

CHALLENGES FACING THE CHRIST APOSTOLIC CHURCH YOUTH FELLOWSHIP (CACYOF) IN ILORIN METROPOLIS.

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Abstract

Challenges are constant phenomenon in life and particularly in every human organization. No organization is free from challenges at one time or the other. In other words, authoritarian system of leadership, insufficient funds, arrogant of human nature among others serves as an impediment to progress in any establishment. The youth are not only movers and shakers of the society but the future of the present is built in the youth. The paper examines the challenges facing the youth fellowship in Christ Apostolic Church. The youth fellowship is recognized with the name Christ Apostolic Church Youth Fellowship (CACYOF) and has been functioning in the church for over 50years. This paper aimed at providing solutions to the challenges in order to allow smooth and efficient running of the fellowship as a body in the Church. The paper adopted historical and empirical methods; primary sources like interviews were also used to facilitate adequate information on the views of youth, pastors and youth executives to determine the challenges and the solutions to the menace facing the fellowship. Some of the findings in this paper show that the age limit of youth in Christ Apostolic Church is 50years and the refusal of many members who are married to participate in the youth fellowship. It is also important to identify that financial constraint has. This paper suggested that the youth fellowship of the church should not be taken with levity, and proper concern to the growth of the body should be placed paramount.

Keywords: Challenges, Youth Fellowship and Ilorin Metropolis

Introduction

Christ Apostolic Church has a lot of departments ranging from Good Women group, Christ Apostolic Church Men Association also known as CACMA, the prayer warriors group, choir, children and youth Departments. In tracing the growth and expansion of Christ Apostolic Church from the beginning till this moment, the roles of youths of the Church cannot be underestimated. It should be noted that society cannot be progressive without a stratum of young men and women who contribute in one capacity or the other to the social, economic and spiritual well-being of the community to which they belong.¹ Infused with relentless energy, vigour and drive, they have been found to be the catalyst to positive development in any given society.² Youth ministries and other similar religious organizations for young people are avenue where they can give back to the youth in their communities.³ The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines 'youth' as the period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood independence and awareness of our interdependence as members of a community.⁴ From the CAC Ideology and constitution, the age limit of youth is fifty years. It is usually the trend to see elderly ones of ages forty five to fifty still participating actively in youth programmes whether as a leader or members. Hence, C.A.C youths are classified as Pre-Teenagers, Teenagers, Real youths, Young Adults

and Elderly Youths.⁵ Many traditional youth programmes have had partial church aims, i.e they have adapted some but not all the aims found in Scripture. For many years youth work has centered on training union or the training hour. The catalyst of ministry to youth has been a training approach that centered on Sunday afternoon programmes. Most Christian educators agree that this approach now accomplished limited results. At one time Christian endeavour dominated church ministry to youth.⁶

The youth in our nation are facing amazing challenges. Christian youth are among those who are facing the greatest challenges in our country.⁷ In the present Nigeria society, the condition of the country is not in any way favourable to especially the average and poor Nigerians. The economic imbalance, insecurity at alarming rate, inflation, scarcity of fuel among many others has been putting the country in a very close range of which Nigerians see no help coming from anywhere than God. Challenges are a constant thing in life of an individual and the country at large of which if properly tackled leads to progress and success. Since studies has shown that youth in Christ Apostolic Church serves as major catalyst in the expansion of the church and in the growth and development therein, hence, this paper shall examine the mayhem faced among the youth fellowship (CACYOF); the challenges, the effects and the possible solutions to the identified problems.

Methodology

This study is categorized in the field of church of history, and thus the research method employed here is historical method of research. The area of study was Ilorin, the capital city of Kwara State. Data collections for the quantitative and qualitative study are; primary sources and secondary sources. The primary sources such as oral interviews which would be conducted in Christ Apostolic Church specified above. The people to be interviewed are people who have detailed information to the topic understudy, these people include; Pastor-in-Charge, Assembly and / District Youth Coordinator, Youth Pastor, Youth Executives, Youth generally (members) among many important personalities were interviewed and Observations from within the church attended. The secondary sources are dissertations, relevant literatures such as books, dictionaries, articles in journals, encyclopedias, internet materials as well as various academic libraries were visited.

