

CLERGY-LAITY RELATIONSHIP IN BUILDING THE CHURCH (IN THE LIGHT OF 1 CORINTHIANS 3: 1 - 15) - A DIAPRAXIS OF ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF AMICHI.

Umeoduagu, Pascal Chukwumerie

Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University

Faculty of Arts

Department of Religion and Human Relations

pascalmerie83@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The Word became Flesh and dwelt among us (John 1: 1 - 14). This Word is named Jesus Christ (Matt 1: 21; Luke 1: 31; 2: 21). He took flesh and dwelt among us for the salvation of mankind (Matt. 1: 21b). From the beginning, Jesus knew that the work of salvation has to go on from generation to generation and thus called people who would assist him to propagate the message even when he is no longer there physically. He thus selected disciples and out of the disciples he selected twelve ordinary men named apostles whose names and ministry appear in Matthew 10: 2 - 26. This shows that Jesus Christ is the one who calls, the one who owns the ministry, and the one who will reward each according to his or her contribution and based on the quality of the contributions. The greatest problem today is that some ministers – clergy and lay, have forgotten that the ministry does not belong to them and have no reason at all to quarrel with one another but should see one another as collaborators in Christ's ministry. Secondly, some people of God have forgotten that every minister has God-given talent which should not warrant them to be involved in a personality cult that is, preferring one minister over another or even preferring a minister to Jesus. This paper aims at explaining again who a minister is, how he should see his fellow minister, and how he should see Jesus Christ. The work adopts the Historical-Critical Method (HCM) as well as Textual Criticism (TC) to unravel the inner meaning of 1 Corinthians 3: 1 - 15. HCM is a branch of criticism that investigates the origins of ancient texts in order to understand the world behind the text – 1 Corinthians 3: 1 - 15. In the same way, TC was used so as to get to the original wording of the text as was written by Paul. The writer discovers that some ministers have forgotten their roles, their relationship with their fellow ministers, and with Jesus Christ, the owner of the ministry. The paper recommends, among other things, that there should be the adequate formation of candidates going into the ministry as priests as well as constant catechesis on the part of members of the Church, especially, on the nature of the Church. This will enable us to avoid unnecessary rivalry in the Church as both the clergy and laity strive to build the Church together. As a matter of policy, this should be started as soon as a child reaches the age of reasoning. Hence, the saying, “catch them young.” Significantly, this work will be of immense benefit to all the members of the Church as well as her ministers.

Key words: Clergy-Laity, Relationship, Building.

INTRODUCTION

The Christian Church is the assembly of followers of Jesus Christ. It is a venerable institution that holds significant importance in various cultures and societies worldwide. Rooted in ancient history, the Church has evolved over the centuries, shaping and being shaped by the

beliefs, practices, and norms of the communities it serves. It serves as a spiritual hub, offering a sense of belonging and purpose to its followers, while also playing a prominent role in shaping moral and ethical frameworks. One crucial aspect of the Church is its role as a communal space. It serves as a place where individuals come together to worship, find solace, and foster a sense of community and belonging. Being a member of a church brings responsibility of building it. Building the Church goes beyond the mere construction of physical structures; it involves the growth and development of a religious community, its spiritual foundation, and its outreach to society. In Christianity, the phrase "building the Church" refers to the process of nurturing and strengthening the body of believers through faith, love, and shared values. It entails fostering a sense of unity, compassion, and support among members, encouraging them to live out their faith in practical ways and spreading the message of Christianity to others. This metaphorical building is a continuous effort that involves prayer, worship, and engagement in charitable activities to create a community that reflects the teachings of Jesus Christ and embodies the core principles of Christianity. Building the church in Amichi Anglican Diocese has, sometimes, been a difficult task as many people in the area still see church as a Western culture.

One of the respondents to this study in Ezinifite, Sir Gaius Ezenwobi (personal communications, May 23, 2022) asserted that in Amichi Anglican Diocese, and in Ezinifite in particular, the Church has struggled to gain acceptance among the local population, particularly in the rural areas. For instance, in one of the villages by name Awor, the Church attempted to establish a new congregation, but faced resistance from the community. The villagers, who were predominantly traditional worshippers, saw the Church as a foreign entity, imposing its beliefs and practices on them. During a Church service, the priest attempted to introduce a contemporary worship song, which was met with resistance from the villagers. They complained that the song was 'too modern' and 'not in line with their traditional way of worship.' The priest, not understanding the cultural significance of traditional worship, insisted on continuing with the song, leading to a walkout by some villagers. This incident highlights the tension between the Church's efforts to evangelize and the community's strong attachment to their traditional beliefs and practices. The Church's failure to understand and respect the local culture has hindered its ability to build trust and establish a foothold in the community. This example illustrates how the perception of the Church as a Western cultural imposition can create tension and hinder the Church's mission in Ezinifite. It highlights the need for the Church to understand and respect local

cultures and traditions, and to find ways to contextualize its message and worship practices in a way that is meaningful and relevant to the community.

