



D L A M

**DIocese OF LAGOS MAINLAND
ANGLICAN COMMUNION**

1st
SESSION
OF THE **6TH**
SYNOD

THEME:

**“LET THE CHILDREN
COME UNTO ME”-**

A focus on Baptism and the Sunday School

(Matt. 19: 14 NKJV)

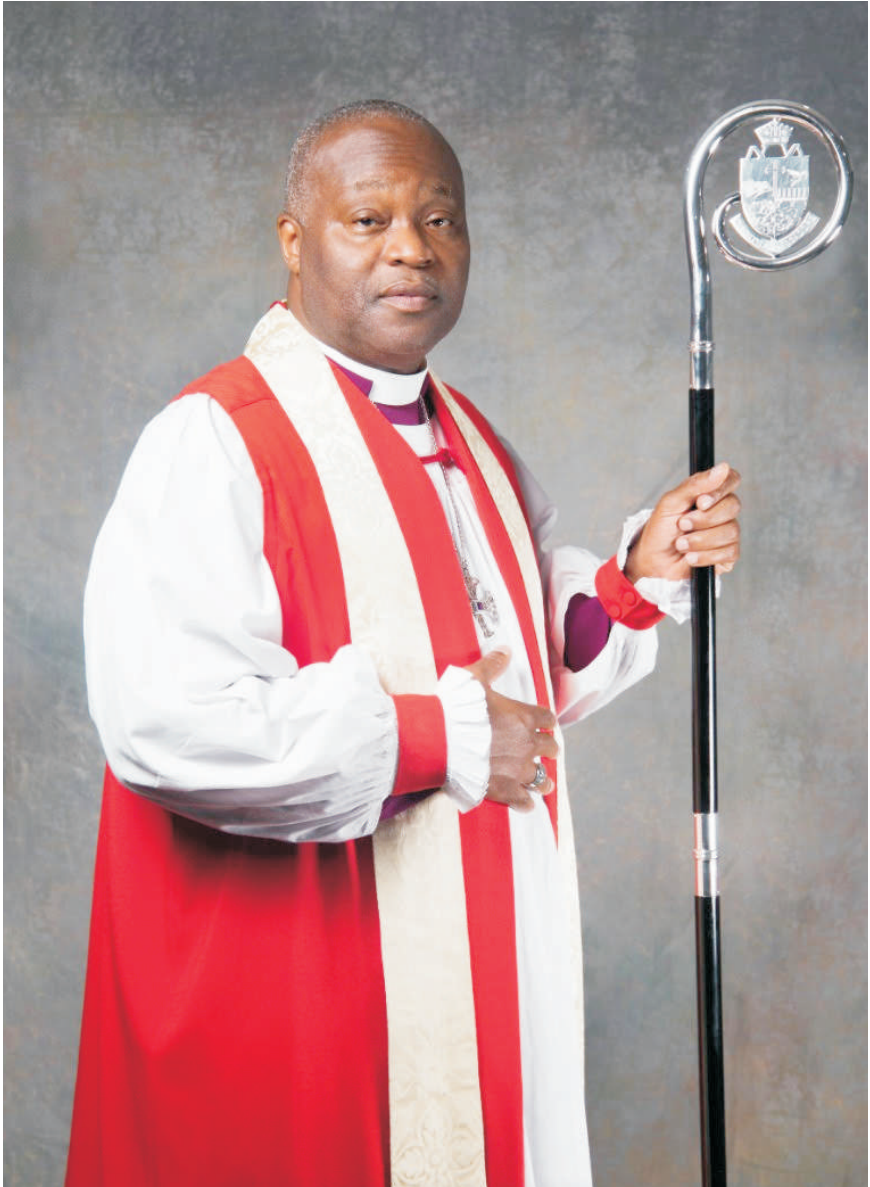
DATE:

Friday 27th May, 2022

VENUE:

ALL SAINT'S CHURCH, YABA.

**RT. REVD. AKINPELU JOHNSON
DIOCESAN BISHOP**



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SYNOD 2022

LET THE CHILDREN COME UNTO ME: A FOCUS ON BAPTISM AND THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

(MARK 10:13-16)

Your Excellency, The Executive Governor of Lagos State

Mr. Babajide Sanwoolu,

Your Graces, the Archbishops

My Lords, the Bishops

My Lord, the Chancellor

My Lord, the Deputy Chancellor

My Lords Temporal

All Legal Luminaries

All Excellencies here present

The Dean of our Cathedral

The President of the Women and Girls' Organisations,

Eminent Clergy and their wives

Distinguished laity,

Gentlemen and Women of the Press.

In the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we welcome you to the 1st session of the 6th Synod of this Diocese. We are grateful to all of you, guests and delegates alike, for your presence today. The time you have taken to be here will not be in vain. We meet with a deep sense of gratitude to God for the abundance of His grace and mercies He has freely lavished upon us, as a Diocese and as individuals; His divine protection we continue to experience and enjoy, we cannot take for granted and we are grateful to Him. Our

last Synod was wonderful and a blessing to us all and by His grace, our Synod this year will be even better.

Our theme last year; 'All Things Bright and Beautiful' was a call for us to focus on the beauty of creation and Man's role in protecting and using it as God intended. We noted the harmful effects of global warming and the danger it portends for the survival of the natural world and Man himself. God's power, presence, and majesty we said, can be discerned in nature, and that this God who can be discerned in nature is He who enters into covenant with Man. It is important to reflect on the fact that, even in this perilous and uncertain times, nature, if we can discern its working, shows that God is with us. God is concerned for the world which He so lovingly created and not only is He transcendent, He, is at the same time immanent in it.

We emphasised the fact that the command to have 'dominion' over the natural world, was not a license to exploit nature to the point of extinction, but rather, it was a call to use its resources in a sustainable way and nurturing it for the present and future generations. For our Wednesdays in Lent, the whole Diocese was able to further reflect on this theme trusting that it would lead us to repentance for our misuse of the world God so lovingly created and that we would all resolve as much as it lies within our power, to change our behaviour and spread the word of Man's responsibility and partnership with God, for creation.

This year and for other sessions of this 6th Synod, we will examine together our Anglican Rites of Initiation, though for the three sessions, it is perhaps better to say that we will be looking at some rites of passage, which we will all pass through. In relation to these Rites of Initiation, we will look at baptism with special attention

given to our Sunday School and its continued relevance and development. Next year by God's grace, we will examine Confirmation, the Eucharist, and our Youths and in the third session of Synod, we will examine together the Question of Lasting Legacies.

As we begin the 1st Session of the 6th Synod, we must thank all the officers of the Diocese and Appointees of the Bishop who have worked hard over the years for the growth and development of the Diocese. Some of our Appointees have graciously served since the inauguration of the Diocese and others were brought on board later by our pioneering Bishop. Majority of our Appointees continued when we were enthroned in 2016, and we are grateful to them for their faithful service. We appreciate all the effort, the time and commitment given at a time when the socio-economic and political climate in the country continues to deteriorate.

Attendance at meetings always come at a cost; by way of time spent on the road and the increasingly difficult security challenges we face as a nation. For instance, at our first Diocesan Board Meeting of the year, we were informed during the meeting of the armed robbery attack on one of the Clergymen, whose driver was also taken along when the vehicle was stolen. God be praised for the timely release of the Driver and the fact that our brother was able to join us at the meeting. This unfortunately, is the Nigeria we now live in. In preparation for these new sessions of synod, we have made new appointments and some reappointments, and we welcome all on board. We trust each of you, and indeed all of us, will find true and lasting joy in the Lord's service.

As a Diocese and people of God, we continue to be grateful to God for His continued faithfulness to us. We are yet to fully recover from

the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic, so there is still the need for us to continue to be cautious. Many in the Diocese have been negatively impacted economically by the pandemic and this has made things difficult for us; yet despite this, our members continue to make sacrifices, not only by their treasure but also by their time and talent. We express our gratitude to all members of this Diocese for all the sacrifices. None of us will go unrewarded in Jesus' name.

OUR GUEST PREACHERS

Profile of The Rt. Revd. Olumuyiwa Ajayi (Ph.D)

Olumuyiwa Odejide Ajayi is the fourth child among the five children born by his mother (Mrs Comfort Tejumade Ajayi). He was born in Ake, Abeokuta, Ogun State on the 2nd of November 1961 into the family of Chief Zachariah Adebowale and Mrs Comfort Tejumade Ajayi, and their ancestral home is Igan Alade in Yewa North Local Government Area of Ogun State.

He encountered Jesus and accepted him as his Lord and Saviour in Lagos after his WASC Examinations on the 24th of July 1979. He was called into the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ during his NYSC in 1985. He holds HND in marketing obtained from Ogun State Polytechnic, now Moshood Abiola Polytechnic, Bachelor of Divinity (BD) obtained from Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TCNN), Bukuru, Master of Art (MA) Ethics/Philosophy from the University of Jos and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Ethics/Philosophy also from the University of Jos.

He was trained for the ministry at the famous Immanuel College of Theology, Ibadan between 1989 and 1991, Deaconed in July 1991 and Priested in July 1992 in Diocese of Osun (Anglican Communion) by the Rt Rev. Seth Oni Fagbemi (retired Bishop of Osun Diocese, now of blessed memory). He transferred his services to the Northern part of Nigeria as a missionary in 1994 and served in Jos Diocese until he was made Bishop of the then Missionary Diocese of Pankshin on the 4th of March 2007.

He was married to Dr. Mrs. Dorcas Wusa Tabitha Ajayi (of blessed memory). He remarried to Magdalene Oghenekewve (formerly a widow), now Mrs. Magdalene Oghenekewve Ajayi on the 16th of January 2020 to the glory of God. By this union their relationship is

now blessed with Eleven (11) Children and grandchildren. Mrs. Antonia Enefola, Mrs. Teni Jatau, Mrs. Oghenekaro Ogunkola, Mrs. Sarah Lawal, Mrs. Afokoghene Atawodi, Mrs. Emuohwo Ekanem, Mrs. Oghenewede Ewhe, Mr. Omoiroro Omu, Pastor Daniel Ajayi, Pastor Philip Ajayi and Master Marvellous Ajayi. To God be the Glory.

The Rt. Revd (Prof) Dapo Asaju

Born on 16th November 1961, Dapo Asaju is from the royal family of Asaju in Iyara Ijumu, Kogi State.

The Rt. Rev. Dapo Folorunsho Asaju joined the staff of the Department of Religions Lagos State University in 1984 and rose to become professor of Christian Studies in 2004.

He obtained his diploma in Theology from Vining College of Theology, Akure, Bachelor and Master of Arts in Christian Studies from University of Ilorin. He further gained his Doctoral degree in Christian Studies, 2003. A Professor of Christian Studies at the Lagos State University, Ojo where he has served for 38 years and counting.

He began his pastoral work as a Deacon under Archbishop Adetiloye in Dec. 1998 in Diocese of Lagos and was also priested in July 1999 by Archbishop Adetiloye, Lagos. He served as Vicar, Church of Epiphany, Iba, 1998-2000, Church of Transfiguration, Ketu, 2000-2003 and Bishop James Johnson Memorial Anglican Church, Okokomaiko. Chaplain Chapel of Light, Lagos State University, 2006-2009, Priest, Cathedral of St. Philips, Diocese of Birmingham and licensee by Archbishop of Canterbury, 2003-2004. Archdeacon Missioner and Chairman Evangelism Board, Lagos West, 2009-2009.

He was consecrated Bishop and appointed Bishop Theologian January 10 2010, Director, GAFCON Bishop's Training Institute 2020; Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) Lagos State University; Rector, Crowther Graduate Theological Seminary, Abeokuta, 2009-2015; Vice-Chancellor, Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, 2015-2020. On the 2nd of April 2022, he was enthroned the Diocesan Bishop of Ilesha.

He is married to Barrister Harriet Dapo-Asaju (A Lawyer, Librarian and Theologian) and they are blessed with three children and three grandchildren.

PROFILE – Stanley Ibe – Guest Speaker

Stanley Ibe is an International Human Rights Lawyer with nearly two decades experience in Governance and Justice Reform as well as Rule of Law programming. He has managed path-breaking projects impacting poor and vulnerable people across Africa, including a Duty Solicitors programme in Nigeria; Paralegal Projects in Ghana, Malawi and Sierra Leone; a successful effort to develop Regional Standards on Policing and Pretrial Detention at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights; and two litigation projects to invalidate prolonged pretrial detention and decriminalize petty offences before the Community Court of Justice of ECOWAS and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights respectively.

His work has earned him several accolades, including the Reagan-Fascell Democracy and Draper Hills Summer Fellowships of the National Endowment for Democracy, Washington DC and Stanford University's Centre for Democracy, Development & the Rule of Law respectively. He holds the Master of Laws (LLM) with specialization in Globalization and Human Rights from Maastricht

University, the Netherlands; and Postgraduate Diplomas in International Protection of Human Rights and Justiciability of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights from the Institute for Human Rights, Abo Akademi, Turku, Finland.

He has also earned Certificates from the Hague Academy on International Law, Netherlands; Oxford University, UK; Salzburg Law School, Austria; and United States Institute of Peace, amongst others. A life member of Pan African Lawyers Union (PALU), Stanley is Author, Co-author or Editor of six books/manuals and several journal articles. He is also a visiting Lecturer in Law at the Redeemer's University, Ede.

OUR NATION

It is unfortunate that once again, we do not have more positive news to report about Nigeria. On the contrary, the situation in our nation continues to deteriorate at an alarming rate and the calls for the dismantling of Nigeria as we know it continue. In fact, many, while not openly expressing the sentiment of ending Nigeria, probably will wonder if there is any hope in our continued unity. This time, the impetus is not so much the marginalisation of ethnic groups or the domination by one ethnic group over the others. The main challenge this time seems to be the economic hardship that pervades the land. The sentiment this time is: 'let each group go its way to develop at its own pace'. There is economic trouble in the land, and it has been recently expressed by a commentator, that 'nothing is working in Nigeria, except politics.'

2023 Elections

It is with the above statement in mind that we turn our attention to the elections coming up next year. Our country is at a very critical

stage in her democratic system of governance, and we are already witnessing the build-up to the elections with various intrigues and political alignments and realignments. Candidates and members of the various political parties have continued to engage in 'carpet crossing', jostling for the best vantage points to get elected. In all this carpet crossing, no policy issues are being discussed, so the electorate just does not know what anybody stands for. There does not seem to be any political ideology except 'power and money' at all costs. In preparation, legislation has been put forward and signed which we hope will give the electoral umpires the backing to conduct a free, fair, and credible elections.

Nigeria's elections have always been flawed with irregularities, and this was corroborated by the late President Yar'adua, in his inaugural speech on the 29th of May 2007. This led to the famous Uwais Commission to review the electoral process in Nigeria, and the report he submitted is yet to be acted upon. We call upon the President and all the relevant Agencies to review the report and implement the recommendations therein for the good of our country.

We encourage all Christians to participate in the electoral process. If we decide not to, we will not be able to effect any change. Most Christians do not vote during elections because of the belief that their votes will not count, however let us believe that votes count and that the only votes that do not count are those that are not cast. We therefore call on all eligible adults in our Diocese, to take advantage of the continuous voters' registration exercise to register (for 18-year-olds or those who have never registered before); update their information or transfer their polling centres from their previous location to their new location in case of those who have moved residences. This is not the time to sit on the fence

unconcerned. The situation of the country now, calls for full participation of all eligible citizens.

Within the geographical boundaries of our Diocese, there are Seven (7) Local Government Areas and only one of them is headed by a Christian who is not an Anglican. We Anglican faithful must get involved, and influence government policy to positively affect our people. We encourage all with Civic and Political inclination, under the leadership of Venerable Folarin Shobo to go on advocacy and enlightenment visits to all parishes in the Diocese and we appeal to all Vicars to kindly co-operate with them.

Economic Challenges

The economic situation in Nigeria continues to deteriorate at an alarming rate with no hope for improvement in sight. Since the advent of COVID-19 in 2020, it was possible to blame our economic woes on the damaging effects of the pandemic, especially in the light of the global lock-down. The same is not possible this year as our economic woes today, surpass those of the lock-down period and its after effects. Our problems today clearly have to do primarily with the endemic corruption in the society, and among the political elite in particular. Corruption threatens to destroy this country and all of us are to blame, either by actively participating in it or by being silent beneficiaries of it.

Earlier this year, we all noticed long queues at petrol stations, which was finally attributed to the importation of substandard fuel imported into the country. The background to this incident was and is, the continuing debate as to the need or otherwise to end the fuel subsidy as far as the importation of petrol is concerned. Since then and despite the many assurances given by the relevant authorities, the petrol situation in the country is yet to return to

normal. Where there is fuel for sale, it is being sold at higher prices, which begs the question, 'has the fuel subsidy been removed'? We noticed too, that the cost of flying within the country has increased astronomically, which is being blamed on the cost of Aviation fuel. Now airlines we understand have been permitted to import fuel for their use. The unavailability of kerosine will also affect households which use the product for their cooking. The cost of cooking gas too continues to escalate.

On the one hand, simple Economics tells us that because of the conflict between Russia and the Ukraine, these products will automatically be scarce and more expensive, on the other hand though, we must ask the question as to the lack of political will to repair our refineries despite the provisions made every year for their maintenance. What happens to the budgeted funds and why as an oil producing nation, we do not have working refineries to provide for our domestic consumption and even the export of petroleum products? Is it not to do with the fact that for a few well-placed people, it has been better to import (some were even paid for products that never came into the country), than to have the refineries functioning?

Business is grounded too because of the astronomical cost of Diesel (AGO) in the country. As we write, diesel now costs on average N650 (six hundred and fifty naira), which means it's now most certainly impossible to carry on with any type of manufacturing, bearing in mind that we really do not have any reliable public power supply. Our Churches too must adapt and the case we have always made to the clergy for shorter services will now be forced upon us. The hope was that with the privatisation of the power sector, the epileptic power supply in the country will improve and positively impact all sectors of the economy, but alas! the amount of funds

spent on the power sector before and after privatisation, with really nothing to show for it, leads us to only one conclusion, and that is that either the power rehabilitation was carried out by incompetent hands or that corruption has once again stolen from us a greater and better Nigeria. In fact, both possibilities in the end come down to corruption, which continues to rob us of any meaningful and lasting development in the country.

Where there have been slight improvements in infrastructure in the land, corruption and a terrible mentality among our people will only but set us back. For instance, in the area of transportation by rail, people have testified to the usefulness of rail transportation where and when it is available. However, we are beginning to see increasing instances of vandalization of the network, whether by those stealing the rails to smelt them and produce other things, or to resell them. Could it also be that this is being organised by those who believe their businesses are threatened by the success of the rail system? There was also the recent bombing of the rail track of the Kaduna – Abuja line, which led to a derailment. So, terrorism too will begin to negatively impact on the little infrastructural developments we are experiencing in the land. Indeed, we are in trouble as a nation.

Rising Inflation

The rate of inflation in the country is alarming. The common man continues to bear the brunt while the upper class feels threatened due to the fear of violence, which he believes can be unleashed by the lower class due to lack and hunger. The cost of food keeps rising due to limited supply for many reasons and the manufacturing sector struggles to meet demand due to the high cost of production. There are so many inflationary pressures, and these have made the poor become poorer. Food, housing,

clothing, and healthcare are slowly but surely getting beyond the reach of the average Nigerian. The ever-depreciating value of the Naira adds to the inability of the average Nigerian to improve his quality of living. This Synod appeals to the Federal Government to do something about the high rate of the exchange of dollar which is the bedrock in the wheel of inflation in our country. This Synod also appeals to Christians to become more prudent in their daily expenditure to be able to survive this looming economic crisis.

While we can congratulate the Federal Government on some successes in infrastructural development like rail transportation and the roads, we hasten to add that the maintenance of these is just as important to justify the colossal loans taken to put them in place. The loans have been subject of debate and many Nigerians are worried about our ability to pay back particularly to China, which bankrolled most of it. We cried out last year when we were informed of the plan to build a rail line into Niger Republic at the expense of the country. Perhaps our fears are now abated with the news that China has now decided to stop providing loans to the government. We encourage the federal government to concentrate on a national rail system fit for purpose, before embarking on an international line. From the point of view of our national security, an international train system is not to be encouraged at this time.

Education

Our educational system is undoubtedly in trouble especially at the tertiary level, with the ever-recurring ASUU strikes which disrupt the studies of our young ones and impoverishes their parents by endlessly prolonging the period of their studies. The ASUU and the Federal Government have long been at loggerheads for a while now, but the case has taken a new dimension as NASU and other

related unions have also joined the strike action.

Surprisingly, the Nigerian Students Union took a swift action by declaring a protest in which they occupied the Eagle Square declaring notable streets in Abuja as Universities of Streets. In their submission, they lamented the long closure of schools which has affected them academically and otherwise. They therefore declared that they would remain on the streets until the issue between the Government and ASUU is resolved. This Synod urges the Government and ASUU to reach a quick and lasting solution to enable a return to the classrooms in our tertiary institutions.

Unemployment

The economic downturn which even before the pandemic had made employment possibilities impossible for our youths will be further heightened by the current energy crisis and the worldwide effect of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. What hope is there of employment for the unemployed when even now the jobs of the employed are in peril? In the absence of any social security safety net, many of our youths continue to try to illegitimately leave this country for allegedly better opportunities abroad. This is a journey fraught with many dangers. Few have made it, and the 'unsuccessful lucky' few, have managed to return to tell the story.

Apart from those who have tried illegal immigration, so many other young professionals and entrepreneurs continue to 'relocate' abroad in what can be described as a 'brain drain'. One area where this is most glaring is in the health sector which has lost so many doctors and nurses to other countries. It seems it is just impossible, not only to get jobs, but job satisfaction if you do have a job. Canada has become a favourite destination for young ones in recent years and it seems as if our government is satisfied with the

current trend. We call on the Federal Government to put policies in place which will actively encourage job creation and create enabling environments which will encourage young ones to stay in the country.

Security Challenges

The recent bombing of the Abuja – Kaduna rail line, the killing of about nine people and the kidnapping of some passengers on that train has brought home to the unbelieving the perilous times we live in the country. There is fear in the country not only during inter-state road travels, but also in many communities in various parts of the country. The fear of violence is very real, and the daily toll of attacks keep rising. It was felt in some quarters before that the Federal Government was either unwilling or unable now to find a real and lasting solution to this problem. In the light of the train attack, it seems clearer that our government has run out of ideas as to how to eradicate terror in the land. The country is losing on all fronts: the economy is suffering due to uncertainty and lack of investment, lives and property are destroyed daily, and the huge sums of money being budgeted for the purchase of arms for the military seems unjustified. Perhaps in the light of the level of corruption the question should be asked about the sincerity of purpose as regards the utilisation of the funds budgeted.