The Birth of Christ Apostolic Church Youth Fellowship (CACYOF) in Nigeria

The history of Christ Apostolic Church Youth Fellowship dates back to the 1930s when the Nigerian Apostolic and the white Apostolic from Britain were still in alliance. Although the opposition that later arose against the group drove it underground, the youth society operated under the leadership of the late Pastor. I. Adesile at its early stages. In the 1940s, after the crack within the group, fresh efforts were made by the youths to come together. First to emerge was the Young Men Christian League (YMCL) but as the body became inactive, Christ Apostolic Church youth congress took its place towards late 40s. However, the congress was also short-lived like others.

Similarly, in the early 1950s, another youth association called the Christ Apostolic Progress Union (CAPU) emerged championed by some Christ Apostolic Church students and youths at CAC Oniyarin Assembly in Ibadan. Again, within a short time its activities fizzled out. However, the youth fellowship at this period was an extra-constitutional organisation formed by the then youths and approved by the church authority. The list of these youth organisations also include: the prayer band, the blessed gossellers and the prayer battalion in 1949 that later metamorphosed into the Light Of the World Society (LOWS) in 1966.

Apart from the Light Of the World Society (LOWS), other fellowship which has emerged are; Christ Apostolic Church Students' Association (CACSA) in 1969, the Youth Camp in 1970, and The United

Association of Christ Apostolic Church Choirs (UACACC) in 1973. At various levels, (national, state, zone and assembly), majority of these youth organizations engaged in such activities as evangelism, regular prayer meetings, open-air crusades, seminars, prayer retreats, church planting, camp meetings and conferences which greatly impacted the church, the membership and the society at large. These notable achievements, notwithstanding their operations, led to unprecedented problems which later assumed unmanageable proportions. These problems include programme conflicts, unhealthy rivalry, and improper relationship with the line of authority of the church.

Consequently, the church authority in her reorganization exercise in 1992 dissolved all the aforementioned organisations in the mission and formed a new evangelical body called Christ Apostolic Church Youth Fellowship (CACYOF) under the supervision of a newly created youth department established in the general secretariat of the church in Ibadan for the purpose of promoting unity, ensuring better productivity among the youths as well as facilitating an effective coordination of Youth activities within the church.

The Fellowship organizes its programmes by adopting different approaches. The holding of its annual conference began in 1993 at Joseph Ayo Babalola Miracle Camp, Ikeji-Arakeji. This is done in groups by the different States of Nigeria. The sixteenth edition of the Conference held in 2010. Also Higher Institutions in the six geo-political zones in Nigeria are centres for the Fellowship. For proper monitoring, campus visiting ministers are appointed to supervise the centres. Leadership Training Programmes are also held at different Fellowship centres. This approach has tremendously improved the output of Fellowship leaders in different parts of Nigeria.⁸ The officers of the Fellowship since its formation were Gabriel O. E. Okafor who held office from 26th January 1993 to 2nd June 1995 and Michael Anu Ojo who held the office from 1st July 1995 to 30th June 2003. The current youth officer is Joe Jacob who came to office on 1st July, 2003.⁹ Christ Apostolic Church is governed by only one constitution. Therefore, all her agencies or arms of operation are in turn guided by rules and regulations flowing from the same constitution.

Aim and Objectives of Christ Apostolic Church Youth Fellowship

- Lead every youth in Christ Apostolic Church (hereinafter referred to as the church) to Christ so as to enable him/her have a personal experience of salvation.
- Infuse Christian discipline and growth in the youths.
- Enable the youths; of the church cultivate humility, obedience, and other godly virtues.
- Involve the youths in all aspects of evangelism and edifying programmes such as conferences, retreats, camps, leadership training, symposia, lecture, bible study, tarry meetings, musical concerts, academic stars summit, prayer conference, intercessory prayer congress, campus crusade, youth Sundays and other scriptural activities.
- Serve as a forum for training and equipping the youths of the church for God's work.
- Uphold and teach the tenets and doctrines of Christ Apostolic Church.
- Foster love, unity and fellowship among the youths of the church.¹⁰

