple email. A staff member receives a message that appears to come from the senior pastor: "Please urgently make this payment." A volunteer receives a link asking them to "confirm their church account." An administrator gets an attachment that appears to be an invoice. Someone clicks. And suddenly, the door is open. This is why cybersecurity is also a people issue. Every person who has access to a church system becomes part of its security environment—pastors, administrators, finance



officers, ministry leaders, employees and volunteers.

Cybersecurity awareness must therefore become part of church culture.

Access Is a Privilege, Not a Right

One question church leaders should ask is remarkably simple: Who has access to what? Does every staff member really need access to the membership database? Does every administrator need access to financial information? What happens to the email account of someone who leaves the church? Can former volunteers still access church systems? Are passwords shared among team members? Are multiple people using the same administrator account?

The principle should be straightforward:

People should have access to the information and systems they need to perform their responsibilities—and no more. This is not about creating suspicion. It is about creating healthy controls. Trust is important in ministry. But good governance does not require us to choose between trust and accountability. We can have both.

Financial Systems Require Special Attention

Churches are increasingly adopting digital giving, online transfers and electronic financial management. This has brought enormous convenience and efficiency, but it has also created new opportunities for fraud. Imagine receiving an email requesting that a vendor's bank details be changed, or a message appearing to come from a senior leader requesting an urgent transfer. The safest response is not simply, "The email looks genuine." It is to independently verify the request.

A phone call, a separate message or an established approval process can prevent a costly mistake. Financial controls are therefore not signs of mistrust. They are signs of responsible stewardship.

What Happens When Something Goes Wrong?

Every church should ask the uncomfortable question. What will we do if we are hacked tomorrow? Who takes charge if something goes wrong. Even if our systems are perfectly secure and nobody clicks a suspicious link. Which accounts should be secured immediately? Who contacts the technology provider? How will financial transactions be protected? How will affected members be informed? Where are our backups? Can we restore our critical information?

Start With the Basics

A cybersecurity incident is not the time to begin developing a response plan. Churches do not have to become technology companies to improve their security. They can begin with practical measures:

- Enable multi-factor authentication on important accounts.
- Use strong, unique passwords and a password manager.
- Regularly update computers, phones, applications and operating systems.
- Back up critical church data and test whether it can actually be restored.
- Review who has access to church systems.
- Immediately remove access when staff or volunteers leave.
- Train staff and volunteers to recognise phishing and social engineering.
- Independently verify unusual financial requests.
- Secure church Wi-Fi networks and administrative devices.
- Establish clear policies for collecting, storing and sharing personal information.
- Develop a simple incident-response plan.

These may sound like technical details, but they are actually leadership decisions.

Cybersecurity Is Stewardship

The church has always understood the importance of stewardship.

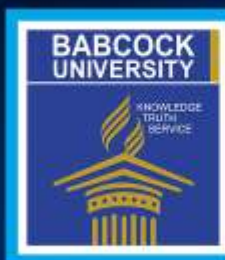
We steward money, buildings, equipment and people. We must now steward information.

Technology has given the church powerful tools to communicate, disciple, mobilise, administer, facilitate giving and reach people. We should not retreat from technology because of the risks. Instead, we must become wiser users of it.

The question every pastor, ministry leader and church administrator should now be asking is if someone attempted to compromise your church today, how prepared would you be? Understand that you are not too small to be targeted?"

Cybersecurity is not merely about protecting computers. It is about protecting trust, people, resources, reputation and the continuity of ministry. Are you protecting the information entrusted to you with the same seriousness with which you protect the people entrusted to you?

The church's mission is too important to be disrupted by a preventable digital breach. The time to take cybersecurity seriously is not after the breach. It is before it happens.



