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THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF LIBERIA GRAVITATING TOWARDS FINANCIAL
INDEPENDENCE: STRATEGIES AND THE WAY FORWARD

by

SLEWION P. LEWIS

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Luther Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment of

The Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

2021

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ABSTRACT

The Episcopal Church of Liberia Gravitating Towards Financial Independence: Strategies and the Way Forward

by

Slewion P. Lewis

This thesis project sought to solicit and find strategies and the way forward as to how the Episcopal Church of Liberia can be financially independent and sustain itself as a diocese. The Episcopal Church of Liberia, a faith tradition of which I am a member and an ordained clergy, continues to a large extent rely on support from the Episcopal Church in America for the running and operation of the church. This has and continues to be the practice and trend of successive leadership dating as far back as the days of the church under missionary bishops. With the church now under indigenous leadership and bishop and as the Episcopal Church in the United States of America plans to discontinue its annual financial support to the church in Liberia, how can the church in Liberia achieve financial independence and sustainability? This research therefore looked at stewardship, leadership development, and investment as key strategies as to how the Episcopal Church of Liberia can achieve financial independence and sustainability.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1: 6 NIV). Indeed, this scripture has come to pass in my life, especially in my pursuit of the Doctor of Ministry Degree at Luther Seminary, because God has brought to completion what he began. While it is true that all the glories and praises belong to God, he worked through certain institutions, families, and individuals to make this dream a reality, and to whom I owe a great deal of gratitude and appreciation. Thanks to my darling wife, Mrs. Regina G. Williams Lewis and our kids (George, Richmond, Joel, Bill, Ophelia, and Emily) for standing by me throughout the sojourn. To my wife, I say, thanks for playing the role of a father and mother while I was always away to participate in my on-campus residencies. Special thanks to the office of International Students and Scholars Affairs at Luther Seminary for the support and guidance throughout the process. To the former bishop of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota, Rt. Rev. Brian Prior and the current bishop, Rt. Rev. Craig Loya, I say, thank you for your support and prayers. Special thanks and appreciation to Rev. Lisa White-Smith and the loving people of Church of the Epiphany, Plymouth, Minnesota for their love, prayers and support. Thanks to Rev. Fr. J. Worjloh Mitchell and the generous parishioners of St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church, North Minneapolis, Minnesota for their support. Fr. Arthur Hancock and the friendly parishioners of St. John-in-the-Wilderness Episcopal Church, White Bear Lake, Minnesota, and the folks at Trinity Episcopal Church, Litchfield, Minnesota, I also express my heartfelt gratitude for their support and prayers. To my friend and classmate, Rev. Steve Cauley, his family, and the peaceful

people of Zion Lutheran Church, Muscatine, Iowa, I say thank you for your prayers, love, and support. To my siblings, Tobias, Samuel, Anthony, Oswald, Adolphus, Hannah, and Kotatee, words are insufficient for me to express how appreciative I am for all your support which without any doubt made this dream a reality. Special appreciation also to my cousins, Professor Wilson K. Tarpeh, Clarence Tweh and Dr. Thomas Nimene Tweh, and my uncle Harrison Tweh for their support during the process. This acknowledgment will not be completed if I fail to thank the following personalities and families who also contributed immensely to this achievement: Bro. and Sis. Aurelius and Salimatu Butler, Bro. and Sis. Albert and Jackie Cooke, Bro. and Sis. David and Maureen Wilson, Bro. Samuel Abdullai, Bro. and Sis. Paul and Issana George, Sis. Jamesetta Wolokollie, Sis. Frances Bryant, Sis. Augusta Paye and Bro. Elijah Elliot, Bro. P. Brouphi Sayon, Sis. Joyce Mingo Brewer, Sis. Rose Thorpe, Sis. Aminata Jabateh Thorpe, Bro. and Sis. Reyfold and Marie Hayes, Rev. Dr. and Mtr. James and Ophelia Yarsiah, Rev. Canon Dr. Wilmont Merchant, Bro. Jerome Zaza, and Bro. Oliver Harris. To you all I say, thank you for the support. To my professors and advisors, and all those who one way or the other contributed to this worthy cause, I say thank you all very much. To God be the glory.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BOT	Board of Trustees
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
DFMS	Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society
ECL	Episcopal Church of Liberia
IRB	Institutional Review Board
SKT	Sergeant Kollie Town
USA	United States of America
USD	United States Dollars

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The research topic for this thesis is “The Episcopal Church of Liberia Gravitating Towards Financial Independence: Strategies and the Way Forward.” The Episcopal Church of Liberia is a member of the world-wide Anglican Communion and situated on the west coast of Africa, in the Republic of Liberia. It has a total membership of over ten thousand and is one of the oldest faith traditions in Liberia. The Episcopal Church of Liberia, a faith tradition of which I am a member and an ordained clergy, continues to a large extent rely on support from the Episcopal Church in America for the running and operation of the church. This has and continues to be the practice and trend of successive leadership dating as far back as the days of the church under missionary bishops from 1836 to 1970. With the church now under indigenous leadership and bishop and as the Episcopal Church in the United States of America plans to discontinue its annual financial support to the church in Liberia due partly to the notable decline, like other faith traditions in the US, in the growth of finance and membership, how can the church in Liberia achieve financial independence and sustainability? Hence, this is the purpose for my interest in this research topic. From the aforementioned research topic stated at the beginning of this introduction this study explores the research question “How can the Episcopal Church of Liberia achieve financial independence and sustainability?”

Independent and Dependent Variables

Since this research is an exploratory research, the independent variables were determined from the responses gathered at the end of the exercise. However, the dependent variables for this research are independence and sustainability. As the research question seeks to answer the question as to how the Episcopal Church of Liberia can achieve financial independence and sustainability, the independent variables were discerned in the process of the research and will be presented in the results chapter of this thesis.

Intervening Variables

The intervening variables are the economy, income, setting or location, the budget or expenditure of the diocese, and of course the coronavirus pandemic that brought the entire world to a standstill, Liberia being no exception. The economy is an intervening variable because Liberia is a very poor country and the economy of the country is at the very lowest ebb, a situation that has an effect on the people of the country and members of the church with no exception. Income and location, on the other hand, are intervening variables because members of the diocese are divided by rich and poor, employed and unemployed, as well as urban and rural dwellers. Hence, the income and location of members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia are key intervening variables that this research seeks to consider. The COVID-19 pandemic is another intervening variable because the crisis affected a section of my research design thereby causing a swift change in my second focus group discussion.

Importance of Research Question

This research is important to me because, as a member of the Episcopal Church of Liberia, I would love to assist my diocese in finding the solution of attaining total financial independence and sustainability, especially in light of the Episcopal Church of America's decision to discontinue all financial assistance and support to the church in Liberia. This research question is significant to my ministry because it will help me as a student of Congregational Mission and Leadership put into practice and reality some of the skills and knowledge I have acquired over the years and contribute to the strategies and way forward in finding the alternative solutions to this pending financial transition that the ECL is about to experience. To the Episcopal Church of Liberia, this research question is significant because it helps lead to the establishment and sustaining of the Episcopal Church of Liberia as a locally led and locally funded faith community in the wake of the Episcopal Church in America's desire to stop its annual support to the church in Liberia. After over 100 years of gradually establishing local leadership, the Episcopal Church of Liberia is still largely dependent on funding from the Episcopal Church in the United States of America, a situation that needs to be addressed, and permanent solutions found, especially as the Episcopal Church of America plans to discontinue all financial support to the church in Liberia in 2029. Additionally, this research is also significant to the Episcopal Church of Liberia because findings from this research will be used as roadmaps for the church in Liberia, thereby making the church achieve local financial independence and sustainability in its local context.

