

**CHURCH OF NIGERIA (ANGLICAN COMMUNION).
STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING
HOLDING AT ALL SAINTS CATHEDRAL CHURCH, ONITSHA,
DIOCESE ON THE NIGER.
MONDAY 8TH TO FRIDAY 12TH FEBRUARY, 2021.**

PROTOCOL: In the Name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

PREAMBLE: It is with great joy that we welcome all our Archbishops, Bishops, Clergy, Lay and Women delegates to this Standing Committee Meeting of the Church of Nigeria. We raise a voice of Praise to God as the Psalmist declares “I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever”. God has been very gracious to us. It is by His mercy that we are kept alive. The LORD says to us “For I am the LORD, I do not change, therefore, you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob”.¹ It seems as though the violence, COVID-19 Pandemic and sufferings of our time are not abating but our joy is that God is with us. God is here to bless, guide and strengthen us for greater exploits. May we receive grace to go with the Lord into the great future He has prepared for us, even if the giants rise up, God has already given us victory. Amen.

OUR HISTORIC VENUE: BRIEF HISTORY OF ALL SAINTS’ CATHEDRAL, ONITSHA.

The history of All Saints’ Cathedral, Onitsha is traced back to the advent of the Gospel to Igboland in 1857 led by Samuel Ajayi Crowther. Ajayi Crowther became a Bishop in 1864 and spent most of his time traversing various lands in order to consolidate the mission work across the West African sub region. Onitsha, however, remained head of the mission.

The vision to build a Cathedral in Onitsha was that of Bishop Joseph Sydney Hill who was consecrated Bishop in 1893 to succeed Bishop Crowther. The decision was taken when he visited Onitsha after his consecration in 1893. However, he was struck by a sudden illness which resulted in his death on 5th January 1894 and his wife on the following day, 6th January 1894.

With the death of Bishop Hill, everything about the proposed Cathedral was suspended. However, relations and friends deposited the caged structure of Bishop Hill’s proposed Cathedral (abandoned in Lagos) at Christ Church Onitsha. During the period, Christ Church, Onitsha served the functions of a Cathedral, although it was not called a Cathedral.

Bishop Herbert Tugwell succeeded Bishop Hill on 4th March 1894 and continued the dream to build a Cathedral in Onitsha. However, little or nothing was done to that effect his long episcopacy as the Bishop of Western Equatorial Africa notwithstanding.

On the 10th day of October, 1919 the Diocese of Western Equatorial Africa was divided into two Dioceses: the Diocese on the Niger and the Diocese of Lagos. The Right Reverend Herbert Tugwell the substantive Bishop chose to become the Bishop of the Diocese on the Niger.

¹ Malachi 3:6

On 20th October 1919 the Venerable Frank Melville Jones, was duly consecrated Bishop for the Diocese of Lagos. And the Diocese of Lagos was inaugurated on the 25th day of March 1920.

But Bishop Herbert Tugwell, who chose to be the first Bishop on the Niger died ever before he set out for Onitsha the Headquarters of the Diocese on the Niger. The Diocese on the Niger did not take off till 1922 when Bishop Bertram Lasbrey was consecrated Bishop on the Niger.

Bishop Bertram Lasbrey chaired the Diocesan Synod at Christ Church, Onitsha in 1939, where Ven Victor Umunna moved a motion calling for a befitting Cathedral in Onitsha. At the instance of Bishop Lasbrey, B. J. S. Watkins explained the importance of a Cathedral in a Diocese and the Bishop constituted a committee to work out the details.

With the accession of Archbishop C. J. Patterson as the Bishop on the Niger in 1945, strategic efforts were made to commence the building of the Cathedral. Archbishop Patterson envisioned a Cathedral which will stand as a sure and steadfast witness to the things of God in this land. He thought of a Cathedral of all nations and peoples, designed to be elegant, beautiful and tropical compliant and its tower standing high in Onitsha skyline. The committee worked with the CMS and Nigerian Government authorities to choose the best location in Onitsha where the Cathedral will be sited. This site was finally chosen.

Architect Richard Schole Field Nickson, who was briefed, designed this lovely Cathedral in 1949, assisted by Robin York. Architect David ChikwuelumIfejika took over from them later.

The foundation Stone of this Cathedral was laid on Wednesday 9th November 1949 by His Excellency, Sir John Stewart Macpherson, Governor General and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria, after blessings by Archbishop C. J. Patterson.

In November 1959, Archbishop C. J. Patterson formed the group called the “Friends of the Cathedral”. In his inaugural message; he stated that the group was made up of all who desired the well-being of the Cathedral and the expansion of its mission on earth. Because of the design, size and the nature of the Cathedral, its maintenance is expensive and so friends of the Cathedral are expected to help the Cathedral through donations for the upkeep of this edifice and its compound.

The Cathedral was dedicated in phases:

- The Lady Chapel was dedicated on Saturday 10th May 1952. The officiating Bishop was the Rt. Rev Morris Gelsthorpe, Bishop of Sudan – Former Assistant Bishop on the Niger.
- The Sanctuary Windows (stained glasses) was dedicated on Saturday 25th September, 1960 by the Most Rev Dr Geoffrey Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury.
- The consecration of the Sanctuary, High Altar and Transeptal Tower was on Saturday 9th January 1965 by the Most Rev Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury.
- Restoration of the Cathedral after the Nigerian Civil War was on 7th April 1972 by the Most Rev C. J. Patterson, Retired Archbishop of West Africa and Bishop on the Niger, assisted by Rt Rev L. M. Uzodike, Bishop on the Niger.

- Consecration of the Chapter House in memory of Sir Louis Mbanefo (1st Chancellor Diocese on the Niger) was on Saturday 24th April 1982 by the Most Rev Robert Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury.
- Consecration of the completed Cathedral: Main West Nave, the Oratory Chapel, Galleries, Crypt and Belfry was on Sunday 1st November 1992 by the Most Rev Joseph Abiodun Adetoloye, Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of Church of Nigeria, assisted by the Rt. Rev Dr J. A. Onyemelukwe, Bishop on the Niger

Since then, God had used countless men and women in the past to promote His work in this Cathedral. The Lord has continued to glorify His name through the lives of various men and women who offered themselves to His service. Presently, worshipping in the Cathedral is a thing to desire. Our services are vibrant, ancient and modern to the glory of God. The work of the Cathedral Church of All Saints, Onitsha is manifest in various areas of the Church's life, namely: Children, Youth, Men and Women's Ministries, welfare, entrepreneurship, local and foreign missions.

All Saints' Cathedral, Onitsha has hosted many Church of Nigeria events, namely: Church of Nigeria Standing Committee meetings, General Synods and Consecration of Bishops.

The Bishops who have played significant part in the life of this Cathedral are:

Most Rev. C. J. Patterson –	1945 – 1969
Rt. Rev. L. M. Uzodike –	1969 – 1975
Most Rev. Dr J. A. Onyemelukwe –	1975 – 2000
Rt. Rev. Ken S. E. Okeke –	2000 – 2011
Rt. Rev. Dr Owen Nwokolo –	2011 – Date

This is the Cradle of Christianity East of the Niger and home for Anglican Church. We thank God for all His servants who have served Him here and kept the light of the Gospel shining from generation to generation. You have preserved and successfully passed on the Evangelical Tradition of the Anglican Church. Once again we have come from across this Nation for worship, fellowship and deliberation on the Mission and Ministry of the Church in our generation. God is here to guide us now and into the future. Thank you for your hospitality. "God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."² God fought your battle over the Church land and He will preserve your inheritance and bless Diocese on the Niger.

NATIONAL ISSUES:

INSECURITY AND INSTABILITY IN NIGERIA: Nigeria is fast becoming a land flowing with Tears and Blood because the reality of Terror, devastations, destructions and fear are evident. The troubles that come to the people are like the earthquake which was followed by a Tsunami with great destruction of lives and property. The aftermath is only ruins and fear for life. We live in a very uncertain times, insecurity and devastations. Our people have lost their homes, livelihood, lives and property. We are constantly under attacks in our Nation and in some parts of our Dioceses churches have been destroyed, our members are kidnapped, some people are killed violently by sudden attacks by unidentified gunmen. The painful

² 2 Corinthians 9:8.

thing is that the dead are not counted and adequate recognition of the evil made. The trivializing of the sanctity of the lives of Nigerians in their own land is fast becoming a norm. In some cases the Military and Security Agencies would deny that such incident ever took place. The lives of Nigerians irrespective of religion, tribe, class or other considerations matter to God and to this Nation. A situation in which communities that are predominantly Christian are targeted one after another attacked, kidnapped and killed mercilessly and their homes and property destroyed in some parts of the North East like Taraba State, North West like in Kaduna State and North Central is totally unacceptable. The constant siege on communities in the Southern Parts must be checked.

The destruction caused by Communal war in some parts of this country is becoming unbearable. The constant extortion by the Police and other Law Enforcement Agencies clearly show that the South East and South-South Geopolitical Zones are treated like a conquered territory. We support the efforts of some State Governments in checking the menace of the Armed Herders attacks and the wicked activities of Banditry in many States. Nigeria is a Federating Nation and each State Government must rise up to make laws and implement policies that can help protect lives and property our citizens. We support the call for restructuring the Nigeria Police Force to allow State Governments have State Police Force and strengthen the present Regional Security Outfits being put in place.

We commend President Mohammad Buhari for the appointment of the New Service Chiefs of the Nigerian Armed Forces and congratulate the newly appointed Officers. The security challenge is enormous and overwhelming, therefore we urge the Security Chiefs to face their task with determination, and focus to bring an end to Banditry, Kidnapping and general insecurity. They need to work in collaboration with the State Governors and Regional leaders and well-meaning organizations. Care must be taken in disbanding the existing Regional Security Organizations. Nevertheless, there is need for a complete overhaul and restructuring of the Nation's security architecture and purge the Armed Forces and Security Agencies of corrupt officers. The sponsors of Banditry and Kidnapping must be exposed and be dealt with for us to have peace. We hope for a swift, effective and functional security for our country.

CALL FOR A SOVEREIGN NATIONAL DIALOGUE: Nigeria is at the brink of becoming a failed State and we are not too far from Somalia. The arrogance and imposition of Armed Cattle Herders or any other ethnic nationality and the religious colourings in our national life is worrying. The lop-sidedness in the implementation of some National Policies and Federal appointment favouring Muslims and Fulani is troubling.

The issue of Justice, Equity and Equality of Citizens in a free and democratic society remains an issue that must be openly and frankly discussed, legislated and implemented for the survival of this Nation Nigeria. We therefore call for a new comprehensive Sovereign National Dialogue by all the Ethnic Nationalities and Regional representatives (apart from the Legislators) to discuss all issues troubling this Nation. Nigeria needs a new Civilian and Democratic Constitution. We need a birth of a New Nigeria where no citizen is oppressed rather everyone has right to strive for good life. We need a nation where the Resources are

judiciously distributed for the good of all. Our present system breeds greed, corruption, anarchy and injustice. *We need a New Nigeria for all citizens.*

MANDATORY WEAPONS AND GUN CONTROL IN NIGERIA: Considering the security situation in Nigeria, we call on the Federal Governments to declare a state of emergency in Security for the Country for six months. This period shall be for Amnesty for mop up all illegal arms to be voluntarily surrendered by individuals and groups throughout the country. The Nigeria Armed Forces will carry out this exercise. The national borders must be better manned to the influx of illegal aliens, guns and ammunition. The Federal Government must put in place and implement a very stringent Gun Control policy for Nigeria. A situation where a Herdsman carries an AK47 gun and moves freely in civilian communities must not be tolerated.