The increase in kidnapping and banditry cases across the length and breadth of the country calls for great concern, the daily breaking news of attacks and kidnappings is to say the least worrisome. While we thank the gallant men and women of the Armed forces, for their great sacrifices in trying to curtail this reign of terror in the country, there still seems to be many things that are lacking it seems. The intelligence gathering mechanism needs reorientation for the work of the artillery to be seen to be working

well in our favour, to reduce collateral damage on the part of both the civilian and military.

The military hierarchy not only needs a change of tactics but must be politically liberated to prosecute the war the bandits, Boko Haram, ISSIS, ISWAP, and other dissident groups operating in the NorthEast and NorthWest and some parts of NorthCentral of the country have in plain language declared against the country. Now, many excuses are made for why they seem encumbered in their response in Northern Nigeria. Perhaps we may suggest that if they respond in the north in the same way they have responded in the SouthEast, we might have seen some difference being made, but alas! the state of insecurity in the nation will undoubtedly negatively impact on business and investment and the overall wellbeing of the people.

The concerns raised last year about the fight against terror remains pertinent, and I quote:

The response of our military leaves a lot to be desired and the recent allegation of massive fraud tells us where we are as a nation. Funds meant for purchasing of military equipment have apparently been looted by Senior Officers. If this is true, then what hope is there that our already demoralised army can fight insurgency on equal footing as the enemy? It is as clear as crystal that the insurgents, Bandits, Boko Haram or cattle herders are better equipped than the Nigerian Army. One other issue that is a real discouragement to observers is that the Nigerian Army seems more ready to respond to and crush perceived more dangerous enemies from the South East, that is, the IPOB and ESN. This is certainly risible. How we wish that they

would control and subdue the activities of insurgents in the North as a matter of urgency first and then perhaps other regional agitations for the dissolution of the country would drastically reduce. The clamour for independent nations is directly linked to the perceived lopsided nature of the administration of the country by Northern leaders for the benefit of the North and the detriment of the South.

Sincere attention must also be urgently paid to the carnage going on in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria, where unknown gun men are on the rampage always, attacking police stations and looting their armoury. This has led to proliferation of firearms in the hands of untrained youths in the society. We want to appeal to our brothers and sisters from the East to please sheath their swords and tow the line of peace for the development of the region. The current 'Monday sit at home' is crippling the economic activities of businessmen and women and undermining the growth of the economy of the states in the East. The country is already experiencing a fragile economy and forcing them to sit at home when they are meant to be outside pursuing their daily bread needs to be reviewed. Whatever grievances that may be pushing this attitude can be sorted out round a conference table between the government and the aggrieved youths.

Russia-Ukraine war

The whole world is put in suspense by the war going on now between Russia and Ukraine. The war is gradually becoming a huge humanitarian crisis with reports of atrocities apparently being committed against the civilian population. There are reports of widespread cases of rape of women and the targeted execution of men. We call on the United Nations to do everything possible to stop this conflict and end the suffering on all sides. The negative

economic effect of the war is now being felt across the world, coupled with the sanctions against Russia. The Ukraine is a large exporter of wheat and with its ports blockaded, shipments abroad cannot be made.

Russia is a large exporter of oil Petroleum Products and with sanctions in place, the cost of oil is high, which ordinarily should be to our advantage; however, as importers of petroleum products, we must pay higher prices. The costs of Diesel (AGO), Cooking Gas, and Aviation fuel coupled with a depreciating Naira, make for a painful economic experience for us all.

Let us therefore as a Synod pray the Almighty God to bring this war to an end because though happening thousands of miles away, the effects are being felt by us all. Besides, there is a constant threat of the use of nuclear weapons which will be of no advantage to any country.

Global Warming and Environmental Issues

Last year, Synod considered this very important topic and we reminded ourselves the whole of creation belongs to God, and that Man's role is to care and nurture it, for the future existence of Man depends on a right use of the earth and its resources. Environmental degradation still occurs at a very high rate and our emission of pollutants constitutes a health hazard to all. In February 2022, the Church of Nigeria held its Standing Committee in Port Harcourt, Rivers State and flying in by air, one sees the enormity of the problem with heavy soot from illegal refineries blocking out the sun's rays. We cannot imagine how difficult it will be for those who suffer from asthma to thrive in that environment.

We are grateful to Venerable Dr. Emeka Onwuakpa and his team for putting together a Bible Study used by our parishes on Wednesdays in lent on the theme. We hope that by it, other members of our parishes who could not participate at Synod, would have learnt from it. We had hoped that after the Synod, parishes would have set the ball rolling by doing practical things such as recycling plastic bottles, i.e., separating them from the usual garbage, collecting them and selling them. Little changes here and there could make a big difference.

To keep the issue of the environment at the forefront of our thoughts, we will institute in our Diocese, a "Creation Sunday", which will be set aside for all members of our parishes to focus on ecological issues. It will be inform of a Eucharistic service, and all parishes will use the same readings and format. In conjunction with the Administrators, we will decide what day to have the service, and we suspect that perhaps it should come up before parishes start celebrating Adult Harvests. We all must join hands together to make the world a suitable place for our continued existence and that of other creatures and preserve God's world to His glory.

Violence Against Women

It is unfortunate that there is a rise in cases of both physical and sexual violence against women. In recent times, Social Media has reported various instances of the physical abuse of women, even by their husbands. Similarly, instances of both physical and sexual abuse of the girl child is on the rise. We recognise too that particularly in Lagos State, the abuse of the girl child in whatever form comes with very serious consequences and we put on record our appreciation to the state government for this. The incidence of rape too is steadily on the rise, and we call on the authorities to do everything possible to stamp this out, that where there is sufficient

evidence or proof of the crime, people must be prosecuted.

It is against this background that the recent Bills sent to the National Assembly by women asking for better participation in politics should be seen. Three of such bills were apparently were sent and only one was passed. At such a time when we as a nation should be doing more to enhance the dignity of women and see to the better treatment of women in general, it seems that the male dominated National Assembly is so prejudiced against women. We advocate for bills to be passed on merit, but sometimes too, some level of affirmative action to encourage a better deal for women should be considered. This has led some vocal women activists to continue to agitate and protest against the National Assembly. This Synod appeals to lawmakers to carry the womenfolk of the nation (along with) them and not in any way discriminate against women but rather include them in the nation's polity. The Church too perhaps must also constantly assess its treatment of women. It is heartening to see for instance that many Churches now have female Wardens; but at the same time, as we were asked a few months ago, "when are we going to start having Churches named after women?" This is certainly something worth thinking about not necessarily for the future, but especially in the present.

LAGOS STATE

We continue to be extremely grateful to God for Lagos State and for the relative peace and security we enjoy especially when compared to other parts of the country. While we can safely say that the level of insecurity in the country is unprecedented, with the wanton destruction of life and property daily, and we thank God that Lagos State has overall been spared the worst. There have been the usual attacks by cultists and area boys which cause needless carnage, but on the whole, we are grateful to God. It is

not a situation that we can or should take for granted, but each of us must do all we can to support the government which has played its role dutifully. We congratulate the Chief Security Officer of Lagos State, His Excellency, Babajide Sanwoolu on the current situation of things, and at the same time, we encourage him to do more to improve on the work being done to consolidate the gains already made in the area of security in the state.

We note with others too that Lagos State does not stand alone and the threats that other states face, particularly in the light of the elections coming up next year, the stakes are high. The recent news that over 250,000 cutlasses were discovered by the Nigeria Customs Service in a container, is a source for serious concern. It is more probable than not, that various other offensive weapons might have already come into the country to be unleashed on innocent Nigerians during the electoral process next year. The situation of things in the country, calls not only for prayers, but also for vigilance; not only on the part of our security agencies, but also by every well-meaning citizen. For instance, we must not take our eyes off the ever-increasing numbers of 'okada' riders, who will never obey traffic laws, and are aggressive in riding and behaviour. The rising cases of violence in their dealings with law enforcement officers and other road users are further emboldening them. Their number alone is a security risk factor.

Amid the relative peace in which we find ourselves in Lagos, we must once again commend our Governor for the progress we are witnessing in the area of road rehabilitation and construction. Some of the rehabilitation and construction are being done in co-operation with the Federal Ministry of Works, and this has led to the improvements we are seeing. However we realise that these projects add to the frustration of motorists, particularly when it

seems that the whole state is now a construction site. We humbly ask for spacing between projects particularly on highways and at the same time, for the patience, understanding and co-operation of motorists in our use of the roads. We are particularly grateful to His Excellency for all our friends in Badagry are now assured that sooner rather than later, the roads to Badagry will be motorable, that their nightmares would soon be over.

Last year, we noted that the construction of the Light Rail Transit System was making appreciable progress and congratulate His Excellency, that the work is continuing at a fast pace. Visitors from other states to Lagos cannot but be impressed by what residents of Lagos will, God willing, be soon enjoying. However, even as we have so much to look forward to by way of transportation, we remind all residents of Lagos that we are all responsible for the care of infrastructure we currently have or that are being put in place for our use. The recent fire outbreak under the Apongbon bridge was from all accounts, due to the carelessness of those utilizing the space as a market. Its closure is now a source of great distress to road users and its repair will not only be time consuming, but also at great expense. The government must make sure there is alternative space provided for traders away from bridges as the safety of all should be of paramount concern.

We note with delight, that the vision of a 21st Century compliant transportation system is slowly but surely being actualised. The construction of the light rail metro system we are made to believe, will be partially completed, and commissioned later this year. This will go a long way in easing the traffic congestion in our city. Its completion will indeed be a laudable feat, but as always, we humbly remind the government of Lagos State that beyond the building is the equally important need for maintenance of the

network and the need for it to be managed and run by competent hands. In the light of the recent rail attacks, the security of the network must be put in place. We hope too that plans for adequate power to run the trains will be put in place, otherwise, people will be reluctant to patronize the system. We wonder if our government has any plans to clean the canals and use them also for transportation? All options must be properly considered to give the citizens of our state, every available option.

The Diocese of Lagos Mainland is grateful to Her Excellency, Dr Mrs Ibijoke Sanwo-Olu for her attendance at the opening ceremony of the Women and Girls' Organisations Conference last year July. Her presence was a source of encouragement, not only to the women but also to the Diocese. Finally, we could say, that our Governor at least had recognised us. This recognition, for which we are grateful, was further enhanced with the appointment on the 1st of January 2022, of the Diocesan by our Governor, as the Chairman of the Lagos State Pilgrims Welfare Board. This appointment is for three years and by God's grace, it brought with it, positive recognition to the Diocese. In putting on record once again, our sincere gratitude to His Excellency, the Diocesan humbly requests the continued prayers of all the faithful to enable him discharge his responsibilities faithfully and to the best of his ability.

LET THE CHILDREN COME UNTO ME: A FOCUS ON BAPTISM AND THE SUNDAY SCHOOL (MATT 19: 13-14)

Over the years, it has become quite clear that the Anglican Church in Nigeria has lost many of its members to other denominations, initially to the African Independent Churches, and more recently to the Neo-Pentecostal Movement. In fact, it can be argued that the most prominent of these 'Pentecostal Churches' have many members with Anglican background, and this is not considering women who have joined these Churches by marriage. In fact, some very prominent Pentecostal leaders too were once practising Anglicans and who for one reason or the other left our Church. One of the reasons usually given is that our Church lacks 'spiritual dynamism' or as others would say, 'our church is spiritually dead'.

Whether or not this is true, is not our focus now. What is our focus now is a re-examination of our understanding of baptism and the tradition and practise of infant baptism, which is a major difference between our Church and other Christian denominations that do not accept the practice; and the need to make the point that our Church needs to focus and invest more in the Sunday School system, as a veritable means of growing the Church and retaining membership in the years ahead.

It is true that we are still losing members, particularly the youth and one wonders if the long-established system of the rites of passage that takes the child from baptism through the Sunday school, to the youth fellowship, then to the adult church has broken down irreparably. Many of course, rightly or wrongly, link this to the advent of the Neo-Pentecostal churches. To rectify this problem, many churches created 'youth fellowships' or as in some cases,

'youth churches', which was hoped would keep the young ones in the Church until such a time as they were ready to take their place in the adult Church. To be candid, the success of this initiative has been varied and limited. It has not proven to be the antidote to the problem. Pastorally too, there have been issues when unfortunately, due to a lack of proper supervision, these 'fellowships' or 'youth churches', have led to a situation best described as 'a church within a church' and in itself has given rise to the youth exodus from the Church.

Over time, it has become clear to some that nothing has changed and that the 'adult church' is still suffering from the same lack of a 'renewal from within' which the establishment of 'youth churches' was supposed to address. Overall, while it seemed that many Sunday schools were thriving, there was still a disconnect when it came to the children eventually taking their place in the adult church. Even, in the parishes with 'youth churches', the disconnect is still present; for more often than not, many of our Anglican youths are not able to successfully make the transition to the adult church. The result therefore is that the average Anglican congregation is made up, not of youths but people in their 50s and above.

To address this disconnect therefore, a great deal of attention and emphasis has been placed on the 'youth fellowship' or 'youth church' at great expense to retain them in our parishes and this very often as we have noted above, comes with limited success. We do so in the belief that the youths are 'the church of the future' and the expense, time and effort given to the cause is justified this way. However, we would humbly like to suggest that while the youths are very important to the present and future of the church, the Sunday school is vitally more important, as it is the foundational

stage of the long Christian journey. The youths by nature are restless and would often wonder, but it is our belief that if we get the Sunday school stage right, we will not have to struggle as we do now to get the youths and retain them within the Anglican church.

In our unannounced visits to various parishes in the Diocese, we have come to the realisation that overall, we are blessed in many parishes with a very healthy number of children, but we are convinced that we are not yet doing all that we can to teach, mentor and harness them for the future of our church. Very often, we find that children are not being taught in conducive environments and that in very many places, the number of children present, and the space allocated to them do not make for effective teaching. Too often, children did not have individual copies of the Sunday school manual and therefore could not really benefit from it. It seems for some churches, there simply is not the means of making this readily available to each child, and perhaps for others, it is a case of not seeing the need for the investment in the Sunday school. At the Diocesan headquarters we are aware of the many delays before payment for and collection of materials by Vicars. Is this merely down to a lack of funds? We don't think so; there surely is an element of a lack of concern for the Sunday School by some Vicars.

There is, however, we think, a more subtle and deadlier problem that confronts us as a church, which might be the underlying reason for the disconnect between the 'adult church' and both the 'youth church' and 'Sunday school'; and it has to do with the content of what is being taught (doctrine) and how the youths and children worship (liturgy). If these two areas are out of sync with the adult Church, then we are of the opinion that all we are doing is

preparing our young ones for other churches, usually of the Neo-Pentecostal flavour! Indeed, over the years, particularly with the coming of the Neo-Pentecostal Churches, both our doctrines and liturgy have come under pressure, and it is unfortunate that sometimes, our Anglican doctrines and liturgy lose out, in the quest to retaining our 'youths' at all costs. At the same time, those who are comfortable with Anglican doctrines now feel lost at home. Where and how can we find a balance?

One of the areas in which our Anglican doctrines or our understanding of scripture has come under pressure has to do with Baptism and what we mean by it. The questions about the place and meaning of Baptism in the Church is in some respects as old as the Church itself. While it is generally accepted that Christian Baptism has its antecedents in the Baptism of John, it is also clear that the question of ritual purity goes even further to Jewish purity rituals. For our purposes however, we will limit ourselves to what we now understand and practice as Christian Baptism, which particularly within our Anglican heritage and tradition, we refer to as a Sacrament (a word which is not in the Bible but which we understand as meaning an outward sign of an inward spiritual grace) and is our primary Rite of Initiation into membership of the Church, the Body of Christ and it is extended to both adults and infants.

As a Rite of Initiation into the Church, there are some, not only Neo-Pentecostals and Baptists who together with us are part of the Evangelical heritage, but also within our own membership, who disagree and hold that baptism of infants and children cannot be considered as legitimate as infants and young children cannot express faith in Christ. Therefore, in discussing our Sunday School we must try to come to some understanding as to why the Anglican

Church upholds infant baptism, the role of the Sunday school (which is usually the first port of call for infant children in our churches), in preparing them till they are ready for Confirmation as youths or adults, in the hope that they would take their place as adults in the church.

Antecedents of Christian Baptism

Christian Baptism as the New Testament presents it, implies that the tradition of baptizing those who converted to Christianity was derived from the John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1-12), but the source of his own practice is uncertain. Some argue that it was based on the Ablutions of the Jewish Essene Community at Qumran, but this were repeated washings related to their need for constant ritual purity and really cannot be related to initiatory practices. Some others have suggested that John was influenced by the practice of baptizing new converts to Judaism, but it is not certain if this practice was being done during his time or whether it started at a later date. Perhaps also as some argue, that it arose out of the Israelite traditions of ritual purification (Lev. 15:5-13) or prophetic symbolism, which had spoken of God's people being cleansed with pure water in preparation for the coming of the messianic age (Ezek. 36:2-8).

Then again, we cannot really say if the Christian use of baptism began with Jesus himself or only in the Church after his resurrection. The synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) tell of the baptism of Jesus by John but say nothing of him baptizing his followers. On the other hand, John's Gospel has no account of Jesus being baptised, but speaks of him baptising others, with a clarification that it was indeed his disciples performing the actual baptisms (Jn. 3:22, 26; 4:1; 4:2).

Matthew's Gospel tells of the 'Great Commission' – the command to preach to all nations, with the command to baptize; but scholars point to difficulties in accepting this is an authentic saying of Jesus.

Baptismal Practice

From earliest times as the Book of Acts portrays, it was usual practice to baptize converts into the Church, through a process which included water baptism. Unfortunately, the New Testament itself does not provide clarity as to the way such baptisms were performed. For instance, after Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, thousands were baptised, but the actual method used was not disclosed. On the other hand, at the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch, water was used. However, it does seem that water was indeed an essential element, and the preference for the use of 'living water' (flowing water) suggests that baptisms were performed in a river or pool rather than in a domestic bath. The image of baptism as a Christians participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus used by Paul, suggests immersion in water, though in later practice in some areas, people stood in shallow baths and had water poured over them.

In the Book of Acts of the Apostles, earliest baptisms were carried out 'in the name of Jesus' (Acts 2:38) which predates the Trinitarian formular based on Matthew's Gospel. The New Testament is not too explicit as to other expectations from candidates other than faith expressed and repentance demanded (Acts 2:38), but even in Acts of the Apostles, we notice that some instructions or teaching is given before baptism.

Various Baptismal Imageries

We find in the New Testament certain images employed to convey

the meaning and significance of baptism. In the early Church too and in the writings of the Fathers, we find evidence of different imagery and theology used to interpret and express what was thought to happen during and when a person became a Christian. In the letter to the Hebrews 6:4 and 10:32, the baptized person is described as having been 'illuminated'; which is the same imagery that is used in 1Peter 2:9, that God has 'called you out of darkness into his marvellous light'. In the epistle of John 3, the metaphor of rebirth by water and Spirit is used, like what is used in Titus 3:5, which talks of 'the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit.'

In Paul's baptismal theology however, the primary image used is of the baptized enjoying union with Christ through a participation in his death and resurrection (Romans 6:2ff; Colossians 2:12). He also utilizes the metaphor of a Christian having been sealed as God's people (2Cor 1:22); an imagery which is repeated in the Epistle to the Ephesians, where the members of the Church are said to have been 'sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance' (1:13-14; 4:30). This 'sealing' is like the idea in Revelation 7:30, which talks of the servants of God being sealed upon their foreheads. This metaphor seems to be derived from trade, where a seal authenticated a change of ownership; for Christians were once slaves to sin, but now they have been marked as belonging to God (Romans 6:16-23), and the 'Holy Spirit' constitutes the 'deposit' which guarantees that the transaction will be completed at the second coming.

In Galatians (3:27), Paul speaks of baptism as being clothed in a new garment, since it describes the baptized as having 'put on Christ'; and both Colossians 3:9-10 and Ephesians 4:22-24 speak of putting off the old nature putting on the new. This imagery of

'putting off and putting on' is like the eschatological scene in 2Cor. 5:2-3, which expresses the desire 'to put on our heavenly dwelling, so that ... we may not be found naked'. This expression may in turn may have arisen because of candidates for baptism taking off their clothes and entering the water for baptism and dressing up after. There might also have been a reference to the passage in Revelation 7:9-14, which describes the countless multitude wearing robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb.

There is also, in 1 John 2:20 and 27, the image of baptism as being 'anointed' with the Holy Spirit, which differs from Paul's concept of being 'sealed' with the Holy Spirit. This 'anointing' with the Holy Spirit, is based on the Israelite tradition of the anointing with oil of both priests and kings as a sign of their Divine election (1 Sam 16: 1-13). The title Messiah which in Hebrew means 'anointed one' and which in Greek is translated 'Christos', Christ; led to early Christian understanding of Jesus as having been anointed with the Holy Spirit (Lk. 4:16; Acts 4:27; Acts 10:38) and as having received God's Spirit at his baptism (Matt. 3:16; Mk. 1:10; Lk. 3:22). Since there was a belief that Christians too in their baptisms received the Holy Spirit, there was also the understanding that Christians too are anointed just as Jesus had been. The idea that Christians constituted a 'royal priesthood' (1 Pet. 2:9;) or a kingdom of priests (Rev. 1:6) which was derived from Exodus 19:6, probably also contributed to seeing baptism as anointing.

Christian baptism - what does it mean to us as Anglicans?

A simple answer to this fundamental question might be found in the introductory section of the order for Holy Baptism as found in our new Prayer Book, and it reads:

Since all who are born into sin are being regenerated

through faith in Jesus Christ, the sacrament of baptism is for us a sign and seal of this new birth, and adoption into God's family. Therefore, all infants who are brought forth for baptism in faith by their Christian parents and sponsors, and all adults who come into it through repentance and faith are thus made new creatures in Christ. By this sacrament of baptism, they are co-sharers of His death and resurrection and members of His everlasting kingdom.'