Theoretical Lenses

The theoretical lenses used to inform this research are adaptive change, stewardship, and leadership competence. Adaptive change is a kind of change or process that requires change in the beliefs, practices, and at times, the values of the institution, organization, or a group of people. Such practice calls for people who are part of the institution or organization to be involved and form part of the process or solution. *The Agile Church: Spirit-Led Innovation in an Uncertain Age*¹ by Prof. Dwight J. Zscheile and *The Practice of Adaptive Change: Tools and Tactics for Changing your Organization*² by Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky are key resources used in utilizing this lens. Adaptive change is considered a theoretical lens because the ensuing financial transition that the ECL is about to experience requires some shifts in the way things are done in the church and the involvement and contribution of both leaders and members of the church.

Stewardship, on the other hand, is a theoretical lens that seeks to teach members of the church how to generously support the church and help them effectively manage their treasures, talents, and time for the growth and development of the church. This lens is connected to the research because it helps members of the church see the church as theirs and not their counterparts in the West and motivates them to support the mission and ministry of the church. Mark Allen Powell's *Giving to God: The Bible's Good News*

¹ Dwight J. Zscheile, *The Agile Church: Spirit-Led Innovation in an Uncertain Age* (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2014).

² Roland Heifetz, Alexander Grashow and Marty Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing your Organization and the World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Press, 2009).

*about Living a Generous Life*³ and *Ministry and Money: A Practical Guide for Pastors*⁴ by Janet T. Jamieson and Philip D. Jamieson are key resources used to support this theoretical lens.

Leadership competence is considered a theoretical lens because it assists leaders of the church in prioritizing and building the leadership competence of both members and leaders of the church if the church is to achieve financial independence and sustenance. *The Leadership Challenge: How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations*⁵ by James Kouzes and Barry Posner and *Church, Culture and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities*⁶ by Mark Lau Branson and Juan Francisco Martinez are key resources upon which this lens is framed. Leadership competence as a lens is actually connected to the research because it seeks to prioritize competent, principled, visionary, and effective ordained and lay leaders of the church who can enormously help the church grow in faith, wealth, and the sharing of God's love in the world.

Biblical Lenses

The following lenses constitute the biblical lens of this research, The Feeding of the Five Thousand as recorded in Luke 9:10-17, The Parable of the Lost Coin as narrated

³ Mark Allen Powell, *Giving to God: The Bible's Good News about Living a Generous Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006).

⁴ Janet T. Jamieson and Philip D. Jamieson, *Ministry and Money: A Practical Guide for Pastors* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009).

⁵ James Kouzes and Barry Posner, *The Leadership Challenge: How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012).

⁶ Mark Lau Branson and Juan F. Martinez, *Church, Culture and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities* (Downers Grove, IL: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2011).

in Luke 15:8-10, and Old Testament account of Jeremiah 29:11. The theological lenses upon which this research is framed are Abundant Community and Discernment. The feeding of the five thousand is a biblical narrative of how five loaves of bread and two pieces of fish became enough to feed over five thousand persons with there also being leftovers. It is a story that shows the power of God to provide for his people even in the midst of scarcity or doubts. This lens informs the research because the story motivates members and leaders of the Episcopal Church of Liberia in the assurance that God is able to provide for the church even in the midst of scarcity and the discontinuation of support from the church in the United States of America. Key resources used to support this lens included *Feeding the Five Thousand*⁷ by Roger David Aus and *Loaves and Fishes*⁸ by Robert M. Fowler.

The Parable of the Lost Coin is a lens used in informing this research. The parable is the account of a lady searching diligently to find one of her ten pieces of coins that was lost. She searched diligently until she found it and was so glad that she invited her neighbors to celebrate and rejoice with her. Resources used to frame this argument were *Searching for the Lost Coin: Explorations in Christianity and Feminism*⁹ by Ann Loades and *The Lost Coin: Parables of Women, Work and Wisdom*¹⁰ by Mary Ann Beavis. The

⁷ Roger David Aus, *Feeding the Five Thousand* (Lanham, NY: University Press of America, Inc., 2010).

⁸ Robert M. Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes* (Ann Arbor, MI: Edward Brothers, Inc., 1987).

⁹ Ann Loades, *Searching for the Lost Coin: Explorations in Christianity and Feminism* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1988).

¹⁰ Mary Ann Beavis, *The Lost Coin: Parables of Women, Work and Wisdom* (New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).

parable of the Lost Coin actually informs the research because, like the lady in the story, leaders and members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia can search diligently and find those resources and hidden talents that God has blessed the church with and utilize them if the church hopes to achieve financial independence and sustainability.

The account of Jeremiah 29:11 is a passage of hope, hope for the future and for the people of God. This passage clearly supports the research because this future of hope promised by God in this text is a future of abundance and provision; a future and promise which the Episcopal Church of Liberia, like any other faith tradition in the West and other parts of the world, is endowed with and a part of. *Jeremiah: Prophet of Courage and Hope*¹¹ by J. Philip Hyatt and *The Harper Collins Study Bible*¹² edited by Harold W. Attridge are resources upon which this biblical argument was framed.

Theological Lenses

Abundant Community as a theological lens is a theological concept that teaches that every community or organization is blessed by God with abundance of gifts and resources so that it is a deception that the church and the people of the world should live in scarcity. *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*¹³ by Laurenti Magesa and *Having Nothing, Possessing Everything: Finding Abundant Communities in*

¹¹ J. Philip Hyatt, *Jeremiah: Prophet of Courage and Hope* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1964)

¹² Harold W. Attridge, *The Harper Collins Study Bible* (San Francisco, Harper One, 1989).

¹³ Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (MaryKnoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997)

*Unexpected Places*¹⁴ by Michael Mather are key resources from which this lens was utilized. This lens supported this research because it helps the church and leaders of the church to see the church as an abundant community that is endowed and blessed with resources from God that, when wisely utilized, can sustain the church even in the face of the Episcopal Church in America's plans to discontinue her financial support to the church in Liberia.

Discernment as a theological lens is a spiritual practice that encourages an individual, a community, or organization to make informed and wise decisions through the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This lens is connected to the research because in the wake of the pending financial transition, the practice will cause members and leaders of the church to bring and keep God in the conversation and not just relying on their carnal minds and thinking. Key resources used in supporting this lens include *Scripture and Discernment: Decision Making in the Church*¹⁵ by Luke Johnson and *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit*¹⁶ by Craig Van Gelder.