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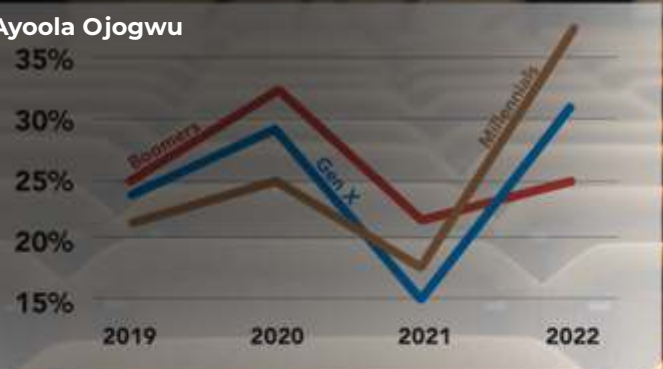
BEYOND ATTENDANCE:

ARE WE MAKING MEMBERS OR MAKING DISCIPLES?



Pastor (Mrs.) Ayoola Ojogwu

WEEKLY CHURCH ATTENDANCE, BY GENERATION



Attendance tells us who showed up, but discipleship tells us what God is doing in their lives... A church can grow in attendance without growing in spiritual depth... Therefore, a growing church is not automatically a growing discipleship movement.

This is a question every Church Administrator must intentionally ask.

In many churches, attendance has become the primary measure of success, while discipleship is neglected. Numbers, filled seats, social media likes, and congregation size often receive more attention than transformed lives.

Attendance tells us who showed up, but discipleship tells us what God is doing in their lives.

A person can attend church every week and remain spiritually immature. A church can grow in attendance without growing in spiritual depth. Therefore, a growing church is not automatically a growing discipleship movement.

The ultimate question is not only, "How many people came?" but also, "How many people are becoming like Christ?"

OUR CORE MANDATE

Jesus did not merely command us to gather crowds. He commanded us:

Matthew 28:19 (King James Version)

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Our mandate is to MAKE DISCIPLES.

Church administration must therefore build systems, structures, programmes, and processes that develop lives—not merely count them.

KEY QUESTIONS EVERY CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR SHOULD ASK

1. How many members are growing spiritually?
2. How many are actively serving?
3. How many are being intentionally mentored?
4. How many can mentor others?
5. Are our programmes producing spiritual maturity or simply crowds?
6. Are people becoming committed followers of Christ?

Beyond attendance, let us build churches that do not just attract people—but transform people.

or merely regular attendees?

7. If attendance doubled tomorrow, would our discipleship systems be strong enough to handle the growth?

ATTENDANCE STILL HAS ITS PLACE

Attendance matters. Jesus Himself expressed the desire that the house of God should be filled:

«“Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.”

— Luke 14:23»

The goal is not to choose between attendance and discipleship, but to ensure that attendance becomes the doorway into discipleship.

Getting people into the church is important. What happens after they come in is even more important.

THE JOURNEY SHOULD BE:

ATTENDANCE → ENGAGEMENT → DISCIPLESHIP → LEADERSHIP → MULTIPLICATION

People come through the doors, become engaged, are discipled, mature into leaders, and reproduce themselves by making disciples of others.

That is Kingdom growth.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE WARNING

Until the church turns its searchlight toward discipleship, people may continue coming through the front door and leaving through the back door.

We may celebrate attendance figures without knowing whether they represent transformed lives. We may

count members without developing disciples, fill seats without fulfilling the mandate, and mistake membership for maturity.

The question is not simply:

“How many members do we have?”

But:

“How many disciples are we making?”

And ultimately:

“How many disciples are we producing who can make disciples of others?”

THE REAL MEASURE OF A GROWING CHURCH

A truly growing church is not merely one where more people are coming in. It is one where more people are becoming like Christ, serving faithfully, growing spiritually, taking responsibility, raising others, and reproducing the life of Christ in others.

We are not called merely to fill seats.

WE ARE CALLED TO MAKE DISCIPLES.

Beyond attendance, let us build churches that do not just attract people—but transform people.

Beyond crowds, let us pursue Christlikeness.