This is as a result of the fact that most people are still rooted in traditional heathen worship. The communities that make up Amichi Diocese, are predominantly Igbo-speaking population, which has deep-rooted traditions, beliefs, and customs that influence their worldview and approach to religion. As a result of this, building the Church in the place faces the issue of syncretism.

One of the respondents to this study in Azigbo, Chief Joshua Laz. Okoli (personal communications, March 12, 2022) noted that people come inside the church pretending to be faithful to their Christian confession in Christ, and the same go out to offer sacrifices to ‘Arusi Udo’ and these same people go to the extent of supporting heathen practices in Azigbo community. Many people integrate traditional religious practices and beliefs with Christianity, resulting in a blend of the two. As a result, any clergy that insists on concentrating on Christianity may be losing members of his church. For instance, at St. Barnabas Anglican Church in Ebenasa village of Amichi, on March 19, 2023, two members walked out of the church as a form of protest against the clergy’s sermon on masquerade dance. They insisted that the clergy should allow them to be part of the masquerade cult and also members of the church, if he wants their presence, services and contributions anymore in the church. This situation not only undermines the building of the church, but also puts the clergy in a tight corner where his decision may contribute negatively or positively to the growth of the church.

In another instance at St. Andrew’s Church, Ebenator, a member of the Church, who is one of the respondents to this study, Mr John Akam (personal communications, July 24, 2022) opined that syncretism is evident in the blending of traditional African practices with Christian worship. For example, in our church St. Andrew’s Church, he stated, some members of the congregation incorporate traditional Igbo rituals, such as the use of kola nuts and libations, into their Christian worship services. This blending of practices has led to tensions between those who see it as a way to honour their cultural heritage and those who view it as a form of idolatry or dilution of Christian doctrine. This syncretism, Mr Akam said, has created a complex theological and pastoral challenge for the church in particular and the Diocese at large, as it seeks to navigate the boundaries between cultural sensitivity and religious orthodoxy. Owing to all these, the course of building the church has become a very delicate and difficult task that requires wisdom to handle.

Again, some clergies only see themselves as authority over the laities. A clergy is expected to be a servant leader, as posited in Mark 10: 42 - 45, in order to have good followers. Where a clergy sees himself as a lord, the laity will rarely listen and obey them; and the church cannot grow or be built in such situation. Lawrence (2017) noted,

that humility and service brings the clergy closer to the laity. The lack of humility and service within the clergy can lead to various negative consequences that undermine the essence of Christian leadership. When clergy lack humility, they may succumb to the temptation of seeking power, recognition, and material gains. This can result in a hierarchical and authoritarian approach to leadership, distancing the clergy from the laity and fostering a sense of exclusivity.

Such behaviour is contrary to the teachings of Jesus, who emphasized servant leadership and humility in Matthew 23: 11 - 12. When the clergy prioritize their self-interest over the well-being of the community, it can lead to divisions, distrust, and weakens the effort in the building of the church. At the heart of building the church is where the clergy creates a unified and cohesive community of believers. A united church can transcend differences and work together towards common goals, promoting harmony and cooperation among its members, and building the church generally. This unity becomes a powerful force for positive change, advocating for justice and compassion in society. The church serves as a guiding light for its members, providing spiritual nourishment and support. Through its teachings and religious practices, the church offers a sense of purpose and direction in the lives of believers. The spiritual growth facilitated within the church enables individuals to deepen their relationship with the divine and find solace in times of difficulty.

Research Methodology

The research work will utilize a mixed-methods approach. This approach combines both qualitative and quantitative research methods to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the clergy-laity relationship and its impact on Church development. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with clergy members and laity from diverse backgrounds within the diocese. These interviews explore their experiences, perceptions, and perspectives on the relationship between the clergy and laity, as well as their roles in Church building. Focus group

discussions with small groups of clergy and laity representatives will also facilitate interactive conversations on the topic.

Document analysis will be conducted by reviewing relevant documents, reports, and official records from the Anglican Diocese of Amichi, such as church bulletins, annual reports, and policy documents. This analysis will provide valuable contextual information on the Church's activities and decision-making processes.

Conceptual Framework:

A conceptual framework serves as the intellectual foundation of a research study or a project, providing a structure that guides the investigation and helps researchers make sense of their findings. It is a set of interconnected concepts, theories, and ideas that frame the research question or problem at hand. It establishes the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings that inform the study, offering a lens through which researchers can analyze data and draw meaningful conclusions.