Methodology

The social science research methodology that was utilized to carry out this research was an exploratory research methodology. Exploratory research is research

¹⁴ Michael Mather, *Having Nothing, Possessing Everything: Finding Abundant Communities in Unexpected Places* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018)

¹⁵ Luke Timothy Johnson, *Scripture and Discernment: Decision Making in the Church*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996)

¹⁶ Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007)

conducted for a problem that has not been studied fully and intended to establish priorities, provide solutions, and improve the final research design. I used this methodology because as the Episcopal Church of Liberia seeks financial independence and sustainability, I explored strategies and the way forward as to how the church can achieve this goal. As I executed this research project, I made use of the qualitative research method which included interviews and focus group discussions. The population of the study was the Episcopal Church of Liberia, a member of the world-wide Anglican Communion with more than ten thousand members and over one hundred and fifty congregations. The research involved key leaders of the Episcopal Church of Liberia, including clergy as well as members of the laity. Five interviews were conducted with five key leaders of the church. This was a nonprobability purposive sample of the population as interviewees were selected based on their position, experience, and knowledge of the church. Each interview lasted for about an hour. There were two focus group discussions conducted. Members of these focus groups were selected by nonprobability convenience samples with a limit of ten members through an open invitation to anyone who wanted to participate. Participants were drawn from attendance at the annual gathering of one of the three major organizations of the Episcopal Church of Liberia and from beneficiaries of a COVID-19 relief outreach which was sponsored by one of the local congregations in the Bong Region within the LOBONI Archdeaconry of the diocese. Participants in the focus group discussions were comprised of members from both clergy and lay members attending the gathering and those benefitting from the

outreach. Each focus group discussion lasted for about an hour.



Figure 1. Research Design

Due to the nature of the method of the research carried out, the instruments that were used for this project were interviews and focus group protocols (see appendices A and B), including my personal notes, memos, and the strategic plan drafted by the diocese at its special convention held in 2018. The instruments were field tested with members of the church who were not participants in this research and were mainly students of a local college of theology and members of an Episcopal congregation. Informed consent forms were sent to participants of the research and these are included in appendices C and D. All interviews were done in English, the official language in Liberia, and were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The process used in analyzing the qualitative data collected from the research included recording of interviews and focus group discussions and transcribing and coding of data. I used an inductive coding in analyzing my data. I also read and interpreted raw data and developed concepts and themes through interpretations from my data using the first five steps of Rubin and Rubin's style of analyzing in *Qualitative Interviewing; The Art of Hearing Data*.¹⁷

¹⁷ Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data* (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2012), 190.

Other Matters

Definitions of Key terms

Adaptive Change – a kind of change or initiative that requires change in the beliefs, practices, and at times the values of an institution, organization, or a group of people.

Abundant Community – Is a theological concept that teaches that God has blessed every community with the abundance of gifts and resources for the benefits of his people.

Discernment – A spiritual practice that encourages leaders and communities to take decisions and make choices by the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Missional Church – A community of God’s people whose true and authentic organizing principle is to participate in the mission of God.

IRB Standards

This research conforms to the IRB standards of Luther Seminary. All records and recordings from this research were confidential and only my advisors and myself had access to them. The use of pseudonyms formed part of the research and there were no benefits or rewards for those participating in the research. The data are being kept in the researcher’s password-protected personal computer. They will be kept for the duration of three years, 2021-2024. Only the researcher and the advisors will have access to them. A period of three years after the completion of the research as required by law for the retention of records will be the minimum period for storing the recordings after which they will be destroyed. This research solicited interviews and participation from those who are eighteen years or above and copies of the informed consent form were read,

discussed, handed out, and signed by participants prior to the interviews or group discussions.

Chapter two of this research provides a brief historical background of the Episcopal Church of Liberia leading from the days of the church under missionary bishops to the church now under indigenous bishop and leadership. The chapter also outlines the level of support the Episcopal Church of Liberia was receiving from the church in the USA and the current block grant appropriation that the church in Liberia receives under the covenant committee arrangement that the church in Liberia now enjoys from the church in the United States of America. Chapter three examines the theoretical lenses under which this research is examined with specific emphases on adaptive change, stewardship, and leadership competence. Chapter four outlines the biblical and theological lenses upon which this research is framed and highlights the feeding of the five thousand, the parable of the lost coin, Jeremiah 29:11, abundant community, and discernment. Chapter five gives a detailed description of the research methodology used in this research and the research method employed. Data analyses and the coding are also reflected in this chapter. Finally, chapter six of this research outlines the results of the study conducted and the interpretations of the results from the study while chapter seven is the conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Chapter one of this research is the introductory chapter to the thesis. It outlines the topic of the research, the research questions and methodology, and briefly states what each chapter of the thesis talks about with particular emphases on the lenses.

This chapter presents a brief historical background of the Episcopal Church of Liberia and her relationship to the Episcopal Church in the United States of America. The relationship between the Episcopal Church of Liberia and the Episcopal Church in the United States of America is as old and outstanding as that between the Republic of Liberia and the United States of America. Liberia as a state was founded in 1822 when freed slaves of color from the United States of America were being resettled in the new colony in order to create a new place for them to call home, which eventually became the first independent democratic nation in Africa. Located on the West Coast of Africa, Liberia gained her independence on July 26, 1847 and has a population of about 4.5 million with a land space of 43,000 square miles. Liberia as a nation was not colonized by any country but got her independence through the American Colonization Society, an organization that was helping in resettling freed slaves to their homes in Africa. The capital of Liberia is called Monrovia, named after former United States of America President, James Monroe. There are sixteen tribal groups and fifty political sub-divisions in Liberia with each tribe having its own unique culture, tradition, and language. As

stated earlier, these freed people of color were not only brought for the purpose of resettlement but were also expected to help transplant Christianity and western civilization to their African home and people in the soon-to-be Republic of Liberia.

According to Yarsiah,

The original works and efforts of establishing the Episcopal Church in Liberia started as far back as the founding of the nation, with Mr. James M. Thomson and Mrs. Elizabeth Mars Johnson Thomson, who were both lay Episcopalians and freed slaves from the United States of America. But it was not until 1836 that the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society (DFMS) of the Protestant Episcopal Church USA developed and set forth a mandate for missionary works in Liberia, West Africa. This mandate was contained in a letter written by the Secretary of the DFMS and delivered to the Rev. Dr. Thomas S. Savage, the very first missionary priest sent to Liberia, in 1836.¹

The primary goal of the missionaries, which was in no way different from that of the freed people of color who founded Liberia, was to Christianize native Africans, spread the gospel among the heathens (as Africans were considered), and bring civilization to the “Dark Continent” (as Africa was called).² In 1837, a year after the arrival of the first missionary priest, the Rev. Dr. Thomas S. Savage, he was joined by Rev. Lancelot B. Minor and Rev. John S. Payne. With these three ordained men, the church gradually began to spread and grow, but it was not until 1844 when the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church USA established the Missionary District of Cape Palmas and Parts Adjacent that the church was formally established. According to documents from the website of the Episcopal Church, USA,

The first Missionary Bishop of the District was Rt. Rev. John S. Payne, after whom the Bishop Payne Divinity School for African Americans in Petersburg was named. In 1884 the House of Bishops elected Samuel David Ferguson

¹ James T. Yarsiah, *Early Missionary Works of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Liberia and their Differential Effects* (Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Publishing House, 2010), 25.

² *Ibid.*, 25.