ENDSARS PROTESTS AND MATTERS ARISING: The ENDSARS/ENDSWAT Protests that was staged by the Youth of this Nation were a protest with specified demands. The unjust allocation of every employment opportunities to the Political class and the privileged people is a corruption of the normal and must be addressed.

We commend the initial response and negations of the Federal Government and request that the Government should keep their word to the Youth of Nigeria. The unfortunate hijack of the peaceful civil protest by hoodlums brought so much pain and destruction. The looting of the Government Warehouses and Stores and Shops of ordinary citizens further worsened the situation. We totally condemn the criminality exhibited by the looters, arsonists who burnt down Police Stations and killed our Law Enforcement Agents. No person serving this Country should be targeted for death because he/she is serving this Nation. We call on the Law Enforcement Authorities to investigate and prosecute those responsible for this evil.

We commend the efforts of some State Governments in establishing the Panel of Inquiry into the ENDSARS Protests. The Lagos State Panel has done well so far and it will be good that other States should not sweep the violation of the rights of the citizens by those who should protect them under the carpet. The handling of the ENDSARS Protest should not become an occasion of witch-hunting and blame game. The seizure of the International Passports of some of the Youth alleged to have masterminded a legitimate protest because of the intolerable conditions of the citizens of this country should be reconsidered. While we appreciate the economic palliatives of the Government to help the most vulnerable in the Nation, though with all its opportunity for corruption, one will rather advocate for greater efforts be put in activating some of the agro-based industries and encourage industrialization that will create jobs and commerce for our teeming population.

THE STRANGLING HOLD ON CHURCHES: The gradual and intensifying subtle persecution of Christians and Churches is troubling. This is seen in the employment, appointments, recruitment and deployment exercise of the Security and Law Enforcement Agencies.

The spate of the destruction of church buildings in some parts of this country by some Government agencies is disturbing. We stand with all our churches that are going through the

pain of confiscation or destruction of the Church property in some parts of this country. In some parts of the North, Christians are not allotted land for the building of churches. However, Churches are encouraged to follow due process in seeking for approval in building of churches and institutions so as to avoid the demolition of our structures.

The Anglican Church has always made the mistake of not securing our Church lands. Sometimes our troubles come from within us because we have had situations where some of our members and leaders connive with outsiders to sell portions of our Church lands or even sue the Church to get portions of our Church lands. We encourage Dioceses to secure all church lands and document them.

2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS: The General Elections comes up in 2023. This is the opportune time for the citizens to exercise their right to choose our 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. Those who contest for political positions are chosen from the grassroots and Ward levels. The Anglican Church must be focused and fully mobilized in the political processes throughout this country.

We encourage every Anglican member to register, obtain and keep your Voters Card and your National Identification Number. The State Elections for Anambra State is slated for November 2021. We encourage all citizens of the State participate and to pray for a peaceful election and smooth transition of power. All groups and organs of the Church must be mobilized for political engagement. Our Seminar shall be on the Role of the Church in the Democratic process in Nigeria. The Political Mobilization Group for the Church of Nigeria will have to guide us on constructive engagement.

COVID-19 AND IMPACT: The year 2020 stands out in history as the year when COVID-19 ravaged the world. It has impacted the world negatively in terms of sickness, loss of lives, loss of livelihood, economically, socially and spiritually. Every Government and family has been affected and Nigeria is yet to recover from its impact. A new strain of the COVID-19 emerging from Britain and South Africa, this is causing the second wave of infections and deaths. More so COVID-19 is already in our villages and communities. We have lost some members to COVID-19 infections. Many people are very complaisant and careless because some believe that it is a rich people's disease or it is not real. COVID-19 is real and it kills. Some people are peddling unfounded campaign against the COVID-19 Vaccines. They suggest that anyone receiving the Vaccine will receive the antichrist number 666. Let it be clear that COVID-19 is a virus that is ravaging the world and killing people. We give glory to God that we have higher survival rate in Nigeria. This disease is like Polio, Yellow Fever and other virus diseases that we receive Vaccines to prevent them. Those who are infected are being treated and many recover. The Medical personnel administer drugs to cure them which does not initiate them with the 666. This Vaccine is like any other that we receive to prevent

diseases caused by virus. The End Time signs are here but the severe persecutions and tribulations are yet to come fully. We should be careful not to propagate stories that are not true and which can only be destructive to the lives of our people. Let us live in faith and righteousness and so walk with God that whether we live or die that we may be pleasing to God.

Therefore every person must be cautious and observe the Protocols as issued by PTF and NCPC. Everyone should keep the non-Pharmaceutical procedures such as keeping social distance, use of Face Mask, hand washing with soap and running water, the use of Alcohol based Sanitizers, the social distancing and others. Above all these we must fight Corona-virus with Fasting and Prayer. It is a virus and an enemy of our lives and at the Name of Jesus Christ COVID-19 must be destroyed. God has preserved our lives till today and He will protect and keep us till the end. We plead that the Federal and State Government should procure the available Vaccines and give general vaccine to all our citizens especially the most vulnerable group.

The incidence of the COVID-19 has exposed the poor state of Nigerian Health Care delivery. We want to encourage Dioceses and members to get invest in the Professional Training of Health Care givers and in Research, Manufacturing and sale of Pharmaceutical products. Dioceses should intensify the establishment of Health Clinics and Hospitals. We direct all our Dioceses and Parishes to see how they need to establish clinics and welfare organs that will carter for our members, especially the poor and vulnerable members. We appreciate all our Doctors, Nurses and frontline health workers who have bravely stood for the sick and infected citizens. We commiserate with all those who lost their dear one in this Pandemic. God stand by us and carry us through this challenging period victoriously.

THEME: “COSTLY COMMITMENT: THE IMPERATIVE IN FOLLOWING JESUS CHRIST” (LUKE 9:23-26).

INTRODUCTION: We live in a generation that people are prone to go for what they will gain rather than sacrifice or pay dearly to get or serve others. This is a generation that commitment is conditional. The idea of a costly commitment may sound alien to many people but it is fundamental in the understanding of the Christian Faith. One cannot follow the Crucified Lord Jesus Christ without a Costly Commitment because sacrifice is at the heart of every service to God and humanity.

We considered the “Priority of God” during the General Synod in September 2020 in order to set out our focus in Ministry of the Church. In this Standing Committee, there is a Costly Commitment required by God from everyone who desires to follow Jesus Christ and do what God demands of us. This is aimed at deepening our personal and corporate commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ in such a way that our lives will be totally rooted and built up in Christ. The purpose of this is that (i) that we will individually know God and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (ii) The experience we are passing through in all the world is such that persecution and suffering are increasing and false teachers and prophets are

waxing stronger. Therefore in this end time any believer who will endure to the end will need to be totally committed to the Lord Jesus Christ. God wants to raise people for His Kingdom tasks and His glory may we be those whom God will use to continue the ministry of the Gospel in our time.

There is no better way to prepare for the challenges and trials of our time than to do what the early believers did in Acts of the Apostles, that is, steadfastness and continuous spiritual growth in spite of the persecutions and killings of the believers in Christ. In our time we shall not fail God. The whole creation is eagerly waiting for the manifestation of the sons and daughters of the Living God³. It is only those who are ready to pay the cost and totally committed to the Lord and diligently obey and follow Jesus Christ that will stand in these evil days.

DEFINITION OF THE TERMS: “**Cost**” has to do with the amount of money you need in order to buy, make or do something⁴. It can mean “incurring a charge; to require payment of a price”; it is “to cause something to be lost; to cause the expenditure or relinquishment of something”; to require to be borne or suffered in order to achieve a goal”. “**Costly**” has to do with the high Cost or Price required to pay or the expensive price or sacrifice required to achieve a set task. The Commitment God asks of us is both Costly and Total. “**Total**” may be “Entire; relating to the whole of something”. “Total” can be an intensifier meaning “Complete; absolute, including everything”. We therefore see “Total” as “complete in which everything is included, whole and entire; nothing is left out”⁵. “**Commitment**” has to do with (i) “the promise or agreement to do something or assume obligation or responsibility in the future”. (ii) it may mean “being bound emotionally or intellectually to a course of action or to another person”. (iii) It means “the trait of sincerity and focused purpose”⁶. **To follow** means “To go or come after, to pursue; to move behind in the same path or direction”⁷.

Our working definition is the pledge and holding oneself responsible in sincerity to sacrifice, obey and come after Jesus Christ and desire to be like Him until the purpose of God is done in one’s life. It is that deliberate, intentional and sacrificial willingness to give up anything that will stand in our way to obey and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. This quality and attachment is mandatory in following Jesus Christ. If indeed we have repented and believed in Jesus Christ, He demands absolute and wholesome surrender in following Him.

It was a Nigerian Politician that said that “in politics and political loyalty there is no place for 80% or 95% loyalty. It is either 100% or nothing at all”⁸. ‘**Commitment**’ is the defining character of manliness. When a responsible man speaks or makes any promise, he is bound to do as he has said and be held responsible for the pledge and expectation that he is liable to. The Psalmist describes a person who is committed to God as one “Who walks (lives) uprightly, and works (does) righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart....in whose eye a

³ Romans 8:19.

⁴ Oxford Advanced learner’s Dicoctionary.

⁵Wikitionary: www.tionary.org. accessed 26 January, 2021.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Senator Mohammad Danjuma Goje, Former Governor of Gombe State.

vile (wicked and deceitful) person is despised, but he honours those who fear the LORD, he who swears (speaks, promises) and does not change even when it is to his hurt (disadvantage)...He who does these things shall never be moved”⁹. A person who is committed does not change from following that which is true and faithful. He is not moved by people’s opinions or challenges. He shall not be removed from his place and his portion shall not be taken away from him. God demands TOTAL AND COSTLY COMMITMENT, not half hearted following. God is not pleased by praise singing and eye service, but a total, unreserved obedience. It is dependence upon Him and constantly walking after Him as He leads the way.

Our Text is drawn from Luke 9 which is 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 is expected of them. It is “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 gave Himself completely to Preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, to Teaching the Truth of the Word of God and to Healing the sick and oppressed. He also feed the hungry** and demanded that the physical needs and hunger of the people be taken care of by His Disciples.

DISTRACTIONS TO FOLLOWING JESUS: God’s Kingdom work is for the total person. Jesus ministry had great impact on the people and society that even King Herod the Tetrarch heard and noticed that it could be John whom he beheaded that came back to life. This was misunderstanding and superstitious. Till today sometimes when God moves to stir souls and bring a turnaround people easily ascribe it to some spiritual forces from the dead. Jesus was accused of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub¹⁰. This is blasphemy and giving the glory that is due to God to idols and spiritual forces. God will not share his glory with any man or idols.

Another group that did not understand Jesus and the Kingdom work was the multitude or the crowd. The crowd followed Jesus Christ not because they love God and want to know God but they followed Jesus because of the things they could get from Him¹¹. They wanted healing, food and to see the next miracle¹². These did not make them believe and commit themselves to Christ. They had their own expectation, which is to see another great Prophet. When Jesus asked who the multitude say He is. They saw Jesus as John the Baptist, Elijah or any of the old Prophets. It comes out clearly that Jesus was seen as a great Prophet but indeed Jesus Christ is more than a prophet. Just as some religions revere Jesus as one of the prophets, a great teacher and mere religious leader. The zealots among them were busy checking out if Jesus was the Messiah who would fight and conquer the Roman rule. They were following Jesus to get their problems solved.