In essence, a conceptual framework acts as the scaffolding for research endeavors, helping researchers to clarify their research questions and hypotheses. It allows them to situate their work within the broader context of existing knowledge, identifying gaps in the literature and areas where their study can make a meaningful contribution. By providing a structured framework, it enables researchers to formulate hypotheses and design experiments or studies that will test these hypotheses effectively. Additionally, the conceptual framework helps in the interpretation of findings by providing a theoretical lens through which to view and make sense of the data collected during the research process.

Furthermore, a well-constructed conceptual framework is crucial for ensuring the validity and rigor of a study. It assists in selecting the most appropriate research methods, data collection techniques, and analysis tools, aligning them with the overarching research objectives. By integrating relevant theories and concepts, researchers can also derive testable propositions that guide their investigation. In sum, the conceptual framework serves as an intellectual anchor, allowing researchers to navigate the complexities of their chosen field of study, thereby enhancing the quality and depth of their research outcomes.

Concept of Clergy:

The word clergy has an interesting etymology. It comes from the Latin clericus, meaning priest, which is derived from the Greek “κληρικός” (klerikos), meaning ‘pertaining to an inheritance’ or ‘one who is chosen by lot’. The word was first used to refer to priests in the Roman Catholic Church. Over time, it came to refer to all members of the clergy, including Protestant ministers.

The term "clergy" refers to a specific group of individuals within a religious organization who are typically ordained or set apart for specific religious duties and leadership roles. The concept of clergy has evolved over centuries and can vary significantly among different religious traditions and denominations. Scholars and theologians have examined the definition of clergy in various contexts, shedding light on the roles, functions, and significance of these religious leaders. According to Smith, (2016) the clergy are ordained ministers or priests who hold a distinct position within a religious hierarchy. They often act as intermediaries between the divine and the congregation, performing religious rituals, offering spiritual guidance, and providing pastoral care. In many Christian traditions, the clergy are responsible for administering sacraments, such as baptism and communion, which are considered essential for the salvation and spiritual growth of believers.

Concept of Laity:

The etymology of the word laity comes from the Latin word *laicus*, which means pertaining to the people. This word was originally used to describe the common people, in contrast to the clergy or nobility. In the mediaeval period, it took on a religious meaning, referring to people who were not ordained members of the church. Today, it is often used to describe people who are not trained religious leaders, but who still play an important role in religious life.

In the words of Congar, (1969, p. 60) in his book ***Sacramentum Mundi*** or The Sacrament of the world he opined that laity have a vital role to play in the church as they bring the gospel into the secular world and live out their faith in everyday life. He suggested that laity are full, conscious and active participants in the church, and that their witness is essential to the mission of the church. Here, Congar's central argument in *Sacramentum Mundi* on the subject of laity is that the role of laity in the church is not to participate fully in the life of the church and the world. He sees laity as co-responsible for the mission of the church, not merely as recipients of the message of the church.

He also stressed the importance of the charismatic gifts of laity, such as their insights into the world and their ability to bring the message of the gospel to others.

Obviously, the world today is in search of meaning. The world wants above all to know the purpose of its existence, its find destiny. The world wants a witness. The laity are in the front line. They live in the world. They are lay people in the world and for the world. That is their vocation. (Congar, 1969).

The above assertion highlights the important role that laity play in witnessing to the meaning and purpose of the world.

The Development of Clergy and Laity Ministry:

The development of clergy and laity roles within religious communities has evolved over time, reflecting changes in religious practices, societal norms, and theological perspectives. This evolution has been influenced by various factors, including shifts in religious authority, the democratization of religious institutions, and changing expectations of clergy and laity.

According to Jenkins, (2013) historically, the roles of clergy and laity were sharply delineated, with clergy holding religious authority and responsibilities for conducting rituals, interpreting sacred texts, and providing spiritual guidance. The laity, on the other hand, were often seen as passive recipients of religious instruction and were primarily responsible for supporting the clergy and the church financially. This hierarchical model of religious leadership prevailed for centuries within many religious traditions. However, in recent decades, there has been a noticeable shift towards a more inclusive and participatory model of religious roles. The Second Vatican Council in the Catholic Church, for example, emphasized the "priesthood of all believers," recognizing that all baptized members of the Church share in its priestly mission. (Dulles, 2014). This theological shift encouraged greater lay involvement in various aspects of church life, including liturgical ministries, pastoral care, and social justice initiatives.

In Protestant traditions, the development of clergy and laity roles has been characterized by a broader range of responsibilities for both groups. The laity have increasingly taken on leadership roles within congregations, serving as elders, deacons, and church council members. (Kreider, 2016). This democratization of decision-making within congregations reflects a more participatory and collaborative approach to church governance. Furthermore, the rise of non-denominational and independent churches has challenged traditional clergy-laity distinctions. In

many of these churches, the clergy may not have formal theological training, and the laity play a more active role in leading worship services, preaching, and pastoral care. (Stetzer & Dodson, 2017). This shift has blurred the lines between clergy and laity, emphasizing the importance of spiritual gifts and leadership qualities over formal ordination.