Missionary Bishop. He was the first African American man elected bishop in the Episcopal Church and was the first Liberian bishop. On October 17, 1913, the name of the jurisdiction was changed to the Missionary District of Liberia, and on January 1, 1970, the Missionary District of Liberia became the Diocese of Liberia. On March 18, 1982, the Diocese of Liberia became a full member of the Church of the Province of West Africa with a covenant relationship with the Episcopal Church.³

From the coastal city of Cape Palmas, where the church originally started in Liberia, the Episcopal Church of Liberia is now found in nearly all the fifteen political sub-divisions of the country, called counties. From 1836, the Episcopal Church of Liberia was a missionary diocese under the Episcopal Church in the United States of America and headed by missionary bishops. In 1970 the Episcopal Church of Liberia experienced her first major transition from missionary leadership to indigenous leadership by electing the first native bishop. This transition, like the pending financial transition, was greeted with mixed feelings as both locals and the missionaries were not too optimistic that the locals were prepared for said task. According to some local Episcopalians and some of the missionaries, locals were not equipped with the necessary competence, skills, and leadership abilities to lead the church in Liberia. Notwithstanding, the church in Liberia welcomed and embraced the change by electing its first indigenous bishop in 1970 as stated above in person of the Most Rev. George D. Browne, who eventually became Archbishop of the Church of the Province of West Africa, a network of Anglican and Episcopal Dioceses within West Africa. Since then, the church in Liberia continues to be led by indigenous bishops and is no longer a missionary diocese under the Episcopal Church in the United States of America, despite receiving annual financial support from

³ The Episcopal Church of America, www.episcopalchurch.org/library/glossary/lib, accessed July 26, 2019.

the church in the United States of America under what is called “Covenant Committee” arrangement.

Prior to the church being led by indigenous bishops and during the leadership of the missionary bishops, the Episcopal Church of Liberia was fully (100%) supported financially by the Episcopal Church in the United States of America. Salaries, clergy’s pension, including all financial obligations and budget of the church, were fully funded by the church in America. The annual appropriation for the church then was close to a million United States dollars but was reduced and depreciated annually after the Episcopal Church of Liberia joined the Church of the Province of West Africa in 1980. Currently the Episcopal Church of Liberia receives a block grant appropriation of \$128,790.00 USD as annual financial support from the church in the United States of America, seventy-five percent of which goes to the annual pension payment for the clergy and lay employees of the diocese. This annual block grant constitutes about eighty percent of the annual budget of the Episcopal Church of Liberia. It is this annual financial support under this Covenant Committee arrangement that the Episcopal Church in the United States of America is about to discontinue in 2029, hence the purpose of this research.

Summary

The above chapter highlighted a brief history of the Episcopal Church of Liberia with emphases on the founders and the dates and place where the church originally started in Liberia. The transition of the church from missionary leadership to that of an indigenous leadership also formed part of chapter two. The role of the freed slaves from United States of America in the establishment of the church and the nation of Liberia

were also included in chapter two. Chapter three looks at the theoretical lenses upon which this research was framed.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL LENSES

Chapter two summarized the history of the Episcopal Church of Liberia beginning from the days of the early missionaries from the United States of America to the church under indigenous Liberians. Efforts of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society in establishing the church in Liberia and the role of the natives who were met on the grounds also presented in chapter two of this thesis. Chapter three of this research examines the theoretical lens through which this research was framed. The following three lenses were used as theoretical lenses for this research: Adaptive Change, Stewardship, and Leadership Competence.

Adaptive Change

The world as a whole, and the church with no exception, is in a time of great change, and there is no doubt about that. We are facing changes not only in our churches, but in our families, our governments, social and fraternal organizations, workplaces, in our schools, and in every sector of life, including faith communities and traditions. As we witness and experience these changes, the need for adaptive change cannot be overemphasized. Adaptive change is a kind of change or initiative that requires change in the beliefs, practices, and at times the values of an institution, organization, or a group of people. Such a change calls for people who are part of the institution or organization to be involved in the process or solution. While authority or expertise are to some extent

required during the adaptive change process, solving such problems or bringing about such change involves the participation of all and calls for new ideas, discoveries, initiatives, and innovations, and requires some considerable period of time to be achieved or realized. This kind of change, regardless of the community in which it occurs, requires the learning of new ideas and ways of doing things in defining a problem or implementing a solution for a given problem. This lens is therefore considered a theoretical lens for this research because the pending transition that the Episcopal Church of Liberia is about to witness and experience is one that requires serious considerations and the participation and contribution of both leaders and members of the church. It is also considered a theoretical lens for this research because the transition that the Episcopal Church of Liberia is about to experience will call for the learning of new ideas and things including new ways of doing things as compared to the status quo. This adaptive change is a process that requires minimal expertise or technocrats, but rather the collective input of all including clergy and laity as well as leaders and members.

As a church, especially under this adaptive change process, both clergy and members alike should be prepared and willing to adapt and embrace alternative ways of governing the church and participating in the mission and ministries of the church if the Episcopal Church of Liberia is to succeed as she embarks on the road to total financial independence and sustainability. Zscheile was right when he said, “if the church has to be successful and faithful, the church must embody alternative ways of seeing and living in the world.”¹ Therefore, it is time now that the Episcopal Church of Liberia sees and

¹ Dwight J. Zscheile, *The Agile Church: Spirit-Led Innovation in an Uncertain Age* (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2014), 8.

embodies alternative ways of running the church if the church is to succeed and achieve this goal. Equally so, as the church prepares for this change and transition, members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia must be prepared to learn new ways of participating in God's mission and leading in the church and must be willing to change some attitudes, behaviors, and values if the church really wants to succeed and thrive through her journey to total financial independence and sustainability. Heifetz and Linsky were right when they said. "without learning new ways and changing in attitudes, values, and behaviors, people cannot make the adaptive change leap necessary to thrive in the new environment."² Rendle was also right when he wrote, "Ministry is no longer a matter of doing what we know how to do best. Nor it is adequate for congregations to continue to do what they did last year. The time and environment continue to change at a pace that requires us constantly to evaluate, to learn anew what our purpose of ministry is, and continually to reinvent the congregation to meet the needs that face us."³

Similarly, to realize this change and be successful, every Episcopalian in Liberia, both clergy and laity, leaders and members alike, must internalize this change and strive to make this change for financial independence and sustainability an important part of their beings if the church will attain this goal. "For the sustainability of change depends on having the people with the problem internalize the change itself."⁴ For as during the first transition from missionary bishops to indigenous bishops when Episcopalians could

² Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Danger of Leading* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 13.

³ Gilbert R. Rendle, *Leading Change in the Congregation-Spiritual & Organizational Tools for leaders* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 6.

⁴ Ibid, 13.

not see that the church under indigenous leadership could be any better than the church under missionary bishops, so Episcopalians now cannot see the church being any better if the Episcopal Church in the United States ceases its financial support to the church in Liberia. This is a notion which to some extent cannot hold as the church under indigenous leadership has been successful and operating close to five decades since the end of the leadership of missionary bishops. Therefore, this transition is of no difference, for in the adaptive change process, “people cannot see at the beginning that the new situation will be any better than the current condition. What they do see clearly is the potential for loss.”⁵ This is a loss which Episcopalians are clearly seeing now as they prepare for this financial transition.

Additionally, as the Episcopal Church of Liberia prepares for this financial transition, leaders of the church should now be engaging every Episcopalian by educating and communicating the need for Episcopalians to adjust some of their unrealistic expectations rather than trying to pretend that the pending transition has a quick fix and it is an easy one. This transition, like any other transition, is not a quick fix problem, and as stated earlier will require time for it to be fully realized. According to Heifetz and Linsky, “In mobilizing adaptive work, you have to engage people in adjusting their unrealistic expectations, rather than try to satisfy them as if the situation were amenable primarily to a technical remedy.”⁶ Similarly, as Episcopalians prepare for this transition, leaders of the church must lead the way in helping members of the church in finding strategies and the

⁵ Ibid, 13.