Christ Apostolic Church Youth Fellowship National Officers

The fellowship had enjoyed the gracious support of the following leaders from the outset till date. The first officer was Pastor Gabriel O.E. Okafor (from 26 January 1993 to 2 June 1995), followed by Pastor Michael Aanu Ojo and assisted by Pastor Joe Jacobs (from 1 July 1995 to 30 June 2003). At the end of the tenure of Pastor Aanu Ojo, Pastor Joe Jacobs became the substantive youth officer but without an assistant during his tenure (from 1 July 2003 to 30 June 2017). The current youth officer is Pastor Samson O. Gbuyiro since 1 July, 2017 and his assistant is Pastor S.O. Oke.¹¹



PASTOR G. O. E. OKAFOR
First Youth Officer CAC
Worldwide



PASTOR ANU OJO
Second Youth Officer CAC
Worldwide



PASTOR JOE JACOBS
Third Youth Officer CAC
Worldwide



PASTOR S. O. GBUYIRO
Youth Officer CAC
Worldwide

Creation of Youth Fellowship in Ilorin

In the year 1998, Youth Chapel started by the fusion of the remnants of the original English speaking group that formed the present Christ Apostolic Church Victory Chapel maturing young minds and teenagers from the children Church and other youths from the main Church. It is like a grain of mustard seed though tiny on the outside yet births what stands as a mighty tree. God used Pastor F. I. K. Ilesanmi, Father of the children Church (Baba Ewe) and teenagers class to encourage and facilitate the metamorphosis of the youths and other Baptists speaking groups to form a separate Church with its own Minister which was a landmark decision in the history of Christ Apostolic Church Oke-Isegun Taiwo Road, Ilorin.

In order to ensure proper guidance, Pastor Isaac Kehinde Adekeye vibrant young Minister was appointed as Minister in charge of the Youth Chapel on the first Sunday of June, 1998. His first service with the youths was so unique that several youths who were contaminating churches change their minds and they stayed. He introduced many exciting programmes for the total well-being of the member. He was ordained as Pastor during his tenure in Christ Apostolic Church Oke Isegun and left voluntarily in October, 2005. The Chapel continued to operate until Pastor Gideon Omotosho Omoniyi was officially appointed as the Minister-in-charge of the youth chapel on the first Sunday of December, 2005. He stepped into the shoe of Pastor Adekeye and built on the work of his predecessor while introducing more additional programme. He was transferred to Christ Apostolic Church Oke Irapada, Basin in August, 2007.

Pastor M. D. Olatunde took over the work of the Chapel in August, 2007. God used him to bring about notable physical turn around for the youth chapel. The chapel was given a facility and numbers of gadgets were put in place. The Chapel enjoyed much growth and this led to the creation of died services and assistant minister was first officially brought in chapel in person of Evangelist Shola Oyeniyi (now Pastor). The next Assistant Minister was Pastor P. A. Eniola due to a number of challenges past Olatunde left in August, 2010 and Pastor Temitope James from former English Assembly was brought in to pilot the affairs of the chapel in September, 2010 from the former English Chapel. God helped him to put a stop to the large defection of members to other churches at the time. Some physical renovation works were also executed including the purchase of some equipment for the use of the Chapel.¹²

Other Assemblies as specified in this work where CACYOF exist are listed below with their year of establishments:

S/N	ASSEMBLIES	ADDRESS	YEAR OF EST.
1.	CAC OKE-ISEGUN.	Ibrahim Taiwo Road Ilorin.	June, 1947
2.	CAC OKE-AYO	Sabo-Oke, Ilorin.	July, 1972
3.	CAC SURULERE ZONE.	Behind First Bank, Sawmill Area Surulere, Ilorin.	Dec, 1993 but became a Zonal Headquarter in the year 2011.
4.	CAC CHAPEL OF GLORY.	Behind Olotu Hospital Amilgbe Ilorin.	Sept., 1995
5.	CAC RIVERS OF LIFE	Behind Immigration Office Complex, Yakuba Ilorin Office Ilorin.	2018
6.	CAC ALABUKUN	Along Offa Garage road, Ilorin.	Dec, 1987
7.	CAC ARAROMI	Along F' Division Tanke, Ilorin.	1989
8.	CAC KIIBATI	Mubo Street behind Agric, Ilorin.	1991
9.	CAC SALVATION CENTRE	Along Fate - Tanke Road Ilorin.	1997
10.	CAC SALVATION LAND	Zone E, Area 2A Behind Fed. Ministry of Agriculture Orisunbare, Ilorin.	April, 2012.
11.	CAC ACHIEVERS	Coca-Cola Road, Ilorin.	May 26, 2012.
12.	CAC OKE-IRAPADA	Basin Road, Ilorin.	Dec, 1993

Challenges encountered by the Youth Fellowship

Despite the functions of Youths in the growth of the Church both at the national and the local levels, their operations have been confronted with device problems which have stood as hindrances to their effectiveness over the years.¹³ It is of paramount importance to note that these challenges ranges from physical, material, spiritual, financial among many others. No one would ever have a complete success story without encountering challenges, therefore challenges are part of life.¹⁴

Sexual Immorality

According to Evan. Michael Olarenwaju, immorality among the youth has been on the increase and thus the need for a minister's supervision of youths during youth programmes which he emphasized as something needful and constitutionalized by the Christ Apostolic Church Authority.¹⁵ This was right because checking youth behaviour in our churches today we will discover that most youth are not indeed born again, some were even forced to come to church, the type of friends they keep among many others are not godly. Even the devil on the verge to get and destroy destiny targeted the youth who are seen as potential leaders of tomorrow. Pastor Samuel buttressed that pornography are what most youth watch on their phones even during church service.¹⁶ Having heard from many ministers of God who claimed that youth mostly are found in the act of immorality hence youth should desist from such act as it is against the commandment of God.

Mass departure

Mass departure of youths from Christ Apostolic Church to other denominations has been one of the major challenges affecting the youth fellowship. Youths in Christ Apostolic Church evacuate the Church in large number to other Pentecostal Churches for some reasons or the other. The high standard of Church, its hard standard and strict enforcement of Church rules on some doctrinal issues (e.g mode of dressing, marital issues and other social vices) discourage youths whereas the doctrines of some Pentecostal Churches do not place strict measures on such issues. Some Christ Apostolic Church leaders are of the opinion that it is indiscipline and the inability of such youths to endure sound Scriptural teachings that make them run away.¹⁷ In the light of the above Pastor Faleye Emmanuel commented that the youth has termed the tradition of our fathers "Old School" and thus believing that everything is archaic.¹⁸

Lack of money

Lack of money battled with the smooth running of the fellowship. Few issues are as pertinent for the contemporary Church as the issue of financial stewardship. Simply put, organisations, need resources, especially financial resources. Without income, no organization can maintain its facilities, staffs or substantial programs. Marketing carefully controlled budgets and salaried employees are crucial to most organisations' success. Hence, it should come as no surprise that organized churches utilize each of these tools in building and supporting their infrastructures.¹⁹

The fact that majority of youths are students in secondary and higher institutions and they depend on their parents for finances have greatly limited the financial capability of the organization in their bid to carry out their lofty programmes. Many times, the organisation depends mainly on the church for all finances thereby making it difficult to get money from the church Authority to organise youth programmes. The board of Elders/Church committee in some C.A.C Assemblies usually allocate small amount of money for youth programmes in the Church's budget but it is usually meager where such exists.²⁰ It is of note to give a recent example as it affected the Youth of Chapel of Glory (English Assembly), during the preparation of the Youth anniversary and as a part of finance, Evan. Michael Olarewaju stated that the Church do not support youth financially for anniversary and that only what the Church can do is to select the youth anniversary committee which will sort out on how to generate income. Also during the youth recent picnic the Church did not support the Youth financially.