SOLVING THE CHURCH RETENTION PROBLEM

How churches can build effective assimilation, belonging, small-group, pastoral-care, member-engagement, and retention systems.



Pastor Kayode Olorunnisola CCA

Many form their conclusion about returning after the first visit. Once their mind is closed, you won't get another chance at a first impression.

INTRODUCTION

Matthew 4:25 (LB)

"Enormous crowds followed him wherever he went."

The crowd is inevitable. In every season, in every city, in every generation — people will gravitate toward where they sense life, hope, power and answers. The church will always attract a crowd.

But a crowd is not a church, it is many times a composition of the mixed multitude. A crowd is driven by diverse motives: some come for refuge from life's storms, some come for answers, some come to observe, and some come because God Himself is drawing them.

"God setteth the solitary in families..." Psalm 68:6 KJV

This is God's heart. He is constantly gathering the scattered, the wounded, the searching, and the solitary — and placing them into the covering of family. The mandate of the church is not just to gather people, but to harness the crowd, heal the broken, and house them in the family of God until they become fully formed and fruitful.

God brings first-timers to church for 3 divine reasons:

1. For Refuge - A safe place from the battles of life
2. For Formation - To be discipled, shaped, and established in Christ
3. For Portion - To discover and fulfill their God-ordained destiny

- Rev. Olusola Areogun

Therefore, every retention system we build must answer these 3 questions:

Are we giving them refuge? Are we forming them? Are we releasing them to their portion?

THE HARD TRUTH:

The Church does not have an attendance problem. The Church has a retention problem.

We can fill auditoriums, but if we cannot convert the crowd into community, we will keep leaking the very people God sent.

This is why we must move beyond programs to systems

- systems of assimilation, belonging, pastoral care, discipleship, and engagement — that turn visitors into family, and family into destiny partners.

Here is data on global retention crisis:

1. 82% of dropouts leave within the FIRST YEAR

Source: McIntosh & Arn, "What Every Pastor Should Know"

2. 15% of first-time guests ever return

Source: <http://EffectiveChurch.com> - U.S. Church Data

3. 5% Average assimilation rate. Goal: 33%

Source: Nelson Searcy, "Fusion"

4. 9% vs 21%

Non-growing churches retain 9% of guests

Growing churches retain 21% of guests

Source: Nelson Searcy, "Fusion"

5. 35% of new members stay past 5 YEARS

Source: Barna Research

6. 52.9% of leaders say their church lacks a strong culture to establish converts

Source: Adventist Church Africa Study, ResearchGate

The concern is global: low retention and the lack of a strong culture to establish converts — converting the crowd into community. This is what we must address.

In almost two decades of pastoring multiple branches, as an Associate pastor, across cities and states in Southwest Nigeria, I have faced the challenge of building assimilation, belonging, small group, pastoral care, member-engagement, and retention systems. Here are 7 gaps that make this challenge linger in many churches.

7 GAPS THAT KEEP CHURCHES FROM RETAINING PEOPLE

Converting the Crowd into Community

1. LITTLE OR NO INTENSE INTERCESSION FOR SOULS BEFORE THEY COME

It starts with prevailing in prayer over souls. Don't just build structures and absorption funnels. Birth people into the church in the womb of intercession.

Why pray? Because there is a devil who does not allow his captives to go freely. Human relations alone are not enough.

People are vessels of spirits, and may be carrying:

- a. Negative spirits from their ancestry
- b. Negative spirits from the land
- c. Negative spirits already trafficking around, undiscerned in the church
 - Rev. Olusola Areogun

If we don't deal with such spirits in prayer before and after the first-timers arrive, we may have welcomed a representative of the principality in the land into our fold. You ever wonder how Doeg the Edomite gained access

God is setting the solitary in families. The crowd will come. The question is: do we have systems to keep them, form them, and release them into their destiny portion?



into the temple. 1 Sam 22:22.