⁶ Ibid, 15.

way forward in achieving this goal of financial independence and sustenance which without doubts will prompt new behaviors and forms of ministry. Rendle was right when he puts it saying, “That in true creative times, which prompt new behaviors and new forms of ministry, what we often need from our God, and what our congregations often need from their leaders, is not a quick-map to the final destination, the promised land, but ‘bread for the wilderness-sustenance and strategies to help find our ways.’⁷

Stewardship

As the Episcopal Church in the United States of America plans to end its financial support to the church in Liberia, it is time now that members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia take ownership of the church and cultivate the spirit of giving to the missions and works of the church graciously and generously. Such initiative can be realized through an organized and vibrant stewardship program and ministry that will teach and educate members about stewardship and supporting the church and help them see the church in Liberia as theirs and not their counterparts in the United States of America. Every church or faith tradition, the Episcopal Church of Liberia with no exception, costs money to operate and in most if not all cases relies on the donations and contributions of its members. In fact, one of the factors of being a member of any faith community or church is the donations and contributions of members to the church for the running and upkeep of the church. Mark Allan Powell puts it correctly when he wrote, “One duty or responsibility of belonging to a church is supporting that church financially; all church

⁷ Gilbert R. Rendle, *Leading Change in the Congregation-Spiritual and Organizational Tools for Leaders* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 2.

members should contribute fairly to meet the costs of the community's life and mission."⁸ Therefore, if the Episcopal Church of Liberia hopes to succeed on this journey to total financial independence and sustainability, members of the church must therefore cultivate the spirit of giving and contributing to the church more than ever before. The need to establish a stewardship program and train leaders in this ministry of the church is therefore significant and must be considered a priority if the Episcopal Church of Liberia is to change the current paradigm of depending on foreign missions for support. For so long the church in Liberia has and continues to look up to the church in the US for sending funding for the support and upkeep of the church here in Liberia. Episcopalians in Liberia must now see themselves as participants with their western counterparts in the mission of God and not just as spectators and looking up to the church in the US for support.

A common biblically based belief of the church in the world is that members of the church must be good stewards of the resources God has entrusted to them. Stewardship is also surrendering our treasures including our times and talents to God and recognizing that we are just caretakers of whatsoever we possessed and are not the real owners. This is part of who we are as Christians and not just a practice or behavior. Stewardship as a Christian principle begins with God and ends with God and with the understanding that God is the source and owner of everything we possess. True Christian stewardship is the acceptance of the responsibility that we as followers of Christ are

⁸ Mark Allan Powell, *Giving to God: The Bible's Good News about Living a Generous Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 130.

called to maintain and use wisely all the gifts God has bestowed on us including our resources of treasure, time, and talent.

However, stewardship is not only intended or applied to church members, but also to the leaders and churches themselves. In the same way that individuals are accountable for how they manage the resources God has given them, churches and leaders of the church are equally responsible for how they steward the gifts that come into their storehouse. To accomplish its mission and fulfil its calling, all of the resources of the church, including the treasures, talents, and time of its members, must be properly stewarded by the church and leaders of the church.

In addition to educating and training leaders and members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia about the ministry of stewardship, giving to the church generously and learning how they can effectively manage their treasures are other ways the church can create the awareness of stewardship among its members. Educating members about the significance of their talents and time and making them cognizant that their talents and time are also part of their stewardship and are ministries that can be used to the glory of God and for the good of the church are other salient ways the church can improve the stewardship of its members and effectively run its stewardship program. For many years now, the Episcopal Church of Liberia and the Christian church as a whole have been hampered by a strong distinction between professional clergy and the lay members. This idea fails to see and function under the New Testament truth, which sees every believer and member of the church as a minister who is ministering for the common good of the church according to the gifts God has given them. Members of the church individually and the church as a whole exist to be good stewards of the truth of God in evangelism and

discipleship through the exercise of the gifted members of the church. Leaders of the church, according to the New Testament's teachings, are like coaches who should be training others for the work of ministry according to the gifts of each other. Stewardship in this sense should be seen as creating the awareness that the vocation and profession of every member should be viewed not as a gift for their personal use or for the sole purpose of money making, but also as a ministry that can be used to the glory of God and for the common good of the church. Members with professional backgrounds as well as technical skills (doctors, teachers, bankers, lawyers, engineers, etc.) should be made to know that their various talents are gifts from God and see themselves as partners with the leaders in the ministries and missions of the church through their respective disciplines. Stewardship under this approach will cause members of the church to see not only their resources as gifts, but also their skills and professions, and they will be motivated to generously and graciously contribute their treasures, talents, and time for the development and growth of the church.

Stewardship or giving to the church should in this light be seen as a religious discipline and obligation and not just giving for the sake of helping the church or those in need. It should come from the heart by faith knowing that the God from whom comes every good and perfect gift will reward and bless us. Stewardship or giving should also be seen as a form of worship when it is done in God's name faithfully. Therefore, it is important as Christians, especially members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia, that we give because it is the nature and will of God, and as Christians we must take on the nature of God and do the will of God in our giving to his church. According to Powell, "Stewardship, then, is not just about our meeting the needs of the poor, or the needs of

our church, or the needs of any particular charity, it is about fulfilling our own need to give as well. Accordingly, church members are often told, ‘Give from the heart, and not a budget!’ Don’t give just because the church needs your money; give because your heart is filled with faith and hope and love for God.”⁹ Similarly, stewardship in this light should not only be seen as a money or resources business but as a spiritual practice that will involve the lives of those who participate. Stewardship is not only about raising money for the support of the ministries and missions of the church, but also as means of raising believers who will see themselves as gifts to the work and mission of God. Josiah Strong, one of the leading social gospel advocates of his day, puts it right when he said, “Stewardship is a school for raising men rather than a scheme for raising money.”¹⁰ Therefore, as the Episcopal Church of Liberia prepares to transition to this era of financial independence and sustainability it is time now that both members and leaders see the ministry of stewardship not as the practice of only raising money for the church but also training and raising men and women for the work of God and the ministries of the church.

Leadership Competence

If the Episcopal Church of Liberia is to grow and succeed, and be financially independent and sustained, building the leadership competence of leaders of the church should be prioritized. Competent, principled, visionary, skilled, and effective ordained and lay leaders can tremendously help the church grow in faith, wealth, and the sharing

⁹ Ibid, 108.

¹⁰ James Hudnut-Beumler, *In Pursuit of the Almighty’s Dollars* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 60.

of God's love in the world. If the church lacks the competent and trained leadership, even in the midst of abundant wealth, the church will still be depending on foreign aid and struggling financially. Therefore, to realize this goal, leadership development of both members of the clergy and the laity in disciplines like stewardship, mission development, property management, and investment is essential and should in no way be taken lightly. The Episcopal Church of Liberia cannot succeed financially, or in any other area of the church, in a world of increasing knowledge and human resource development if the leadership competence of the church is not parallel to that of her counterparts in Liberia, Africa, and the world at large. The Rev. William Hybels, founder and senior pastor of Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois, one of the most attended churches in North America, once said, "The church is the hope of the world, and leaders of the church are the hope of the church."¹¹ Therefore, if the leaders who are the hope of the church are not competent, qualified, and trained, I wonder where will the Episcopal Church of Liberia be heading especially in the wake of the pending financial transition? According to Kouzes and Posner, "Without the knowledge, skills, information, and resources to do a job expertly, and without feeling competent to skillfully execute the choices required, people feel overwhelmed and disabled."¹² Competence is a very serious leadership challenge in the church of God today, especially in Africa, and if the Episcopal Church of Liberia is to succeed in achieving her goal for financial

¹¹ Church Central, "How to Develop Leaders in Your Church," www.christianitytoday.com/le/2009/june-online-only/howtodevelopleadersinyourchurch.html, accessed July 27, 2019.