The development of clergy and laity roles has also been influenced by broader societal changes, such as shifts in gender roles and expectations. In many religious traditions, women were historically excluded from ordained clergy roles, and their participation was often limited to supportive roles in the church. (Lints, 2019). However, the women's rights movement and evolving societal attitudes toward gender equality have led to significant changes in many religious communities. Today, women are increasingly serving as clergy, pastors, and religious leaders in various denominations, challenging traditional gender norms and expanding the scope of clergy and laity roles. Moreover, technological advancements and the digital age have had a profound impact on the development of clergy and laity roles. Online platforms and social media have provided new avenues for religious communication, community building, and outreach. (Campbell, 2013). This has allowed clergy and laity alike to engage with a broader audience and take on roles in online ministries, live-streamed worship services, and virtual religious education, further blurring the lines between traditional roles.

The rise of secularism and religious pluralism in many societies has also influenced the development of clergy and laity roles. In increasingly diverse religious landscapes, individuals from different faith backgrounds may find themselves serving in roles that require interfaith dialogue, cultural sensitivity, and collaboration. (Jacobsen & Barker, 2018). Clergy and laity may engage in ecumenical and interfaith efforts, promoting understanding and cooperation among religious communities. Furthermore, the concept of "spiritual but not religious" has challenged traditional notions of clergy and laity roles. Many individuals identify as spiritual seekers outside of established religious institutions, leading to the emergence of non-traditional spiritual leaders and guides. (Zinnbauer et al., 2015). These leaders may not fit traditional clergy roles but play a significant role in providing spiritual guidance and support to those who do not identify with traditional religious structures.

The development of clergy and laity roles has also been influenced by the need to address contemporary social issues and engage with the broader community. Religious leaders and lay members are increasingly involved in social justice initiatives, advocacy work, and community

service. (Golder, 2019). This expanded role extends beyond the confines of religious institutions, as clergy and laity work together to address pressing societal challenges such as poverty, inequality, environmental concerns, and refugee support. Additionally, the emergence of new forms of religious expression and spirituality has contributed to the evolving roles of clergy and laity. In contemporary society, there is a growing interest in spirituality that goes beyond traditional religious structures, leading to the rise of non-traditional spiritual leaders, life coaches, and spiritual guides. (Roof & McKinney, 2015). These individuals often occupy roles that bridge the gap between clergy and laity, providing spiritual guidance and support in non-institutional settings.

Theoretical Framework:

Social Exchange Theory:

Social Exchange Theory was primarily developed by George C. Homans, (1950). It is a sociological and psychological framework that provides insights into how individuals engage in social interactions, relationships, and transactions. At its core, Social Exchange Theory posits that individuals engage in social relationships and interactions with the expectation of receiving rewards or benefits while minimizing costs or losses. These exchanges are not limited to material goods but encompass a wide range of resources, including emotional support, companionship, love, information, and even intangible factors like social approval and recognition. Individuals are thought to weigh the perceived benefits against the perceived costs to determine the desirability of a social exchange.

Central to Social Exchange Theory is the idea of reciprocity. It suggests that individuals are motivated to reciprocate and maintain relationships when they perceive a fair or equitable balance between what they invest in the relationship and what they receive in return. If a person feels that the rewards of a relationship outweigh the costs, they are more likely to engage in or continue that relationship. Conversely, if the costs outweigh the rewards, the individual may be motivated to terminate or withdraw from the relationship. The theory also acknowledges the existence of alternatives in social exchanges. In other words, individuals assess the attractiveness of various alternatives to the current relationship or interaction. If a better alternative is available, it may influence their decisions to continue or exit the current exchange. This consideration of

alternatives is crucial in understanding how individuals make choices in their social interactions and relationships.

Social Exchange Theory is not solely concerned with interpersonal relationships but can be applied to various social contexts, including organizations and institutions. For example, it can explain employee-employer relationships in terms of the perceived benefits of job security, salary, and work conditions compared to the costs of time and effort invested in the job. Similarly, it can be used to analyze consumer behavior in terms of the perceived value of products or services compared to their monetary cost. One significant aspect of Social Exchange Theory is its ability to provide insights into the dynamics of power and dependency within social exchanges. When one party in a relationship has greater access to resources or control over rewards, they may hold more power in the exchange. This power differential can influence the negotiation of rewards and costs and impact the overall stability and satisfaction of the relationship. Consequently, Social Exchange Theory can be applied to the analysis of power dynamics in areas such as marriage, politics, and economic transactions.