2. NOT DISCERNING PEOPLE BEFORE THE ABSORPTION FUNNEL

John 2:24 KJV

"But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men,"

Before we commit to people, we must KNOW THEM. Jesus was not carried away by numbers. He discerned the crowd before inviting chosen ones into His community.

CATEGORIES OF FIRST TIMERS:

- The sinners
- Young converts
- Wounded believers reacting against their former church
- First-timer ex-pastors
- People on transfer carrying their former church's vision
- Those looking to start a church and want to understudy us
- Enemies of the church
- Media, government agents, or spies on information gathering
- Occasional visitors - relatives of members
- Agents on assignment
- Those seeking solutions. Once solved, they switch off
- True God seekers

In the kingdom we don't mass produce disciples. We need one-on-one discipleship programme to know people before inviting them into full membership and leadership.

3. VISITATION AND FOLLOW-UP GAP

Visit new members within the first 24 hours.

Many form their conclusion about returning after the first visit. Once their mind is closed, you won't get another chance at a first impression.

Speed communicates value. Delayed follow-up



communicates indifference.

4. GAP IN KNOWING PEOPLE: KNOW THEM BY NAME AND BEAR THEM IN YOUR HEART

Knowing people by name communicates belonging.

"God does not give a new member a seat in church, He gives them a space in the heart of the pastor."

- Rev. Olusola Areogun
- Know their person
- Know their home
- Know their office

When people feel known, they feel they belong.

5. PASTORAL CARE GAP

We need a multi-layer pastoral care system.

Create multiple absorption layers and small-groups that provide pastoral care.

If the pastor is the only one doing pastoral care, the church cannot grow. Care must be decentralized through small group leaders, deacons, and department heads. Every member must have a shepherd they can reach.

6. THE TRAINING GAP

Most training is for pulpit ministry, not retention ministry.

We train people to preach, usher, and sing, but we don't train greeters, follow-up teams, and small group leaders on how to turn a visitor into family.

2 Timothy 2:2 KJV

... And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also...[2]

You cannot retain what you are not trained to retain. Retention must be taught, modeled, and measured.

7. THE WRONG METRICS GAP

We measure attendance, offerings, and new converts, but we don't measure assimilation rate, retention, or small group participation.

Growing churches retain 21% of guests because they track connection, not just crowd.

What gets measured gets managed. What gets ignored gets lost. Every ministry must review retention

numbers, not just attendance numbers.

10 SYSTEMS TO CONVERT CROWD → COMMUNITY

Each of these 7 gaps is closed by building intentional systems. Here are 10:

- 1. First 24hr Follow-up System** — Contact/visit fast. Speed communicates value. Have a team assigned to call, text, and visit within 24 hours of a first visit.
- 2. Welcome/Greeter Team System** — Capture details on the welcome card + follow up with the details. Train greeters to be warm, to collect data, and to pray with people.
- 3. Small Groups System** — Pastoral + care unit. Place every member in a small group for fellowship, prayer, and care. This is where belonging happens.
- 4. Newcomers Class System** — Connect them to Kingdom discipleship + sound doctrine. A thorough discipleship and onboarding class must be in place.
- 5. Pastoral Care Teams System** — Decentralized shepherding. Appoint leaders over zones, groups, and departments to provide care so the burden is not on one man.
- 6. Discipleship Track System** — Salvation → Membership → Training → Ministry → Leadership. A clear pathway to grow people from conversion to deployment.
- 7. Engagement System** — Have a clearly defined and uncompromising engagement philosophy and procedure. Don't be under pressure to engage people without passing the test of trust.
- 8. Database Tracking System** — Attendance, birthdays, needs. Use a CRM or church database to track who came, who left, who is sick, and who needs follow-up.
- 9. Intercession Team System** — Pray for souls before/after arrival. A dedicated team that stands in the gap for new converts and first-timers weekly.
- 10. Celebration Culture System** — Recognize, testimonies, milestones. Celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, promotions, and testimonies.