¹² James Kouzes and Barry Posner, *The Leadership Challenge: How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 255.

independence and sustainability, leadership competence should be prioritized and given serious consideration.

While it is true that financial independence and sustainability is cardinal and essential for the Episcopal Church of Liberia to shape the current paradigm of dependence on foreign support, developing the leadership competence of both clergy and lay members is also a key factor that should be considered and not overlooked if the Episcopal Church of Liberia is to realize economic stability and change its dependency syndrome, and to achieve our desire for financial viability and keep the church alive and active if support from the church in the United States of America ceases. Building the competence of leaders is crucial because no matter how financially vibrant or strong the church may be, if the right competent leadership structures and individuals with leadership innovation are not put in place or into positions, the desire and objective of making the church financially sustainable and independent will be a dream far from reality. Kouzes and Posner continue by saying,

developing competence and building confidence are essential to delivering on the organization's promises and maintaining the credibility of leaders and team members alike. To make extraordinary things happen, you must invest in strengthening the capacity and resolve of everyone in the organization. This is especially important during times of great uncertainties and significant challenges.¹³

For leaders, developing the competence and confidence of their constituents so that they are more qualified, more capable, and more effective and are leaders in their own right reflects their appreciation of the truth that they cannot get anything extraordinary accomplished all by themselves. According to James Kouzes and Barry

¹³ Ibid., 256.

Posner in their book, *The Leadership Challenge*, “the best leaders know that investment in training will pay off in the long terms. For people can’t deliver on what they don’t know how to do, so you have to upgrade capabilities continuously.”¹⁴ This is particularly true and right now for the Episcopal Church of Liberia as she prepares for this financial transition.

Therefore, if the Episcopal Church of Liberia is to grow and succeed, and be financially independent and sustained, building the leadership competence of both ordained and lay members of the church should be given priority and taken very seriously. This is important because without competent and skilled leaders both lay and ordained the church cannot accomplish this goal even in the midst of surplus and abundance.

Summary

This chapter examined the theoretical lenses upon which this research was conducted and framed. Specific emphases were placed on adaptive change which encourages leaders and members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia to be prepared and willing to adapt new ideas and ways of doing things, stewardship which calls on members and leaders of the Episcopal Church of Liberia to see the church in Liberia as their own and take responsibility of supporting the church financially, and leadership competence which calls on the church to prioritize building and developing the competence of both the ordained and lay members of the church. The chapter navigates how these lenses connect to the research and how they can change the paradigm of the

¹⁴ Ibid, 231.

financial struggles of the church if considered and in the wake of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America's plans to discontinue her support to the church in Liberia. Chapter four of this thesis examines the biblical and theological lenses upon which this research was is framed.

CHAPTER 4

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL LENSES

Chapter three presented the theoretical lenses of the research and explained the importance of these lenses to the Episcopal Church of Liberia especially as the church seeks to achieve financial independence and stability. The chapter highlighted adaptive change, stewardship, and leadership competence as part of the way forward to the church achieving total financial stability and independence. This chapter presents the biblical and theological lenses that informed the research. The Feeding of the Five Thousand presented in Luke 9:10-17, The Parable of the Lost Coin as recorded in Luke 15:8-10, and Jeremiah 29:11 constitute the biblical lenses upon which this research was framed.

Feeding of the Five Thousand

The account of Jesus feeding the five thousand is a story of how five loaves of bread and two pieces of fish became enough to feed more than five thousand people with there also being leftovers. In this gospel account which is recorded in all four gospels (Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:31-44; Luke 9:12-17; John 6:1-14), we see the doubt of Jesus' disciples and the provision of God through a miracle even in the midst of scarcity. Five loaves of bread and two pieces of fish became surplus enough to feed over five thousand persons even with the doubts of the disciples that the meal was insufficient. This parable manifests the power of God as the provider of his people and proved wrong the doubts of the disciples. The story of the feeding of the five thousand also

demonstrates Jesus' might to save and power to provide for his people even in the midst of scarcity and doubts. The Episcopal Church of Liberia, like the disciples who doubted the power of Jesus to use the five loaves of bread and two pieces of fish to feed such a massive crowd, doubts the provision of God for the Episcopal Church of Liberia in the wake of the USA church's desire to discontinue financial aid to the church in Liberia. With this biblical narrative of the feeding of the five thousand, leaders and members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia should be assured that God is able to provide for the church in Liberia even in the midst of scarcity and the discontinuation of financial support from the church in the USA.

Besides the story of the resurrection of Christ in the Holy Bible, the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand is the only miracle recorded in all the gospel books, and the writers of the gospels considered this story a significant miracle. When our Lord fed the over five thousand people that day, the Lord started with barely five loaves of bread and two pieces of fish which according to the account were borrowed from a lad's lunch who was among the crowd. To feed five thousand persons with twelve baskets of leftovers with such a small quantity of bread and fish is indeed a miracle, a miracle our Lord is still capable of performing for the Episcopal Church of Liberia even in the midst of the US Episcopal Church's plan to discontinue financial support to the church in Liberia.

According to the narratives, Jesus' disciples wanted the crowd go away because evening was approaching and they were in an area far away from the villages. The disciples also knew that the people needed something to eat and perhaps find places to rest for the night was fast approaching. When the disciples expressed their concerns about where the crowd of thousands would find something to eat, Jesus offered a surprising

solution by ordering his disciples to give them something to eat and saw things the other way rather than sending them away. The disciples protested, focusing their attention on what they did not have, which were food and money, and thought that God would ask them to do something that they and he together could handle. We should not as children of God let our lack of resources blind us to seeing God's power of provision for his people.

Prior to the gathering of the crowd, Jesus had tried to slip quietly away from the crowds, but they found out where he was going and followed him and instead of showing impatience at this interruption, Jesus welcomed the people and ministered to their needs. With this idea and with the five loaves of bread and two pieces of fish, Jesus asked the crowd to be seated, gave thanks for the food, broke the bread, and gave it to his followers to distribute among the crowd. Miraculously and amazingly, the over five thousand persons were fed with this insignificant quantity of meal with over twelve baskets left over as the Lord provided and they all ate to their fill and were well satisfied. "Part of the miracle or sign which Jesus performs consists of his disciples finding all the fragments in the grass. In addition, there was at least twice as much bread left over at the conclusion of the meal than there was present at the outset, only five loaves."¹

With the five loaves of bread and two pieces of fish which were not withheld by the lad in the story, and of course by the disciples, even though they doubted, our Lord did not just meet the needs of the hungry crowd, but also showed his compassion and lavished them with so much food that there were twelve baskets of leftovers, which the

¹ Roger David Aus, *Feeding the Five Thousand* (Lanham, NY: University Press of America, Inc., 2010), 66-67.

Lord ordered his disciples to pick up. This act of Jesus served as an example of discouraging wastefulness and a clear indication that everyone was adequately fed and had enough. God in similar manner is able to shatter the small expectations of members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia if we learn to bring to God what we already have no matter how pint-size that may be.