Moreover, Social Exchange Theory has been adapted and expanded upon by scholars to account for the complexities of human behavior and relationships. For instance, the concept of "equity theory" suggests that individuals not only seek an overall balance in their relationships but also strive for fairness in the distribution of rewards and costs. When individuals perceive inequity, they may take actions to restore a sense of fairness, which can include altering their contributions or seeking compensation from their partners. The theory's application extends to the study of social networks and communities, where individuals engage in a web of social exchanges. These exchanges can range from simple acts of reciprocity among friends to more complex interactions within professional networks or online communities. Social Exchange Theory helps us understand how individuals navigate these networks, forming alliances and maintaining relationships based on the perceived benefits they receive.

Collaboration between the Clergy, Laity and Jesus:

The relationship between clergy and laity has been a critical factor in the growth and success of the church throughout history. A key example of this collaboration is found in the story of Jesus sending out the seventy-two in Luke 10. In this passage, according to Bauckham, (2017) "Jesus entrusted his followers with a task that was vital to the spread of the gospel, and they were

able to accomplish it through their teamwork, cooperation and collaboration. This story provides valuable insight into the importance of collaboration between ministers and Jesus Christ (p. 54).

In the Anglican Diocese of Amichi, there has been a robust collaboration of the ordained and the lay ministers with Jesus in the discharge of their ministry. In the opinion of Okeke, (2017)

one sure way this collaboration played out is through the consistent engagement of the bishop, ministers both lay and ordained in prayers and fellowshiping together. Prayer, as he noted, has been seen in the Diocese of Amichi as a 'powerful tool that can help to align the will of the minister with the will of God'. He went ahead to opine that ministers in Amichi collaborate with Jesus by seeking to understand and apply the teachings of the bible in their own lives and in their ministry. Additionally, ministers in Amichi collaborate with Jesus by seeking to serve others in a way that reflects his love and compassion (p. 56).

In his support to this idea, Nzewi, (2017) opines that "in view of the collaboration of ministers in Amichi and Jesus, it is believed that prayer is a vital part of the collaboration between ministers and Jesus (p. 57). The Diocese has a strong tradition of prayer, through its many spiritual programs which is demonstrated and domesticated in all the Archdeaconries, Parishes and station churches, the ministers continue to grow in their collaboration with Jesus. Additionally, he went on to state that the Diocese has a strong focus on serving the community, which is another way that ministers in Amichi collaborate with Jesus.

Critically, according to Wright, (1992) argues that collaboration between ministers and Jesus is not just about ministers and Jesus and what things they do, but also about the way that we live our lives (p. 137). Paul teaches us that we are called to be living sacrifices (Romans 12: 1), which means that we offer our whole selves to God and live in a way that reflects his love and grace. This can be challenging, but ministers in Amichi do their best to imbibe by this powerful way to collaborate with Jesus in their lives and ministry. In addition to the ideas of prayer, communion, fellowship and living out their faith, ministers in Amichi Diocese also collaborate with Jesus by engaging in evangelism and outreach programs. Evangelism is the process of sharing the gospel message with others, and it is a key part of the ministry of the church. The Amichi Diocese has a strong tradition to evangelism, and I believe that this is a key way that ministers collaborate with Jesus in their ministry.

According to Ashimolowo, (1993) writing on the importance of evangelism in the Eastern part of Nigeria, pointed that the primary purpose of the church is to be the light of the world and to spread the gospel to those who do not know Christ (p. 78). In the same vein, evangelism has played a significant role in the growth of the Diocese of Amichi. The Diocese has grown rapidly in recent years, and this has been in part to its emphasis on evangelism. Through the collaboration of the ministers and Jesus, the Diocese has been able to reach out to people who are not part of the church and has seen many people come in faith in Jesus Christ.

Ikeakor, (2021) asserts that

this has led to the planting of new churches and the growth of the existing churches. He said that another key aspect of the collaboration between ministers and Jesus in the Diocese of Amichi is the importance of community. Jesus gathered a community of disciples around him, and the church is also meant to be a community of believers who support and encourage one another. As seen in the various Archdeaconries that make up the Diocese, this community aspect of the church, is crucial for the collaboration between the ministers in Amichi and Jesus, as it provides a context in which ministers can work together and support each other in their ministry for the general growth of the Diocese (p. 35).

Collaboration between the Bishop, Clergy and Laity:

In the Anglican Communion, Fearon, (2018) opines that the bishop is the leader of the Diocese, and he provides guidance and support to the ministers (p. 67). The bishop of the Diocese of Amichi has been instrumental in developing a strong sense of collaboration among the ministers, by providing clear leadership and direction. One aspect of the collaboration between the bishop and ministers in Amichi Diocese is communication. The bishop and ministers have regular meetings to discuss the needs of the Diocese and to strategize about how to meet those needs. The bishop also makes a point of visiting the different churches in the Diocese in order to get to know the ministers and the people they serve. This allows for a more personal relationship between the bishop and the ministers which enhances their collaboration.

Egbunonu, (2021) asserts that “the Bishop of the Diocese of Amichi (Anglican Communion) and ministers work together to set goals and priorities for the Diocese. The bishop and ministers collaborate on making decisions that affect the Diocese and they share information and resources with each other” (p. 53).