CONCLUSION

God is setting the solitary in families. The crowd will come. The question is: do we have systems to keep them, form them, and release them into their destiny portion?

Programs attract. Systems retain..

Let us audit our systems. Let us train our retention teams and build the household of God. May the Lord find us faithful.

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THE VOLUNTEER REVOLUTION

Building a Church Where Everyone Has a Ministry

A healthy church should not depend on a few heroic people who keep rescuing everybody else. It should build systems that help every willing person discover where they can contribute, develop their capacity and find joy in serving.



Steve Akoni

Vice-President, Church Administrators
Society of Nigeria (CASON)

There is a familiar picture in many churches: the same five people are everywhere!

They are in the choir on Sunday morning, arranging chairs before service, attending meetings during the week, following up guests, organising an outreach and somehow they are expected to smile throughout the whole process.

If you ask, "Where is everybody?" the answer may be, "They are in church."

Yes, they are in church but they are not necessarily in ministry. Just as I once told our congregation: some people are visible but not available.

This is where the volunteer revolution begins.

A healthy church should not depend on a few heroic people who keep rescuing everybody else. It should build systems that help every willing person discover where they can contribute, develop their capacity and find joy in serving.

After all, church is not a spectator sport. We should not have 200 people watching 20 people do everything!

FROM 'WHO CAN HELP?' TO 'HOW DO WE MOBILISE PEOPLE?'

For more than 23 years, our ministry has worked with volunteers. One lesson has become increasingly clear: volunteers should not be treated as emergency resources. They should be treated as strategic partners.

There is a difference.

An emergency volunteer is the person you call because

someone cancelled five minutes before an event.

A strategic volunteer is someone who has been recruited, oriented, trained, deployed, supported and appreciated.

The first model produces exhaustion. The second produces capacity.

This requires churches to move from the occasional question, 'Who can help us?' to a deliberate system:

Recruit. Train. Deploy. Motivate. Appreciate. Retain.

That simple cycle can transform the way a church functions.

1. RECRUIT: CREATE A CULTURE OF PARTICIPATION

Recruitment should not happen only when there is an event or a crisis. Churches must consistently communicate that every member has something to contribute.

Some can preach. Others can organise. Some can sing. Others can manage technology, design graphics, welcome people, teach children, coordinate logistics, write or solve problems nobody else has noticed.

The person sitting quietly at the back may not be disinterested. They may simply be waiting for someone to say, 'We need what you carry.'

2. TRAIN: DON'T JUST GIVE PEOPLE JOBS, BUILD PEOPLE

Volunteers should not be thrown into an assignment with the instruction: 'Just use your initiative!'

That may sound spiritual, but it is not always good

administration. Training should explain the what, why and how of service.

What exactly are you expected to do? Why does it matter? How should it be done? Who do you report to? What standards should you maintain?

Good training reduces confusion, improves quality and gives volunteers confidence. And training should be continuous. People grow when they are trusted with responsibility and given opportunities to improve.

3. DEPLOY: PUT THE RIGHT PEOPLE IN THE RIGHT PLACES

Not every willing volunteer belongs everywhere. Deployment should consider gifts, competence, availability, personality and season of life.

In our ministry, we have general ministry volunteers who serve as church workers. As they grow in character, competence and leadership capacity, some can progress into core ministry and where appropriate, pastoral leadership.

We also have what we call 'staff volunteers.' These include self-employed people and people between jobs who volunteer in the church office with varying levels of weekly commitment. Some serve on selected days each week; others contribute during vacation periods from full-time employment.

The key is clarity. It protects both the church and the volunteer. At the point of engagement, expectations are discussed:

How much time can you give? What responsibilities are you accepting? Who will supervise you? What support will you receive?

4. MOTIVATE: GIVE PEOPLE PURPOSE, NOT JUST TASKS

People rarely remain committed simply because their names appear on a duty roster. Volunteers need to understand the difference their contribution makes.

'Please usher' is an instruction.