⁹ Psalm 15:1-5. NKJV.

¹⁰ Matthew 12:24.

¹¹ John 6:22-27.

¹² John 6:28ff.

Our Natural Orientation: Like the Political Jewish religious leaders and the Crowd that followed Jesus so are we today in understanding who Jesus Christ really is. Many people in the churches follow Jesus because of what they can get and gain. This is true among Pastors and ordinary members. In many cases our mindset and worldview are subsistent and survival mindset. Most of our farmers in Nigeria are farming just to get food to eat. In some cases what we laboured the whole farming season are eaten up in two months. Some of our people in villages may get some money from the sales of their harvest only to spend it in drinking and loans to friends that are never paid back. We live in the culture of poverty, subsistence and struggling to survive. As such people see every public event burial, marriage, harvest and occasions to get as much food, money and anything free to meet some needs.

We have ***cultural inheritance that shapes our attitude*** in such a way that personal commitment and responsibility are avoided and evaded. Mbiti said that African philosophy of life is “I am because we are, and because we are I am¹³”. This is a very good African understanding of life that set us above the individualistic life style of the western and modern way of life. But there is a very negative impact of this African cultural communism on us. It is easy for the whole family or village to be converted to Christianity or Islam without personal commitment. There are people who are in the Church because that is where their family and friends belong.

In both modern Pentecostal and Mainline Protestant churches many people are just following without readiness to study God’s Word, engage in the disciplines of Discipleship. In some cases we Pastors make Disciples after ourselves and not unto Jesus Christ. Because of this African communalism mindset, people can rise to leadership position without a personal commitment to Jesus Christ or readiness to take responsibility and make sacrifice for that which they believe. The modern trend now is that people move from one church to another and even from Christianity to Islam and to nothing. This is the root of mixture of teachings and falsehood. The only thing that culturally does not change for people is survival and meeting their basic needs. Fundamentally, in Nigeria, personal interest is more important to the individual than even the common good of the Church, fellowship, community or Nation.

Our Natural orientation is clear “go for what you will get, do what they require you should do just to survive. Get what will benefit you and get out before the system collapses”. This is the root of our corruption, eye service, cut and join system. We do not work to make the system become strong and be sustained. This is why no Government Industry or organization ever survives. This is why our railway is dead and our Government schools are not able to train our children. Another killer mentality is ***Dependency Mentality***. It is the thinking that Rulers are specially endowed by God and the ordinary people cannot think for themselves. The people need to depend on the Rulers, Kings, Governors, Politicians and Pastors to meet their needs. This thinking is rooted in the Feudal system where very few individuals manipulate power to control the majority perpetually. The struggle for power is intense because that is the easiest way to have access to resources and wealth. We see this in Nigerian politics and our Democratic experience. We see this among pastors as we struggle

¹³ Mbiti, John S., African Traditional Religion and Philosophy;

to climb to become Rev or Canon or Bishop, Secretary or Chairman and then the fire of zeal will die out. The ordinary people settle down to the mindset of “we are the responsibility of the leaders whether religious or political. The result of dependency mentality is that even where and when we should take responsibility we will resign and do nothing. We hope somebody else should do it.

The fundamental problem of Nigeria is SELFISHNESS AND GREED. This is the root of our spiritual, mental and political and societal poverty. We are not lazy, poor, and helpless as it seems. This is the root of our following the crowd, hero worship and following dominant and beneficial powers and people. This was the problem of the people in Jesus time. Jesus Christ contradicted their expectations and placed a demand for Costly, Total Commitment and personal responsibility to Himself as LORD and SAVIOUR, not hero worship, not following the crowd, and not for what you will get.

On the road to Jerusalem the Disciples sensed that something special would happen, then what did they do? They were quarrelling over who is the greatest among them as we see in Luke 9:46-48. Jesus taught them humility and service as the core of following Him and not position and power. The mother of James and John came to Jesus to ask for special positions for her sons. This also caused another big trouble among the holy men following Jesus. Sometimes deadly politics go on in our churches when the President and other officers of the churches are elected or appointed. Are these all for the work of the Kingdom of God?

JESUS KINGDOM AGENDA: In the context of our selfish pursuit and personal hidden and open agenda, Jesus is asking us “Who do you say that I am?” Who is Jesus to you and me? What is our experience of Him and is it such that we can leave everything to follow Him without expecting to get something in return? We can see that Peter answered for the Disciples when he said “You are the Christ of God¹⁴. “Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.¹⁵” Jesus made some profound statements following this confession that this was not by human knowledge but by the revelation from God.

Indeed no one can truly know and experience Jesus Christ except by the help of the Holy Spirit, for no one can confess that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. The living and saving faith is a gift of God when we truly turn to Him. Secondly, this faith in Christ Jesus is the foundation of everything God is doing in the life of the individual and the fellowship of the Believers called the Church. As long as believers in Christ hold to this faith in Jesus Christ Who died and rose again, there may be trials and persecution but God will build His Church and the power of death and destruction cannot prevail over the Church. Thirdly, faith in Christ gives the believer access to heaven’s resources and power to reign over situations on earth. It is the basis of the Believers’ authority which we exercise in prayer and the Word of God. Every operation of the Kingdom of God on earth is dependent on Jesus Christ, His Name, Power, Blood and the Word of God. Therefore God’s reign is present in the Person of

¹⁴ Luke 9:20.

¹⁵ Matthew 16:16.

Jesus Christ. Jesus demands commitment not to a set of rules or a particular Book thrown down by God or anything but to Himself as LORD and Saviour.

This Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of the Living God. He is the Servant of God that Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 52, and 53. He is the suffering Servant of Yahweh Who would die and bear the sins, iniquities, afflictions and death of many. He will die but will rise again to life and shall see the seed of His suffering. The Reign of God shall prosper in His hands. Daniel also prophesied about the Son of Man Who is the Eternal Son of God that comes before the Ancient of Days and receives Authority and power, dominion and glory to reign over the Nations of the world. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.¹⁶

Following Peter's confession Jesus began to tell the Disciples His Kingdom Agenda. That Jesus will be rejected by the Jewish leaders and people, be betrayed, suffer and be crucified and die. But on the third day He shall rise up again from the dead. The aspect of rejection and suffering were not understood in the expectations of the Jewish Messiah. They wanted a Conqueror to destroy the yoke of the Gentiles. Suffering and death were not expected nor accepted. It is the same thing with the New Gospel of prosperity and fight against poverty at the expense of righteousness, holiness of living and endurance to the end as we await the Return in glory of Jesus Christ our Lord. Peter rebuked Jesus for accepting to suffer and die. But Jesus' response show us that God's will and purpose cannot be thwarted. Any opposition to the suffering and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is from the Devil and human fallen nature warring against God.

Paul said to the Corinthian Christians "For the message of the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God... For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men¹⁷". The Kingdom of God is not like the kingdoms of this world and cannot be destroyed by the powers of the worldly rulers or spiritual wickedness. Yes, they can persecute burn down and kill but God's reign in this present world shall continue until the end of time.

DEMAND FOR KINGDOM SERVANTS: Jesus Christ seeks for God's Kingdom Agents and Citizens who are totally sold out to Him and are willing to suffer shame, attacks and even death. He did not present it to meet the positions, aspirations and popular expectations of the people. Jesus is looking for people not system. His demand is conditional and open to anyone who is willing to respond be it child or adult, young or old, male or female, in the village or city, big or small. Jesus said to them all both the Crowd and the Disciples, "If anyone desires

¹⁶ Daniel 7:13-14.

¹⁷ 1Corinthians 1:18-25.

to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me¹⁸. There is an open and equal opportunity for every one of us to respond to God to a sacrificial and costly commitment to follow Jesus Christ. It is not less for us in Nigeria. The demand of Christ then is not different for us today.

You can see Jesus walking away from the Disciples and the crowd and expected those ready to follow Him. Jesus today raises His voice as of old and calls us out of selfish ambitions and agenda, out of sin, lust, guilt, shame, gluttony and wickedness. Jesus is calling us out of our fears, pain and betrayal which we have suffered. Jesus is calling us out of the world's mammon, power, pleasures and glories to sacrifice all to follow him. The Hymn Writer Cecil F. Alexander in 1852, aptly put it thus

Jesus calls us, over the tumult, of our life's wild restless sea, Day by day His sweet voice soundeth, Saying , 'Christian, follow Me'. As of old the Apostles heard it By the Galilean lake, Turned from home and toil and kindred, leaving all for His dear sake. Jesus call us from the worship of the vain world's golden store, from each idol that would keep us, saying 'Christian, love Me more....'¹⁹

There are three major things He is demanding. *Firstly, desire to follow shall be a response of a whole life from the heart.* And such will require **"Deny himself"**. Self or Ego lies at the heart of our self-understanding, assessment and assertion. This demand seeks to kill our loyalty to our natural life, our natural cultural allegiance, ambitions, interests and agenda. It is death to our selfishness and pride. One reality is that the natural man, the carnal man cannot please God and cannot understand or hold on to the things of the Holy Spirit. The sinful nature does not give up easily, it always fights back. There is a warfare going on as Paul the Apostle points out *"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not the things that you wish.... I say then: 'Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh'²⁰*". It is evident the greatest hindrance to costly commitment is the self/ego. As someone said, that "I" or self or ego is at the 'center' of sin.

To deal with this self we need the help of the Holy Spirit, we need God. God wants to work in us as freely as we shall allow Him and our readiness to obey and follow His guidance and instruction. He sanctifies us by pruning and cutting off habits, attitudes and life styles that are not pleasing to God. The Holy Spirit teaches and reminds us of God's demands in the Word of God. He leads us to the Truth that cleanses, and frees our consciences from guilt. It is not easy but it is possible when we willingly yield to the Holy Spirit's guidance. This in itself comes by self-condescension, humility and obedience just as we see in Jesus Christ. This is the mind of Christ Who in His human form did not count equality with God as something to hang on to. He willingly gave it up His heavenly splendour and took up the form of a slave. He made Himself of no reputation, He humbled Himself, He became obedient to the point of

¹⁸ Luke 9:23.

¹⁹ Church of Nigeria Hymnal (CONH) 556.

²⁰ Galatians 5:17,16.

death, even death on the cross²¹. Jesus is not asking us to do what He did not do or what is impossible. This is what it cost Him to do the will of the Father and that is what it will take us to do the will of Jesus Christ. Commitment attacks our ego and pride in such a way that we die to self and even when self raises its ugly head, we deny it of its claims.

This leads us to the *second demand "Take up his cross daily"*. In the time of Jesus the Roman Empire ruled the conquered people in such a way that they put fear in the lives²² of the people by the way they kill those who rebelled against their authority. It is like during the Military rule anyone found guilty of 'Coup de tar' or plot to over throw the Government will die by firing squad. Such death on the tree trunk and drum represents the Roman Cross. It is a symbol of violent and cruel death. It is a symbol of shame. For the Romans, the condemned criminal carries his cross as a sign of accepting his crime and readiness to suffer and die. Jesus makes it clear that following Him demands one's readiness to suffer shame, rejection by family, friends and the community and death. To take up one's cross is to accept the readiness to suffer and die in the cause of obedience and humble surrender to Christ. St. Luke qualifies this demand as a "Daily" death.