One of the respondents to this study in Amichi, Ven. Nnoli E. C. (personal communications, November 19, 2022) a retired priest from the Diocese of Amichi who had some

interesting insights to share about the collaboration between the bishop and ministers. He said that the bishop and ministers work together like a family. There is a lot of mutual respect and trust between them, and they are always willing to listen to each other's ideas. He also said that the collaboration has been very effective in making the Diocese more successful.

Still on how the bishop and ministers collaborate on setting goals and priorities, they work together to identify the needs of the Diocese and to develop a plan to address those needs. This includes things like developing programs and initiatives to serve the community, setting financial goals, and working to make the Diocese more efficient. Another respondent to this study in Akwaihedi, Mrs. Ngozi Belonwu, (personal communications, April 15, 2023) an indigene of Amichi who also worships at the Cathedral Church of St. Andrew, Amichi said that the bishop and his ministers collaborate in making decisions. She asserted that this is an important aspect of their collaboration because it ensures that everyone has a voice in the decision-making process. They meet regularly to discuss important issues and make decisions together, rather than having one person make all the decisions.

One of the respondents to this study in Unubi, Revd Canon Chidi Enemo, (personal communications, March 24, 2023) said that the Bishop and ministers share information and resources. He said this is an important aspect of collaboration because it allows everyone to be on the same page and to work more efficiently. They share information about the Diocese's finances, programs, and initiatives so that everyone is aware of what is happening. They also share resources like staff, facilities and equipment.

The Cathedral Administrator in the Diocese of Amichi was also interviewed. In his view point, one of the respondents to this study in Amichi, Ven Chika Mbeyi, (personal communications, July 22, 2023) spoke about how the sharing of information and resource has helped to improve communication and efficiency in the Diocese. The administrator said that before the bishop and ministers started collaborating in this way, there was a lot of miscommunication and wasted resources. But now, everyone is more informed and there is less waste.

Furthermore, one more important point to note about the collaboration between the bishop and ministers in the Diocese of Amichi is that it is not just about sharing information and resources. It is also about building relationships and trust. They meet regularly to share meals and socialize, and this helps to create a strong bond. They also encourage each other and support each other in their work. Another form of collaboration that is seen between the bishop and ministers in Amichi

Diocese is what one of the respondents to this study in Amichi, Sir Engr Igweka Uche, (personal communications, May 21, 2024) referred to as ‘collaborative leadership’. In this type of collaboration, the bishop and ministers work together to set a vision and direction for the Diocese. In this interview, Sir Igweka maintained that the bishop and ministers in the Diocese all take responsibility for achieving that vision. He went further to say that they all work together to develop plans and strategies, and they hold each other accountable for their actions.

Collaboration between the Clergy and Laity:

The collaboration between clergy and laity is vital part of the church's mission and ministry. In the words of Nzelu, (2020) “there are many ways in which ministers in the Diocese of Amichi collaborate to further the work of the church (p. 12). They are as follows: planning and executing joint ministry initiatives, such as outreach events or service projects, sharing resources and knowledge, such as best practices or expertise in specific areas of ministry. It also includes, coordinating efforts to support one another in times of need or difficulty, encouraging and praying for one another, building up and strengthening one another in the faith and so on.

In the Diocese of Amichi, according to Dame Prof Chineze Uche who was also one of the respondents to this study in Amichi, (personal communications, April 24, 2023) asserts that planning and executing joint ministry initiatives has been a great way for ministers to pool their resources and expertise to achieve a common goal. For example, she said two churches could work together to host a community event that brings people together and shares the gospel, or they could collaborate on a service project to help those in need in their community. She said, this kind of collaboration requires planning and communication, but as seen in the Diocese, it has been a powerful way to make a difference.

In the Diocese of Amichi, the ministers also collaborate in a variety of ways to further the work of God. For example, the priests in the Diocese meet regularly to share ideas, prayer requests, and updates on their ministries. They also collaborate on special events, such as Combine Lenten Meditation, Set-Apart / Retreats, and pilgrimages. In addition, the ministers work together to provide support for each other, whether it be through prayer, financial assistance, or emotional support. They work together, to serve the people of Amichi, providing pastoral care, sacraments and other spiritual needs.

Ikeakor, (2019) was of the view that

it is important that priests work together in unity for the good of the church and the people they serve. He said that collaboration between ministers is essential for the church to thrive and grow. He strongly insisted that if we work together as priests, we can share resources, ideas and experiences that will be beneficial to all. We can also support each other in times of need. And most importantly, we can reach more people with the gospel of Christ by working together (p. 23).

Here, emphasizes is made on the need for ministers to put aside their differences and work together for the common goal of spreading the gospel and serving the people of God.