'You are helping create an atmosphere where someone who walked into church discouraged can feel welcomed' communicates purpose.

The second approach makes people understand that their service matters.

Volunteers should also receive opportunities to learn, lead and grow. Responsibility can be highly motivating when people know they are trusted.

5. APPRECIATE: PEOPLE ARE NOT MACHINES

Church volunteers may not be on the payroll, but they are still human beings! They have families, jobs, businesses, challenges and Mondays!

Appreciation therefore matters. Sometimes it is a public thank-you. Sometimes it is a certificate, a birthday message, a meal, a development opportunity or simply a leader saying, 'I noticed what you did.'

Never underestimate sincere appreciation. People are

more likely to remain engaged when they know their contribution is seen and valued.

6. RETAIN: BUILD A COMMUNITY, NOT JUST A ROSTER

Retention is not achieved by keeping people's names permanently on a duty schedule. People stay where they experience belonging, growth, purpose and support.

Churches should regularly ask volunteers:

How are you doing? What are you learning? What is becoming difficult? Where would you like to grow? Is this assignment still working for you?

Sometimes retention means allowing someone to change departments or reduce their commitment for a season. A healthy volunteer system recognises that people have seasons.

THE PRINCIPLE GOES BEYOND MINISTRY

Volunteer engagement is not restricted to Sunday services or ministry departments. The same principle works across para-ministries, committees, special projects and one-off events.

I experienced this personally as the Conference Lead for the CASON 2026 Conference. We engaged some of our outstanding CASON members who volunteered to serve as Team Leaders. They were not simply people available to 'help with the conference.' They were entrusted with defined responsibilities to drive specific aspects of the conference and deliver excellence.

This reinforced an important principle: when you give capable people ownership and support, they can produce remarkable results.

A SYMBIOTIC SYSTEM

In our ministry, our volunteer philosophy is structured as a symbiotic system. Volunteers contribute their participation, gifts, relationships and service.

The church, in turn, provides spiritual development, community, leadership opportunities and support.

Both sides benefit. The volunteer is not merely giving something to the church. The church is also creating an environment in which the volunteer can become more spiritually mature, more capable and more effective. We also bridge their skills gap by networking them with established professionals within the church who groom and mentor them.

That is the revolution!

The goal is not simply to have more volunteers. The goal is to build a church where everyone understands that they have something to contribute and where systems exist to help them contribute it well.

Perhaps this is one of the most important shifts church administration can facilitate in the digital age:

From a church where a few people do everything, to a church where everyone has a place to contribute and grow. Because when everyone has a ministry, the church stops depending on a few exhausted heroes and starts releasing the capacity of the whole body.



Adesola Adesokan, ECA,
member CASON

Beyond Charity:

From Church Outreach to Sustainable Community Transformation.

The Church cannot afford to measure its relevance only by the number of people it reaches; it must increasingly consider the depth of transformation it facilitates.

Charity has always been an essential expression of the Church's mission understood as a primary expression of Christian responsibility toward people in need— an act of compassion expressed by the Lord – Jesus Christ himself (Matthew 9:36). Feeding the hungry, clothing the poor, caring for widows and orphans, visiting the sick, and providing emergency assistance were—and remain—genuinely Christian acts as typified in the feeding of the five thousand ((Matthew 15:32) and the biblical support in that “He that gives to the poor lends to the Lord” (Proverbs 19:17).

Charity – A Historical Contribution of relief repeat Model

This model employed by the church focuses on providing immediate relief for those in need and usually progresses from the identification of need, to identifying opportunity for charity, to the mobilization of donations; and then to the offering of relief drawn into a programme which ends immediately it is implemented. The intervention offered is considered successful when the immediate need has been addressed and then repeated again when the need arises or another is noticed.

Majority of the present church operates on a model of Give → Relief → Comfort → Repeat.

A model glaringly not enough to cater to the present era where challenges are increasingly complex, interconnected and systemic. What happens after the relief given is gone?

Transformation- the Language of the emerging age.