Following Jesus is not mere volunteerism or done in expectation of the material things to gain. It is costly and there is a price to pay. Jesus would not take excuses of greeting relations or burial of relatives or other distractions in following Him²³. Jesus demands costly and total commitment to His Person from the one who wants to follow Him. Jesus said "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God."²⁴

It is evident from Roman 6 that our faith in Christ as expressed in our Baptism unites us with the death of Jesus and as we are raised up from the water of Baptism we are raised up to newness of life. Death and resurrection in Christ should be a daily experience by which we die to sin and are raised to life by the power of God to live and serve God. Daily we seek to live above sin and not be in bondage to sin, the world and the devil. Our Baptismal covenant demands that we fight under Christ to live out the power of God. Sin shall not have dominion over us, victory is assured in Christ Jesus.

Paul says in 1 Cor.15:31b "I die daily". It means that every child of God must ask for the grace or "manna" to live every day. It means we should not cover any sin, we must confess and ask for God's forgiveness and cleansing every day. J. Keble (1827) in a Hymn said

New every morning is the love our waking and uprising prove, Through sleep and darkness safely brought, restored to life and power and thought. New mercies, each returning day, hover around us while we pray, new perils past new sins forgiven, new thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven²⁵.

Our walk with God should be consciously done that like Paul the Apostle we shall say "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me; and the life

²¹ Philippians 2:5-8.

²³ Luke 9:57-62.

²⁴ Luke9:62.

²⁵ Keble J., Hymns Ancient and Modern. Number 4.

which I live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me²⁶". This is the life style and pattern for the daily living for Total and Costly Commitment.

The third demand for Total and Costly Commitment is "Follow Me". It is clear that Jesus is demanding a personal and step by step following. Literally it is to go or come after behind Him, stepping into His footsteps. It is a demand to come after Jesus. It is to copy, imitate and becoming like Jesus. Jesus said, ***A Disciple is not above his Teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple be like his Teacher, and a servant like his Master***²⁷. He demands that we be like Him in every way, to hear Him, speak what He is saying, do what He is doing. This is the purpose of our Calling and the giving of the Holy Spirit so that He will send us to Preach the Kingdom of God, Teach the Word of God, Heal the sick, Deliver the oppressed and care for the needs of the people.

It is evident that Jesus wants to replicate and duplicate Himself in us who believe. He desires that we shall do greater works, signs and wonders. He desires that we bear more fruit that will abide. "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you²⁸". These can only come as we follow Jesus. It is necessary to point out that the ultimate result of following Jesus is that we shall be like Him as we imitate Him and be like Him. We shall conform into the image of the Son of God. It means that wherever Christians gather, Heaven will see little Jesus' walking and serving God.

But this is costly. Dietrich Bonhoeffer rightly said that ***"When Jesus calls any one to follow Him, He calls him/her to die. It is only a person who dies that can truly follow Jesus Christ"***²⁹. Hatred, attacks, insults and persecution will surely come to every Disciple and committed servant. This is why Jesus said ***"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you"***³⁰. It means that following Jesus is walking in the heritage of Prophets, Apostles and the Saints who faithfully followed God. There is a cost to it but it is worth the suffering. We are convinced that there shall be the revelation of God's glory and great reward when Jesus shall come.

THE COST OF FOLLOWING JESUS CHRIST: There is cost in following Jesus Christ. It is not an easy road or provision of employment for the lazy and careless person. Every Apostle called by Jesus Christ was fully employed and engaged meaningfully in their work or business. Peter, and the sons of Zebedee were busy fishermen. Jesus met them doing their work with their own boats and net. Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men³¹". Their response was overwhelming, "they immediately left their nets and

²⁶ Galatians 2:20.

²⁷ Matt. 10:24-25.

²⁸ John 15:16.

²⁹ Dietrich, Bonhoeffer. *The Cost of Discipleship* (Pocket Books, 1995.)

³⁰ Matthew 5:11-13.

³¹ Matthew 4:19.

followed Him³²". It cost them their business, work and livelihood. They lost their means of income. It affected their family because they left their wives, children, fathers and mothers to follow Jesus. Later on "Peter began to say to Jesus, "*see, we left all and followed You. So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house, or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the Gospel's. Who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first³³".*

When we look closely to the response of Jesus to Peter's worry of loss and gain in following Him, we must note that God is not a debtor to anyone. Whatever you lose He will surely give you back in ways you will never think. He promised to give hundredfold. **Secondly**, Jesus made it clear that His call to follow Him does not dissolve marriage or take away the responsibility of the husband to his wife. Jesus will not allow unfaithfulness in marriage or to the family that is why He did not say that you will get hundredfold of wives or husbands. Therefore, no believer should use following Jesus or service to God and the Church as an excuse not to fulfil his or her family responsibility. **Thirdly**, when we faithfully follow Jesus Christ, we must expect persecutions. We should expect God's intervention, help and deliverance in trials, but like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego we would be ready to die if that be the will of God. **Fourthly**, there is an assurance of Eternal reward when Jesus shall come in His glorious majesty, in the age to come, Eternal Life.

Fifthly, there is a very strong warning that many who are first shall be last, and the last shall be first. Why should the first be last when Jesus shall come? It is because they lost focus of the goal of their calling. They thought that because they are first or higher in position or preferment therefore God will have special regard for them. No. Remember that when Peter went and preached in the house Cornelius, while he was still speaking God Who sees the hearts of men, poured out His Holy Spirit on the Gentile family and friends because they totally believed and committed themselves to God. Peter in that occasion declared "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him"³⁴

Therefore, even when anyone forsakes all to follow Jesus it is not a licence to expect that people will carry your problem and you will not pay for anything. We should be afraid not to have run in vain and therefore keep watch over ourselves and our doctrines. Paul checked and judged himself strictly and made sure that he submitted to the authority of James, Peter, and John the Super Apostles and Leaders of the Church in Jerusalem. Apostle Paul, though highly gifted in wisdom, understanding and powerful in signs and wonders, yet he fought against pride and was humble. He said "And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that

³² Matthew 4:20.

³³ Mark 10:28-31.

³⁴ Acts of Apostles 10:35-36.

Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain”.³⁵

Another thing that Apostle Paul pointed out that could disqualify a servant of God or a follower of Jesus Christ is the flesh or sin and disobedience to God. This will make Jesus to reject and deny such person at His coming. Jesus said “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, and done many wonders in Your Name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness”.³⁶ This sure word of Jesus should make every servant and follower of His to be cautious, knowing that God is not man and He is not partial in His judgement. If those who prophesied and worked wonders cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven because of disobedience and sin, where will the casual and careless follower or the one who serves to please men or gain worldly fame and wealth be?

If our Spiritual gifts and ministry will not give us first position in Heaven, then we should know that ***God will surely reward who we are more than what we do.*** Apostle Paul said, “Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified”.³⁷ The greatest enemy that will bring the downfall and disqualify many followers of Jesus Christ is the flesh; the body of sin and the sin that so easily entangle us. Flesh is the instrument that the world and the devil use against any person. Flesh is the enemy of Total Commitment.

EXAMPLES OF PEOPLE WHO LIVED IN COSTLY COMMITMENT TO GOD:
Hebrews 11 is the Hall of Fame for Faith. Men and women who did great exploits through faith in God were listed so as to encourage us in running the race of faith. There is no trial that we face which God has never taken His people over such before us. He will not fail us if we remain faithful. The foundation and distinguishing factor in walk with God is faith. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony...by faith Enoch pleased God...But without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him”.³⁸

Abraham, the father of faith stands out as an example of Total Commitment in following the Living God. He demonstrated this when God called him to leave his father’s house and security to go to the place God would show him. Abraham obeyed God and followed God. When God gave him promises especially of a son and of many descendants, everything around him showed that it would not be. He was old and Sarah his wife was as good as not having a womb. Yet Abraham believed God, because God gives life to the dead and call things which do not exist as though they did; Abraham, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so

³⁵ Galatians 2:2.

³⁶ Matthew 7:21-23.

³⁷ 1 Corinthians 9:26-27.

³⁸ Hebrews 11:1-2,5c-6.

that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, ‘So shall your descendants be.’³⁹ In his commitment to God, Abraham did not consider his own body as an old man or the deadness of Sarah’s womb. He did not doubt God but totally trusted that God Who promised is able to perform His own Word. It was counted to him as righteousness. Abraham was acceptable to God on the basis of this faith and trust in God, because without faith it is impossible to please God.

When we consider *Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David and the Prophets* who spoke in God’s name and the amazing depth of their messages we see total commitment to the living God. It has been said of Joshua and Caleb that even when the ten spies brought evil report that made the Israelites rebel against God and desired to return to Egypt these men stood strong on the promises of God and the Covenant God made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. These men so believed God that they knew that God has defeated the giants and those who occupied the Promise Land. Hear them as they spoke from God’s perspective; “Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD IS WITH US. DO NOT FEAR THEM.”⁴⁰

It is possible that like the Israelites we can see God’s wonders, and be beneficiaries of God’s miracles, healing, protection and provision, yet some will not heed to the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ. As in the days of Joshua and Caleb, God is calling us not to follow the Crowd or the mixed multitude who fight God’s Word and stand against His purpose. God affirmed the Total Commitment of Caleb when He said “But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring him into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it.”⁴¹

It is not only men that are totally committed to the Living God; sometimes women are more committed to God. All our Churches are standing because of the commitment in the Word, Worship, Witness and Work of God in the Church. In the Ministry of Jesus there were many women that faithfully followed Jesus. These women also used their own resource, money, food and joined in prayer and supported completely the ministry of Jesus Christ. “*Now it came to pass, afterward, that Jesus went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substances.*”⁴² These women showed us what will make believers be totally committed to following Jesus Christ. First is personal experience of the grace and mercy of God in saving us from the power of sin and evil life. This salvation comes by the preaching of the Gospel, the power of God to save all who believe in Jesus Christ.

³⁹ Romans 4:17-18.

⁴⁰ Numbers 14:9.

⁴¹ Numbers 14:23-24.

⁴² Luke 8:1-3.

Second is the experience of the power of God to deliver people from the bondage of the devil and demonic powers. *Mary Magdalene* was delivered from seven demons and her many sins were forgiven her by Jesus. She was the woman who prophetically broke the Alabaster jar of costly oil and poured the perfume on Jesus. She anointed the body of Jesus for burial. Jesus said that because she realized that her sins and debts were forgiven and cancelled, therefore, her love, obedience and commitment to Jesus Christ is great. When we do not appreciate what God has been and done in our lives, then we cannot yield ourselves completely to Him. For Mary Magdalene, there is no alternative to Jesus. Life is worthless without Jesus. Because of this mercy shown to her, a worthless woman, God gave her back life, meaning and purpose, and more to that, Jesus gave her hope and eternal life. That is why she followed Jesus with all her heart like Caleb. Costly Commitment can only flow from a grateful, thankful and worshipping heart and soul.