Background to 1 Corinthians 3.

The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians, probably written about 53 54 CE at Ephesus, Asia Minor, deals with problems that arose in the early years after Paul's initial missionary visit (c. 50 51) to Corinth and his establishment there of a Christian community. Among the myriad problems in the Corinthian church were: claims of spiritual superiority over one another, suing one another in public courts, abusing the communal meal, and sexual misbehaviour. Paul wrote to "demand higher ethical and moral standards" (Jerome, 2011). The letter is valuable for its illuminations both of Paul's thoughts and the problems of the early church. Saddened by reports of dissension among the converts of various Apostles, Paul begins his letter with a reminder that all ministers are to be regarded as servants of Christ and stewards of Gods mysteries (4: 1). They are, therefore, not the owners of the ministries but servants working for someone collaboratively. Then, answering questions sent from Corinth through Chloes people, he addresses matters of immorality (5: 1 2, 10, 6: 9; 2 Cor. 5: 10), marriage and celibacy (7: 1 2, 8 9, 28 - 29, 32 33) the conduct of women (11: 3 - 5, 7, 13 15; 14: 35), the propriety of eating meat offered to idols (8: 1, 8 10, 13; 10: 19 21), the proper usage of spiritual gifts (12: 1, 7 9, 28; 14: 1, 13 14, 40), and the worthy reception of the Eucharist (11: 23 25, 27 29, 31).

According to Enrique (2004), Paul tells the quarrelling community members that spiritual gifts are like body parts each is essential, and jealousy between them is irrational, just like an eye and ear quarrelling over their roles. (p. 89). Then, in one of the most significant of Pauline texts which is 1 Cor. 13, the apostle explains to his fellow Christians that no gift of God whether it be the gift of tongues, faith that moves mountains or knowledge of mysteries has meaning unless it is

accompanied by love. He also reaffirms the reality of Christ's Resurrection doubted or denied by some as the very foundation of Christian faith (15: 17).

Bruce (1976), states that the

Corinthians were immature in their faith and needed to grow in their understanding of God. He argues that Paul's letters to the Corinthians were meant to encourage them to mature in their faith and to address the various problems they were facing. He also highlights the importance of love, humility, and obedience to God's word in the Christian life. The Corinthians were more interested in spiritual gifts than in love and unity. Paul's letters to the Corinthians were meant to correct their misguided ideas about spiritual gifts and to encourage them to love and care for one another. The gifts of the Spirit were meant to build up the church and not for selfish gain. The gifts of the Spirit are given by God according to his will, not according to our desire. There is a diversity of gifts, but all are given for the common good. (pp. 34 35).

According to Henry, (2002) he went further to assert that

while Paul was still ministering the Word in Ephesus, he heard from Chloe's people that divisions were beginning to emerge among the Corinthian saints. In addition, Paul was informed of a case of gross immorality in the church, one with which the church had not dealt. Instead of feeling shame and sorrow over this sin, at least some of the saints were proud of their tolerance (chapter 5). He heard also of Christians taking their fellow believers to court, seeking to have pagans pass judgment on spiritual matters (chapter 6). Paul was also told of unbecoming conduct at the Lord's Supper (chapter 11) and doctrinal error concerning the resurrection (chapter 15). A three-man delegation consisting of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus also arrived from Corinth (16: 17) bringing a letter which inquired of Paul about marriage (7: 1), virgins (7: 25), food sacrificed to idols (8: 1), spiritual gifts (12: 1), the collection for the saints (16: 1), and Apollos (16: 12). Paul in First Corinthians set out to answer the questions the Corinthian Christians posed to him and also to clarify ideas that are not clear to them and solve quarrels that were rearing their ugly heads around then. (pp. 87 88).

Conclusion

The work surveyed and investigated the influence of the relationship between the clergy and laity in building the church in the light of 1 Corinthians 3: 1 - 15: a diapraxis of Anglican Diocese of

Amichi. It was discovered that the relationship between the clergy and laity is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires careful consideration and balanced approaches. Based on the exegesis of 1 Corinthians 3: 1 - 15 and the findings of this study, several key principles emerge. Firstly, unity and humility are vital for building up the church and must be promoted in all aspects of the relationship between clergy and laity. A focus on the glory of God, rather than personal ambition, is essential in preventing divisions and rivalries. Secondly, clergy must recognize their role as servants of the laity and facilitators of God's work, while laity must understand their crucial role in the building of the church. A healthy balance between ministry and stewardship, as well as spiritual mentorship, must be maintained. It is also seen that it is vital to address and avoid the dangers of idolatry, abuse of power, and societal influences that can corrupt the relationship between clergy and laity. As this study has explored, the relationship between clergy and laity is a key factor in the strength and vitality of the church. It requires constant self-reflection, prayer, and mutual respect. The church must be a place where all members can grow in faith, serve God, and build one another up in love. In this specific context of the Anglican Diocese of Amichi, it is essential to promote open communication, transparency, and a shared vision for the future.