Transformation addresses the social, economic, educational, spiritual and structural conditions affecting the community. The world of the present time is marked by economic uncertainty, technological disruption, changing social structures, environmental challenges and increasingly complex community needs. The Church cannot afford to measure its relevance only by the number of people it reaches; it must increasingly consider the depth of transformation it facilitates. The Church of the emerging age must move from occasional relief, which responds to immediate suffering, to sustained transformation - meeting immediate needs while addressing the conditions that create those needs. That old model can leave the underlying conditions unchanged. If a community is repeatedly hungry, giving food every month may relieve hunger without changing the economic conditions producing it. If young people are unemployed, occasional financial assistance may help temporarily without creating employment. Charity asks “What can we give?”



Transformation asks in addition: “What can we build with the community?”.

The Shift

People in present times are increasingly looking to institutions (and churches) to demonstrate measurable impact, empower communities, collaborate across sectors, and address complex problems rather than simply provide episodic assistance. The AI dimension then adds another layer: the communities are looking at the Church as a place where they gain not only spiritual resources, but the knowledge, skills, networks and technologies needed to shape their own future. Church Outreaches that provides assistance that can address the symptom without changing the system that produces the need are no longer enough for the impact required of the church of the emerging age. Outreaches should move from short term programs of providing relief, giving gifts, meeting needs, spending and offering short term charity to identifying recipients and beneficiaries in order to track long term systems of building resilient individuals who are empowered. Churches should take into consideration their needs with regards to assets available, guiding them into investment opportunities thereby transforming them into self-reliant individuals with success stories measured by the church from life outcomes. The focus is to shift from “We have an outreach programme.” to “We are participating in God's mission of human and community flourishing.”

Model for Sustainable Transformation

For sustainable transformation, charity remains necessary. A person that is hungry is to be fed today! Then, other questions are to follow: “Why are they hungry?” “What can we do so that they do not have to remain hungry tomorrow?” Churches should move from “What programme should our church run?” Ask: “What does this community already have?”; Ask “what does it lack?”; “What are the five biggest problems facing the people?” Then choose two or three priority problems thereby the church then becomes a connector and catalyst.

Instead of enquiring “How much money can we give away?” Ask: “How can we deploy our resources so they keep producing benefit?” For example “Can our church building serve as a training centre during the time it's

not used?” Thereby the church's resources become community assets. Replace a “We have to solve this ourselves” mindset with a “Who needs to be at the table?” or “Who can we partner with?” mindset. “Should we work with NGOs? Other Churches?”

The goal of transformation is to help communities discover, develop and deploy the resources, gifts and leadership already present within them. Sustainable transformation requires participation and dignity. The new model for a Church building capacity for sustainable transformation is a church that moves:-

From Giving to listening: The church moves from just identifying a need woven into an outreach to listening to the community – to hear what they considered to be their need. The habit of Churches unintentionally approaching communities with a “saviour mentality”—assuming that outsiders know what a community needs must change.

From Assumptions to Data Collection – The church uses technology – AI to verify community need and ascertain interventions through understanding.

Community View from Beneficiaries to Partners: The church looks into the communities to identify strength; making them partners in their own change story. It helps people become contributors rather than permanent recipients moving from short-term relief to sustainable outcomes.

From Projects to Partnership: It connects resources rather than operating in isolation.

From Dependency to Empowerment: It develops local leadership rather than creating dependency.

From Fulfilling Needs to Ensuring Sustainability: Before launching a project, it answers these questions: Who owns it, who pays for it, who operates it, who benefits from it and what will happen to it after five years.