Third, there is no alternative to Jesus for Mary Magdalene whether in life or death. Jesus Christ is all in all. We see this during the morning of the resurrection. When the women saw the empty Tomb, others left. Peter and John who were the only men who came to the Tomb also left. But there was a woman that was Totally Committed to Jesus Christ. She stayed back, weeping, searching and waiting. It was the woman that Jesus first revealed Himself to after the resurrection. “Jesus said to her, “ Mary!” She turned and said to Him Rabboni (which is to say, Teacher). Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God⁴³”.

Mary was the first Evangelist that proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Authority to preach the Gospel and serve God flows from intimate encounter and closeness to the Risen Lord Jesus Christ. We come to know the special Father-Son relationship, and the Fatherhood of God through Jesus Christ. Jesus brings us into this loving relationship that makes it possible for us to confidently approach God in prayer, in His Word and especially in times of need, knowing that He will hear us and we shall find favour and help from Him.

The Eternal Consequence: The decision to follow or not to follow Jesus Christ wholeheartedly and with singleness of mind has an eternal consequence. Jesus Christ is coming back again to judge the world. There is a consequence and accountability for every action and opportunity that God has given us both secular or religious. All persons shall stand before the judgement Throne of God to answer and receive the reward or recompense of all we have said and done in our lives. Jesus made it clear that the greatest and precious possession we have is our soul. The salvation of our soul is the greatest eternal reward. This comes by faith in Jesus Christ, faith that is expressed in godly character, integrity and total commitment and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ and the Word of God.

Standing for God and integrity in the public domain and places of service, business and daily activities has eternal reward. It is in the daily life struggles that we either witness or deny Jesus. Our lifestyle and choices will either bear witness to Jesus or crucify Him. Jesus said

⁴³ John 20:16-17.

“For whoever is ashamed of Me and My Words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels”⁴⁴.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF OUR THEME:

Genuine Conversion experience: Some people have said that Nigeria is ripe for a Revolution. If happens it will be so bloody that we may not know whether it a tribal or religious war. We are sure that Nigeria occupies an important place in God’s plan for World Evangelization. We cry out to God breaking out of His move in Revival. Nigeria needs God’s fresh touch in which Jesus Christ will be preached in the power of the Holy Spirit. The foundation for Total Commitment is in genuine conversion of the individual to the Lord Jesus Christ. The undiluted Word of God, the Good News of the Saviour’s death and resurrection and sinner’s need of God’s mercy and grace that bring salvation will need to be preached and presented to everyone in the Church and in all communities. People are to be encouraged to receive Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour. Everyone who ever was committed to God in the Scripture, first had an encounter of faith with Jesus Christ. God is working among us today. Someone wrote on some Nollywood Celebrities that encountered Jesus Christ and some are now Pastors. He concluded saying “These notable celebrities are living proof that it is never too late to turn a new leaf and correct the errors of the past by starting afresh in their spiritual journey.”⁴⁵

Jesus spoke to the Pharisees that even the Tax Collectors and sinners are entering the Kingdom of God but those who claim to have the law of God are not repenting. It is harder for some people in the Church to truly and publicly acknowledge their sins and turn to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith. We are concerned when people who come to church still worship idol or go to native doctor to find out about a problem or dispute. We encourage everyone to truly repent and return to Jesus Christ. There is no shame in doing so rather it should be celebrated because Heaven rejoices over a sinner that repents. It is not just responding to the Altar Call but living out the new life in Jesus Christ. “If anyone be in Christ, he is a new creation, the old things are passed away, behold new things have come.”⁴⁶ Be a friend of Jesus today and live to please Him. As John the Baptist demanded so it is for us today; “***Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘we have Abraham as our father’’. For say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.***”⁴⁷ There is consequence for playing religion because God desires salvation for humanity. God wants to raise Kingdom Agents and servants and the very sure start is by being born of the Spirit of God.

Commitment to Discipleship: Even when many people respond to Altar Call and give their lives to Christ, commitment to Discipleship on the part of the Pastors and the new converts is

⁴⁴ Luke 9:26.

⁴⁵ Opera min Media news accessed May 10, 2019, 3.50 pm.

⁴⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:17.

⁴⁷ Matthew 3:8-10.

weak. Very few people really go through proper teaching, nurturing and mentoring. There are fresh ways of helping new converts grow in faith without much dependency on some people. The use of Discovery Bible Study, Intentional Discipleship and our Catechism are essential for Discipleship in Church of Nigeria. We encourage Pastors to use them. Commitment to Christ, to soul winning and teaching the sound Word of God is very vital to every local Church Ministry in our Dioceses. We appreciate Church revival programmes but from now pay more attention to personal Discipleship, to the study of God's Word and to prayer in smaller groups. Bringing new people and converts to the Lord Jesus and growing the Church must be the focus of our Ministry in the local churches. Let us target transformation of lives, building up fellowship among our members and seeking ways to glorify God.

Envisioning a New Community of faith through Fresh approach to Fellowship and Mutual Support in the Church: In most of our churches our members come to church and worship and go. It is like going to the market; you only greet along the road and mind your own business. Jesus built relationship with His Disciples and Apostles even when they came from different backgrounds. The Church of God is the people, God's Household, it is God's family. It is a Fellowship that is "Koinonia". ***Koinonia is a coming together of the redeemed people of God who manifest the reality and presence of the Lord Jesus Christ through sacrificial care for one another.*** The way we do ministry make people think that we come together for business. We need to stand for and with one another especially the weak, poor, hungry, sick and oppressed. Our church Groups should care for people in the church and our communities. Jesus said "By this shall all men know that you are my Disciples if you show love for one another"⁴⁸.

Godly Work Ethic in the Church and Society: Jesus demands that God's people should take responsibility for the work of the Kingdom of God. This starts with our self-giving to God and the leadership of the Church. God depends on us to do God's work and take responsibility to serve God with integrity and Godliness. Let there be willingness to sacrifice and service God with one another. Let us work for the good of the whole church.

The average Nigerian worker wants to work less and get more. God wants us to serve sacrificially and give our best and do honest labour whether people are watching or not. The Parable of the Talents shows that we are stewards of our work, business, time, and possessions put at our disposal. Irrespective of the master or who benefits we must labour to make good and profit from what God or people have given us to do. Integrity in the public service is a rare commodity in our time and Christians must restore it.

In view of the Time in which we live: The time is evil but it points us to the immediate return of the Lord Jesus and the events of the end time. One of the events is the severe Persecution of the Church. There is a grand plan that the Church is facing a challenging future and it may not be easy for most believers in Christ. It is only those who are committed to the Lord Jesus Christ and ready to die for their faith that will stand. This is the reason that we need to build people in faith and rooted in God's Word now, that when the evil days come we shall stand.

⁴⁸ John 13:35.

For 70 years, Atheistic Communism controlled Soviet Union and Christianity was severely persecuted. Under Communism, the true faith in Jesus Christ grew in the underground Church. Those who took this risk grew stronger in faith, numerically and spiritually. It was counted a joy to suffer for the Lord Jesus. This was the case of the Believers in Acts of the Apostles. The more they were persecuted the more they preached the Gospel and the more people were being saved.

Nominal Christianity cannot stand in severe persecution; therefore we need to prepare the Church now. As Peter puts it “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it be tested by fire, may be found to praise, honour and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ⁴⁹”. Now that we have the freedom, let us grow strong in His Word. Let us serve God now while it is day. Remember the Words of our Lord Jesus; “I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work”⁵⁰

FOCUS ON GOD’S ETERNAL KINGDOM. If we serve God just for the perishable wreath, tribal group interest, or worldly glory, we are of all people most to be pitied. May it be that God’s Kingdom and Righteousness, the Eternal and imperishable reward will become our focus. Whether we like it or not our enormous privileged position also point us to the enormous accountability, Jesus Christ the Lord and Saviour of the Church is coming back again to rapture a Glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be without blemish. The purpose of our salvation and calling is to present us and God’s people holy and blameless and above reproach in His sight if we are not moved away from the hope of the Gospel.⁵¹

CHURCH OF NIGERIA CONCERNS:

Peace, Unity and Discipline: The Peace and Reconciliation Task-Force led by Rt. Rev. Samuel Ezeofor, has done a lot of work in interface, interventions and reconciliation in the Church. Some successes have been recorded and even then they are work in progress. Following their Report, the Primate’s Office will take care of some of these troubled churches in Port Harcourt, Benin, Yewa, Sapele and Lagos and establish Special Chaplaincy that will serve them until their issues are finally resolved. These congregations will come under the Primatial oversight as a temporary measure.

Special Peace Team under Archbishop Edmond Akanya is interfacing with Igbomina Diocese and we trust God that their problem will soon be resolved. God has helped us to resolve the problem in Ukwu Diocese. The Rt. Rev Samuel Eze will retire voluntarily by June 2021. From 11th January the Primate has intervened in the administration of the Diocese. A Taskforce made up of the Clergy and Lay members of the Diocese of Ukwu has been constituted under the Primate. Their main task is to put in place the things necessary for the

⁴⁹ 1Peter 1: 6-7.

⁵⁰John 9:2.

⁵¹Colossians 1:22-23.

retirement of Bishop Samuel Kelech Eze. They have been task to build a retirement house, buy a retirement car, and provide a purse for him. Subcommittees are already working on the (i) Spiritual Revival and Mobilization, (ii) Housing Project and (iii) Car/Purse.

The continuing problem between the Governor of Kaduna State and the Rt. Rev. Abiodun Ogunyemi resulting in a Criminal Law suit against Bishop Ogunyemi which matter is before the Court in Kaduna. The volatility of the State and the security of the life of our Bishop required that the Church took a step to demand that Bishop Ogunyemi should proceed on a Sabbatical Leave. This takes effect from 15th February 2021. We are committed to resolving and securing the Cathedral Church of St. George's Zaria and our property in that place. God will lead us each step on the way.

Peace, reconciliation and mutual support are essential for this Church as a National Church, growing stronger and fulfilling God's purpose in our generation, this cannot be compromised. We need to work on identifying danger signs that can lead to breakdown of peace in our Parishes, Deaneries, Archdeaconries and Dioceses and seek to stop them from festering. We shall not sacrifice any soul, or congregation or Diocese because of the interest of any Bishop, Clergy or Laity or Group. The dictates and provisions of the Constitutions and Statutes of the Church of Nigeria and our Dioceses must not be thwarted for our interests or convenience. Let us work together to resolve our differences and build this people God has committed to our care. We all must work to see that interference in other Parishes, Archdeaconries and Diocese are not to be tolerated whether by Bishops, Clergy or influential Laity within or outside any Diocese of this Church. Many individuals and groups are hurting, wounded and aggrieved. We are pleading for forgiveness and mercy to everyone even in those cases that have lasted long and we think them to be irreconcilable. For the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, let us forgive one another just as God in Christ Jesus has forgiven us. More so, we cannot make any progress with quarrels and divisions. Pray for the peace, unity and growth of this Church.

EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: Education and Human Development 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 will continue as a way of training the Clergy and empowering future leaders of the Church and Society. There is need to identify and train specialists in some areas of Ministry for the Church.

Church of Nigeria Education Taskforce has been constituted under the leadership of Prof. Olugbemi Jegede. They have started work to give us a Policy Direction and monitor the work of Education Mission in the Church of Nigeria. The declining standard in education requires that the Church will rise to give quality education that is rooted in sound Christian faith and living that will help transform our society. The Church must play a leading role in training our Youth and building the future through education. We shall build on the Missionary heritage of the Church.