Youths are not easy to control

Youth can be adamant and unyielding. When you call for programmes they won't come and give excuses of having tests, examinations among many others. Some of the respondents agreed on this. Pastor Samuel noted that some of the Youths who work in bank or other organisations don't show up for programmes and simply gives excuses such as closing time at office, having other assignments to carry out among many others for their unavailability.²¹ Youth prefer not to do the things of God, they prefer doing things of pleasure.²² Likewise, some who are overzealous youths would always want to treat issues in a hard way. In everything they react so vehemently. Thus the youths are pampered to some extent not to make those who even wait to go away.

Age Dichotomy

The age bracket for youth in the Church is between 18 and 50 years, that is not often the reality on ground among many if not all branches of youth organisations at the Assembly level. In some Christ Apostolic Church local assemblies, the youth fellowship has been reduced to teenager's affairs. Once the young adults among youths get married, they join either the C.A.C Men Association or C.A.C Good Women

Association.²³ Afterwards they failed to identify with the activities of their former youth groups. Over the years, this has led to series of challenges to the youth organisations. Among which are: reduction in membership and numerical strength, financial base and emergence of inexperienced leaders. It is uniquely true that majority of Christ Apostolic Church in Ilorin has limited the Youth group to young age group and thus youth of age bracket 38-50 years are excluded. During youth programmes, they give exemption that they are no longer youth hence they said "when we are a still youth...." Whereas, people said that are within the range of 30-50 years.

Spiritual Luke warmth

Evan. Alex Femi sharply noted that the challenges battling with the youth lies in the fact that the heart of many youth have turned away from God and that God should turn their heart to Himself so that they can be useful for Him hence the way forward is prayer and encouragement.²⁴ For further clarification, Pastor Ajala noted that most youth lack spiritual growth and development, as a result of this, some of the youth are not living up to their God given expectation.²⁵

In conclusion, youth are known for their zealotness, participations and rigorous engagements during services or programmes and especially to the growth of Christ Apostolic Church in Ilorin Metropolis. However, these roles are not only hindered by the aforementioned challenges but also gives the future of the Youth Fellowship into one that needed urgent resuscitation hence the need to provide solutions to the challenges facing the youth in order for them to be able and successful discharge their roles.

Recommendations

This research work has revealed that youth fellowship of C.A.C was an offshoot Light of the World, which stands a pride of place in the origin of Christ Apostolic Church Youth Fellowship. The following are the recommendations;

- The youth must be regenerated and thus not standing on the premises that their parents are Christians and automatically qualifies them to be, they must be aware that salvation is not a matter of hereditary rather it is a personal engagement.
- The church authority should all in their capacity to cater for the youth in some neglected aspects such as finances, emotional and physical. It is paramount to say that the spiritual aspect which is always put in place by the church shouldn't just end there but then extend to other various aspects.
- The church should work with the youth leaders in order to ensure good administrative process. Only those who can instigate a youth are a youth, only those who they see friendly and of age brackets they can relate with very well. Therefore, the church shouldn't neglect the youth especially when the youth call on them and where never they demanded for space for programmes they should be allow to carry out such programmes in as much it is in line with church doctrines and regulations or standards.
- Adults need to understand that youths have outgrown their childhood faith and belief and have matured and should be treated with some level of respect.²⁶ Adults in the church to understand that youth needed to be treated with some level of respect in order to enjoy their engagement.
- Well-designed discipleship programme towards weaving theology of work into church curriculum for the workplaces towards grooming youth as ambassadors of Christ for societal transformation should be embarked upon by church pastors/leaders.²⁷

Conclusion

The research work buttressed and discussed vividly the challenges of Christ Apostolic Church Youth Fellowship in Christ Apostolic Church in Ilorin Metropolis. These The non-involvement of the Youth in

Church administration may lead to chaos and disengagement from the church hence active involvement of the youth means the ability of the church authority to carry the youth along in things they do and also get youth involved in decision making process. Church should help the youth in terms of needs such as when youths are preparing for youth programmes such as anniversary, retreats, seminars, prayers among many others, this not only guarantee youth ability in the discharge of their role but also the ability to give effective and efficient discharge of the roles.

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