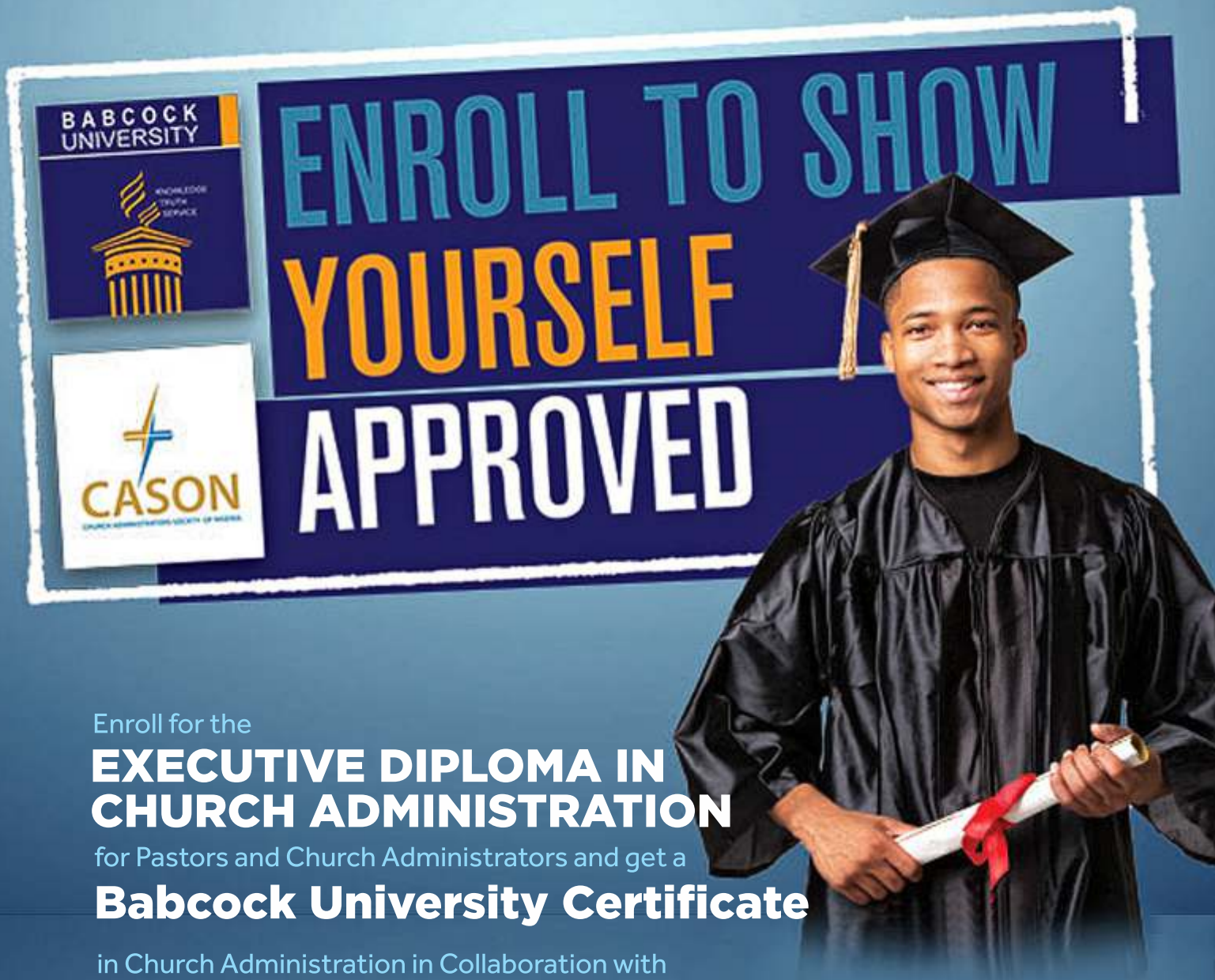
The Next Church's calling is not to abandon charity, but to connect compassionate relief with empowerment, partnership and long-term community transformation using its spiritual, human, financial, technological and community resources to create lasting improvement in people's lives.

It is alignment 'O' Clock. Get your church ready!

the battle
did not
choose us.
**we chose
the battle.**

It's a battleground
of the mind and
we're winning it
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REGISTRATION IN ONGOING