Church of Nigeria Faith Based Organization Taskforce has been constituted under the leadership of Prof. Adesegun O. Fatusi. They have started work and have developed the concept note for the establishment of a National Faith Based Organization for the Church of Nigeria.

The Mandate of the Task Force is as follows:

- Formulate a National Faith Based Development Policy
- Establish a National Church Non-Profit and Non-Governmental Organization that will respond to human needs with the love of Christ
- Partner with credible organizations that will share our Faith and Values
- Serve as a National Coordinating Organization for Anglican Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) in Nigeria. As many of our Dioceses are already doing some good work in some of these areas.
- Any other function that will enhance community development in Nigeria.

They have already established partnership/working relationship with TEAR Fund UK Nigeria office and by the grace of God more partnership and collaboration with reputable organization in consonance with our stand in the Anglican Faith.

PROPOSAL FOR ANGLICAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AT KWAITA, ABUJA: We are reporting to the Standing Committee that the Taskforce on the Proposed Anglican University of Technology was constituted on the 26th October 2020, at St Matthias House Secretariat. This is an 18 man Eminent Anglicans in the Academia and other professions under the leadership of Prof. Jerry Gana. They have gone to work and constituted the following subcommittees (a) Academic Committee chaired by Ven. Prof. Chinedu Nebo; (b) Master Plan Production Committee chaired by Rt. Rev Prof.DapoAsaju; (c) University Law and Governance Committee chaired by Prof.AdamuBaiki; (d) Committee on Finance and Fundraising chaired by Mazi Sam Oluabunwa; (e) Committee on Liaison with NUC chaired by Prof.OlugbemiJegede. Prominent Anglicans have been co-opted to serve with the members of these committees.

A dedicated Bank Account has been assigned to this University Project thus: **CHURCH OF NIGERIA (ANG. COM) UNIVERSITY PROJECT, GTB BANK; ACCOUNT NUMBER 0611577178.**

On 4th November 2020, the Primate in company of the Dean, Archbishops and Bishops and other members paid a courtesy visit to His Excellency, Governor Nyemso Wike, in Port Harcourt. We were well received and we shared the task before the Church. The Governor of Rivers State pledged to support the establishment of the Anglican University of Technology with the sum of Five Hundred Million Naira (N500M) We are indeed very grateful for this support and pray God Almighty to bless his Administration and the good people of Rivers State. We appeal to our prominent members, friends and all people of good will to support this worthy cause. The fencing of the University Site is nearing completion and the work on the clearing of the Site has started. Building of the structures will soon start. The Taskforce has submitted the Letter of Intent for the Establishment of the University to the Executive Secretary of National University Commission, Abuja. In order to further move this work we

hereby redesignate the Taskforce as ***ANGLICAN UNIVERSITY PROJECT PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE***

HEALING AND HEALTHCARE: The persistence of the COVID-19 Pandemic with its impact on the socio-economic life of the people demands that the Church of God must rise up to this challenge spiritually in fasting and prayer but also socio-educational actions. More so, the poor health care delivery in the country offers us a great opportunity for Compassionate Ministry in Healthcare. We are totally absent in Pharmacology and Pharmaceutical services. The Church needs to play more key roles in the Health care delivery of this Nation. We want to 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 whether in Nigeria or outside Nigeria. In this Decade of God's Reign, God will make bare His Holy arm to heal and restore His people. As a Church we shall encourage Parishes, Dioceses and Provinces to establish, administer and strengthen Healthcare facilities. We need to explore the Training of Health professionals, Pharmaceutical production and Research Laboratories. There is the need to harness our members who are Healthcare Professionals to serve God among us. The Church of Nigeria will need to explore the Healing and Healthcare as a tool for Evangelism and Mission.

A CARING CHURCH IN DEVASTATED SITUATION: The Relief Committee of the Church of Nigeria under the leadership of Dr. Peter Nmadu, has served the Church especially the afflicted parts and members within the available resources. It has been a very trying time for some of our Dioceses who have suffered attacks in communities, living as IDPs, and often we have had to source money painfully to pay for ransom and save lives. Church of Nigeria will always stand for all our members especially in challenging times. The Relief Committee is mobilizing all members to be involved in assisting others who are in need through Prayer, Phone calls, food stuff and money. We can do this as individuals, Parishes, Diocese or Province. "Bear one another's burden and thereby fulfil the law of Christ"(Gal 6:2).

THE N5 BILLION NAIRA MISSION TRUST FUND: The CON needs to grow its Finances, diversify her Investment and ensure a stronger National Church that is able to carry through her Mission and Ministry, sustain her Institutions and continue to grow spiritually, numerically, and impacting the society and Nation, politically, socially, educationally and other wise. The main Focus of "the Decade of the Reign of God" is Mission, Evangelism and Discipleship, in which we seek to mobilize and encourage all our members, churches and Dioceses to engage in personal walk with God and lead others to personal faith in Jesus Christ. By this we shall grow the Church of God spiritually, in faith, numerically and empower our members to live purposefully and economically fulfilling their ministry.

A situation where Bishops, Clergy and Missionaries serving this Church are poorly paid and sometimes may not get their Stipend should not continue. We have many Mission fields and Dioceses needing support to be built up. We understand clearly that the Church in Nigeria is

equipped to lead in World Evangelization and preparing the Church for the return of Jesus Christ. Mission work is a costly venture. Jesus puts a demand on every believer when He said “Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the Heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”(Luke 12:33-34). Let us invest in the God’s Kingdom work and He will richly bless us.

The Church of Nigeria Mission Trust Fund is managed by a Taskforce chaired by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Chidi Oparaojiaku. The designated Mission Fund Account is: **CHURCH OF NIGERIA (ANGLICAN COMM) ; ZENITH BANK; ACCOUNT NUMBER 1013997778.**

God will prosper your work and through you He will bless the Mission and Ministry of the Church. The proceeds of the launching of the Primate’s Address and the launching of the Mission Fund shall be dedicated to this Mission Account.

REPOSITIONING THE CNMS AND THE MISSIONS OF THE CON: In the period under review we had Zoom Conferences and physical Workshops in order to clearly set out the Vision and tasks of Missions in the Church of Nigeria. The team on Mission and Evangelism have identified what we need to do to prosper the work of the Gospel and the Kingdom of God. Our Task is to “**Make the Church of Nigeria a vibrant strategic Missions sending Church, equipping and mobilizing every Anglican to evangelize and disciple people groups for Christ**”. In order to implement the goals set for Missions we constitute the **Church of Nigeria Missions Board** as follows:

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|--------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. Most Rev. Henry C. Ndukuba | = | Chairman |
| 2. Most. Rev. Tunde Adeleye | = | Deputy Chair |
| 3. Most Rev. Joseph Akinfenwa | | |
| 4. Most Rev. Edmund Akanya | | |
| 5. Rt. Rev Owen Nwokolo | | |
| 6. Rt. Rev. James Odedeji | | |
| 7. Rt. Rev. Sosthenes Eze | | |
| 8. Rt. Rev. Aloysius Agbo | | |
| 9. Rt. Rev. Sunday Adewole | | |
| 10. Arc. Dotun Ikumapayi | | |
| 11. Ven. Oliver Ofoegbu | = | Mission Director / Secretary. |
| 12. Rev. Canon Timothy Olonade | | |
| 13. Rev. Niyi Gbade | | |
| 14. Bro Mike Adegbile | | |
| 15. Mrs. Mary Okon | | |
| 16. EFAC Representative | | |
| 17. Mrs. Olayemi Dada | = | Treasurer CON |

The Mission Board will have Working Committees on Home and Foreign Missions; Finance and Mobilization; Prayer Mobilization; Educational Missions ; and Discipleship. There shall be a Directorate of Missions who will oversee the Mission Committees, Projects and

Programmes. It is the responsibility of this Directorate to organise National Missions Convention of the Church. These organs will serve for a renewable Three year term.

We need to reposition the CNMS to fully function as the Mission Arm of the Church of Nigeria. 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...”*⁵²We hereby constitute the **CNMS Management Committee** which shall be led by *the Executive Secretary with five Co-ordinators and a Consultant*. These shall be as follows:

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|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. <i>Ven. Dr. Sunday Adepaju</i> | <i>=CNMS Executive Secretary</i> |
| 2. <i>Rev. Canon Solomon Nnamani</i> | <i>= Research and Planning</i> |
| 3. <i>Rev. Emmanuel Ubandoma</i> | <i>= Communication and Mobilization</i> |
| 4. <i>Bro. Chima Okeke</i> | <i>=Recruitment and Training</i> |
| 5. <i>Sis. Ngozi Nwosu</i> | <i>=Mission Field Coordination</i> |
| 6. <i>Mr/Mrs.....</i> | <i>= Staff Rep.</i> |

The CNMS will be centrally funded by the Church of Nigeria and the daily running will be the responsibility of the Management Committee. The thrust of Mission will focus on African countries and regions, first to collaborate with Churches we share in communion and where not present build national churches that are Self-propagating, self-supporting and self-governing in the West, Central and North regions of Africa. 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.

BISHOP AJAYI CROWTHER MEMORIAL CENTRE, OSOOGUN; The first phase of the Bishop Ajayi Crowther Memorial Centre Osoogun has been completed. On 20th January 2021, the Primate, the Dean and the Archbishops and Bishops, the Women Ministry and Officials of the Church were in Osoogun to dedicate the Memorial Church, the Hall, the Rectory and other structures built. We thank Archbishop Segun Okubadejo and his Team for the sacrifice and commitment that brought about this accomplishment. The Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther Memorial Centre, Osoogun shall become our National Church Mission Training Institute, to raise, nurture and send Missionaries and Kingdom labourers into the Ripe Harvest. There is the urgent need to complete the modified second phase which will include the Hostels, Staff Quarters, Classroom Blocks, Library and Museum and Archives for the Early Missions of the Church. ***The climax of the work in the Mission Centre will be to make it the final Resting Place for the late Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther.*** The Collections of the Advent Collection 2020 will be used to complete this project in order to be a firm base for Church Missions and Training. We must commend the efforts of the Ajayi Crowther University in securing the important historic places in the Osoogun town and putting their campus in that place. Osoogun and the Institutions and historic places and Artefacts belong to

⁵²Mission Implementation Strategy for the CON 2020-2030.

the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion). We trust God that His glory shall return to this town and the light of the Gospel shall shine forth from there to the world.

THE JOSHUA GENERATION YOUTH AND CHILDREN MISSION: The Taskforce on the Children and Youth Mission of the Church of Nigeria was inaugurated during the DIVCCON Conference in November 2020. Our focus will be to build Children and Youth Mission that will mobilize them unto the Word, Prayer, Worship, Witness and Outreach. We desire that God will raise the Joshua Generation who shall conquer their generation for the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In doing this the young people in particular must be empowered economically, spiritually and socially and be helped out of poverty and unemployment so that they will take their God given place in leadership both in Church and society.

The Maiden Youth Mission Conference will hold 5th to 10th April 2021 at Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo. 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 per person in running the Conference.

LITURGICAL DISCIPLINE AND UNITY: There is need for unity and Discipline in our Liturgy and Worship, the need to move as a National Church and use what has been provided should be encouraged. A situation in which some Bishops and Dioceses do not make use of the Church of Nigeria Book of Common Prayers; the Hymnal; the Bible Study Outline and other publications of this Church is not healthy. We encourage our Regional Translators to commence full translations of these publications into Nigerian languages for the use of our people. The work on these publications is an ongoing task, we shall review them after some years of use. The New Chairman for Liturgy and Spirituality Committee is Rt. Rev. Dr. Foluso O. Babatunji, the Bishop of Osun Diocese. We appreciate the labour of love this Committee rendering to the Church of God. Pray for him and the members of this Committee.