It is important to state, before we examine what we as Anglicans understand or should understand by Christian baptism to state that, Christian Baptism differs from other baptisms such as the baptism of John or any other rites of purification, by the fact that it is intimately linked to Jesus. It is intimately linked to Jesus, not only because it is performed in obedience to His injunction in Matthew's Gospel to 'preach the gospel to all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit ...'(Matt. 27:18), but because it is rooted in His death and resurrection. Paul in Romans 6:3-4 writes:

... Or don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into his death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

The death and resurrection of Christ therefore differentiates Christian baptism from other baptisms and for Paul, Christian baptism is the means by which the baptised person is joined to Christ; hence it is our initiation into the Church, which is 'the Body of Christ'. It might be fair to say that the New Testament knows no other way by which one can become part of Christ apart from baptism. The expression used in the introductory of the section

referred to above is 'adoption' into God's family. In the prayer of the blessing of water to be used we find: 'We thank You, Father, for the water of baptism, in it we are buried with Christ in His death, by it we share in His resurrection, through it we receive the sign of the forgiveness of our sins and our adoption as God's children by the Holy Spirit.' We are therefore by baptism, children of God by adoption and grace.

To delve deeper into the significance of Christian Baptism and what it means or should mean to us as Anglicans, such that the result is that we become a part of Christ, we will have to consider the concepts of the 'new birth', 'regenerated', 'new creatures' or 'new life' which we find throughout the baptismal liturgy of our Church. Apart from the introductory section, we find in the prayer of blessing of the water to be used, a clear reference to this 'new life' made possible in baptism in the words: 'Now Lord, sanctify this water, we pray you, by the power of Your Holy Spirit, that those who are here baptised in it may be cleansed from their sins and being born again may continue forever in the risen life of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour...!'

New Birth and Born Again

The phrase 'born again' is derived from the New Testament. For instance, in Nicodemus' encounter with Jesus as recorded in John's gospel, Jesus tells him that 'no one can see the kingdom of God unless he has been born again'. Similarly, the epistle of Peter opens with a thanksgiving to God, because 'by his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead' (1Peter 1:3). In fact, in the conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus goes on to say, 'no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and spirit' (Jn3:5).

The Collins Concise Dictionary defines rebirth as 'a second or new birth' and this carries with it the idea of the end of one life and the beginning of a new one. Within the context of Christianity, it is a term that is useful to describe what Paul describes as the status of Christians who having been baptised into Christ, have thereby participated in his death and resurrection, symbolising the physical death to sin and the spiritual rising to new life in Christ. Within Christian theology however, the term is usually used interchangeably with 'regeneration' which unlike 'rebirth' does not imply the sense of death. The Collins dictionary refers to regeneration as 'to undergo or cause to undergo moral, spiritual, or physical renewal or invigoration'.

Moltmann in seeking a better understanding of the term 'rebirth' refers to the usage where the word in Greek referred to worldly time. For the Greeks time was cyclical and the beginning of each cycle was understood as rebirth. On the other hand, in Jewish apocalyptic usage, 'rebirth' was understood eschatologically, symbolising 'the unique and final rebirth for the eternal kingdom of the creation which had become old and transient and mortal'. Thus 're' is understood as 'new' and not 'rebirth' to old life. Consequently he says " 'reborn' or 'born again' frequently used in America does not make the point, for what is in fact meant is not regeneration but the beginning of a new life (Jn 3: 3-5)." Furthermore, Moltmann adds that the cosmic dimension of the understanding of the word as evident in both Daniel 7 and Matthew 19:28 was not taken into consideration by the reformers, pietistic and revivalist theologians. Thus, rebirth or regeneration was viewed as something which happened in human beings as an inward personal experience in the soul and not as an expectation for the whole suffering and dying world. Burkhardt using these terms together says 'regeneration' or 'new birth' (Tit. 3:5; Jn. 3:3; 1Pet.

1:3) describes the inner renewal by the Spirit of God which takes place when a person becomes a Christian.

The divine nature of the new birth is further illustrated by Enns when he writes:

Two basic passages of scripture discuss regeneration as it pertains to impartation of new life to the believer. John 3:3 (although not using the word regeneration) refers to regeneration as a "new birth." The Greek word translated "new" is anothēn and may be translated "from above." In other words, the second birth is a birth from above, from God. The new birth is a spiritual birth in contrast to the first birth which is a physical birth. In the spiritual birth the Holy Spirit regenerates the person; He is the means of regeneration. In John 3:5 the phrase "is born" is passive, indicating it is a work done upon man, not by man. Man does not bring about regeneration; the Holy Spirit produces it.

Erickson views the concept of regeneration as part of the subjective aspects of salvation closely linked to the concept of conversion. Noting the different approaches taken for instance by Armenians who insist that conversion (which includes repentance and faith) is prior to regeneration and Calvinists (who take seriously the fact of the total depravity of man and therefore his ability to respond to God) and see the need for regeneration before conversion. He views regeneration as after conversion and primarily as God's supernatural transformation of individual lives when they accept Christ. Underlying the doctrine of regeneration are the various biblical portrayals of human nature as fallen and 'incapable of doing anything to alter their condition of blindness and their

natural tendency towards 'sin' and therefore in need of divine transformation.

Noting the attendant difficulty in understanding the concept of rebirth and regeneration 'because the new birth deals with matters not perceived by the senses', Erickson makes several assertions about it, that it involves something new, a reversal of an individual's natural tendencies but even though it involves something new, it does not result in anything foreign to human nature. Rather,

... the new birth is the restoration of human nature to what it originally was intended to be and what it in fact was before sin entered the human race at the time of the fall. It is simultaneously the beginning of a new life and a return of the old life and activity.

Further assertions made by Erickson are that the new birth is instantaneous and not a process and that though instantaneously complete, it is not an end in itself but the beginning of a spiritual growth which continues throughout an individual's lifetime and very importantly, that it is a supernatural occurrence and not something that can be attained through human effort. The view that rebirth is a supernatural occurrence is supported by Moltmann who states that the medium of regeneration is the Holy Spirit. He writes:

The operation of the Spirit as we experience it is therefore a double one: it is the justification of the godless out of grace and their rebirth to a living hope through their installation in their right to inherit God's future.

With reference to Titus 3:5-7 and 1 Peter 1:3 he adds:

The interpretation or regeneration or new birth as new

creation is Christologically based, pneumatologically accomplished and eschatologically orientated.

Thus, to be born again implies a willingness by the individual or group to develop a closer relationship with God in such a way as to impact on their daily lives. It not only refers to the inward spiritual renewal but also to the ethical or moral transformation which should follow as a result. The truth of the matter has been that there probably has been a perceived failure to get the 'ethical and moral transformation which should follow baptism as understood and practised by the Church, hence the appeal of something considered more demanding of the individual. This has led to an exodus from our Church due to what has been considered an apparent 'spiritual lethargy' that had beset the Church for so long compared to the apparent dynamism of the Neo-Pentecostal Churches. Or perhaps the exodus away from the Anglican Church might be as a result of a crisis of praxis which the Late Bishop Oluwole saw and against which he urged very strongly, '...let us not aim at large annual returns, but let us labour, in teaching and prayer, that every candidate baptized by us may, indeed, be born again. It is a real danger to the life of the Church to fill it with baptized heathen....'

Thus, it now seems that many within our Church who have directly or indirectly been influenced by the Pentecostal Movement no longer see (or perhaps never knew) the context for rebirth as water baptism. The Nigerian Pentecostal emphasis on the need for individual faith and the individual confession of Christ together with the attendant expectation to live visible Christian lives seem to many within the Church as the effective antidote for the apparent Anglican spiritual lethargy.

Particularly among the youth who having encountered Neo-Pentecostal teaching on rebirth and the manner of its presentation on university campuses, it has proved to be a refreshingly new and particularly relevant dimension to Christianity which within the context of an increasingly difficult and uncertain socio-political and economic climate seems to be a more valid expression of Christianity. Thus, even if the Anglican Church did actively express the 1662 understanding of the concept, it is one which probably would not speak to them within the context of the reality of their everyday lives. Hence there has been an exodus of very many youths and even adults away from the Anglican Church into the Pentecostal Churches, though whether this trend continues or has been reversed is open to debate.

While it is possible to point to the various theological understandings that Churches have to the concept of the new birth, it is possible to argue that the ethical dimension of the concept as used and understood within our context is less contentious. For example, when discussing the outcome of the recent Papal election and the failure of the Nigerian Cardinal Arinze to emerge as Pope, the Anglican Bishop of Enugu, the then Rt. Revd. Emmanuel Chukwuma made an ethical link between the nation's moral ills and the outcome of this election. In his opinion, God needed moral sanity in Nigeria before a Pope could emerge from it. His remedy therefore was that the whole nation needed to be 'born again'.

Here Bishop Chukwuma has used the concept with the ethical implications which would be readily understood by all (Muslims included), as a remedy for the nation's moral ills. However, justifying his position theologically would be difficult to achieve. It might be argued that it was a subtle call to non-Christians to

become Christians but the sense and context in which the comment was made imply that Christians were being included in his call for all to be born again. So, it seems that in this use of the term here, ethical considerations are being made without reference to the theological implications.

Bishop Chukwuma's call for all to be born again, when put within the context of the our Church, highlights the ambiguity that exists between the current theological and liturgical provisions and the contemporary understanding of the new birth within the Church. The understanding now commonly expressed of the new birth does not reflect the formal theological and liturgical provisions of the Church which as we have noted is based on the 1662 understanding of the concept.

For example, in a sermon preached at the Cathedral Church of Christ, Marina Lagos, on the 27th of November 2005, the then Provost of the Cathedral, The Very Revd. Omololu asked if all present had been 'born again' and whether all 'had confessed and accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour' (which we do in the creeds and sing in some hymns anyway). Within the context of the 1662 understanding of rebirth, Baba Omololu's question would seem to be out of place as most, if not all present, were baptised and confirmed. Similarly, in a tract written and distributed by the Directorate of Evangelism of the Anglican Diocese of Lagos, the 'dress code' to 'the wedding feast' is described in terms similar to the Nigerian Pentecostal understanding of rebirth. Emphasis is placed on the need for the individual to 'accept that you are a sinner', 'believe that Jesus came to save you', 'confess your sins', and 'doing it with all sincerity right now'. The fact that this tract and others such as this are regularly given out to both members and non-members alike, points to the fact that the biblical doctrine or

rebirth is increasingly being understood in a way contrary to that of the 1662 understanding.

Theological affiliation of the Nigerian Anglican Church

In assessing the impact of the Neo-Pentecostal Movement on our doctrinal heritage and tradition, particularly in the light of their common Evangelical heritage, a pertinent question to be asked of our Church is, what does it mean for the church to be evangelical in the real sense of the word and how does this affect its traditional understanding of Rebirth and Regeneration'?

The Anglican Church in Nigeria was founded by the Church Missionary Society, which belonged to the Evangelical wing of the Church of England. The rise of the CMS in England cannot be separated from the evangelical revival of the late eighteenth century, which owed so much to the work of John Wesley. Not only did Wesley's revival eventually led to the founding of the Methodist Church, it led also to the founding of new missionary societies, and an increasingly powerful evangelical party within the Church of England. These various missionary groups were to become closely associated with the anti-slavery movement which had its roots partly in the reaction to the physical suffering of slaves and to the radical philosophies of the eighteenth-century age of reason and enlightenment, with its ideas of the noble savage, the natural rights of men, the inherent values of liberty in political, social, and economic relationships, and the power of environment and law to change the character of man.

Within the context of the founding of various Missionary Societies by various denominations, evangelicals within the Church of England sought their own contributions. Groves writes:

In 1796 Charles Simeon introduced at a meeting of the Eclectic Society the question: "With what propriety, and in what mode, can a Mission be attempted to the heathen from the Established Church?" One who was present wrote across his notes of the discussion: "This conversation proved the foundation of the Church Missionary Society." ... In April 1799 the new Society was constituted, the Claphamites active in its counsels – William Wilberforce, Charles Grant, Henry Thornton, Zachary Macaulay, Charles Simeon and John Venn were all officially connected with it...

Though later to be known as The Church Missionary Society, it was originally referred to as 'A Society for Missions to Africa and the East'. Its founders according to Stock, rather than join forces with the already existing Society for the Promoting of Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.) and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (S.P.G.) felt their preferred sphere of operations were different, and that their principle of "Spiritual men for spiritual work" could not be compromised. These existing Societies emphasised the ministry of ordained clergymen, which they believed was influenced by the High Church or Catholic tradition. For them a conversion experience was important, thus the committee would only recommend 'such men only as "have themselves experienced the benefits of the Gospel and therefore earnestly desire to make known to their perishing fellow-sinners the grace and power of a redeemer, and the inestimable blessings of His salvation."' The importance of the need for this personal knowledge of salvation for the evangelicals cannot be overstated. This according to Ajayi was related to Wesley's realization of the need to end slavery not merely reform it:

But as he developed his evangelical doctrine of sin and redemption, he went beyond these humanitarian ideas. He concluded that the noble savage was 'a sinner and degenerate idolater' who must be converted; slavery was not just a cruel and inhuman practice that should be improved but a sin that must be abolished.

Thus, the forming of an alliance between the Evangelical Movement and the Anti-Slavery Movement was made, aided by the understanding of evangelicals that there can be no separation between the spiritual life and the physical life, and that the Christian faith must impact positively on society in general.

While it is important to establish the link between the Church Missionary Society and the Anglican Church in Nigeria, it is also important to restate the fact that what Wesley initiated in the eighteenth century based on his experience was a renewal. To understand this Movement, we must go further back in time. McGrath writes:

The term 'evangelical' dates from the sixteenth century and is used to refer to catholic writers wishing to revert to more biblical beliefs and practices than those associated with the late medieval church. It is used especially in the 1520s, when the terms evangelique and evangelisch come to feature prominently in polemical writings of the early reformation.

It is therefore to this 'tradition' theologically at least, that the Church in Nigeria by virtue of its founding fathers belongs. However, a strict adherence to this term liturgically would be difficult, as the use of High Church ritual is also known. It might be fair to describe the current Nigerian Anglican Church as one that is

liturgically 'broad Church' and theologically Evangelical. What is it to be evangelical and how would the evangelical theological tradition of the Church lead to its being susceptible to the Pentecostal understanding of rebirth? According to I. S. Rennie, evangelical theology affirms that:

The bible is the truthful revelation of God and through it the life-giving voice of God speaks; God is the almighty creator and we are his dependent creation; God has entered history redemptively in the incarnation of Jesus Christ; God's nature exists in Trinitarian expression; Jesus Christ is fully divine and fully human, the power and judgment of sin is a reality for all humanity; God graciously takes the initiative in coming to us savingly in Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit; Jesus Christ is building his church; and the consummation of history will be expressed in the second advent of Jesus Christ, the general resurrection, the final judgement, heaven and hell.....It is deeply committed to the centrality of the Bible, to its power by the Holy Spirit with special reference to preaching, to its final authority in all matters of doctrine and life, and to the necessity of interpreting it as naturally as possible and disseminating it widely in the vernacular. It is equally committed to justification by faith in which acceptance with God is received by trusting his loving self-disclosure and not by any human accomplishment. It also readily confesses that the Church is composed of all believers who have thus been incorporated by the Holy Spirit, and who have direct, personal, and constant access to their heavenly Father.

Four key elements of evangelicalism are to be highlighted. Firstly,

the importance placed on the sufficiency of scriptures. Secondly, the incarnation and redemption wrought by Jesus. Thirdly, the need for a personal conversion or experience of Christ. Fourthly, the necessity for evangelism or the propagation of the gospel. These traits of evangelicalism unfortunately have never by themselves yielded cohesive, institutionally compact, or clearly demarcated groups of Christians but they do serve to identify a large family of churches and religious enterprises. It is clear therefore that not only the mainline protestant denominations can be described in broad terms as evangelicals. This is a fact further emphasised by Tidball, when he writes:

In line with its reformation heritage, from the eighteenth century onwards, 'evangelical' came to be the name applied to specific groups of Christians irrespective of their denomination, who manifested a particular approach to the gospel and the Christian life. These were the people associated with the Evangelical Revival led by Wesley and Whitefield. Revivalism, of a different form, subsequently became a key characteristic of evangelicalism, especially in the United States. Two centuries later evangelicalism has grown to be an immense tree with all sorts of shoots and branches which often seem to have little in common, yet which clearly draw off the same roots.

Unity and diversity within a common heritage

It is possible based on the long history and current understanding of the term, to say that the modern-day Pentecostal Movement can legitimately be described as evangelical. In fact, several writers such as Noll and McGrath attribute the rise of the modern-day evangelicalism to Billy Graham the American evangelical evangelist

and his influence worldwide has been phenomenal. In this sense also the Anglican Communion can rightly claim to be evangelical even though it has elements of Catholicism (a brand of Churchmanship, which stresses the place of tradition order, the oneness of the universal church and the objective aspects of the Christian faith) and at the same time, it shares with other Churches (particularly within the context of this work, the Pentecostal Churches), a theological affinity.

Yet despite this affinity, based on agreement about the Bible and the gospel, evangelicalism has always been characterised by variety, not only along denominational lines but also in terms of types of spirituality on offer. Thus, within the Evangelical Movement, Pentecostal spirituality is distinctive in its emphasis on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, healing and prophecy. A key theme is that of power-for service to the Church and for witness. In seeking a working definition for the term 'Pentecostal', Anderson suggests that:

'Pentecostal' is appropriate for describing globally all churches and movements that emphasize the working of the gifts of the Spirit, both on phenomenological and theological grounds-although not without qualification. A broader definition should emphasize Pentecostalism's ability to 'incarnate' the gospel in different cultural forms. This broad use of 'Pentecostal' will often include the terms 'Charismatic' will refer more narrowly to Pentecostal experience in 'mainline' Churches.

There is an important element in the understanding of evangelicalism which has been alluded to above. It is that, unlike Catholicism which among other things stresses the 'objective aspects of the Christian faith', evangelicalism according to Walls is

'about inward religion as distinct from formal, real Christianity as distinct from nominal.' For McGrath, following Kern Robert Trembath and Max Warren, evangelicalism properly understood and lived out, must be subjective and experiential. Hence evangelicalism must place emphasis on the individual's experience of salvation rather than upon a cognitive, dogmatic, and historical articulation of this experience.

It is not surprising in the light of the above, that because of the theological affinities that exist despite the variations within the evangelical movement, that our Church has been influenced by the Pentecostal understanding of rebirth. Before an attempt is made to answer the question as to why this might have happened, it might be worthwhile to point out areas where both Evangelicals and Pentecostals agree, at least on a pastoral and theological level and then go on from there to see how this might affect the traditional Anglican understanding of rebirth.

Firstly, both agree on the need for a conversion or personal relationship with Christ. Secondly, at a pastoral level and as a result of the need for this 'conversion experience', some evangelicals within the Anglican Church would agree with the Pentecostal practise of believers' baptism, in which case the Anglican practice of infant baptism would be untenable. While in this instance there seems to be agreement on the need for believers' baptism, the agreement is based on the need for faith by the recipient and not on the issue of whether one becomes born again in water baptism.

Thus far, there do not seem to be any obvious contradictions between both positions, but there is a need for caution. Firstly, while both the Evangelical in the Anglican Church and the Pentecostal would agree on the need for baptism to be believers' baptism, both would differ on the concept of rebirth/regeneration

and the role of the Spirit in the process. The Evangelical Anglican would not see the separation that the Pentecostal sees between rebirth/regeneration and the giving of the Spirit as an indwelling influence, while the Pentecostals might grant that the Spirit operates as an external influence leading one first to faith, which results in regeneration, but it is only after water baptism, that the Spirit is given as an indwelling influence. The Evangelical Anglican on the other hand, should state that in baptism, the Spirit is given as an indwelling influence, which results in regeneration. It is therefore not a separate process, but one.

John Stott the influential evangelical Anglican writer expresses the 1662 understanding in several ways:

The gift of the Holy Spirit is a universal Christian experience because it is an initial Christian experience. All Christians receive the Spirit at the very beginning of their Christian life...

Water baptism is the symbol of which spirit baptism is the reality...

The New Testament writers take it for granted that God has 'given' their readers His Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5; 1Thess. 4:8; 1John 3:24; 4:13); there is no single occasion on which they exhort them to receive Him.

... Baptism in water is the sign and seal of baptism with the Spirit as much as it is of the forgiveness of sins. Water baptism is the initiatory Christian rite because Spirit baptism is the initiatory Christian experience. So then, whatever post conversion experiences there may be, 'baptism with the Spirit' cannot be the right expression to use for them.

In certain respects, the Church of England and the Anglican Church in Nigeria share some similarities and differences as far as the influence of the Pentecostal Movement on them is concerned. Within both Churches, the Pentecostal influence made inroads into the Churches through their Evangelical wings, because of the evangelical affinities that exist between the Pentecostal Movement and the Anglican Church. This might not be unrelated to the argument put forward by McGrath about evangelicalism particularly in the Church of England, that:

Where evangelicalism ought to be devoting its enormous creativity and theological strengths to the forging of patterns of spirituality suited to the evangelical ethos, it appears to have been crippled by some form of lethargy in this vital area... in failing to give full attention to this network of issues centring upon spirituality, evangelicals fail the modern Church.

McGrath further argues that Anglican evangelicalism having lost sight of its own heritage has borrowed too much from other traditions. What is needed is 'a spirituality which is radically and consistently grounded in scripture and orientated towards the cross.' Similarly, Anderson writes, 'a criticism often justifiably levelled at Pentecostals is that sometimes a theology of success and power is expounded at the expense of a theology of the cross. Thus, Tidball identifies three implications that the influence of Pentecostal/Charismatic theology is having on Anglican evangelicalism which traditionally had the cross (atonement) as central in its Christian experience. With the growth of the Charismatic Movement within the Church, this position of centrality was in danger of being taken over by that of the Spirit, 'a theology of glory, with its emphasis on resurrection, life and

power.' Secondly, if the cross is restored to its position of centrality, which interpretation of it is dominant, the view of Christ as victor over the powers or the view of penal substitution? Thirdly, what now is the scope of the work of the cross? Does it only deal with sin and defeat demons or is it effective, in the here and now, in healing sickness and curing psychological problems?

Failure of Anglican spirituality and its consequences

Within the Anglican Church in Nigeria, the lack of viable models of spirituality within Anglican evangelicalism as noted by McGrath and illustrated by Tidball, has had the same effects and much more. There has been, probably not consciously, an abandoning of the Anglican understanding of rebirth in favour of the Pentecostal understanding with the emphasis on 'power' and most importantly because, 'experientially' the Pentecost understanding seems more viable. Unlike within the Charismatic Movement in Church of England where this 'experience' is mostly understood from the perspective of a renewal and not something altogether new, this does not seem to be the case within the Nigerian context. The emphasis seems to be on a 'new experience'. This being the case then, questions must be asked as to the Nigerian Anglican understanding of the place of the Holy Spirit within the rites of initiation and whether the present rites remain relevant within this context. The failure of 'traditional Anglican Evangelical Spirituality' as referred to above has resulted in the exodus of many particularly the youths, into the Pentecostal Movement and its brand of spirituality.