Through Christ's miracle of feeding the 5,000, God demonstrated that he is big enough to shatter all of our finite expectations and abundantly provide for our needs. His goodness exceeds our imaginations, and Christ in the story of the feeding of the 5,000 amplified the meager provisions that were brought to him, and similarly, God amplifies our gifts, money, and talents when we bring them to him.²

In like manner, when we as Episcopalians learn to willingly offer our lives wholeheartedly to God and relinquish our resources of time, money, and talents to him no matter how small they may be, God will use these ordinary things to accomplish extraordinary things in the life of the church in Liberia. At such, members of the ECL must never think that their resources are too small to serve God or give to God, for the God we serve delights in taking humble, seemingly insignificant things or persons and use them for his glory.

The story of Jesus feeding the five thousand with such an insignificant quantity of bread and fish provided by a little boy should therefore be a reminder to all Christians, especially members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia, that our problems or circumstances in this world, no matter how unsurmountable or big they may seem, are never too big for the God we serve to handle. We only need to learn to surrender our lives and all that we have to God in the spirit of total obedience and sacrifice no matter how

² [Compellingtruth.org/feeding-the 5, 000.html](http://Compellingtruth.org/feeding-the-5,000.html), accessed February 11, 2020.

insignificant we think they are, for by doing so we can definitely expect God to do for us far beyond what we imagined and not only meet our need, but also lavish on us spiritual blessings and favors even to the point of overflowing and to our own disbelief.

The feeding of the five thousand is a great demonstration of our Lord's power and authority over human situations and teaches that the little we have can be made into much if we put them into God's hands; the ECL seeking financial independence and sustainability is no exception. Christ has power and authority, and he is able to provide for the church in Liberia with its little resources if the church in the US ceases its financial support to the church in Liberia. The feeding of the five thousand is a miracle of trust and the assurance that nothing we face in this terrestrial world as children of God is too big for him, and as our God, he is always willing to make time for us, put everything aside for our sake, even if it means to stoop low for us as demonstrated in the story of the feeding of the five thousand. "Jesus has time to arrange the huge crowd in ordered ranks, to feed them bread and fish, to have the massive number of leftovers collected, to send the disciples away, to climb a mountain, and to pray before it gets dark."³ He is certainly able and willing to do the same for the Episcopal Church of Liberia.

The disciples in the account of the feeding of the five thousand, though, doubted from the outset, but later trusted Jesus in providing for the crowd despite the limited quantity of food, and he did. In like manner, leaders and members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia can trust God even in the midst of scarcity and plans for the

³ Roger David Aus, *Feeding the Five Thousand* (Lanham, NY: University Press of America, Inc., 2010), xiv.

discontinuation of support by the church in the US and he will certainly do it for the church. Members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia must meanwhile have faith, trust in God, be committed to the church, and cultivate the practice and spirit of giving to the work of God and the ministries and missions of the church their treasures, time, and talents no matter how small or insignificant they may be.

The Lost Coin

The parable of the Lost Coin as recorded in Luke 15:8-10 is an account of a lady searching diligently to find one of her ten pieces of coins that was lost. She searched so diligently until she found it and was so glad that she did and called her neighbors to rejoice with her. “In those days Palestinian women received ten silver coins as a wedding gift. Besides their monetary values, these coins held sentimental value like that of a wedding ring, and to lose one would be extremely distressing.”⁴ And just as a woman would rejoice at finding her lost coin or ring, so the angels would rejoice over a repentant sinner. Each individual is precious to God and he grieves over every loss and rejoices whenever one of his children is found and brought into the kingdom.

The parable of the lost coin is actually teaching us about God’s love for the sinners and the importance of every sinner in the eyes of God. It is also the demonstration of how much God cares and loves the sinner who repents and turns to him. The parable of the Lost Coin explains the character of God and shows how God looks at a lost sinner. It is a parable of how God so loves and cares about his people, especially when sinners repent and turn to him. The parable furthered shows that the Lord is merciful and loving

⁴ www.postbulletin.com, accessed May 7, 2020.

and how he attaches high value on his children and not wishing that any of us, his children, get lost. It is also a parable that demonstrates how much the Father who created us cares for us and how happy he can be if one of us who was lost repents and turns to him.

The parable of the Lost Coin teaches us that God is a loving and forgiving God who is always willing to receive anyone of his children who repents and turns to him. We also learned from the story that because God is such a loving and forgiving character, it is never too late to clean up our messes or desist from our wrong doings. There is always an opportunity to repent and become clean and better people if we sincerely repent and turn to the Lord. The importance of this parable and the core of the lesson this parable is teaching is God's love and value for each and every one of his children. After the woman searches diligently and found her one coin that was lost, it became important and of more value than all the other nine coins even though they all are of the same and equal value. This is similar to the fact that if one were to be a sinner and becomes lost from God, they would be preferred in the kingdom of God if they repent than nine persons who do not repent but claim to be righteous. In other words, the parable is teaching that a person who has sinned but has begun repentance is much more valued in the eyes of God than a person who sins and refuses to repent or a dozen persons who are righteous.

While it is true that the thrust of this parable is God's love for the sinner and the importance of a repentant sinner, the lady's example of searching diligently for her lost coin until she finds it is a very good example that the church and leaders of the church in Liberia can emulate. The Lord has blessed the church in Liberia with gifts and resources that are hidden within the Episcopal Church of Liberia and among its members that need

to be searched for and utilized if the church hopes to achieve financial independence and sustainability. Like the lady in this parable, leaders of the church in Liberia need to go all out and search diligently for those God given gifts and resources and use them to create that financial independence and sustainability that the church desperately needs.

Africa as a continent and Liberia as a sovereign nation, including the Episcopal Church of Liberia, are rich and blessed with resources both human and natural that when sincerely and diligently searched for and wisely used can transform the church and make it more independent financially. The church in Liberia is blessed and endowed with the abundance of gifts, resources, and talents from God which are untapped and buried and need to be tapped into and unearthed. Leaders of the church now need to do all they can to search deeply for those hidden treasures, resources, and talents which the church is endowed with and help members of the church with professional and technical skills to see their gifts not for their personal or family use alone, but also for the work of God and the mission of the church.

As stated earlier in this paper, leaders of the church now need to be creating the awareness that will make members of the church see and view their vocational and professional talents and skills as gifts not only for their personal use or for the sole purpose of livelihood, but also as ministries that can be used to the glory of God and for the common good of the church. Members with professional backgrounds as well as vocational and technical skills, such as, doctors, teachers, bankers, lawyers, and engineers, should be made to know that their various talents are gifts from God and see themselves as partners with leaders of the church in the ministries and missions of the church through their respective vocations and professions. This approach will cause

members of the church to see not only their resources as gifts, but also their skills, talents, and professions, thereby searching deeply and deeper for their hidden talents and be motivated to generously and graciously contribute to the work and ministry of the church.