THE VISION OF THE CHURCH OF NIGERIA This Document was presented to the General Synod at plenary for adoption as a working document for the Church of Nigeria in this 3rd decade of Visioning in our Church. It is now available for everyone to obtain a copy.

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND MINISTERIAL FORMATION: Theological Education and spiritual formation of the Pastorate and leadership of the Church will continue to occupy a central position in the life and Ministry of the Church. We must meet the challenges of our generation with greater resolve to remain faith to the Orthodox faith and Anglican heritage as we have received. We shall continue to uphold the Authority of the Word of God and live out the Biblical teachings, contending for the faith once and for all delivered to the Saints. The training Programme and the Curriculum of our Theological Colleges will need to reflect the centrality of the Mission of the Church and Ministry to Children and Young people as core to the life of the Church.

ELECTIONS OF OFFICERS OF THE 13TH GENERAL SYNOD: The following are those elected/ appointed as officers of the 13th General Synod of the CON are:

1. Hon Henry Odein Ajumogobia, SAN - Chancellor
2. Barr Abraham Yisa - Registrar
3. The Ven. Saidu Isuwa - Prolocutor
4. Hon. Justice A. O. Bamigbola - Chairman House of Laity
5. The Rt. Rev'd Praises Omole-ekun - Episcopal Secretary
6. The Rt. Rev'd William Aladekugbe - Assistant Episcopal Secretary
7. The Ven. George Ugo Njoku - Clerical Secretary
8. Dame Meg Orianwo - Lay Secretary
9. Mrs Olayemi Dada - Treasurer
10. Chief Otitoju - Auditor
11. Mr James Nwabuokei - Auditor
12. Members of the Committee of Reference, Finance Committee, Boards and Task Forces as in the Primate's Address

CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW AND THE EXPANDED COMMITTEE OF REFERENCE:

At the Standing Committee held in Minna in 2018 it was resolved that a comprehensive review of the Constitution and Canons of the Church of Nigeria be done. Following this Provinces and Dioceses were requested to make their inputs. The work has been done and the Reviewed Constitution was adopted at the 13th General Synod of the Church of the Church of Nigeria held in Abuja 20th -25th September 2020.

We must appreciate the labour that the Committee of Reference in giving us a comprehensively reviewed Constitution and Canons for the Church. Thank you so much. We hereby present to this Standing Committee copies of the Constitution and Canons of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) 2020, in the Name of God the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. May it be a guide unto fruitfulness and life to the Church of God in this and the succeeding generations.

We are expanding the Committee of Reference as follows:

1. The Most Rev. Dr Michael O. Fape.
2. The Most Rev. Israel Amao.
3. The Rt. Rev. Timothy Olajide Adebayo.
4. Barr. Dr. Abraham N. Yisa(Registrar CON, & Chairman of CoR)
5. Hon Justice B. A . Ogunade
6. Hon Justice G.I. Anunihu(KSC).
7. Barr. Chidi Ilogu(SAN).
8. Barr. LanreOgunlesi(SAN).
9. Barr. Mrs Kehinde Ajoni
10. Barr. T. B. Akinyeye.

11. Barr. Monday U. Ataine.
12. Ven. Barr. Ernest Onuoha.
13. Barr. Chinelo Anazodo.
14. Barr. John Omughele.
15. Ven. Barr. Habila Saleh Ardzard.
16. Rev. Canon Bola Ogunyanwo

CROWTHER GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, ABEOKUTA: The Crowther Graduate Theological Seminary, Abeokuta started under the leadership of Archbishop Joseph Adetiloye as the Language School which meant to nurture the unity of this Church through Language training for the graduating students of our Theological Colleges in the three major languages in Nigeria. The need for advanced Theological education for our Priests and Bishops in the wake of the fight against the Revisionist Homosexual influence made Archbishop Peter Akinola to upgrade the Institute into a full Graduate Theological Seminary for Masters and Ph. D Research programmes. The New Rector **Ven Prof. Taiye Aluko** has resumed duty and he is doing very well. Within this short time he has restored the affiliations that were severed. The former Rector, Rt. Rev. Prof. Igenosa (retired) has moved from the Seminary to a rented house the Church of Nigeria paid for him for one year. He has a plot of land that he hopes to start developing. The other demands he put before us will be addressed by the New Governing Board of the Seminary.

We have appointed a New Registrar for Crowther Graduate Theological Seminary in the person of Rev. Canon Dr. Friday I. Ogbuehi.

We thank the Most Rev. Dr. Buba Lamido, the Dean of the Church of Nigeria who serves as the Chairman of the Governing Board and his team for the work they have done. We visited the Graduate Seminary briefly on 19th January 2021. There are a lot of repairs and renovations to be done in the Seminary and the PEJAK Centre and personal House donated to the Seminary by Archbishop Akinola. The Administrative block will need a total make over because the ancient wood decking is being destroyed by termites. The perennial problem of water and Electric Power supply will need a comprehensive attention.

The Governing Board of the CGTS is reconstituted as follows:

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| 1. The Most Rev. Dr. Buba Lamido | = Chairman |
| 2. The Most Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Egbunu | =Member |
| 3. The Most. Rev. Dr. Cyril Odutemu | =Member. |
| 4. The Most. Rev. Dr. David Onuoha | =Member. |
| 5. The Most Rev. Marcus Ibrahim | =Member. |
| 6. Rt. Rev. Dr. Samuel Sowale | =Member. |
| 7. Rt. Rev. Wisdom B. Ihunwo | =Member. |
| 8. Rt. Rev. Prof. Dapo Asaju | =Member. |
| 9. Prof. Mrs. M.F. Olumakaiye | =Member |
| 10. Very Rev. R. O. Agboola | =Member |

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|---|----------------------------------|
| 11. Dr. Mrs. Ada Mac-Ozigbo | =Member |
| 12. Sir. Donald Udogu (SAN) | =Member. |
| 13. Barr. Chukwueloka Tim Okeke | =Member. |
| 14. Ven. Prof. Taiye Aluko(Rector). | = Member |
| 15. The Rev. Canon Friday Ogbuehi | = Secretary to the Board. |

ST. MATTHIAS FUND: We appreciate the Dioceses for their contribution and urge every member of the Church to participate and the Dioceses to faithfully remit your collections. The Bishops during the Retreat at Agbarah 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. However, some fund will be sourced so that a Revolving Fund will be given to Dioceses, Institutions and Organizations of the Church of Nigeria in order to enable them start Ventures and Investments that will sustain them financially. Those that will benefit will be selected from the applications and Investment proposals submitted. This will be a very limited fund and conditions will be set and applied by the Managers of the Fund.

ACNN BOARD, MANAGEMENT AND OPREATIONS; There is need for building up of the ACNN TV and Media outfit of the Church of Nigeria so as to meet the challenges and needs of our Church in this modern age. This is an important organ for the propagation of the Gospel and the Teaching of the undiluted Word of God. We have purchased new Equipments to improve on the output of the TV Station. We are working to extend our platform in the DSTV and other platforms to improve on our coverage. The membership of the Board of ACNN is hereby reviewed as follows:

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| 1. Sir Folusho Olamiti | = Chairman. |
| 2. Rt. Rev. Dr. Blessing Enyinda | =Vice Chairman |
| 3. Rt. Rev. Dr. Chidi Oparaojiaku | |
| 4. Ven. Dr. Dade Sadare | |
| 5. Ven. Hassan John | = Director for Communication/ Secretary. |
| 6. Dr. Peter Nmadu | |
| 7. Mr. Timothy Akinyeye | |
| 8. Mrs. Bisi Amagada | |
| 9. Mrs. Ritmwa Iwoh | =Assistant Secretary. |
| 10. Mr. Olarewaju Lasisi | |
| 11. Engr. Korede Akintunde | =General Manager. |

DIVCCON: The Divine Commonwealth Conference which is an annual Conference of the Church which is meant to provide spiritual renewal and fresh encounter with God through the faithful proclamation of the Word of God, Prayer and Seminars. This Conference was held against all odds from 16th to 20th November 2020. Indeed God blessed us and the Theme was **“We are More than Conquerors” (Romans 8:37).** We appreciate the efforts of Archbishop Tunde Adeleye and his team. We have requested Archbishop Adeleye to continue as the Co-ordinator of DIVCCON even after his retirement for the next Three years, this is renewable.

CONNAM AND UK/EUROPE MISSIONS: The re-envisioning of our International Mission engagement as in North America and our Chaplaincy in UK and Europe is being done. Due to some operational issues CANA as the incorporation for our Mission has been dissolved through due legal process. We have put in place another Mission Organ called “*Church of Nigeria North American Mission*” (**CONNAM**). The Rt. Rev. Felix Orji remains the Bishop leading the Church of Nigeria Missions in North America. He will continue to co-ordinate the activities of our Dioceses and represent the Primate on all issues affecting the Mission of the Church of Nigeria. In recent times we have had some uneasy relationship between CONNAM and ACNA. When the Pandemic is over and travel bans are lifted we shall have a physical meeting with Archbishop Forley Beach and his Team to discuss on these issues. Our desire is to have a good relationship and work as partners in the overall good of the Church of God and the GAFCON family. The Mission in North America will be restructured to enhance the Ministry of the Church.

Rt. Rev. Amos and Mama Fagbemiye, the Bishop of ADOTT will disengage in March 2021. We are grateful for your labour of love for the Church of God. You stood for the Church of Nigeria and advanced the course of the Gospel of Christ. God will honour you all through life and give you good health as you disengage from active ministerial service of the Church. The Suffragan Bishops and their wives have served this Church sacrificially and we do earnest appreciate them. God will continually renew your zeal to serve the Living God.

The Chaplaincy in UK is doing well and we appreciate the work of Ven Dr. Joe Ajafobi and his efforts in maintaining a good relationship with our old friends in England especially the former Bishop of London and the other Bishops. Continue in the good work you are doing.

We commend also the labour of love for the Church of God which is exerted by the Anglican Missionary Congregations (AMC) in Manchester, the Midlands and Northern England. Your focus in Mission Outreach and Church planting must be encouraged and maintained. The engagement of Nigerian Professionals in Mission will be sustained. These two strands of Mission and Ministry of the Church of Nigeria in UK are equally encouraged and serve as model for reaching Europe. There should be no confusion among you just as there was no confusion in the Ministry of Apostle Peter and Apostle Paul in Galatians 2:1-10.

GAFCON: The incidence of the COVID Pandemic has complicated matters and no one knows when this will end. The GAFCON Conference will still hold in Rwanda but we are not certain of the date. However the GAFCON Primates Council meetings are held virtually through Zoom. God is at work in the different regions of GAFCON world. The GAFCON Constitution and organs are being worked on. The establishment of the Convocation of UK and Europe under Bishop Andy Lines is being fine-tuned. We commend the work of Archbishop Benjamin Kwashi, the General Secretary of GAFCON and his team. Archbishop Ben Kwashi has been indisposed and he is doing well and we give thanks and praise to God. Like the **Decade of Evangelism** the GAFCON Missions and Church Planting team is working in some countries with Dioceses that are inviting them. Nigeria is represented by Ven. Wankgam Mark but we have requested that more representatives be drawn from Nigeria for effectiveness.