Within the Context of the Anglican Church in Nigeria, one of the ways in which the failure of Anglican evangelical spirituality has manifested has been identified by Bishop Stephen Fagbemi. In discussing from the Anglican point of view, the 'lack of adequate or

commensurate correlation between faith and its effect in modern Nigeria' he notes the spiritual impoverishment and divided loyalty of its members as some of them belonged to secret cults like the Reformed Ogboni Fraternity among others.' While the 'lack of adequate or commensurate correlation between faith and its effects in modern Nigeria' not only led to the formation of various Christian groups such as the Deeper Life Bible Church, with the aim of teaching the Bible afresh, the 'spiritual thirst and hunger witnessed a mass exodus of Anglican youths, not only to Deeper Life Bible Church, but also to smaller ministries and churches holding such beliefs and teaching that apparently emphasise the need for salvation and theological identity to affect moral lifestyle and outlook.' Two key theological aspects of this group (and others like it) are noted:

They emphasise salvation symbolised in repentance and turning from 'old ways' and sins and urge believers to receive Jesus as their personal Saviour, thus making the beginning of the slogan 'you must be born again', an apparent reference to John 3: 3-6. The emphasis of this group is similar to the scriptural holiness that characterised the 18th century Evangelical revival that saw the emergence of Wesleyan Methodism and the Church Missionary Society. Furthermore, they emphasise sanctification as the work of the Holy Spirit, that is, a process of being set apart by God... They soon came to be known distinctly for their moral stand and non-compromise with anything considered unbiblical, albeit that their approach to scripture manifest a literal or fundamentalist one.

In recent years, because of the rise and influence of the Neo-Pentecostal Movement, there has been a noticeable level of

renewed spirituality and vitality in the our Church. This has been primarily because of members of the church who while retaining their membership, have participated in the Movement and secondarily because of those who having earlier gone out of the Anglican Church have now made their way back. Bishop Fagbemi has rightly identified this trend and in addition list some groups within the Anglican Church, such as the Anglican Youth Fellowship (AYF), the Evangelical Fellowship of the Anglican Communion (EFAC) and the Anglican Students' Fellowship, that have been influential in this revival. From a theological point of view, it is safe to say that the revival has been undertaken based on the 'two key aspects' mentioned above, '... they stress the need for a conscious decision/new birth attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit in response to evangelistic preaching.'

This of course once again raises the problem of the ambiguity inherent in the rites of initiation within the context of the current liturgies. These groups talk of a 'revival' within the church, yet there is the sense of 'something new' in the theological presentation of their understanding. The emphasis on the operation of the Spirit upon the individual is portrayed as a 'new' event, and it is clear that the result of this new indwelling of the Spirit and the immediate conversion is seen as different and more authentic to the gradual conversion of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer.

The emphasis on the Spirit and therefore a 'spontaneous Spirit led liturgy' is similar to Pentecostal worship and unfortunately within our Anglican context, because 'Evangelicalism' is not commonly defined in terms of theology but in terms of a particular style of liturgy, it has made the task of differentiating between traditional Anglican Evangelical theology and the Evangelical Pentecostal theology more difficult. From the cultural point of view, with the

belief in the possibility of Spirit possession, the emphasis on the Spirit and on the manifestation of its presence gives the message of these groups an added validity. It is in stark contrast to the Prayer Book understanding which talks about the indwelling of the Spirit, yet until very recently did not seem to expect and was perceived as discouraging the possibility of its manifestation in a charismatic manner.

Therefore, because in our Church Evangelicalism has been viewed almost entirely from the point of view of a particular style of liturgical worship, Anglicans have unwittingly become more readily susceptible to Pentecostal influence and consequently it would seem, that the pervasive and subtle influence of Pentecostalism is leading some within our Church to abandon its traditions, not only in liturgy, but also in theology. Our Church has sought to counter the negative influence of Pentecostalism on the Anglican doctrine of rebirth and regeneration by increasing evangelism and mission but there has been little if at all, of a theological response to the problem. It is possible that a theological approach as well as a contextualised liturgy might make the 1662 Prayer Book understanding of the doctrine of rebirth and regeneration relevant to the contemporary Nigerian Anglican.

It is probable that many of the ordained and lay, if asked what it means to be born again, would most likely express it in Pentecostal terms. Many no longer believe or perhaps do not realise the difference between both positions. Many out-rightly do not accept the 1662 Book of Common Prayer understanding and Article 27 of our 39 Articles of Religion that the Holy Spirit is given in Baptism and that in that act one becomes 'born again'. It states:

Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from

others that be not christened, but it is also a sign of regeneration or new birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the church; the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed; Faith is confirmed, and Grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God. The Baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained in the church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ.

The view that it is in water baptism that an individual is regenerated is reinforced in the service of baptism for example by the words after baptism:

Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that these persons are regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's Church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits, and with one accord make our prayers unto him, that they may lead the rest of their life according to this beginning.

Particularly with the younger clergy, a good number would claim to have 'accepted the call' after their being 'born again'. In a paper on baptism presented by a lay man to a conference on the Church in the 21st Century, the evidence of the influence of the Pentecostal understanding of rebirth on traditional Anglican understanding is evident:

... many of the children who are brought to us from parents without the requisite spiritual fibre or the exemplary conduct. The homes lack the nourishment in which virile faith can sprout. The godparents have extremely low or even statistically insignificant performance level in our

midst. If we may ask, how many godparents have sought out and impacted or influenced their wards for Christ? The promise and oath therefore have been left hollow. Our courses of instruction and catechism have followed the course of the ceremonial to fulfil all righteousness that we often lose the expected impact.

... Some of the embarrassing, deceptive half-truths we often hear in our churches include: "Your baptism grants you forgiveness"; "Your baptism gives you spiritual rebirth and eternal life". To all this I say, it is your faith and belief in the finished work of Christ and not the ritual or ceremony. The symbol is not the real thing. The water washes your body only to signify what grace has done inside-the cleaning of your sins by the blood of Jesus. The water of baptism cannot be the invisible blood of Jesus which washes clean by faith.

This quotation above, illustrates the point that the question of baptismal regeneration, rebirth and forgiveness, continues to be a topical point among the faithful, and in this instance, is borne out of the sincere desire to see all Christians live up to the demands of their calling in all its ramifications. In fairness, this statement could have been made by any other person in any part of the Anglican Communion. For instance, it is precisely because of some of the failings of the system of baptismal practice highlighted that many evangelicals within the Church reject infant baptism in favour of child dedication.

Infant Baptism

The major sticking point concerning the practice of infant baptism is that there is no explicit statement demanding or encouraging the

practice in the New Testament. What we have in the New Testament are instances of adults coming to faith and submitting themselves for baptism. The faith of the individual was therefore considered as a vital component of baptism. The earliest undisputed reference to the practice was in the early third century from Tertullian in North Africa, in his treatise 'De Baptismo' in which he argues against the practise. Some scholars however suggest that the tradition of infant baptism probably goes back to the first century based on how one interpreted NT references to baptism of a 'household' (Acts 16:15; 1 Cor. 1:16) should be understood. Did the 'household' include very young children or not? At the same time too, if infant baptism went back to the first century, then it did not quickly replace adult baptism as the norm everywhere.

Unlike Tertullian, Cyprian in third century North Africa argued in favour of the practice and left to him, this could take place even before the eighth day. At this time too, it was also common for even adults to delay baptism for as long as possible, sometimes even until their death bed. The problem of the need to profess faith in Christ in the practice of infant baptism was solved by allowing others to speak for them. It was in the writings of Augustine of Hippo that a theological justification for the practice was first put forward. He argued that faith was not a prerequisite for baptism as in the case of an adult, but that faith was bestowed on the child through the faith of others in the celebration of the rite itself.

His doctrinal exposition on infant baptism is what is known as the doctrine of 'original sin'. Since new-born children had not yet committed actual sins, he concluded that they must have inherited the 'original sin' of Adam. Augustine developed this teaching further by arguing that children dying unbaptized would inevitably be damned. Coupled with high infant mortality rate, people began

to see the need for infants and young children to be baptised so that they did not lose their salvation. It was not long therefore before infant baptism became universal throughout the Church and people forgot that baptism was originally related to adult conversions. At adult baptisms in the early Church, the sponsor or godparent's role had been to vouch for the sincerity of conversion of the candidate; now with the practice of infant baptism, the godparent's role changed to making the necessary responses for the infant and later in the medieval Church, the godparent was also charged to see to the future spiritual nurturing of the child. In our Church today, many who remain unconvinced about infant baptism now opt for child dedication instead and this is common with our Igbo brethren in Lagos.

What is Child dedication?

Child Dedication according to Venerable Benjamin Nwanekwu, is a corruption of the traditional Igbo Churching. Advocates of this tradition are mainly Anglican Returnees from Pentecostal and free churches. They gradually replaced the traditional **“IKELE EKELE NDINYOM MGBE HA MUSIRI NWA”** with the Pentecostal practice of child dedication. In Child Dedication, the focus is on the Child while in Churching of women, the focus is on the Woman. It can be argued that child dedication is modelled on the Dedication of Samuel to God by his mum and the presentation of Jesus in the temple. Advocates of child dedication also believe in the priesthood of all believers hence they advocate that the service is not necessarily to be conducted by priests but rather that any gifted charismatic and gifted evangelist or lay person. This service therefore is conducted at the choir steps where weddings are conducted, and mothers are encouraged to step forward with their babies while the evangelists or whosoever is appointed prays for

them. After the prayers the women, their husbands and the entire congregation are expected to come for thanksgiving. They are also encouraged to come with livestock and other edible materials which are shared among fellowship leaders. This service of dedication is often done on fellowship days rather than Sundays when the priest is available. This has become bone of contention between traditional Anglican Priests and Lay members who are Pentecostal in spirit.

It is possible that there are some Anglican Priests too who do not accept infant baptism and just as in Pentecostal Church circles, where 'child dedication' is seen as an alternative to infant baptism, many within our Church, now accept it and practice it. This creates some tension between them and traditional Anglicans. Our Church does not have the tradition and neither does it practice Child dedication.

Infant Baptism affirmed

While it is true that infant baptism can and is easily abused and particularly when abused, causes grace to be cheapened, the same too can be said of any theological doctrine and liturgical practice of the church. Surely where there are failures, reform or correction might be preferable to total elimination? Baptism for the Christian affirms that we all have received of God's gift of Love and signifies what God has done for us in Christ. Migliore says of both adult and infant baptism:

Together express the full meaning of baptism better than each would alone. In other words, their meanings are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. Adult baptism gives greater play to the conscious and free response of a person to God's forgiving love in Jesus Christ.

It stresses explicit public confession and personal commitment to the way of Christ. But if practiced exclusively, adult baptism may tend toward a view of faith as preceding rather than responding to God's initiative. It may also foster a false individualism to the extent that it neglects the importance of the community in the process of one's growth in faith and Christian discipleship in both childhood and adulthood. ...

Infant baptism, on the other hand, declares the sovereign grace and initiative of God. It demonstrates that even when they are helpless, human beings are loved and affirmed by God. It proclaims, as Karl Rahner says, that God loves this child. It expresses God's loving reception of the child into a covenant community that takes responsibility for helping this child to mature in faith. It makes clear that baptism is a beginning of the process of growing into Christ, and that this process of growth cannot take place without a supportive community of faith.

Migliore suggests a 'commissioning' service (confirmation?) which must link together infant baptism and the free, personal response of the person baptised.

For the child baptised unable to profess faith, God who is patient grants time for the infant's response. In the meantime, he argues, that there is a faith that is already responding to the enacted grace of God in the baptism of an infant. It is the faith of the parents and the community in whose presence the child was baptized. While their faith cannot substitute for that of the child, it can help prepare the way for the child's eventual free response to his or her baptism. Parents and congregation vow to provide a Christian environment for their children until the day when they are ready to speak for themselves.

The role of the Holy Spirit at Baptism

The practice of Infant baptism as the norm for Christian initiation (with the obvious lack of faith), has led to many within our Church to question the rite itself and possibility of regeneration or rebirth through the rite. In other words, 'is it possible for the Holy Spirit to work in infants?' A reading of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer seems to imply that the baptism of an individual whether as an adult or as an infant, marks the moment of rebirth. Rebirth is effected through the activity of Holy Spirit as an internal agent and that the individual by baptism receives the forgiveness of sins and becomes a member of the body of Christ. Some other Christian denominations such as the Roman Catholics for instance, share this understanding of the new birth with Anglicans.

The gradual acceptance of the Pentecostal understanding by a growing number of Nigerian Anglicans has resulted in the questioning of previously held understanding of the concept and the liturgical rites of initiation within the Anglican Church in Nigeria by both members and non-members. It is to be conceded therefore that at least within the Nigerian context, the Pentecostal Movement has sensitized or raised the awareness of the Anglican Church Nigeria, about the need for a constant reappraisal of its doctrinal understanding and liturgical practice.

The question of the possibility or otherwise of rebirth is from the biblical perspective intimately linked to the work and person of the Holy Spirit. In scripture, the Holy Spirit is portrayed as not only present at the creation but active in it. God's quest for 'a new people', 'a re-created people' is accomplished by the giving of His Spirit in a new outpouring to His people. In the New Testament also, especially in the writings of Paul, there is also the understanding of the Spirit of God as the author of recreation.

It is therefore impossible to examine the Anglican or Pentecostal understanding of the biblical doctrine of rebirth without a consideration of the perceived role of the Holy Spirit in the process held by these denominations. Beasley-Murray notes this when he states that both Presbyterianism and Pentecostals distinguish between baptism in water and baptism in the Spirit. For them, baptism in water is a sign while that in or of the Spirit is a gift of God for faith alone. He adds that within the Anglican and Roman Catholic tradition there has been a tendency sometimes to link the giving of the Spirit to confirmation.

What Beasley-Murray hints at is the debate within the Church of England concerning the role of the Holy Spirit in the Anglican rites of initiation and consequently in the understating of the new birth. This is reflected in a lecture given and published by Dom Gregory Dix titled: "The Theology of Confirmation in Relation to Baptism." In this lecture Dix argues that though in baptism the individual is regenerated, the activity of the Spirit on the individual is external. It is in confirmation that the Spirit is given to the individual as an indwelling influence. His stance here is explained by the fact that in an earlier work titled "Confirmation by the Laying on of Hands" he had argued that contrary to the present order of Christian initiation where baptism precedes confirmation. In the Early Church, confirmation had actually preceded baptism, for just as circumcision which was considered as the moment of entry into the covenant was performed prior to the ceremonial bath in Judaism, so in the early Church confirmation served as the equivalent to the circumcision and by which it was considered that an individual entered into the new covenant. Therefore, Dix argues that it was confirmation rather than baptism that constituted effective rite of admission to the Church. Beasley-Murray however maintains that despite this debate, the traditional understanding within the

Anglican Church has been to link the giving of the Spirit to baptism in water.

The Pentecostal Understanding of rebirth which would seem explicitly to emphasise the conscious acceptance of Jesus as the moment of rebirth seems incompatible with this Old Testament and Pauline understanding of the link between the Holy Spirit and creation/recreation, for how can rebirth be accomplished apart from the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit? Beasley-Murray hints at this difficulty when he asks:

Could the New Testament writers have postulated such things as a Christian apart from the presence and operation of the Spirit in the believer ..Could one through baptism "be in Christ"; "in the Body"; "in the Kingdom"; participating in the new age and therefore a new creature, born anew and renewed by the Spirit, yet not possess the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the Body, the Spirit of the Kingdom...?

While Beasley-Murray seems inclined to argue that the New Testament understanding and portrayal of impartation of the Spirit cannot be separated from the confession of Christ in water Baptism. Dunn takes a different view; the direct link between water baptism and the impartation of the Spirit for him cannot be made. He says:

The antithesis between the rite of water baptism and the metaphor of Spirit baptism, which John first coined, was carried into Christianity (Acts 1:5; 11:16)... Nowhere is Acts can it be said that the Spirit was given in, with or through baptism (Acts 2:4, 38; 8:12-17; 10:44-48; 18:25; 19:51f)... For Luke the gift of the Spirit was the most decisive element in conversion-initiation. It was the mark of God's acceptance.

It would seem from the above therefore that Dunn's rejection of the direct link between water baptism and the giving of the Spirit is in total agreement with the Pentecostal position. However, there is disagreement on two fronts; firstly, unlike Pentecostals who usually would ascribe the giving of the Spirit to the 'third' stage of a process, Dunn seems to ascribe this to the initial conversion stage, that is, at the moment of the coming to faith. He says:

... While the Pentecostal's belief in the dynamic and experiential nature of Spirit-baptism is well founded, his separation of it from conversion-initiation is wholly unjustified...

Secondly and most importantly, even though Dunn and Pentecostals might agree that the giving of the Spirit cannot be linked to water baptism, he seems to disagree with them on their rationale for coming to this conclusion.

In addressing the question he restates the opposing positions this way; firstly, that the Pentecostal belief in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a second Pentecostal experience distinct and subsequent to conversion, which gives power for witness (Act 1:8); secondly, that the gift of speaking in tongues is the necessary and inevitable evidence of the baptism; and thirdly, that the spiritual gifts as listed by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, must be manifested during divine worship. Dunn however admits that the Pentecostal position raises serious questions, such as the exact meaning of the phrase 'baptism in the Holy Spirit' within the context of the New Testament; secondly, whether the baptism in the Holy Spirit is to be separated from conversion-initiation thereby implying that the beginning of Christian life is to be divided into distinct stages and thirdly, whether Spirit baptism is something essentially different from becoming a Christian, so that even a Christian of many years' standing may never have been baptised in the Spirit.

On the other side of the Pentecostal position according to Dunn, there are others outside of the Pentecostal Movement who see a link between the baptism in the Spirit and water baptism and secondly some who see two outpourings of the Spirit, the first at conversion-initiation and the second much later during confirmation. The first of these views seems to be the position of the 1662 Prayer Book even though the second view has been at a time accommodated within the Church, but which seems to have now been abandoned. He again disagrees with this position:

... While water-baptism is an important element in the complex of conversion initiation, it is neither to be equated or confused with Spirit-baptism not to be given the most prominent part in the complex event. The high point in conversion-initiation is the gift of the Spirit, and the beginning of the Christian life is to be reckoned from the experience of Spirit-baptism.

To make his point both against the Pentecostal and Anglican understanding that the gift of the Spirit is the climax of conversion-initiation, Dunn examines key instances especially from Luke's perspective. The first is the account of the baptism of Jesus which for both Pentecostals and Anglicans is important. Pentecostals would claim that after being conceived by the Spirit, it was still necessary for Jesus to receive the Spirit for power. Christians, therefore, after their 'rebirth' need to receive the Spirit for power to witness. For Anglicans, Jesus' baptism by John foreshadowed Christian baptism, and it brought together water baptism and the promise Spirit baptism. Against these views, Dunn argues that the giving of the Spirit to Jesus was not just for power for his ministry, but more fundamentally, to mark the dawn of a new age:

The descent of the Spirit on Jesus effects not so much a

change in Jesus, his person or his status, as the beginning of a new stage in salvation-history. The thought is not so much of Jesus becoming what he was not before, but of Jesus entering where he was not before ...

Therefore, according to Dunn while Pentecostals are right to assert that it was the Spirit that equipped Jesus for ministry, it was not the primary purpose for its impartation. The coming of the Spirit on Jesus was to initiate the End Time and it is in this sense that it is to be seen as initiatory.

On the other side of the argument Dunn argues against those who make the link between water baptism and the receiving of the Spirit. With reference to John's gospel where the water rite is not even mentioned but the descent of the Spirit on Him, Dunn argues that for Luke the real experience for Jesus was that of the Spirit and not of the water rite:

As the passage stands, Luke intends us to understand that the descent of the Spirit coincided with the praying of Jesus, not with his baptism which had already been completed. The Spirit was therefore given in response to prayer and neither in or through baptism.

Thus, according to Dunn, Anglicans for instance cannot legitimately make the link between water baptism and the impartation of the Spirit based on his interpretation of the experience of Jesus at his baptism.

The second important instance that Dunn examines is the event of the Day of Pentecost. Traditionally within the Pentecostal Movement, this event had been viewed as of vital importance as it provides the impetus for the whole Movement. Pentecostals

according to Dunn argue that those on whom the Holy Spirit descended were already saved and regenerate. The reception of the Spirit did not mark their moment of conversion, and therefore could not be regarded as the beginning of their Christian lives. Therefore, the impartation of the Spirit on them was a second experience, subsequent to and distinct from their 'new birth'. Several texts are quoted by Pentecostals to prove that for the disciples the new birth or conversion had occurred earlier: Jn. 13:10f; 15:3; 20:22 and Lk.10:20. Dunn notes the difficulties in the use of these texts and further argues that it is only at Pentecost that the act of faith which resulted in the gift of the Spirit to the 120 occurred.

Once again Dunn argues that the primary purpose of Luke's account of the story of Pentecost has been missed by both Pentecostals and Anglicans. Pentecost was not primarily an occasion for empowering but rather an initiatory experience. Just as Jesus in his baptism was initiated into the new age, so for the disciples Pentecost served as their initiation into the new age. While Dunn sees a positive aspect to Pentecostals' emphasis on the dramatic nature of Spirit-baptism, he believes they are wrong to call it 'the baptism in the Spirit'. This is because according to him, one does not enter the new age or the Christian life more than once, but one may be empowered by or filled with the Spirit many times.

Apart from viewing the impartation of the Spirit as an initiatory experience into the new age both for Jesus and the disciples, Dunn introduces another fundamental aspect to his understanding, that is that Luke saw and understood the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit as the essence and embodiment of the new covenant. Proof that Luke saw this is confirmed by the fact that he presents the story of the outpouring of the Spirit within the context of Pentecost, for

Pentecost was more and more coming to be regarded as the feast which commemorated the law giving at Sinai. Pentecost was for Luke the giving of the new law and Dunn therefore emphasises Luke's continuity with Ezekiel 36:26; Jeremiah 31:33 and Paul. Thus, for Luke according to Dunn, initiation into the new age involved an inclusion into the new covenant and both were mediated through the Spirit. The influence of the Spirit was also to be felt in both the corporate and individual spheres of the lives of believers.

Dunn's position as can be seen from the above and as it relates to the immediate concern of this Charge, differs from both the Pentecostal and Anglican understanding of the impartation of the Spirit to the individual. He maintains on the one hand unlike Pentecostals, that the outpouring of the Spirit is intimately linked to the conversion-initiation process and thereby linked to the question of salvation. The purpose of this outpouring primarily is for initiation into the new age secondarily for power for witness. Commenting on Dunn's research, the Church of England Doctrine Commission adds:

... that baptismal language has been inappropriately applied to a later (often dramatic) stage in the Christian life when a believer enters more fully into what he has already received. In short, we are not at all persuaded that the life-changing crisis experienced by not a few Christian people at time subsequent to their initial conversion is appropriately called baptism in the Holy Spirit.