Recommendations

This work does not claim to have provided all the information on the topic discussed. It is rather a humble contribution with an exegetical compass in addressing the relationship between the clergy and laity in building up of the church. Given the findings of this study, it is important to provide recommendations that can strengthen the relationship between clergy and laity in the Anglican Diocese of Amichi. These recommendations are aimed at fostering greater unity, humility, and teamwork within the church, while also addressing potential challenges and pitfalls. By implementing these recommendations, the Diocese can ensure that the relationship between clergy and laity is healthy, Christ-centered, and focused on building up the kingdom of God. The work therefore recommends the following:

1. Implement regular training and workshops for clergy and laity on topics related to unity, humility, and teamwork, focusing on biblical principles and practical examples.
2. Encourage inter-denominational and inter-cultural dialogue between clergy and laity to foster mutual understanding and respect.

3. Establish clear accountability structures within the church to prevent the abuse of power and ensure transparency in all decision-making processes
4. Develop mentorship programs for both clergy and laity, with a focus on spiritual growth, leadership, and community service.
5. Encourage greater participation of laity in decision-making and administrative processes within the church, to ensure that their voices are heard and respected.

Reference

- Ashimolowo, M. (1993). *From zero to hero: A ten-year journey*. London, UK: Sovereign World.
- Bauckham, R. (2017). *God and the crisis of freedom: The Benedict Option and the today*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Campbell, J. A. (2013). *Unleashing the Christian imagination: Seven ways to think like Jesus*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.
- Cherry, C. (2015). *The theology of work: Where marketplace and ministry intersect*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Congar, Y. (1969). *Lay people in the church: Theological reflections of a commissioned layman*. New York, NY: Herder and Herder.
- Dulles, A. (1987). *Models of the Church*. New York, NY: Doubleday & Company Inc.
- Durotoye, O. O. (2013). *The Lordship of Christian in the nations*. London, UK: Daystar Press.
- Ebaugh, H. R. & Chafetz, J. S. (2015). *Religion and the new immigrants: continuities and adaptations in immigrant congregations*. New York, NY: NYU Press.
- Ebaugh, H. R. (2017). *A public faith: How followers of Christ share their religions in modern pluralistic societies*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Egbunonu, N. (2021). *Piety and politics: A study of liberation and inculturation in African Catholic thought*. In M. C. Okeke (Ed.), *The Collaborative nature of the clergy and laity in the Diocese of Amichi: An empirical analysis* (pp. 23-34). *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 54 (1), 43-59.
- Eisenberg, A. (2019). *The revolutionary faith: The fight for a supreme God during the English Civil Wars*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Hale, M. (2018). *Vocation: Discerning our callings in life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Ikeakor, E. O. (2016). *Diocesan development: the growth of the Diocese of Amichi (Anglican Communion) in perspective*. Nsukka, NG: University of Nigeria Press.
- Jacobson, J. & Barker, K. J. (2018). *Imitation to theology: Discipleship in a pluralistic world*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Jenkins, P. (2013). *The great and holy war: How World War I became a religious crusade*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Johnson, A. (2019). *Ministry of the Laity*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.

- Johnson, N. M. (2017). *Theology as discipleship: Stanley Hauerwas and the education of desire*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock.
- Kreider, B. (2016). *Earth and altar: Theology of food and eating*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.
- Kukah, M. H. (1995). *African ecclesiology: The Christian community in Africa in the service of reconciliation, justice, and peace*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Spectrum Books.
- Lawrence, S. (2017). *The waning of the Eucharist*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Nzewi, A. U. (2021). *The people of God and the growth of the church: a historical account of the Diocese of Amichi*. Onitsha, NG: Charity and Development Publications.
- Okeke, C. C. (2017). *The African cultural revolution: The Igbo experience*. Cambridge, MA: Open Book Publishers.
- Okeke, M. (1998). *An African Pentecostal theology: The Holy Spirit and the formation of African Christianity*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.
- Okeke, M. C. (2017). *The collaborative nature of the clergy and laity in the Diocese of Amichi: An empirical analysis*. *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 54 (1), 43-59.
- Roof, W. C. & McKinney, J. L. (2013). *American spirituality in an age of choice: Individual and commitment in a new millennium*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, A. B. (2016). *The end of unbelief: Christianity, Science, and the meaning of life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Stetzer, E. & Dodson, D. (2017). *Subversive kingdom: Living as agents of gospel transformation*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Wright, N. T. (1992). *The resurrection of the Son of God*. London, UK: SPCK. In M. C. Okeke (Ed.), *The collaborative nature of the clergy and laity in the Diocese of Amichi: An empirical analysis* (pp. 2 - 5). *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 54 (1), 43 - 59.