ADVENT COLLECTION FOR 2020

DIOCESE	ZENITH BANK ₦	
LAGOS		
LAGOS	10,650,000.00	
EGBA	1,105,455.00	
IJEBU	1,697,595.00	
REMO	1,101,690.00	
YEWA	700,000.00	
LAGOS WEST	8,000,000.00	
BADAGRY	946,500.00	
IJEBU NORTH	100,000.00	
LAGOS MAINLAND	4,000,000.00	
VEN E OJONE	1,128,510.00	
EGBA WEST	457,830.00	
AWORI	446,710.00	
IJEBU SOUTH WEST	369,870.00	
OF THE NIGER		
ON THE NIGER	5,836,000.00	
AWKA	3,500,000.00	
NNEWI	4,718,340.00	
AGUATA		
OGBARU	1,652,270.00	
IHALA	662,800.00	
NIGER WEST	420,000.00	
MBAMILI		
AMICHI	924,500.00	
NIGER DELTA		
NIGER DELTA	1,825,150	
CALABAR		
UYO	150,000.00	
NIGER D. NORTH	8,558,422.00	
NIGER D. WEST	1,400,000.00	
OKRIKA	2,670,080.00	
AHODA	95,775.00	
OGONI	567,555.00	
ETCHE	500,000.00	
IKWERE	456,000.00	
NORTHERN IZAN	600,800.00	
OGBIA		
EVO	4,574,486.00	
IBADAN		

IBADAN	2,204,374	
ILESHA	461,495.00	
OSUN	713,760.00	
IFE	684,630.00	
OKE-OSUN		
IBADAN NORTH	875,190.00	
IBADAN SOUTH	1,514,835.00	
OYO	351,275.00	
OGBOMOSHO	247,815.00	
OKE OGUN	164,995.00	
A. CROWTHER	139,760.00	
IFE EAST	123,605.00	
OSUN NORTH	175,775.00	
IJESHA NORTH	160,000.00	
OSUN N. EAST	210,045.00	
IJESHA N.EAST	218,840.00	
ILESA SOUTH WEST	233,200.00	
ONDO		
ONDO	1,000,000.00	
EKITI	3,697,555.00	
AKOKO	516,570.00	
OWO	706,765.00	
AKURE	1,173,870.00	
ON THE COAST	252,200.00	
EKITI WEST	431,840.00	
EKITI OKE	105,470.00	
ILAJE	120,000.00	
IRELE ESEDO	68,650.00	
ILE-OLUJI	196,795.00	
IDOANI	235,325.00	
KADUNA		
KADUNA	649,500.00	
KANO	1,008,000	
KATSINA	131,690.00	
SOKOTO	590,765.00	
KEBBI		
DUTSE	113,300.00	
WUSASA	250,000.00	
GUSAU	125,000.00	
ZARIA	521,440.00	
BARI	104,230.00	
IKARA	131,500.00	
OWERRI		
OWERRI	1,000,000.00	
ORLU	750,000.00	

MBAISE	1,078,395.00	
ISI-MBANO	660,000.00	
OKIGWE SOUTH	1,353,045.00	
EGBU	700,000.00	
IDEATO	1,429,485.00	
OHAJI/EBBEMA	377,285.00	
ON THE LAKE	240,035.00	
ORU	621,695.00	
OKIGWE	362,023.00	
IKEDURU	200,000.00	
BENDEL		
BENIN		
ASABA	4,581,360.00	
WARRI	4,245,470.00	
S/ORA	409,315.00	
UGHELLI	2,405,465.00	
OLE		
ESAN	426,000.00	
IKA	1,050,000.00	
WESTERN IZON		
AKOKO EDO	206,270.00	
	1,004,675.00	
NDOKWA	577,970.00	
SAPELE	1,129,510.00	
ENUGU		
ENUGU	3,870,820.00	
NSUKKA	2,000,000.00	
ABAKALIKI		
OJI RIVER		
AWGU/ANINRI	340,220.00	
Enugu North	1,230,000.00	
NGBO	355,150.00	
IKWO	148,945.00	
AFIKPO	267,450.00	
NIKE	832,525.00	
UDI	660,175.00	
EHA AMUFU		
ABA		
ABA	550,000.00	
UMUAHIA	1,850,000	
UKWA		
ISUIKWUATO- UMUNNEOCHI	225,000.00	
AROCHUKWU	67,025.00	
IKWUANO	102,545.00	

ISIALA N. SOUTH	370,000.00	
ISIALA NGWA	312,000.00	
ABA N. NORTH	434,335	
KWARA		
KWARA	510,700.00	
OFFA	240,790.00	
IGBOMINA	313,410.00	
NEW BUSSA	235,000.00	
OMU ARAN	336,905.00	
JEBBA	89,410.00	
EKITI KWARA	154,525	
IGBOMINE WEST	123,425.00	
JOS		
JOS	527,000.00	
DAMATURU	121,585.00	
YOLA	507,500.00	
MAIDUGURI	209,175.00	
BAUCHI		
JALINGO	250,000.00	
GOMBE	306,150.00	
PANKSHIN	179,565.00	
BUKURU		
LANGTANG	102,050.00	
ABUJA		
ABUJA	7,720,200.00	
KAFANCHAN	348,385.00	
MAKURDI	274,890.00	
OTUKPO	356,000.00	
G/LADA	679,600.00	
LAFIA	727,410.00	
KUBWA	3,560,000.00	
ZONKWA	217,450.00	
KWOI	135,280.00	
ZAKI-BIAM	193,935.00	
GBOKO	150,090.00	
LOKOJA		
MINNA	300,000.00	
LOKOJA	726,680	
BIDA	406,515.00	
IDAH	155,710.00	
KABBA	278,540.00	
KONTAGORA	96,440.00	
KUTIGI	145,000.00	
IJUMU	200,000.00	

OKENE	186,750.00	
OGORI-MAGONGO	59,530.00	
DOKO	143,000.00	
UNIDENTIFIED		
TOTALS	150,119,180	

The Advent Collection is the second Mandatory Collection of the Church of Nigeria. It is meant to fund the Capital Projects of the Church. We appreciate efforts of the Archbishops and Bishops and indeed the whole Church that the Advent Collection. We received the sum of One Hundred and Fifty Million, One Hundred and Nineteen Thousand, One Hundred and Eighty Naira Only (N150,119,180.00). This fund will be used to complete the Bishop Ajayi Crowther Memorial Mission Institute and start the physical development of the Bethel-Camp-land for the Anglican University of Technology.

CREATION OF DIOCESES: During the General Synod we placed a Moratorium on the creation of Dioceses whether Full-fledged or Missionary Diocese. This will be reviewed by the next General Synod. We shall put in place a Committee 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. The Committee will be as follow:

1. **Most. Rev. Dr. Joseph Akinfenwa**
2. **The Most Rev. Daniel Yisa**
3. **The Most Rev. Dr. David Onuoha.**

National Board for Ministry and Welfare: In order to improve on the standards and conditions of the Ministry and Welfare of the Clergy in the Church of Nigeria, we shall establish a **National Board for Ministry and Welfare**. This Board will work out the minimum standard that we expect in the practice of Ministry and welfare of Ministers in the Church of Nigeria. There is need to regulate the expected Standard for Ministry in this Church as regards recruitment, training, ordination, and preferment. It may be possible for us to have a common scale of remunerations but the way some Bishops recruit, ordain and prefer Clergy will cause chaos in the system. We need a National Standard that can be enforced or applied even in Missionary situation. The National Board shall be as follows:

1. **Most Rev. OlusinaFape = Chairman.**
2. **Most Rev. Daniel Yisa**
3. **Most Rev. David Onuoha.**
4. **Bishop Samuel Sowale**
5. **Bishop David Bello**
6. **Bishop Timothy Yahaya**
7. **Bishop Daniel Nkemjika**
8. **Bishop Stephen Fagbemi**
9. **Bishop Dapo F. Asaju**
10. **Bishop Praises Omole-Ekun = Secretary.**

We expect the interim report by June 2021.

OUR GRATITUDE: We owe our lives to the Almighty God for His protection over us in the COVID-19 Pandemic, even though it is not yet over but we trust God to keep us safe to the end. We thank all our Archbishops, Bishops, Clergy and their wives for their sacrifice in the service of God, the Church and Humanity. May God bless and renew your strength continually. We are grateful to the Laity and the Women, Youth and Children Ministries and all the Organizations of the Church, God will remember and reward you now and in eternity. We thank the Bishop and Mama Owen Nwokolo and the Diocese on the Niger for hosting this Standing Committee. God will reward our members and bless the Diocese. On behalf of the Church of Nigeria we express our profound gratitude to the Most Rev. Dr. Nicholas D. And Mama Nkasiobi Okoh for the bold and godly leadership you sacrificially gave to the Church of God. Your legacies will be sustained and in your retirement you will enjoy robust health and God will renew your strength daily. We thank all our retired Fathers in faith and assure you of our prayers and support. Even in your old age you will enjoy God's presence and you will still be fruitful and relevant to the Church of God. We appreciate all our Committees and Taskforces for your labour of love for the Church of God

OUR SORROW: We commiserate with all who lost their dear ones. In the period under review we lost some fathers in God namely, the late Bishop Jacob Ajetmobi (retired Bishop of Ibadan South Diocese), Bishop Folusho Taiwo (Diocese of Oke Osun) and Lady Grace Iwuagwu (Wife of retired Bishop of Aba). We condole the family of the late Dr. T Ajakpo (the Galadima of Lokoja) the former Chairman of the CON Relief Committee and member of the ACNN Governing Board, some other Church officials in our Dioceses. May God of all comfort console their families. May the souls of the faithful departed rest in perfect peace and rise in glory at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

OUR JOY: We rejoice with the newly consecrated Bishops and their families and pray God to guide and bless your ministry in the Church of God. We congratulate all those blessed with marriages, child birth, graduations, employment, promotions and happy retirement. Your joy and testimonies shall abide and God will bless you immensely.

2021/2022 Standing Committee Meetings: The Diocese of Lagos will host us Monday 13th to Thursday 16th September 2021; Monday 21st to Friday 25th February 2022 we shall go to Diocese of Eyo.

IN CONCLUSION:

Why should we strive for Costly Commitment in following Christ? It is because God desires it of all who wants to follow Jesus, personal encounter with Christ that brings forth faith and trust in God and love for people among whom you live. God wants the growth of the Church in Nigeria in such a way that Mission and Ministry are sustainable in challenging times. Jesus is asking for the faith that can endure in the face of suffering, a faith that can grow when it is hunted by the enemies of God and His Christ. It can only come from being anchored on the Person and the finished work of salvation which Jesus did on the Cross. It is only Christ crucified; who was raised from the dead and who lives and reigns eternally that can sustain

life and Mission. It is only the Living God whom Abraham followed, whom Moses saw, and whom Paul, Peter and the Fathers in faith obeyed, He shall be our God and our guide until the end. It is by Him that the Preaching of the Gospel and the service to God and humanity can be sustained. May our personal faith and loyalty to Christ be deep and may He be our all in all to us. Thank you for your patience and being there for the Church of God. God bless you and all yours.

Your Brother and Fellow Labourer;

++ HENRY, ABUJA.