However while agreeing with Anglicans that the outpouring of the Spirit is to be linked with the conversion-initiation process, Dunn differs from the Anglican position in maintaining that the outpouring of the Spirit is not linked to water baptism, thereby

holding fundamental consequences for the Anglican understanding of not only seeing the link between water baptism and the impartation of the Spirit but also of seeing the link between water baptism and the forgiveness of sins.

In disagreeing with Dunn, particularly in his insistence that the gift of the Spirit initiated the individual primarily into the new age, Turner maintains that for Luke, the gift of the Spirit:

Is not about experiencing salvation, but always concerns empowering members of the saved community for witness. In this respect, two related descriptive terms applied to Spirit-reception are of great importance in Pentecostal teaching: (a)'separability'- meaning that the actions of the Spirit in bhs (baptism of the Holy Spirit) are distinct from those involved in regeneration and entry into the life of salvation; and (b)'subsequence' – meaning bhs follows logically, and normally temporally, the gift of regeneration ...

Similarly, Menzies disagrees with Dunn that the gift of the Spirit is a necessary and climatic element in Christian initiation. He writes:

Luke undoubtedly viewed the Spirit as a normal and important experience in the life of the Christian. Acts 2:38 suggest that repentance and water baptism constitute the normal prerequisites for receiving the Spirit and it may suggest that Luke viewed the water baptism as the normal occasion for reception of the pneumatic gift. However, these conclusions cannot be adduced to support the assertion that Luke viewed the Spirit as 'the bearer of salvation' and, as such, a necessary element in Christian initiation. On the contrary, they are completely compatible

with my contention that Luke portrays the Spirit as a prophetic enabling granted to those already converted. Indeed, the importance with Luke attaches to the gift of the Spirit does not bear witness to the purported integral role which it plays in conversion; it is a reflection of Luke's conviction that the Church is a prophetic community with a missionary task.

It is clear from the above comments of Turner and Menzies who are both Pentecostal writers that even within the Pentecostal Movement, there is yet to be unanimity regarding the perceived role of the Spirit in conversion process. While Turner seems happy to grant the Spirit a role but to differentiate such a role between what occurs in regeneration and baptism in the Holy Spirit, Menzies on the other hand seems to imply that the Spirit does not have a role to play in conversion. While this seeming lack of unanimity regarding the role of the Spirit in the conversion process exists, some scholars such as Migliore are clear that the Spirit does have a decisive role to play. He says:

According to John's theology, the Spirit is the agent of our second birth. Just as we are born from our natural mother's womb in our first birth, so we must be born anew by the power of the Spirit. The Nicene Creed follows 1Cor. 15:45 in naming the Spirit the "life giver". While this designation refers primarily to the new life in Christ, it probably also has in mind the activity of the Spirit at the creation of the world (Gen 1:2). The Spirit is the power of transformation from the old to the new, from enslavement to the powers of sin and death to a life in communion with God and others.

Therefore, if as Menzies suggests the presence of the Spirit is not necessary during conversion but is given to the 'already converted', how then apart from the Spirit is this possible bearing in mind the scriptural principle of the Spirit as the author of creation and recreation? How is rebirth possible? As Dunn argues, it is only when the 120 persons have received the Spirit that they could rightly be considered as Christians.

Neo-Pentecostal Understanding of rebirth

To better understand the Pentecostal view of baptism and regeneration or rebirth, a pastor of the RCCG consulted made the following points which according to him are basically commonly held by most Pentecostals. These are that: an individual needs to be regenerate before he or she could be baptised by the Holy Spirit. In other words, a person could be rightly described as 'Born Again' even before he or she receives the baptism of the 'Holy Spirit' or water baptism. He explained that the individual's coming to the knowledge and acceptance of Christ was only possible because of the action of the Holy Spirit upon but not within the individual, and not based on the individual's effort; yet this activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of the individual cannot validly be described as a baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The understanding of The Redeemed Christian Church on this matter is further illustrated in its manual for new members titled 'Believer's Class'. It outlines among other things the way in which a person becomes 'born again' that is; 'the way you are born, adopted and married into the family of God'. In the section relating to the new birth, it provides a list of 'unscriptural' meanings of the new birth among which very importantly is the idea of being born again in water baptism. Baptism in water has nothing fundamentally to do with the new birth though in itself is important

as proof of a commitment to Christ. Thus, the new birth is defined as:

a spiritual experience that transforms you from the kingdom of darkness into God's Kingdom. It is the receiving of God's life and God's righteousness. It is both a spiritual and moral change. Christ lives in you by the Holy Spirit. It is not a physical birth, our spirit not our flesh is born again. It is so vital an experience that no one can enter into God's Kingdom without it. Jn. 3:1-7; Jn. 1:12-13; 1 Pet. 1:23; Col. 1:12-13; Eph. 2:8-10.

Concerning the question as to how one becomes 'born again', the following points are listed: acknowledge that you are a sinner (Rom. 3:23; Lk. 18:13; Ps. 51:5); sincerely repent of your sins (Acts 3:19, Lk. 13:3); Receive Him into your heart by faith and thereafter thank God for saving you (Jn 1:11-12; Eph: 2:8). The evidence of a 'new birth' is seen in a moral change for the better and in a better personal relationship with God.

If there is to be a criticism of this understanding it would be based on the fact that it does seem that there does not seem to be an equal emphasis on the activity of the Spirit in the process of rebirth as more emphasis seems placed on the need for the individual's conscious acceptance of Christ and consequently there does seem to be an unresolved ambiguity between what is termed 'a spiritual occurrence' but which is emphatically based on human action. This ambiguity continues even within the moral sphere of the consequence of rebirth that the role of the individual is so elevated in such a way that it seems that the line between 'personal effort' and 'spiritual grace' seems blurred. Not much emphasis is placed on the role of God who seeks and calls the individual to Himself through Jesus.

It is possible therefore, to suggest that The Redeemed Christian Church of God and most Nigerian Pentecostal Churches understanding of the new birth is one that differs in 'technicality' if not in its ethical implications to the definition of the concept as understood from the point of view of the 1662 Anglican Prayer Book. A passage of scripture that might possibly be viewed as supporting this rational and conscious acceptance of Christ as the mode of experiencing the new birth might be 1Peter 1:23 which was quoted in the 'Believer's Class' and then only if a literal reading is taken. The passage as it stands is ambiguous as to its reference to 'the word of God'. Is the reference to Jesus or to Scripture? The element of the emphasis on 'a coming to faith' and 'a conscious acceptance of Christ' in Pentecostal understanding of rebirth it would seem, does not reflect the rich symbolism present in scripture with the allusions to death and life, burial and resurrection which the rites in water have and of course there is that absence of the allusion to baptism which Jesus made in talking about his death. With reference to the biblical understanding of the Spirit as author of creation and recreation, Turner as we have noted reminds us of the separation in Pentecostal understanding of the matter of salvation and the gift of the Spirit.

This understanding would seem to agree with that of Burkhardt's as both place emphasis on the individual's coming to faith in Jesus as the moment of rebirth and in removing this from the immediate context of water baptism. Thus, both would seem to have a contrary understanding to that expressed in Article 27 which gives the context of regeneration as in baptism. Article 27 however it might be argued, implies an element of faith, by stipulating 'a right reception of baptism', but moves on to include within its understanding, the baptism of infants where no possibility exists of belief of right reception.

A reason for this apparent difference in understanding is suggested by Burkhardt when he says that baptism and regeneration are linked in the New Testament (Tit. 3:5) and because infant baptism became a general practice in the early church, it was assumed that regeneration came about at the same time and so the biblical understanding of regeneration forgotten. It was however with the rise of the Anabaptists, the development of pietism and the Evangelical Awakenings that special emphasis was placed on regeneration as the individual starting point of the Christian life. While Burkhardt's definition of the biblical doctrine of regeneration might be correct, it might be possible to disagree with him on the separation between baptism (water and Spirit) and regeneration. This separation seems to lie at the heart of the difference in understanding and practice between Nigerian Pentecostals and other mainline churches and in particular, the Anglican Church.

To press home the point that regeneration must take place before Spirit baptism or water baptism, Pentecostals point to the fact that the disciples of Jesus undertook some missionary work prior to the day of Pentecost and question whether Jesus would have sent out unregenerate men to preach, heal and teach. Besides, the logic continues, Jesus described them as 'spiritually clean' (Jn. 13:10; 15:3), 'with peace from God' (Jn. 14:27; 20:19,21), 'obedient to God's word' (Jn. 17:6, 8, 14) and 'as belonging to him' (Jn. 15:19; 17:6, 10, 16). They therefore could rightly be described as regenerate before they became filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Reference is also made to the story of the Samaritan converts in the book of Acts, who in the view of the Pentecostals, were regenerate before they were baptized in the Spirit (Acts 8). The baptism of the Spirit occurs with visible results, such as speaking in tongues (Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6).

The separation between regeneration and baptism in the Spirit underlines the strong belief in the mind of Pentecostals that there is a distinction between the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as the source of Saving faith (Rom. 8:9,11; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2Tim. 1:14), and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that empowers for Christian life and witness (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:5,8; 4:31; Rom. 15:19; 1Cor. 2:4; 1Thess. 1:5). As a result of this outpouring of the Spirit, the life and witness of the primitive church was energised by the supernatural gifts and miracles that occurred, and it is deeply held by Pentecostals that it is still God's will that this continues to happen. In Pentecostal understanding also, there is the distinction between the reception of the Spirit and the reception of salvation. The gift of the Spirit is therefore solely for empowerment. As Jesus was anointed with the Spirit and power at his baptism, so too believers need the empowerment of the Holy Spirit:

This is a manifestation of Jesus' messianic lordship and his exaltation to the father's right hand (Jn.7:39, literally 'for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified'; Act 2:33, 36), and thus baptism in the Spirit is grounded in the ascension of Christ, just as forgiveness of sin and new life are grounded in the death and resurrection of Christ respectively. The gift of the outpoured Spirit is thus integrated with God's saving acts in Christ.

Pentecostals do not accept the validity of infant baptism as is commonly practised by some mainline churches and new members joining them who have been so baptised are re-baptised. Pentecostals hold that the practise of infant baptism is contrary to the spirit of baptism as discerned from the pages of the New Testament. Adult baptism is upheld as the normative pattern of the NT and must be by immersion. In teaching and in practice, adult

baptism in water is regarded as a necessary means of public declaration of faith after regeneration or conversion. It is after this baptism in water, and after a further period of teaching and preparation that prayer is said with the imposition of hands for the baptism in the Spirit, and the attendant manifestation of the speaking in tongues. In regarding infant baptism as contrary to the practise and spirit of the New Testament, Pentecostals are not unique. The Baptists for instance share this opinion but differ in the sense that Baptists hold a higher view of baptism than Pentecostals.

From the above therefore, it is possible to see at first glance that when the phrase "you must be born again" is used especially in a pastoral and even theological setting, the Anglican Church and Pentecostals seem technically to be saying different things. Concerning rebirth, regeneration and baptism in the Spirit, the Pentecostal position seems not to be dissimilar to what Simon Tugwell perceives is the understanding of a general Pentecostal understanding. He writes:

After conversion (and 'water baptism'), there remains a second blessing, associated usually with the laying on of hands, in which one receives the 'fullness' of the Holy Spirit, and his personal indwelling, experiencing for oneself what the first disciples experienced at Pentecost. Some manifestation, usually tongues, is generally expected; indeed, strict Pentecostals demand it- 'no tongues, no baptism in the Spirit'. Thereafter a person should increasingly realise in his life that he has been 'endued with power from on high', power to witness for Christ, he will know that he is 'led by the Spirit', he will expect to receive and, when necessary, to perform miracles, especially healing.

The view that baptism in water is the context within which an individual becomes 'regenerated' seems to be supported by Moltmann, who says:

The 'fact' described by the words 'regeneration' or 'rebirth' is certainly always implicit in baptismal theology, since from Christianity's very beginnings people who arrived at faith were baptized.

However, while both Anglicans and Moltmann might seem to agree on the context for the moment of rebirth there remains a point of difference between both. It is that even though Moltmann sees the moment of water baptism as the moment of rebirth, he would only grant such a status to those who arrived at faith. With the Anglican practice of infant baptism and the obvious impossibility of 'coming to faith' of the infant, Moltmann would seem to disagree with Article 27 which seems to suggest that all who come to water baptism are born again. Therefore, it could be suggested that on this point there would seem to be agreement between Pentecostals and Moltmann. However, at the same time, the emphasis seemingly placed by Nigerian Pentecostals in their understanding of rebirth as based on the human acceptance of Christ with little or no reference to the fact that it is a divine work, would seem to be contrary to Moltmann's understanding which emphasises the divine act which effects rebirth as a consequence of the coming to faith. It is to be noted also the context of rebirth in Moltmann's understanding seems to be water baptism which is not the case in the Nigerian Pentecostal understanding.

In his brief survey of the writings of some sixteenth and seventeenth century Anglican divines on baptism, Stevenson notes that aspects of their understanding of the subject have both liturgical and theological ramifications for the contemporary

Church. Hence, he submits that the task of theology 'is to reflect anew and afresh on the experience that people have of that life of faith and take the risk of doing so in the shifting sands of changing terminology, liturgical innovation, and even social revolution.' This is a very pertinent point particularly within the context of the contemporary Nigerian Anglican Church which is being challenged to reassess its liturgy and theology particularly as it concerns water baptism and the new birth because many Anglicans no longer understand or express their understanding of the concept in this way.

The change in the understanding of the biblical doctrine of rebirth being now commonly expressed by Anglicans has however not occurred in a vacuum. It has occurred within the context of the pastoral needs of Anglicans both from the spiritual and ethical perspectives. It has earlier been noted, that within the Nigerian context, the theological basis and supposed differences in the understanding of the doctrine has not dominated the discussions and that it has been the ethical dimension which, less contentious than the theological, that has largely dominated discussions on the subject. This has been particularly true especially among the youths who have felt that for too long, the high ethical biblical standards expected of individuals were not being met and perhaps, in their opinion, maybe no longer being expected by the Church of members. We agree with Bishop Fagbemi who has earlier noted this.

The predominance of ethical implications of the new birth in general debate is further exemplified by the former Anglican Bishop of Akoko, Bishop Obijole in a paper presented to Synod of the Diocese of Lagos when he says:

... But a cursory look at the Church today reveals the

opposite. Many of us have not yet validated our baptismal experience. Many people in assembly of God's people who call themselves Christians are still living in sin, worldliness, and are deeply involved in mundane pursuits and materialism.... Many of us have neither died with Christ on the cross to sin nor risen with him to a new life righteousness... Sectionalism, tribalism, nepotism, extravagance are some of the worst and most dangerous problems afflicting the Church and putting it in a state of a dead rather than a risen Church.

Bishop Obijole's emphasis on the need for an ethical reappraisal by all Anglicans if a holistic approach to a healthy spiritual life is to be attained is to be commended. However, what is particularly relevant is his claim that 'many are yet to validate their baptismal experiences'. This is important because even though he does not explicitly state his understanding of what happens at baptism, it does seem to imply that he understands that something happens during Anglican baptism, even though the suggestion is that whatever might have happened still needs to be validated by each individual. Unfortunately, he does not tell how such experiences might be validated. The question might be posed that within the Anglican rites of initiation, would such validation occur at confirmation particularly in the case of those baptised as infants, or does he see another moment when such a validation should occur? If, however my assumption is correct as Bishop Obijole implies, that something does occur in baptism that needed a validation maybe during confirmation, then it might be that the point being made by him is that the rite of confirmation which is still viewed as important has obviously failed as a pastoral tool. The evidence of this failure are the ethical shortcomings which he highlights in the paper. On the other hand, perhaps no reference to the rite of confirmation

was intended. Perhaps all that Bishop Obijole sought to say was that the determination to live an ethical Christian life was in itself, a validation of Christian baptism.

Unfortunately, Bishop Obijole does not explicitly link the new birth with the moment of baptism. This can only be assumed to be the case in the sense that he seems to see the absence of Christian virtues as a sign of the absence of the new life. He says:

...many of our members have not experienced the transformation and break (chasm) between the old former life and the new life in Christ (between pre-resurrection and post resurrection life) ... they have not even experienced the new life let alone grow in it to the full stature of Christ as expected in Ephesians 4: 11-15....

Therefore, if it can be rightly assumed that for Bishop Obijole the moment of baptism is the moment of rebirth but which ought to be validated either at confirmation or by the growth in faith and in the living of an ethical Christian life, then it might be safe to conclude that he has at the back of his mind the 1662 understanding of doctrine of rebirth with the corresponding expectation that 'this person may continue the rest of his life according to this new beginning.' This 1662 understanding of seeing the moment of baptism as the moment of rebirth is reflected not only in the baptismal liturgy of the current Book of Common Prayer, but also in the prayers of intercession provided for use during funeral services:

Lord Jesus Christ, we commend to you our brother (sister) N... who was reborn by water and the Spirit in Holy Baptism...

And

Let us pray for our departed brother/sister N... that he/she may receive the fullness of the life which he/she first

received at Baptism, and enjoy the company of the Saints forever...

These prayers are explicit in their understanding that the new birth occurs during water baptism and thus it seems clear that theoretically at least, our Church has a 1662 understanding of the biblical doctrine of rebirth. It is an understanding that is portrayed not only in its current baptismal liturgical rites but also as has been noted above, in its prayers of intercession during funerals. In this, the Church is in keeping with the long historical tradition of this understanding both in a theological and liturgical sense. This is collaborated within the Nigerian and African contexts by the fact that many of the initial converts to Christianity particularly those liberated from slavery in Sierra Leone and Liberia, symbolised their 'new life' and 'break' with the past by the adopting of new names. This is not unlike the Nigerian Roman Catholic practice of adopting the name of a saint as a Christian name at baptism.

It is also important to point out as Stevenson does, that while there are two other theological images of baptism which are; of 'dying and rising' (Rom. 6:3-11) and of 'washing' (1 Cor. 6:11) and while at the same time advocating the ideal of bringing all three images together in liturgical use, he notes that in the writers examined, the dominant image is that of rebirth 'because it most clearly expresses the action of God in Trinity in the human person'. This according to him cannot be understood apart from the gospel narratives of the baptism of Jesus from which the human story of salvation is played out by Jesus who identifies with humanity. Therefore, as Jesus was declared Son of God in his baptism, so Christian baptism expresses the individual's rebirth as God's child.

Thus, while the Anglican understanding of rebirth is related to these important theological images and at the same time closely

associated with the liturgy of water baptism as the context within which an individual is reborn, the Nigerian Pentecostal understanding seems to have a different understanding. This is not unconnected with the difference in understanding of the Spirit and its role at the beginning of the Christian life. The point has been made that for the Anglican Church, based on the understanding of the Spirit as the author of creation and re-creation, and viewing the initial impartation of the Spirit as an event which occurs during water baptism based on the understanding of the baptism of Christ, the link between water baptism and rebirth has been made. Similarly, the theological image referred to by Stevenson above, help to further strengthen this understanding.

The Pentecostal Movement seems to have a different understanding of the moment of rebirth and the role of the Spirit in the process. Its understanding seems modelled on the Lucan narrative of Christ's baptism, which shows the moment of the impartation of the Spirit as separate from the water baptism. However, the Spirit is viewed as active at the beginning of the Christian life almost as in an external capacity, leading the individual to faith and confession of Christ. Following Luke's narrative in Acts, particularly the sections that seem to emphasise believers' baptism, Pentecostals have an understanding that the coming to faith and expression of belief in Christ is the moment of rebirth. Baptism follows but is unconnected with the impartation of the Spirit. The Spirit is imparted later after prayers and the laying on of hands and its impartation relates directly to its activities for witness and mission. The emphasis on the need for the individual's confession of Christ serves not only as a pastoral tool for gaining an individual's commitment to Christ and the Church but also in a theological sense, it pointed to the guarantee of salvation based on Romans 10: 9-10.

While there seems to be a difference in understanding of the impartation of the Spirit and how this relates to the question of rebirth between the Anglican Church and the Pentecostal Churches, we note an apparent ambiguity that exists within the Anglican Church as to when exactly within its rites of initiation, the Spirit is understood to be imparted. This ambiguity is particularly evident when the 1662 and 1928 liturgies are placed side by side. The 1662 clearly implies that the initial impartation of the Spirit is during water baptism, while the 1928 seems to suggest that impartation occurs during confirmation. However, it seems the Church has adopted the view that the Spirit is imparted in baptism, with the possibility of subsequent outpourings **'in increasing measure'**.

One other area of difference between the Anglican Church and the Pentecostal Movement, relates to the question of the necessity or otherwise of the charismatic manifestation of the gift of the Spirit. Within the Nigerian cultural context, with the traditional belief in spirit possession, it was noted that the Pentecostal emphasis on the need for a charismatic manifestation of the Spirit acted in its favour as a means of proving the authenticity of Pentecostal spirituality. Placed alongside the Anglican emphasis of Isaiah's 'seven-fold gifts of grace', the Pentecostal understanding has proved to be more relevant to many contemporary Anglicans. It is pertinent to note however, that because of the presence within the Anglican Church of various groups which are charismatic in nature, many Anglicans are now more open to the charismatic manifestation of the Spirit. However, even in this instance there seems to be a problem. Many charismatic Anglicans unlike their Roman Catholic counterparts, seem to understand their experiences as something altogether new and outside of the current liturgical rites of initiation. Roman Catholic charismatics on the whole understand their experiences in

relation to the rites of initiation of the church.

These points noted above cannot be separated from the contemporary Nigerian understanding of a 'born again' and 'Spirit filled' Christian. Here, the Pentecostal understanding, with its emphasis on the individual's acceptance of Christ dominates. Thus, despite the Anglican Church's liturgical and theological formulations, which reflect the understanding of water baptism as the context within which rebirth occurs, many Anglicans both clergy and lay, now seem to have an understanding more in line with that of Pentecostals. This might not be unconnected to the desire to increase the awareness of the ethical implications of the new birth as we have already noted. It would seem therefore, that the taking on board of the Pentecostal understanding is partly due to the desire to reject (if at all it existed) the erroneous view that water baptism is efficacious and releases one from ethical obligations. Within the context of what traditionally is an evangelical Church, an 'over sacramental' view of baptism will not suffice.

Perhaps the failure of our Church has been its inability to emphasise that God's initiative action in baptism must be reciprocated by the individual's response which has lifelong implications, for baptism is but a beginning of the lifelong journey under the Lordship of Christ. Perhaps also, there has been too much of a pervading sense of a 'completion' to the detriment of the obligation to a lifelong commitment to Christ characterized by ethical Christian living, hence the readiness by Anglicans to view the biblical doctrine of rebirth from the Pentecostal perspective which emphasises the coming to faith and the act of confession of Christ as the moment of rebirth. The implication here is that such an individual has made for himself or herself a personal and lifelong commitment to Christ.

Thus, it seems that the Pentecostal understanding of the new birth is being used as a means within the Anglican Church of reminding each member of the need for a personal relationship with Christ, which has both spiritual and ethical implications. Both the Anglican Church and the Pentecostal Movement, because of their common Evangelical heritage, share the emphasis on the need for a personal relationship with Christ. This might be one of the reasons that our Church has been susceptible to Pentecostal influence.

The need for a lifelong response to God characterized by ethical Christian living is further underlined by the attention given this subject by the former Anglican Bishop of the Diocese of Owerri, Dr Cyril Okorochoa who in his charge to the Synod of the diocese counsels:

For unless a person is born of water (the word of God,) and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God even if he is ordained and a member of the PCC... Jesus insists, "you must be born anew" Jn. 3:3... So when our Churches are full of bickering and contradictions of our belief and practice, we need to ask, are we truly born of the word and the Spirit? And the source of this two-fold but decisive experience is the word of God.

Bishop Okorocha's understanding seems to complement that of the former Provost of the Cathedral Church of Christ, Lagos already referred to, in the sense that both seem to suggest that water baptism is not the context within which and individual becomes born again and that 'rebirth' is technically achieved by the conscious 'confession of Jesus as Lord and Saviour'. Not only does this understanding contradict the 1662 understanding particularly in the case of individuals baptised as infants, it also poses problems when considered in relation to the rites of initiation for adults as

well, for it seems that in their understanding, a context outside of the rites of initiation for the confession of Christ, is being alluded to. This understanding also raises problems when placed alongside the frequent opportunities during the worship of the Church whether in its hymns, its prayers or in its creedal formulas, for the confession of Christ.

The contemporary religious context, particularly in relation to the influence of the Pentecostal understanding of the biblical doctrine of rebirth, together with its emphasis on the spiritual, and material benefits which in the light of the economic realities of the day have proved to be an attraction. Yet while there is no argument as to the ethical implications of the new birth on all sides, it could be argued that the popularity in religious and social discussions of the new birth has proven to be an indispensable opportunity for the Anglican Church to address important ethical issues in the lives of its members and the nation. While this is a laudable objective, we are particularly concerned about the theological and liturgical heritage of the Anglican Church which seems increasingly compromised in the process. The growing tendency within the Church to 'go Pentecostal' as a means both of attracting new members and of retaining existing membership, has created within the Church a kind of tension between the theological and liturgical provisions and the commonly expressed understanding of members.

It seems clear therefore that the current liturgical provisions seem not to adequately speak to many of our members. The Pentecostal emphasis on the 'immediate' has had a negative impact on the Anglican understanding which views baptism as the moment of rebirth with the expectation of a 'lifelong growth' in faith into spiritual maturity. This has subsequently weakened the concept of

a spiritual grace given especially at infancy when it cannot be received or appreciated nor be of any use to the individual. This is a challenge to which the Anglican Church must respond theologically, liturgically, and pastorally, without losing its own identity and heritage.

The Pentecostal Movement seems to have been able to engage better with contemporary Nigerians by its willingness to tackle head on, cultural issues that have a bearing on the social, religious, political, and economic realities in the country today. Evidence of its undoubted influence on Anglicans is based on the fact that many Anglicans now seem to have a wider view of the scope of rebirth beyond what seems conveyed by the 1662 liturgy. The contemporary Anglican understanding now seems to view the physical world in an explicit way as a legitimate sphere for the spiritual and material benefits of rebirth and as such, negative spiritual influences that might hinder the individual's 'self-actualization' are 'dealt with' when one becomes 'born again'.

Although the Anglican Church (unlike the Pentecostal Movement) is seemingly reticent to make such an explicit and direct link between rebirth and wealth and the possibility of the breaking of spiritual hindrances to self-actualization, it increasingly alludes to this possibility at other times apart from the rites of initiation, such as during intercessions at public worship or at weekly programmes. An example of this is the invitation by Churches to individuals who own businesses to register such businesses for a daily prayer roster.

Therefore, it seems to me that the real problem that the Anglican Church faces is not much that of an inadequate theology but rather, its failure to critically respond to the challenges brought about by contemporary Neo-Pentecostalism. Within its traditional

theology of baptism and regeneration, what seems to be lacking is an adequate and necessary connection between theology and life, faith and praxis. A better appreciation of the problem with a resolute attempt to critically address the problems might prove to be effective. A failure to engage in critical evaluation of its theology and practice might only lead to more confusion.

Way Forward – 'Let The Children Come Unto Me'

The practice of infant baptism, while not explicitly commanded in the New Testament, can still be supported from the same scriptures. Baptism, whether of infants or adults, is the first stage of entry into the Church, and it is important that it is seen as 'a first stage' of a life-long process of growing in the knowledge and faith of God, through Jesus Christ. The doubts cast on infant baptism by those of the same evangelical heritage as us and even some within our Church, should not lead to us abandoning it, but rather, emphasising it and encouraging all concerned to follow up on the responsibilities attached to it. Once received into the church by baptism, the godparents and the Sunday School are expected to play a vital roll in developing the child to such a time that he or she is ready to affirm faith in Christ.

It is unfortunate that this lack of a follow up as stipulated by our Prayer-Books is one of the reasons why our doctrinal and liturgical heritage is coming under pressure by those who would seek to change it. Besides, the lack of investment and commitment to our Sunday School system is a major reason why we are unable to retain our youths within the church. We recently came across an article in the on-line platform of 'Church Times', a Christian magazine, written by one Mariam Bello, titled: 'Children's department, not a dumping ground, Church leaders take note'.We

quote the article in full:

The Children's department or Sunday School in some orthodox churches is saddled with the responsibility of teaching children about the reality of the Christian Life.

Teachers in this department come to the level of the children so that they can clearly understand the language and ways of the Christian Life.

However, when the purpose of a thing is not known, abuse is inevitable.

The children's department is not primarily babysitting, nor is it a random school where children get scolded and motivated about life.

It is not a place where children show intelligence by cramming chapters of the Bible in order to reproduce it on a competition day.

The children's department is not a place where parents dump their children so they won't be disturbed during service, neither is it a place where children go to sleep, play, sing, learn choreography, and do other mundane things. All these are good and can be done but they still haven't done justice to the reality of how the children's department should operate.

The department should mainly develop, grow and teach children about the personality, of Jesus.

The department is meant to make children know and understand the Christian Life, what we do and why we do what we do.

The department is meant to give clarity to questions about God that arise in the mind of the child.

The children are meant to do more prayer and Bible study in the church. (Act6:4)

But the reality is that most church leaders and even congregations do not see the value of the children's department.

This brief article speaks directly to the situation that sadly exists in our Sunday Schools. We believe that it is important for the future of our Church and our Diocese in particular, that the Sunday School and its children are given greater attention than they currently enjoy. We must not miss any opportunity we have to invest in them for they really are the future of the Church. It is in the Sunday School that the foundation for future membership is laid, and this foundation must be properly laid. If this is done, the Church will undoubtedly enjoy a more robust youth and a healthier and vibrant adult Church.

The example of Jesus and His attitude to children during His earthly ministry is instructive. In Matthew 19: 13-15, (cf. Mk 10:13-16) for example, we see Jesus scold His disciples for attempting to stop little children from being brought to Him. The intention of their parents or guardians was to have Him lay His hands on them and bless them. Matthew and Mark, setting this incidence within the same context of Jesus just having taught about divorce and the breakup of the family as not being in the original plan or mind of God for Man, might perhaps be pointing to the fact that in the union of Man and Woman, the interest and wellbeing of children are to be considered as paramount. We should not forget that in that Jewish society, children were hardly to be reckoned with and

castigating His disciples openly because of them, surely is an important pointer to how they were perceived in His eyes; after all, are children not 'gifts and heritage of the Lord?' One cannot but remember the story in Luke's Gospel of Jesus when at about 12 years old, was found sitting in the temple and discussing with the teachers of the law and holding His own with them. It is therefore not surprising that He would always elevate children and even use them as examples for adults to copy (Matt. 18:1-4).

Our Church rightly has followed in the long tradition and heritage of infant baptism, through which, children, brought by their family in faith are made members of the family of the 'Body of Christ', the Church. For some, there is an important symbolism in infant baptism, for in the same way in which the Jewish boy enters the covenant relationship with God, so too does every child, brought forward by faith by its family and the church, enters that same relationship with God through Christ. The ceremony is pregnant with symbolism of how this happens and what is going on in the rite. Apart from the theological significance of the rite itself, which we have already referred to, the symbolism of the positioning of the font at the back of the Church (entrance) is a pointer to the fact that the child is being brought into the family of the Church. In recent years too, there has been a liturgical change away from the private baptism of children to a public baptism of children within the context of the worship of the Church which our new liturgy now encourages as an ideal setting for baptism. It is now possible within this liturgy, for a corporate reaffirmation of faith and most importantly too, it is the community of faith together, that welcomes the newly baptised with these words: 'We welcome you into the body of Christ. ... faithful soldier and servant to the end of your life.'

The faith of the parents and godparents of children in bringing children to God through Christ in baptism and the faith of the Church in receiving and welcoming them is like the faith of the parents and guardians of the children who brought them to Jesus that He may lay His hands on them and bless them. Not only was this act a demonstration of their faith in Jesus, but it was also a sign of the respect they had for Him and the value they placed on His favour and blessing. They believed that even as children, Jesus' prayer for and blessing of the Children, will stand the children in good stead even as they grew and developed into adulthood. The response of the disciples, in attempting to send them away, was typical of the society and culture back then. Alas, perhaps too, even now, by denying them the grace of baptism or not making the Church conducive to their needs, we need to hear again the admonition of the saviour; 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.' (Matt. 19:14)

The Matthew Henry Commentary states:

Children of believing parents belong to the kingdom of heaven and are members of the visible church. Of such, not only of such in disposition and affection (that might have served for a reason why doves or lambs should be brought to him), but of such, in age, is the kingdom of heaven; to them pertain the privileges of visible church membership, as among the Jews of old. The promise is to you, and to your children. I will be a God to thee and thy seed. That for this reason they are welcome to Christ, who is ready to entertain those who, when they cannot come themselves, are brought to him. And this, in respect to the little children themselves, who he has upon all occasions expressed a

concern for, and who, having participated in the malignant influences of the first Adam's sin, must needs share in the riches of the second Adam's grace, else what would become of the apostle's parallel? 1Cor. 15:22; Rom. 5:14, 15, etc. Those who are given to Christ as part of his purchase, he will in no wise cast out.

... He received the little children and did as he was desired; he laid his hands on them, that is, he blessed them. The strongest believer lives not so much by apprehending Christ as by being apprehended by him (Phil. 3:12), not so much by knowing God as by being known by him (Gal. 4:9); and this the least child is capable of. If they cannot stretch out their hands to Christ, yet he can lay his hands on them, and so make them his own, and own them for his own.

The Burden of Responsibility

In accepting children into our families and into the family of the Church, God has extended to us a great privilege which entails great responsibility and scripture is replete with the admonition to nurture them and to train them to maturity. Many passages such as Gen: 18:19; Prov. 22:6; 15; Eph. 6:1-4; make the point that children need significant guidance and constant reinforcement. The end goal of all this training is that we raise children who become adults who live for God's glory and understand His ways—like Timothy, whom Paul instructed, “Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12). It is important to note that Timothy was already an adult, old enough to be the pastor of a church; albeit a young pastor, he was not a child. Paul later reveals how Timothy

had gained that wisdom: through the instruction of Scripture since his infancy. (2 Tim.3:14-15)

Children too must be protected at all costs, especially in increasingly evil and perverse generation. One of the most striking things Jesus said about children was when He called a child to him and told His followers that they should come to Him with the faith and humility of a child, then said, "but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea." With so many clear admonishments in Scripture to avoid the influence of bad company (1 Corinthians 15:33, Proverbs 13:20; 22:24–25) and make no provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14) and the impetus of guiding and training children on the parents, there is a great responsibility given that must be seriously taken.

God's desire too is for children to be immersed in the truth. To be immersed in something means we are completely submerged in it or surrounded by it. It touches and affects everything we do, eat, breathe, touch, and think. This idea of immersing children in the acquisition of God's laws, His ways, and His character is introduced in Deuteronomy 6:5–7: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise."

Our Sunday Schools

These responsibilities are undoubtedly enormous, and we wonder

how we can as a Church meet these responsibilities or even perhaps assist parents in the spiritual nurture of children. We are not unmindful of the financial constraints faced by parishes in this Diocese, but we believe that if we understood the need to get the Sunday School right from the beginning, we will then adequately budget for the spiritual and physical needs of the children. The Sunday School must be financially supported for both internal and external programmes. Vicars must never lose sight of them and must make sure that they pay regular visits to the Sunday School during services. That way they are more aware and get first-hand information about the situation of things there.

Apart from the regular visitation of the Sunday Schools by vicars, there are other practical steps that might be taken to improve our Sunday Schools and these we list in no particular order:

- a. The environment for their corporate worship must be conducive, with enough space and ventilation.
- b. It is important that when they break into their various classes, they must be adequately spaced out, such that each class is not disturbed by the other.
- c. Printed materials for worship and teaching aids for study must be provided in adequate number for their use.
- d. As much as possible, a clergyman must lead them or be present at their corporate worship which must reflect Anglican liturgy and doctrine. The use of hymns and our prayer book is to be upheld in all our parishes.
- e. The teachers should be interviewed before being allowed to teach and they must be regularly trained and ready to faithfully attend the retreats and seminars organized for

them. Teachers must accept and advocate Anglican spirituality and doctrines, otherwise the children are only just being prepared by us for other denominations.

- f. The abuse of children in anyway, shape or form is not to be encouraged or tolerated.
- g. The Vicars must regularly incorporate the Sunday School with the adult Church, for instance, during Holy Communion services, inviting all the children forward to receive a blessing at the altar. The children must not be chased away from the altar. The Sunday School should on special occasions such as Mothering Sunday and Fathers' Day, be allowed to lead or participate in the services. The formation of children choirs or drama groups is to be encouraged.
- h. There must be regular meetings between the vicars and teachers to plan together for greater effectiveness.

Our Stand

Our Church continues to welcome into its fold, young and old by baptism, though it seems that the liturgical and theological provisions for the practice no longer seem to speak to the pastoral and spiritual needs of the people. Our task has been to highlight this disconnect between what our liturgy and theology provide for and what we understand and articulate. This we have argued has been due to the influence of the Neo-Pentecostal Churches; such that, very many Anglicans would articulate their understanding of 'rebirth' similar to the Pentecostal understanding.

This 'change' in understanding of course raises questions about the

continued practice of Infant Baptism. Within this shift in understanding, we must now question the continued relevance, not only of infant baptism, but of baptism itself; for if the Holy Spirit is not present at baptism, both as an internal and external influence, then how in traditional Anglican understanding is rebirth achieved? The change in the Anglican understanding has been made possible or easier because both the Anglican and Pentecostal Churches share a common heritage in evangelicalism, and because of all the 'possibilities' and 'breakthroughs' associated with the Pentecostal understanding of rebirth, many Anglicans no longer seem to find the traditional Anglican understanding relevant.

This Charge therefore seeks to call all Anglicans to an understanding of our theological and liturgical heritage and affirm that what we hold as our understanding of the sacrament is both biblically sound and spiritually edifying. We agree with Daniel Migliore who writes:

Christian baptism is the sacrament of initiation into life in Christ. It marks the beginning of the journey of faith and discipleship that lasts throughout one's life. In baptism a person is immersed in water, or water is poured or sprinkled upon him or her, in the triune name of God.

Authorization of baptism is often found in the command of Jesus: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (matt. 28:19-20

Important as this passage has been in the history of baptismal practice, baptism is based not only on the

command of Jesus but also on the act of Jesus on freely submitting himself to baptism. This free act of Jesus is, as Barth describes it, "a prologue which opens and characterizes the whole" of the Gospel drama that concludes with the passion. Jesus commences his vocation, his obedient response to the call of God, by being baptized by John. In this act, Jesus enters into solidarity with lost humanity. He begins the life of costly love and service that eventually leads to his passion, death, and resurrection. Jesus' baptism thus signifies his solidarity with the sinners and outcasts of this world and his complete obedience to his Father's will. As described by the evangelists, this self-identification of Jesus with sinful humanity is met by God's identification of him as the beloved Son and by the descent of the Spirit of God on him (Mark 1:9-11).

Jesus uses the image of baptism in relating the life of his disciples to his own mission of self-expending love: "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Mark 10:38). The event of baptism thus marks the beginning of the Christian's participation in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. It signals one's death to an old way of life and one's birth to the new life in Christ. Christians are given a Christian name, and their whole life becomes a journey of faith in which they enter ever more fully into their baptismal identity. They become participants in the life and love of the triune God in whose name they are baptized.

... Infant baptism, responsibly practised, is a sign of God's gracious initiative in creation and redemption. It is a powerful expression of the fact that God loves us even

before we begin to respond to God in trust and love. It proclaims the love of God as sheer gift. Further, infant baptism is a sign of human solidarity in the presence of God. At no stage of human life are we isolated from each other or from God.

The grace of God draws us deeply into relationship; it is formative of new community. Because the grace of God aims at the transformation not only of individuals but also of our life together as families and communities, the practice of infant baptism is theologically legitimate and meaningful.

Finally, infant baptism is a sign of covenantal responsibility as a community of faith and most especially as parents of the child brought to baptism. If people are indifferent to or negligent of their responsibility as parents to bring up their children in a home and a congregational environment that guides them toward their own free, personal decision about Christian faith and discipleship, it is unlikely that their sense of social responsibility will be very strong in regard to people beyond the family circle or local church. Especially in our age of broken homes, one-parent families, and many abused and abandoned children, infant baptism could be a strong and unambiguous declaration of the fact that God loves these and all children. When infant baptism is taken with appropriate seriousness, parents, and other members of the congregation of Jesus Christ are called to responsibility for the care and nurture of children in the life of faith.

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OTHER MATTERS

We Have a New Dean

On the 2nd of May 2022, the new Dean of our Cathedral Church of St. Jude, the Venerable Segun Ajayi, assumed office and on Sunday the 15th of May 2022, he was formally installed; and he comes to the Cathedral at a time when expectations are high. Venerable Ajayi comes with a reputation of a spiritual, pastoral and liturgically dynamic and robust leadership, and an achiever. All these qualities will no doubt be needed to build upon all that has been achieved by his predecessors in office and move our cathedral to greater heights, especially among the committee of Cathedrals in the Church of Nigeria. We are grateful to God for his exemplary and impactful leadership over the years and trust that together with his wife, Mrs Idowu Ajayi and family, their tenure in the cathedral would be one of faithful and fruitful leadership.

Appreciation of Our Former Dean

We once again put on record our sincere appreciation of our former Dean and wife, the Venerable Olufeyisanjo and Mrs. Olumuyiwa Ojelabi for their peaceful and fruitful tenure in the Cathedral. On a personal level, our brother did everything to make sure that our arrival and ministry in this Diocese was smooth and peaceful. By his insightful counsel and wisdom, he was able to assist us settle down quickly and we will forever be grateful for his friendship and counsel. He has moved to Holy Trinity Church Ikate, (a straight swap) with Venerable Segun Ajayi, and I am sure he takes up this new challenge with the prayers and best wishes of every member of the cathedral congregation, and ours as well.

As a way of thanking him for his joyful, faithful, and fruitful labour

in the cathedral, we have decided that from the savings the Diocese has been able to make, he and his wife should have the opportunity of pilgrimage to Israel and Jordan. We are trusting that by this visit, both Venerable Ojelabi and his wife, will be spiritually recharged to face the challenges in their new station. We have always advocated a programme of continuous training and exposure of the clergy, and this forms a part of the programme; a widening and deepening of spiritual awareness. The Ojelabis are therefore 'pathfinders' for the rest of the clergy, in the sense that going forward, the Diocese intends to send two people from the clergy family on pilgrimage. Also going on pilgrimage this year, but on the ticket of the Diocesan in his capacity as Chairman of the Lagos State Pilgrims Welfare Board is Dr. Jide Ajilogba, a member of St. Jude's, and Revd Michael Ade-Ajayi.

Women's and Girls' Organisations

We are grateful to our women under the able leadership of Mrs Olabo Johnson. Our women have continued to 'fly the flag' despite the many difficult and challenging situations that beset us on many sides in our country. We congratulate them and indeed us all on the dedication of the Resource Centre in Bariga. A special thanks too, to all involved in the building of the edifice. We congratulate all the new members of the Mothers' Union and pray God's blessings on their families. The women have always been involved with assisting some young ones from indigent families with their education and they continued with this. There is now a new dimension to this as they partner with the School of Music to encourage young children develop interest in music. Through the generosity of one of our parishioners, the women last month donated 150 plastic chairs to the Music School, and for this we are extremely grateful. The academic seminar held on March 26th 2022 for Senior Secondary

School 2 and 3 students, with three resource persons was a huge success and participants from other denominations were in attendance too. Various out-reaches too were held and we remain extremely grateful to all the donors and those who made it happen.

Dr T. K. E. Phillips Foundation for Music (Music School)

The school opened for activities in January 2021 with Two sets of the Clergy. The first set of the clergy resumed to conclude their program from the previous year while the second set were the Deacons who are now the newly ordained Priests. The program for the Deacons was on from March 2021 till November 2021.

Another training that also came up was the choir training for all the Choirs in the Diocese in May 2021. The program was conducted for three months and was concluded in August.

The Advent Orchestra & Choir was also created by the Women's & Girls' Organisation in April 2021 to assist and empower youths on various instrument and their recruitment & training is still ongoing. The Advent Orchestra had performed in the Diocesan programmes, which are the Women's Conference, Celebrating Jesus and performance for the Christmas Carol in December, 2021. In September 2021.

The school had its first Organ Master Class on Saturday, 13th November 2021 at All Saints Church Yaba. The program was organised for Organists and Choirmasters in the Diocese and the facilitator was Dr Ayo Oluranti.

It is worthy of note that between Monday 31st January and Wednesday 2nd February, a Music Composition Workshop was held and the facilitator was Miss Kerensa Briggs, an international award winning music composer based in the UK. She had visited Nigeria in

2018 as a chorister with King's College London, so it was an opportunity for her to see Lagos again. The workshop was open to all who were interested, and we had people from outside the Diocese attending. She was challenged to write a short western 21st Century interpretation of 'Ise Oluwa' by TKE Phillips, which she did, but we have now asked her to complete the work in full and hopefully this will be ready soon. It was indeed a successful outing.

We hope the school will be ready to resume fully for all categories of students, i.e., the clergy and Lay after the Synod this year, but while we look forward to this happening, we feel it is best to make sure the administrative policies of the school are clearly defined and put in place. We have eager students waiting to enrol but we plead for understanding and patience. We are very grateful to the dedicated team of Teachers who have served since the inception of the school and look forward to the very many years of service ahead.

It is evident that in recent years, we have been placing more emphasis on music in the Diocese, and rightly so. Music is very important to our liturgical life as Anglicans and the concept of worship without music is unimaginable. In times of joy and in times of sorrow, music has its place, and we will continue to explore various avenues to see that this Diocese continues to raise the standard as far as music is concerned in our Church. Towards this end, we believe that it is time to correct something we have long overlooked; that is, the creation of a Chaplaincy to bring our Organists and Choirmasters together. The Chaplaincy will also serve to attend to their spiritual needs and be a bridge between them and their Vicars, which we hope will result in greater fruitfulness in the Lord's service. We will entrust the Revd Kunle Olaitan with this responsibility, trusting that as a Musician and Priest, he will be able to carry out this assignment effectively.

Movement to the Permanent Site

The Music School is currently situated in the Cathedral crypt with the kind permission of the Dean and Standing Committee, for which we are grateful. However, there has also been the hope that a permanent structure for the school will be built on the grounds of St. Paul's Church, Idi-Oro. This is because the Late Dr. T. K. E. Phillips lived the later part of his life on part of the grounds of the church. The foundation of his home is still visible, right next to the wall by the Mobil petrol station at the entrance and exit of the grounds.

This investment in music is part of our strategy to move the Diocese forward in such a way that all will be carried along, especially the youths and children in our Sunday Schools, and at the same time, positively impact on their lives and in the corporate life of the Diocese. Music, especially choral music, is an integral part of our heritage and it is fundamental to our worship and liturgical life. By investing in music as a Diocese, we hope to enhance our spiritual life and worship and at the same time secure this heritage and legacy for future generations and we hope, will also encourage both the young and old to have a new and deeper appreciation of music and the young we believe, will become our Church musicians and choristers in the future. Our Diocese too, it is hoped, will become a centre for choral excellence in the Church of Nigeria.

Towards this end, a Committee is to be inaugurated to help actualize this vision of a building of a permanent home for the School of Music. It is to be made up of some members of St. Paul's Church Idi-Oro, members of the Young Men Christian Union society (YMCU) of our Cathedral, and members of the Diocesan Plans and Building Committee. We hope that the building and dedication of this building, will serve as the 20th Anniversary project of the Diocese on 24th August 2026. Incidentally too, the Y. M. C. U.

will also mark its 85th Anniversary on the same day and their participation on this committee points to a harmonization of efforts to mark both their anniversary and that of the Diocese in a befitting way. Some members of the Board of the T. K. E. Phillips Foundation for Music will also be represented on this committee, and we are indeed grateful to each of these groups for their willingness to serve.

Clergy Training and Education

In line with our policy of continuous Clergy education and training, a workshop on "Personal Effectiveness for Clergymen" was organized for 41 Clergymen in two (2) streams. The Facilitator is an experienced Consultant with the prestigious Lagos Business School, Mrs. Atinuke Adelokun. The feedback from the participants was quite encouraging and we intend to train more Clergymen this year. We are grateful to the parishes for part funding their clergymen for this programme.

Bariga Land Committee

The Venerable Olufeyisanjo Ojelabi is to Chair a committee we have set up to see to the registration of title of the already fenced large expanse of Land, at Bariga, opposite our Resource Centre originally belonging to CMS Grammar School and vested in the Archbishop Abiodun Adetiloye Foundation and granted to us for use. The committee will also recommend to us what use the land could immediately be put to, with a view to consolidating our claim on it. Other members of the committee are: Lady Chikwe Ochiagha, Architect Bukola Ejiwunmi, Mr. Yemi Akinsanya, Architect Bamidele Onadein, Revd. Olufemi Ogundana, Miss Dolapo Fasina and Chief Tunde Ologundudu. We wish them the best in this endeavour. The committee will be inaugurated today.

Moments of Inspiration Radio Programme

We are grateful to The Venerable Okey Ifionu who for a little more than two years ran this Diocesan Evangelistic Outreach radio programme every Sunday starting in December 2019. The programme was designed to propagate the Gospel through Radio Nigeria's Metro 97.7 FM using Christian hymns and chats with guests on topical Christian issues. He, together with his team of presenters, through their work, were able to bless our listeners. We have since decided to end the programme on air for now because we were not able to get adequate sponsorship for the programme. Plans are, however, underway to rejig and air it through other channels at much lower cost. We look forward to our members' sponsorship of this highly inspiring programme so that it can run uninterruptedly.

ORDINATIONS AND RETIREMENT

Ordination

The following Deacons were made Priests at the Advent Ordination on Sunday 5th December 2021, at the Cathedral Church of St Jude, Ebute Meta.

1. ONOHWAKPO, Emmanuel Oghenekaro
2. DADA, Olukayode Sylvester
3. EMEDOSI, Chijindu Onyebuchi
4. EZEObI, Onyekachi Stephen
5. OGBAJE, Ekene Emmanuel
6. ORELAJA, Oluwatosin Joseph
7. OSIKOMINU, Ayotunde Mobolaji

Retirement

The following Clergymen retired from active Pastoral

Ministry on the dates against their names (having attained the mandatory age of 70 years)

- (i) Revd Canon & Mrs. C. Adeosun – 1st December, 2021
- (ii) Revd Canon Navy Captain Chinedu Chukuka – 5th February, 2022
- (iii) Ven. Adeyemo Soley – 16th May, 2022
- (iv) Ven. Alfred O. Adegoye – 19th May, 2022

Preferment & Collation

The following Clergymen were preferred as Venerable Archdeacons on Sunday, 23rd May, 2021.

- (i) Ven. Francis Oluranti Bada
 - (ii) Ven. Chidiebere E. Ukachukwu
- They were collated on Sunday, 26th September, 2021

OUR JOYS

We rejoice with these **Clergy Family** on the following occasions:

Birthday

- (i) Ven. Omotayo O. Akinboboye 50 Years
- (ii) Rev. Canon George Abara 60 Years
- (iii) Revd Canon Stevenson Adedeji 60 Years
- (iv) Revd Olabisi Fuad Ashaju 40 Years
- (v) Revd Innocent Molokwu 60 Years

Marriage

- (i) Ven. & Mrs. Alfred Adegoye's Daughter
- (ii) The Late Ven. & Mrs. Francis Bada's 2 Daughters
- (iii) Revd & Mrs Benjamin Eluchie's Son
- (iv) Revd Emmanuel E. Ogbaje

New Babies

- | | | | |
|-------|----------------------------|---|-----------|
| (i) | Rev & Mrs Ayotunde | - | Baby Girl |
| (ii) | Rev & Mrs Adedotun Adesina | - | Baby Boy |
| (iii) | Rev & Mrs Chijindu Emodosi | - | Baby Boy |
| (iv) | Rev & Mrs Godwin Adams | - | Baby Boy |
| (v) | Rev & Mrs Ekene Ogbaje | - | Baby Girl |

Appointments and Awards

The Board congratulates all who were celebrated and uplifted in the course of the year, especially Rev. Arc. Dr. Ajibade T. Adeyemo who successfully completed his Ph.D. course in Architecture at Covenant University, Ota.

OUR SORROWS

Transition in the Clergy Family

Ven. Francis Oluranti Bada – 21st February 2022

CHURCH OF NIGERIA MATTERS

Standing Committee Meeting:

- a. The September edition of the standing committee meeting was hosted by the Diocese of Lagos at Archbishop Adebola and Mrs. Oluranti Ademowo Resource Centre (Faith Plaza), Bariga – Lagos from Monday 20th to Friday 24th September 2021. The theme of the meeting was “Abiding in Christ: God's Panacea in an Unstable World”. (John 15:1-8).
- b. The CON Standing Committee meeting for February 2022 was hosted by the Diocese of Evo from Monday 21st to Friday 25th, February 2022. The theme of the meeting was “The Christians Dual Citizenship and Responsibility” (Matthew 22:20-22).
- c. Divine Commonwealth Conference (DIVCCON): The 2021 Divine Commonwealth Conference of our National Church took place as usual at the National Christian Centre, Abuja from Monday 8th to Friday 12th November 2021. The theme was “Quit You Like Men” (I Corinthians 16:13). It was indeed a time of spiritual refreshing and rejuvenation for all the participants and congregants. Our Diocese participated fully in the conference. DIVICON 2022 is fixed for Monday 7th to Friday 11th D.V.

Episcopal Retreat:

The annual Bishops’ Retreat was held from Monday 3rd to Friday 7th January 2022 at Ibru Centre, Agbarha-Otor. The theme of the retreat was “It is the Lord: Fresh Encounter With The Living God” (John 21: 1-25). Bishops’ Wives Retreat was hosted by Awka Diocese from 5th to 8th January 2022. The theme was “Walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16).

Joshua Generation International Youth Conference – The second edition was held at Abuja from 18th to 22nd April 2022. We were duly represented.

Retirement, Consecration of New Bishops and Presentation of Archbishops:

We rejoice with all our fathers in God and their wives who have retired or will be retiring from church ministry before the end of this year. We pray that good health will be their experience in retirement. We congratulate all Archbishops; Bishops and their wives that were translated, elected, consecrated, enthroned and presented within the last one year. We pray for Grace and renewed anointing for the task ahead.

We equally commiserate with the families and Dioceses who lost their loved ones during the Synod year. We pray that the Lord will comfort them and give them courage to bear the loss.

Retirement:

- | | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. | Most Rev'd. C. T. Omotunde | - | Ekiti |
| 2. | Rt. Rev'd. Justus Mogekewu | - | Asaba |
| 3. | Rt. Rev'd. Dr. Samuel O, Sowale | - | Ilesa |
| 4. | Rt. Rev'd. KelechiEze | - | Ukwa |
| 5. | Rt. Rev'd. Amos Fagbaniye | - | ADOTT, USA |
| 6. | Rt. Rev'd. D. K. Bello | - | Otukpo |
| 7. | Most Rev'd Tunde Adeleye | - | Calabar |
| 8. | Rt. Rev'd Benjamin Emamezi | - | Western Izon |
| 9. | Rt. Rev'd Adedokun Adewunmi | - | Suffragan (ADOTT) |
| 10. | Rt. Rev'd Abiodun Ogunyemi | - | Serving as Bishop
CON Missioner |

Translated:

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|---|--------|
| 1. | Rt. Rev'd. Idris Zubairu | - | Sokoto |
| 2. | Rt. Rev'd Manasseh Okere | - | Ukwa |
| 3. | Rt. Rev'd. Prof. Dapo Asaju | - | Ilesa |

New Archbishops:

1. The Most Rev'd. Dr. Blessing C. Enyindah - Niger Delta
2. The Most Rev'd. Dr. H. B. Olumakaiye - Lagos

Elected, Consecrated and Enthroned:

1. Rt. Rev'd. Dr. Olukayode Adebogun - ADOTT, USA
2. Rt. Rev'd. Ishaya Baba - Zaria
3. Rt. Rev'd. Randi Wonole - Bari
4. Rt. Rev'd. Kingsley Obuh - Asaba

Transition

1. The Rt. Rev'd Prof. Augustine Iwuagwu - (Aba)
2. The Rt. Rev'd Dr. Omole - (Sokoto)
3. The Rt. Rev'd Taminu Aduda - (Gwagwalada)
4. The Rt. Rev'd Abraham O. Awosan - (Oke Osun)
5. The Rt. Rev'd Dr. Peter Adebiyi - (Lagos West)

Lagos Ecclesiastical Province

1. On September 23rd, 2021, at the Episcopal Synod of the Church of Nigeria, the Most Rev'd. Dr, Humphrey Bamisebi Olumakaiye, Bishop of Lagos, was elected as the Archbishop of the Ecclesiastical Province of Lagos. He was presented at the Cathedral Church of the Advent, Gwarinkpa, Abuja on Sunday 7th November 2021.
2. The Provincial Clergy Conference was held at the Archbishop and Mrs. Oluranti Ademowo Conference Centre (Faith Plaza) and Archbishop Akinde Resource Centre, Bariga – Lagos from Monday 14th to Thursday 17th February 2022. The theme of the conference was “Anglican Clergy in a changing World”; and it was attended by all the Clergymen from the 13 Dioceses that make up the province. It was indeed a time of fellowship, re-union, and spiritual revival.

APPRECIATION

In ending this Address, we must express again, our gratitude to God for all He has done and continues to do for us as individuals and as a Diocese. We pray that His eternal presence will continue this journey with us and that His peace will continue to be ours.

We thank God for His continued provision and all those He has raised to bless His work in this Diocese. Many have and continue to work behind the scenes to make our time together, during the Synod, a beautiful and comfortable time together. We are grateful to them all. We thank the clergy and clergy wives led by our new Dean, The Venerable Segun Ajayi, and his wife. Our former Dean, The Venerable 'Feyi Ojelabi and his wife too, deserve special commendation for their faithful service over the years. We thank all the Administrative Archdeacons who joined us in planning for the Synod.

We thank all our leaders of worship, the preachers at our services, the Bible Study Leader and all those who helped prepare the various orders of service. We are grateful for the comportsment and leadership that the clergy continue to give especially during this Synod. This year at the opening of Synod Service, the clergy all agreed to come in their black cassocks, and they were such a beautiful sight to behold. We are grateful for the effort they continue to make to see that they are always clean, neat, and tidy. They are deeply appreciated.

The Synod Secretary and his team as usual, have been hard at work for the past three to four months and we pray for renewed health and strength for each of them. Their labour of love will not be in vain. In a special way, we say a big thank- you to our Synod Secretary, who will not be standing again for re-election and who

has decided, after many years of faithful service in the Lord's vineyard, to take early retirement, which he is qualified for. We are grateful indeed for the very hard work he has put in, towards the growth and development of this Diocese. From the bottom of our heart, we say thank you. He has been the live-wire of the administration of the Diocese, a role which he has played creditably well and we are sad to see him go, but we trust that even in retirement he will still be relevant and his health will not fail him in Jesus' Name.

We are grateful to All Saints' Church, Yaba for its continuing spirit of generosity displayed every year in its hosting of the synod. In the light of the ever-increasing cost of diesel and electricity, we cannot take their generosity for granted. Everything has been put in place for our comfort and we pray for the grace of replenishment for them. We are grateful to individuals who have donated in cash and kind and have prepared this venue for us.

The Cathedral too, graciously hosted the opening service as usual and will host the clergy conference on Monday. St. Paul's Church, Idi-oro will host the thanksgiving service on Sunday morning. This year, we finally get to go St. Paul's Church Idi-Oro for our thanksgiving service after a delay of about two years. We are grateful for all the preparations they have made to be ready for us. We are sure we will have a spirit-filled time in the presence of God with the good people of St. Paul's Church and Idi-Oro Archdeaconry.

We thank the Diocesan Choirmaster Sir Emeka Nwokedi and other Choirmasters, Organists and our Choristers for the sacrifices made in their preparations for the leading of our worship during the synod. Thank you, sir. The Altar Servers, Diocesan Guild of Stewards led by its President Mr. Emmanuel Adegboyega Oyeleke,

we say thank you. We are grateful to our Readers, I. T. Teams, Sextons, Security personnel and Cleaners. You are all deeply appreciated. May God bless and richly replenish each of you and continue to make you instruments of blessings to His people.

It is with the deepest sense of gratitude that we acknowledge the immense contributions of all our Nominees and Advisers, many of whom have served this Diocese since its inception. Some are no longer on board with us, and some have been reappointed. We are grateful for the time, talent, and treasure they have committed to the Lord's service. This will not go unrewarded. Your presence and contributions at our Diocesan Board and your various Parish Council meetings are appreciated. We heartily welcome on board our new Nominees and Advisers and wish them joy in the Lord's service.

We must thank too our very able Registrar, Lady T. C. Ochiagha and members of the Synod Planning Committee for all the good work they have put in to make the synod a success this year. This year we held our usual Pre-Synod Breakfast in BHAM Church with the Sunday School Choir of the Church of the Transfiguration, LUTH in attendance and the Advent Voices and Orchestra, a baby of the Women's and Girls' Organisations in attendance. We are grateful for all who attended, and the donations made. We thank the Synod Planning Committee for organising the event. We all felt comfortable with the ambience created in the hall and are sure that all who attended and those who watched online were blessed.

Finally, we thank in a special way Mama Lagos Mainland for her continued support through her constant intercession for us and the Diocese, especially as we prepared for Synod. Her leadership of the women of the Diocese and the immense contributions they continue to make for the edification of the Diocese are deeply

appreciated. Even as we begin and end the Synod, preparations for the Women's Conference are going on in earnest. May she and all the women enjoy God's presence and favour in the preparation for and during the conference. Amen.

We pray that at this Synod, God will honour us with His presence, guide us in the power of His Holy Spirit and bless all our deliberations. May all we do glorify His Name and that He Himself will prosper His work in our hands. May the Diocese of Lagos Mainland continue to be blessed and may God's Kingdom be enlarged through our work. Amen.

Dominus Vobiscum.

+Akinpelu Lagos Mainland



CHURCH OF NIGERIA

(Anglican Communion)

THE MOST REV'D HENRY C. NDUKUBA, ma, bd, ma (Ed.)
Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of All Nigeria.

THE COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE CHURCH OF NIGERIA (ANGLICAN COMMUNION) HOSTED BY THE DIOCESE OF LAGOS, AT ARCHBISHOP ADEBOLA AND OLURANTI ADEMOWO RESOURCE CENTRE, FAITH PLAZA, BARIGA, LAGOS STATE, FROM MONDAY, 20TH TO FRIDAY, 24TH SEPTEMBER 2021.

PREAMBLE: The Standing Committee meeting of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) which was held from Monday, 20th - Friday, 24th September, 2021 was presided over by the Most Reverend Henry Chukwudum Ndukuba, the Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of All Nigeria, accompanied by his wife, the National President of the Women Ministries, Mrs Angela Eberechukwu Ndukuba, attended by 163 Bishops, 151 Clergy and 97 lay delegates. Also in attendance were 3 Bishops from the Province of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA), led by its Primate and Chairman of the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON), the Most Reverend Dr Foley Beach.

The Standing Committee received guests at the opening ceremony, including His Excellency, Mr. Babajide Olusola Sanwo-olu, the Executive Governor of Lagos State, His Excellency, Barr. Chief Nyesom Ezeunwor Wike, CON, the Executive Governor of Rivers State, His Excellency, Arakunrin Oluwarotimi Odunayo Akeredolu (SAN), the Executive Governor of Ondo State, represented by his Deputy Governor, Hon. Lucky Orimisan Ayedatiwa, His Excellency, Prince Dr Dapo Abiodun, the Executive Governor of Ogun State, represented by the Most Reverend Michael Fape, Archbishop of Lagos Province and Bishop of Remo, and Hon. Prof. Emmanuel Akinola Abayomi, the Honourable Commissioner for Plealth, Lagos State, all of whom were recipients of the Primatial awards for their courageous and outstanding leadership in our nation at this challenging times.

THEME: The theme, "Abiding in Christ: God's Panacea in an Unstable World," was taken from John 15: 1 - 8. The theme was exhaustively exposed through the Primatial Address, Bible Study and Sermons. The meeting calls on Christians to abide in God as the only panacea in an unstable world.

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ST MATTHIAS HOUSE:

Plot 942, Ibrahim Waziri Crescent CAD Zone B01, Gudu District, P.O. Box 212, ADCP Garki, Abuja, Nigeria.,
Tel: 08037007270 Email: episcopalhouseabuja@gmail.com | Website: www.anglican-nig.org

INSECURITY AND INSTABILITY IN NIGERIA: The Church expresses its sympathy to the communities affected by violence and insecurity in various dimensions, spreading all over the country. The Church laments the gruesome killing of one of its Clergy in the Diocese of Orlu, the Reverend Emeka Merenu. It calls on the Government at various levels to take actions that would restore confidence in its ability to protect lives and stem the tide of despair and hopelessness, urging them to ensure that the killers are identified and brought to book. The unabated kidnapping of school children in the country portends grave danger not only to the education of our children but also to the nation's development. The Church condemns the fragile state of insecurity in the nation due to religious extremism, terrorism, violence, attacks and killings all over the country; and urges the Government to urgently rise to address the situation.

NEW WAVE OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC: The Standing Committee bemoans the unfortunate situation which the 'Corona Virus December 2019' (COVID-19) pandemic brought to the world. The Church appreciates the Government's efforts to vaccinate the people against this pandemic and urges that efforts should be taken to make it available in all parts of Nigeria. The Standing Committee therefore calls on everyone to take precautionary measures and observe all protocols of COVID-19 and its variants.

EDUCATION AND JOB CREATION: The Church calls on the Government to make efforts at addressing issues of youth unemployment. The Standing Committee, therefore, urges the government to make Nigeria attractive to Foreign Investors. It proposes a re-orientation in our educational system that will be relevant in the contemporary world. In this direction, the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) has decided to establish the Anglican University of Technology.

ECONOMY AND INDUSTRIAL ACTIONS IN NIGERIA: The Church notes that the regularity of industrial actions in Nigeria is alarming, adversely affecting the economic development of Nigeria. The Standing Committee recommends that all stakeholders involved in industrial relations should adopt Conciliation/Mediation and other Alternative Disputes Resolution (ADR) mechanisms. The Standing Committee urges the Government to endeavor to keep the agreements reached at the roundtable conference between them and various organisations.

INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT: The Standing Committee commends the Federal Government on diversification of the nation's transport system by the introduction of rail transport and the ongoing construction of the second Niger Bridge. It calls on the Government to expedite actions to complete the projects. However, the Church is worried over the durability of some of the roads constructed.

EXTERNAL DEBTS: The Church is concerned at the rate at which Government is borrowing, thereby increasing the national debts portfolio. The Standing Committee urges Government to exercise restraints in further borrowing so as not to jeopardise the future of all Nigerians.

ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA: The General elections will hold again in Nigeria in 2023. The meeting encourages all Christians to be involved in the electoral processes. The Church admonishes the National Assembly to revisit the issue of Direct-recording electronic (DRE) voting system. As the gubernatorial election approaches in Anambra State, the Standing Committee, enjoins all stakeholders to embrace equity, justice, fairness, and good conscience in all political permutations and engagements.

AGITATIONS: The Church observes that many are clamouring for self-determination because of varying forms of injustice in governance in the country. It therefore urges Government to initiate dialogues and inclusive governance to address the reasons for the agitations and stop gagging people with opposing views.

HEALTHCARE: The Standing Committee calls on the Government to urgently redress the lapses in the country's health system. It urges the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) to as a matter of urgency, establish functional centers in the six geopolitical zones.

WAR AGAINST DRUG ABUSE: The Church observes with grave concern one of the monsters confronting our nation as drug abuse and addiction. Nigeria is fast becoming a major drug hub in the world. The Standing Committee commends the Federal Government for efforts of 'National Drug Law and Enforcement Agency' (NDLEA), in curbing drug trafficking. The Church has gone further in supporting the efforts of the Government by declaring a War Against Drug Abuse and Addiction through her initiative called 'Anglican Compassion and Development Initiative' (ACADI).

AFGHANISTAN: The Church stands with the Christian believers in Afghanistan, and calls on the international community to prevail on the powers in Afghanistan to respect the peoples' Fundamental Human Rights of Freedom of Religious Faith and Practices.

CONCLUSION: In line with the theme of the Standing Committee, it is necessary to die to sin but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our LORD and the obedience to the Word. This will enable all Christians to abide in Christ in this unstable world and in our nation Nigeria that is passing through a very challenging time.



The Venerable Dr Gershinen Paul Dajur,
General Secretary, Church of Nigeria.



The Most Reverend Dr Ali Buba Lamido,
Dean, Church of Nigeria.



The Most Reverend Henry Chukwuduni Ndukuba, MA, BD, MA (Ed),
Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of All Nigeria.



CHURCH OF NIGERIA

(Anglican Communion)

THE MOST REV'D HENRY C. NDUKUBA, *ma ,bd ,ma (Ed.)*
Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of All Nigeria.

THE PASTORAL LETTER ISSUED AT THE END OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE CHURCH OF NIGERIA (ANGLICAN COMMUNION) HOSTED BY THE DIOCESE OF LAGOS, AT ARCHBISHOP ADEBOLA AND OLURANTI ADEMOWO RESOURCE CENTRE, FAITH PLAZA, BARIGA, LAGOS STATE, FROM MONDAY, 20TH TO FRIDAY, 24TH SEPTEMBER 2021.

Dearly beloved in Christ,

In the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Greetings to you from the meeting of the Standing Committee of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) hosted by the Diocese of Lagos, at Archbishop Adebola and Oluranti Ademowo Resource Centre, Faith Plaza (CMS Grammar School), Bariga, Lagos State, from Monday, 20th - Friday, 24th September 2021. The theme of the meeting was "Abiding in Christ: God's Panacea in an Unstable World" John 15: 1-8.

We were well received by the Diocese of Lagos (Anglican Communion) and the Province of Lagos. It was an opportunity for us to recognise some eminent Anglicans for outstanding performance with awards for courageous leadership in challenging situations in various states across the country. Meanwhile, the unstable state of our country is a matter of utmost concern to all and sundry. Banditry, kidnapping and insecurity now characterise the life of our society in the present day Nigeria, and it is painful that our dear country has found itself in this situation. Many are now fearful, exhibiting hopelessness and lack of confidence in the future of our country. Yet, at this meeting, we are strongly encouraged not to give up on our faith in Christ and the power of the Lord to deliver us and our country. The Standing Committee condemns in strong terms the murder of Reverend Emeka Merenu from Orlu Diocese, Owerri Province by unknown gunmen right inside the Church parsonage. The Standing committee commiserates with his family, the Diocese, the entire Church and others who have suffered the same faith.

Our joy is that abiding in Christ gives us hope to go through all these situations. It is important therefore that we hold on to Christ and abide in Him, who is the solution to our problems. If we remain in Him, He is able to keep us and make us

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ST MATTHIAS HOUSE:

Plot 942, Ibrahim Waziri Crescent CAD Zone B01, Gudu District, P.O. Box 212, ADCP Garki, Abuja, Nigeria.,
Tel: 08037007270 | Email: episcopalhouseabuja@gmail.com | Website: www.anglican-nig.org

fruitful. Therefore, we encourage all our members to remain faithful and committed to Christ, knowing what He has called us to be, and remain firmly committed to the purpose of our calling as God's children. This demands that we focus on Christ and allow no distraction whatsoever, but look up to Christ who is the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:1 - 2).

The economic and socio-political problems of our time call for responsible leadership on the part of our political leaders. While we note with joy the improvement in our economic situation as recently announced by the Government, we are well aware that unemployment and inflation rates are still high. But we appeal to you all never to lose hope, but to serve with diligence wherever the LORD has placed you, while we continue to pray for more improvement in our economic situation. Hence, we encourage you to go on with your daily business in confidence knowing that our God will not abandon His children.

We are aware of the attempt of some people who are trying to use the name Anglican in the formation of their Churches. This is most unfortunate when we realise that it is intended to confuse our members; and also, bearing in mind that those who are doing this are people who are under discipline from our Church for their immoral conduct. We urge you not to be confused. There is only one Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) duly registered in Nigeria. Any one that tries to use the name Anglican deceptively is mischievous. Therefore, We ask you to be vigilant and not be confused. Please, continue to serve God faithfully; and be loyal to the leadership within the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) in the Diocese where the LORD has placed you.

We are delighted to report that our mission in North America is growing and we are working on a plan to have it register as a non-profit charitable organisation in North America under the name 'Church of Nigeria North American Mission' (CONNAM). Please, continue to pray for this mission and all those who are working there, that, through them, the work of God, may continue to grow.

Here, at the home front, we have at this meeting launched an initiative called Anglican Compassion And Development Initiative (ACADI) to lead in our fight against drug abuse and addiction. Drug abuse has reached an alarming stage in our society and the havoc this is doing to our numerous youths is unimaginable. Please, join us to fight the scourge. Any drug that has not been medically prescribed for our use by certified health workers is not to be taken; and we should not indulge in using drugs for any selfish aim to attain what we may not be able to attain naturally.

Regrettably, COVID-19 pandemic has not totally disappeared from the world yet. It is disturbing that the Delta variant of it is manifesting even in our country. Our government is now making an effort to ensure that the people who live in Nigeria are vaccinated against this virus. While appealing to all to continue to keep the protocols, it is now important to encourage all our members to ensure that they are vaccinated, as a better way of ensuring protection against this virus.

Finally, we urge you to continue to serve God faithfully knowing that your labour in the LORD is not in vain. The bane of the Church of our time is a loud profession of the faith that is devoid of integrity and character. Much noise with no fruit. God wants us to shine as light and be the salt of our decaying society and the only way to do so is by abiding in Christ, obeying His Word, and serving God in worship and witnessing to His love. The fruit He desires of us is the fruit of repentance, Christ-like character, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the fruit and harvest of soul winning and mission. Our LORD and Saviour Jesus Christ said, “Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. For the branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be unless you remain in Me.... When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to My Father” (John 15: 4, 8).

To the only Wise and Eternal God, be glory, dominion and excellence, now and forever. Amen.

Your brother and fellow-branch in the True Vine,



The Most Reverend Henry Chukwudum Ndukuba, MA, BD, MA (Ed),
Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of All Nigeria



CHURCH OF NIGERIA

(Anglican Communion)

THE MOST REV'D HENRY C. NDUKUBA, ma, bd, ma (Ed.)
Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of All Nigeria.

THE COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE CHURCH OF NIGERIA (ANGLICAN COMMUNION) HELD FROM MONDAY, 21ST TO FRIDAY, 25TH FEBRUARY, 2022 AT ALL SAINTS CATHEDRAL, RUMUOKWURUSI AND ST. ANDREW'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, RUMUOBIOKANI DEANERY, OBO, EVO DIOCESE, RIVERS STATE.

Introduction: The Standing Committee of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican communion) met under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, presided over by the **Most Rev'd Dr. Henry Chukwudum Ndukuba**, Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of the Church of Nigeria, accompanied by his wife, **Mrs. Angela Eberechukwu Ndukuba**, President of the Women and Girls' organizations at the All Saints' Cathedral, Rumuokwurusi and St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery, Evo Diocese, Obio, Rivers State from Monday, 21st to Friday, 25th February, 2022. In attendance were 161 Bishops, 151 Clergy and 94 Lay delegates.

The Standing Committee was welcomed by **His Excellency Chief Barrister Nyesom Wike**, the Executive Governor of River State. The Executive Governor of Delta State, **His Excellency, Sir Sen. Dr. Arthur Ifeanyi Okowa**, delivered the keynote address and also received the Church of Nigeria Award for Courageous and Purposeful Leadership in Challenging Situation. Other recipients of the same award were **His Excellency Hon. Samuel Ortom**, the Executive Governor of Benue State, **His Excellency Prof. Babagana Zulum**, the Executive Governor of Bomo State ably represented by **Barrister Simon Malgwi**, Bomo State Head of Service and the Senate Minority Leader of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, **Senator Enyinnaya Harcourt Abaribe**, the Senator representing Abia South Senatorial District of Abia State.

Theme: The theme of the Standing Committee Meeting was '**The Christian's Dual Citizenship and Responsibilities**' taken from Matthew 22:20-22. Christians belong to the present world but are as well citizens of heaven. It is imperative that they live responsibly on earth in preparation for their heavenly home. Civic responsibilities such as payment of taxes, active participation in electoral processes, good neighbourliness, discipline and obedience to Government's good regulation are veritable means of demonstrating commitment to heavenly citizenship. Every believer is called upon,

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ST MATTHIAS HOUSE:

Plot 942, Ibrahim Waziri Crescent CAD Zone B01, Gudu District, P.O. Box 212, ADCP Garki, Abuja, Nigeria.,
Tel: 08037007270 | Email: episcopalhouseabuja@gmail.com | Website: www.anglican-nig.org

therefore, to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God, without compromising their heavenly pursuit.

National Security: Insurgency, kidnapping, banditry and all manners of criminality continue to bedevil our country. These security challenges are matters of national concern. The insincerity of purpose exhibited by the Government in many instances have provided a thriving platform for criminal activities to destroy the lives and properties of the innocent in our country. The Standing Committee notes that the lives of Nigerians, irrespective of religion, tribe or class, matters to God, and calls on Government to increase its effort at stemming the tide of insecurity in our country.

Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) Industrial Action: The Standing Committee is disturbed by the ongoing one-month warning industrial action embarked upon by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). ASUU has consistently accused Government of failure to keep the terms of agreement in the past. The Standing Committee calls on Government to give urgent and holistic attention to this matter once and for all in order to avert the myriad of inevitable future consequences of a destroyed educational system.

The 2023 General Elections: The Standing Committee calls on the citizenry to pray and be actively involved in working towards a peaceful electioneering process in 2023. It urges the Government to ensure non-interference in the affairs of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) at all levels, and provide a level playing ground for all the parties including the electorate.

Removal of Oil Subsidy: The Standing Committee commends the Federal Government for suspending the further removal of oil subsidy which would have worsened the level of poverty in the land. It encourages the Federal Government to show greater commitment towards rehabilitating the moribund oil refineries in the country. It further calls on related Government agencies to exercise due diligence in monitoring the importation of oil and oil related products so as to avert the importation of adulterated products into the country as was recently experienced.

National Truth Peace and Reconciliation Commission: In the light of the prevailing high level of insecurity and agitations in the country, giving rise to all sorts of violence and utter disregard to the sanctity of human life, the Standing Committee suggests that a National Truth, Peace and Reconciliation Commission be constituted that will make concerted effort to reconcile all the antagonizing groups in the country.

Infrastructural Development and Transportation: The Standing Committee appreciates the efforts and actions of the Federal and State Governments in infrastructural development, but calls on the relevant authorities to work on the road

leading into Port Harcourt, as it does not befit this oil rich State. In the same vein, actions should be taken to give other areas in the country a sense of belonging.


Environmental Degradation: The Standing Committee expresses worries over the level of environmental degradation owing to oil explorations in the Niger Delta region, and calls on the Government to curb the activities of illegal refineries and harness their potentials in setting up modular refineries.

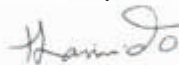
National Economy: The Standing Committee applauds the efforts made to get the nation out of recession and urges the Government to provide the enabling environment for a private sector driven economy. In this regard the need for electricity, other industrial energy sources, cannot be over-emphasized. Standing Committee urges the Government to do everything possible to lay the foundation for a virile modern economy and be extremely careful about further external borrowing that can jeopardize the future of the unborn generation.


Russia/ Ukraine Conflict: The Standing Committee notes with concern the present situation in the Eastern part of Ukraine, and calls on the Federal Government to urgently commence the process of evacuation of Nigerians in Russian and Ukraine as the war between world powers in the Eastern European country escalates.

Ritual Killings and Money Making: The Standing Committee notes with grave concern, the current preponderance of ritual killings for the purposes of acquiring wealth, especially, among our youths. The Standing Committee calls upon all Government agencies, parents, the Church and schools to rise up in our common interest to tackle this ugly menace and drug related issues.

Conclusion: The Standing Committee urges believers and citizens in general to show commitment to their earthly responsibility and civic duties as part of serving God purposefully because the "earth is the Lord's and its fullness thereof (Psalm 24:1).


The Venerable Dr. Gershinen Paul Dajur,
General Secretary, Church of Nigeria.


The Most Reverend Dr. Ali Buba Lamido,
Dean, Church of Nigeria.


The Most Reverend Dn Henry Chukwudum Ndukuba,
Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of All Nigeria.



CHURCH OF NIGERIA

(Anglican Communion)

THE MOST REV'D HENRY C. NDUKUBA, MA, BD, MA (Ed.)
Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of All Nigeria.

PASTORAL LETTER FROM THE STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE CHURCH OF NIGERIA (ANGLICAN COMMUNION) HELD FROM MONDAY, 8TH TO FRIDAY, 12TH FEBRUARY, 2021, AT THE ALL SAINTS CATHEDRAL CHURCH, ONITSHA, IN THE DIOCESE ON THE NIGER, ANAMBRA STATE

Dear People of God,

We bring you greetings in the name of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; Amen.

The Standing Committee meeting of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) held from Monday, 8th to Friday, 12th February, 2021 at the All Saints Cathedral Church, Onitsha, Diocese on the Niger, Anambra State. The theme was, "COSTLY COMMITMENT: THE IMPERATIVE IN FOLLOWING CHRIST" (LUKE 9:23).

The idea that God uses ordinary, broken human beings as vessels of his grace, and delights in us is not only awe-inspiring, it is something we must be thankful to Him for. However, Christ demands genuine commitment from these vessels and those who are his followers. This is not possible without the willingness to pay some price. The theme and the text of the Standing Committee addressed this issue.

The Text drawn from Luke 9, a very rich chapter in the New Testament. There we see Jesus Christ sending the twelve Disciples on Mission. He CALLED them and GAVE them power and authority over demons and to cure/heal diseases. Then He SENT them to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick. He also instructed them on what was expected of them. Jesus Christ said to them "take nothing for the journey". Stay in the home that receives you. Expect rejection from the people but know that there are consequences for rejecting the Gospel and those who serve God. Jesus Christ demanded, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" – Luke 9:23. There are three major demands that arise from this. Firstly, the desire to follow shall be a response of a whole life from the heart; secondly is the demand "Take up his cross daily" and third demand for Total costly commitment is His call, "Follow me." To this end we cannot relent in our efforts to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth in His name. May the Lord himself help us to be faithful at this:

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ST MATTHIAS HOUSE:

Plot 942, Ibrahim Waziri Crescent CAD Zone B01, Gudu District, P.O. Box 212, ADCP Garki, Abuja, Nigeria.,
Tel: 08037007270 | Email: episcopalhouseabuja@gmail.com | Website: www.anglican-nig.org

The Church of Nigeria Missionary Society (CNMS) is being repositioned to assist the Church in achieving this. It will be built into both a Mission Agency and Institution. Her core mandate will be "to evangelize, disciple and plant churches among the identified unreached peoples. Recruit, train, and send Missionaries in the country and areas of need across the continent and the world". The thrust of this Mission will largely centre around African countries but also to other parts of the world. Our desire is that the Church of Nigeria shall intentionally stir up the Universal Church unto World Mission and take the lead in preparing the Church for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The youth are not left out. A taskforce on the Children and Youth Mission of the Church of Nigeria was inaugurated during the Divine Commonwealth Conference in November, 2020. The aim is to galvanise a Children and Youth Mission that will mobilize our young people to be committed to the Word, Prayer, Worship, Witness and Outreach. We desire that God will raise from amongst them, a Joshua Generation that God will use to reach the rest of that generation for the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Maiden Youth Mission Conference will hold from 5th to 10th April 2021 at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The Theme is *LIVING WITH A PURPOSE (ROM. 8:27-30)*. Prominent servants of God will be ministering to the Youth. We request for your prayers and support to make this conference a success. There will be Pre-Conference Regional Mobilization Meetings. It is estimated that four Thousand Youths will attend and we are budgeting N10,000.00 per person in running the Conference. We enjoin all to pray along, while Dioceses and individuals are encouraged to sponsor delegates.

St. Matthias Collection continues to be a great source of funding for helping to grow some of our Dioceses and the different bodies that are beneficiaries in driving the work of mission in their different contexts. We appreciate the Dioceses for their contribution and urge every member of the Church to participate in the same. We plead with Dioceses to faithfully remit their collections. The next collection would be on 21st February 2021. The Bishops during the Retreat at Agbartha Otor resolved that in the meantime, the St. Matthias Fund will be used to meet the needs of the weaker Dioceses, Organizations and Institutions of the Church of Nigeria. Education and Human Development also remain integral parts of the Mission of the Church. Dioceses and Provinces are encouraged to continue and expand their work and investment in education at all levels from Nursery to Tertiary education. The Ph.D Scholarship programme, which is funded by the St Matthias Collection, will continue as a way of training the Clergy and empowering future leaders of the Church and Society.

A new constitution was approved at the last General Synod in September, 2020. It is now in use and we encourage Diocese and Provinces to enlighten the parishioners on the 2020 Constitution of the Church of Nigeria in conjunction with their legal officers for easy understanding of its contents and workings.

On the national scene, we want to continue to call on the Church not to shrink from the demand of Jesus Christ in the face of the unabated attack and destruction of human life and property that we are currently experiencing in our nation. The abduction, wanton killings, and other evil acts are glaring. There seems to be no respect for human dignity anymore as human lives are terminated indiscriminately almost daily in Nigeria by fellow human beings. We must seek the face of God concerning this despicable act of man's inhumanity to man in our nation and we must continue to trust God to raise a leadership after His own heart for our nation.

We counsel that we must all perform our civic duties by ensuring that as the General Elections come up in 2023, we see it as divine opportune time for the citizens to exercise their right to choose their leaders. Politics is God given process in the ordering of His world and society. Politics is not dirty as has been perceived by some people in the past, even though some people have hijacked the political processes for their personal agenda. We encourage all citizens to be involved in the political process of our States and Nation. Christians should register in any Party of their choice and be involved in the activities of the Party from the Ward level to the National.

There is beauty in unity. Jesus passionately prayed that His followers would be one (John 17:21). Therefore, there is a need to move as a National Church in our use of the tools that have been provided for leading worship amongst us. Dioceses are encouraged to use of the Church of Nigeria Book of Common Prayers; the Hymnal; the Bible Study Outline and other publications of this Church. We encourage our Regional Translators to commence full translations of these publications into Nigerian languages for the use of our people. Therefore, we must endeavour to see that our growth and expansion is not as a result of conflict. During the General Synod in September, 2020, the existing Moratorium on the creation of Dioceses, whether Full-fledged or Missionary Diocese, was extended by three years. This will be reviewed at the next General Synod. A Committee has been put in place to set the modalities and requirements for the creation of Dioceses. This Committee will submit their report in the next September Standing Committee meeting so that the guidelines will be clearly spelt out.

On the global stage, the Coronavirus continues to ravage the world, especially with the reported cases of its mutation, and different parts of the world announcing a second wave as cases surge. The Church of God must rise up to these challenges spiritually in fasting and prayer, not leaving out socio-educational actions. More so, the poor health care delivery in our country offers us a great opportunity for Compassionate Ministry. The Church needs to play more key roles in the Health Care delivery of this Nation. To this end, we urge our Dioceses and Provinces to establish Colleges of Nursing and Midwifery and Health Technology. The training of health professionals must be a Mission to rescue our Health Care and nurture the Youth in professions that will put them in service to humanity in or outside of Nigeria.

We commiserate with all who lost their dear ones. In the period under review we lost some fathers in God namely, the late Rt. Rev. Jacob Ajetunmbi (retired Bishop of Ibadan South Diocese), Rt. Rev. Foluso Taiwo (Diocese of Oke Osun), Rt. Rev. Godson Echefu (retired bishop of Ideato) and Lady Grace Iwuagwu (Wife of retired Bishop of Aba). We commiserate with the family of the late Dr. G.T.N. Ajakpo (the Galadima of Iokoja) the former Chairman of the CON Relief Committee and member of the ACNN Governing Board, and some other Church officials in our Dioceses. May God comfort their families. May the souls of the faithful departed rest in perfect peace.

We thank the Rt. Rev. Dr. Owen and Dr. Mrs. Ilesie Nwokolo and the Diocese on the Niger for hosting the Standing Committee. God will reward our members and bless the Diocese. We also appreciate the Most Rev Dr. Alex and Mrs Martha Ibezim for their support during the Standing Committee. On behalf of the Church of Nigeria, we express our profound gratitude to the Most Rev. Dr. Nicholas and Mama Nkasiobi Okoh for the bold and godly leadership they sacrificially gave to the Church of God. Their legacies will be sustained and in their retirement they will enjoy robust health. We thank all our retired fathers in faith who were present and assure them of our prayers and support. We also appreciate all our Committees and Taskforces for your labour of love for the Church of God.

As we conclude, we need to remind ourselves again that genuine COMMITMENT to the Lord and the pursuit of kingdom growth must of necessity cost the true disciple something. As true disciples, we must recognise that though we live in the world, we have been called not to conform to the standard of the world (Rom 12:2) but as people with the citizenship of Heaven (Philippians 3:20) we are called to set our minds on things above, and be transformed by the renewal of our minds (Col. 3:1-2; Rom. 12.1). God's goal is for us as disciples to be made into the image of Christ our Master, this is only possible if we are willing to deny ourselves and take up our cross daily to follow Him.

May the grace of God be with you all; Amen.

Your Most Reverend Father in God,



The Most Rev'd Henry Chukwudum Ndukuba, MA, BD, MA (Ed)
Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of All Nigeria