The parable of the lost coin brought joy in heaven and in like manner can bring joy to the church in Liberia if leaders of the Episcopal Church of Liberia diligently search for those hidden talents and resources which will help eradicate the practice of depending on foreign missions for support to run and operate the church. In the parable of the lost coin, the sinner is compared to a valuable asset or coin which was lost and the lady in the narrative does not take lightly that loss, but diligently searched until she finds it. The lady in this parable lights a lamp so that she could see clearly and sweeps the entire house which enables her to reach those areas of her house which would have been impossible to reach and finally searches diligently until she finds her lost coin. In like manner, leaders of the ECL should explore all and every means possible in searching for those hidden talents and resources of the church until they find them, like the lady in the parable, and avoid any lax or careless attitude in finding those hidden talents and resources which God has blessed and endowed the church and people of Liberia with. Like the lady in the parable who lights a lamp and searches those areas of her house that would have been impossible to reach, leaders and members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia should light their lamps, search and reach every area of the church that seems impossible to reach, and find those hidden resources and gifts and use them for the growth and development of the church. The Episcopal Church of Liberia is rich in resources, both human and natural, that if the leaders of the church diligently search for like the lady in the parable of the Lost Coin can change the life of the church and make the church more independent and

sustained financially and discourage the practice of relying on the church in the US for support.

Jeremiah 29:11

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11; NIV). The Bible is full of incredible promises and assurances that God will not only protect his church, but also provide for it, the above text being a good example. This verse is a verse of hope and a security blanket for all of God’s children, including his church. God indeed has a plan for his people so clearly that the sufferings and hardships his people are experiencing now will end soon and their years of flourishing and better future will begin. In this text from the book of the prophet Jeremiah, we are all encouraged by a leader who stirs us to move ahead, someone who believes we can do the task he has given and who will be with us to the end. God is that leader who knows the future and his plans for us are good and full of hope. As long as God who knows the future provides the agenda and goes ahead with us as we fulfill his mission, we can have boundless hope and a bright future. However, this does not mean that we as children of God will be spared pains, sufferings, or hardships, but that God will see us through to a glorious conclusion.

The children of Israel in the context of the text were in exile, a punishment from God as a result of their sins and disobedience. The prophet Jeremiah here confronts the false prophet Hananiah, who boldly and falsely proclaimed to the Israelites that God was going to set them free in two years from their bondage in Babylon. The prophet Jeremiah calls out Hananiah’s false proclamation and here in Jeremiah 29:11 states the promise of God to his people for a good plan and a future of hope and prosperity. It is this plan of

hope and a future of brightness and prosperity that this lens seeks to highlight and not the false prophesy of the prophet Hananiah in this research. God surely has a good plan for his people, and it is a plan that will give them hope and a prospering future. The text Jeremiah 29:11 is not reassuring because it is trying to tell us that God will only shower us with successes in this life as his children but reassuring because God has a purpose for us as his children in whatsoever difficulties or sufferings we are experiencing. Similarly, these words of the prophet Jeremiah are not the assurance for us as Christians that we will escape every suffering or hardship in our lives and in this world, but that as children of God we will learn to thrive in the midst of them. Therefore, as the Episcopal Church of Liberia prepares to embark on this journey of financial independence, which might seem like a punishment or suffering to the church, these words of the prophet Jeremiah are assurances that the church and members as well as leaders of the church can rely on in strengthening their hope and faith in God as the church thrives in the midst of this pending financial transition.

“Hope gives us the conviction that the future will in some measure bring fulfillment of our dreams and ambitions and see the fruition of some of our plans. For the Christian it means having faith that God will fulfill his promises.”⁵ This future of hope promised by God is a future of abundance and provisions, which the Episcopal Church of Liberia, like any other faith tradition in the West or other parts of the world, is endowed with. Therefore, Liberia and the Episcopal Church of Liberia are by no means poor, and with these promises of hope and abundance in God’s blessings, the Episcopal Church of

⁵ J. Philip Hyatt, *Jeremiah: Prophet of Courage and Hope* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1964), 98.

Liberia should in no way continue to depend on foreign support, but rather, stand on its own in supporting the works and ministries of the church. God knows the plans he has for the Episcopal Church of Liberia and for Liberia as a state, and he ultimately will give the church in Liberia a glorious and brighter future that will make the church in Liberia independent and sustained financially. But as the church walks out its life on this journey to financial independence, leaders and members of the church are to remember that the best of growth and success comes through persevering through our challenges in this world rather than escaping them, and when we learn to persevere to the end, we find immeasurable and surprising joy and fulfilment in God's promises.

God surely has a plan and a future of hope for all his people, including Liberians and the Episcopal Church of Liberia. He is not a God of a particular region or group of people, and this promised hope and future are not for a particular region or people as well, but for all God's people irrespective of race, context, color, or faith tradition. The people of Liberia and members of the ECL are all God's people and part of his plans for the future. The church in Liberia should therefore live by this hope and place their trust in God knowing that he who also called his church in Liberia, like he called their counterparts in the West, is also capable of providing for the church in Liberia as he is doing for their counterparts in the West. As Christians we are people of faith and hope and, as such, we should never be faint-hearted or give up in the midst of uncertainties like the pending financial transition that the church in Liberia is about to experience, because God is still in the business of providing for his people.

God's future hope and plans for the church which includes the Episcopal Church of Liberia are good and not evil. They are plans to prosper the church and his people and

not to harm them. There are also plans to give them a future of hope which will bring forth the ultimate purpose of God for his people and church. It was this hope which might come and be used in various means that Jeremiah had and upon which he placed his faith and believed that God's ultimate purpose for his chosen people Israel was good and not evil. This hope is still alive and can be accessed by all God's people, including the Episcopal Church of Liberia. This hope which is promised by God comes in variety of ways and at times may seem evil to his people and mankind, as in the eyes of members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia now, but yet the end is always good and accomplishes his purpose. Let us therefore remember that God in the words of Hyatt, "might use various means to bring about his ultimate purpose, means which would seem at the time to be evil; yet in the end God would accomplish his purpose of good."⁶ This could be the case of the pending financial transition that the Episcopal Church of Liberia is about to witness, and that seems now to be evil in the eyes of the leaders and members of the church, but in the end might be for good and in the interest of the church.

Therefore, as the Episcopal Church in America plans to discontinue her support to the church in Liberia, members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia including leaders as well must not see this as evil or against the church, or as a means of God trying to bring untold suffering and hardship on his church, but as a means by which God might be using, as he did during the first transition from missionary bishops or leadership to that of indigenous bishops or leadership, to make the Episcopal Church of Liberia to be totally dependent on him and muster the courage and strength to take care of itself financially as

⁶ Ibid., 99.

it is doing now in terms of leadership. The church for over the past five decades has survived and continues to thrive and run without missionaries from the church in the US and to a large extent is succeeding; and without doubt can succeed even if the church in the US discontinues its financial support. This is possible and with total faith and reliance on God coupled with the right attitude and behavior, the Episcopal Church of Liberia can achieve this goal and in the not-too-distant future be a benefactor to other churches in Liberia, Africa, and the world at large.

Theological Lenses

Abundant Community and Discernment are the theological lenses upon which my theological arguments in supporting my research question were framed. The upcoming paragraphs therefore explain the theological basis upon which this research was framed.

Abundant Community

The idea or concept of an abundant community is a theological concept that teaches that God has endowed and blessed every community with abundance of gifts and resources that there is no way that the world and the people of God should live in scarcity. As children of God and an abundant community, we have enough from the abundance of gifts and resources which God has blessed us with and have the capacity to provide what we need to be successful in the face of all our human conditions or difficulties. Abundant life is what God has already given us and it is just a matter of us putting it to wise use for the good of us and for our community. As children of God and as a community that is so blessed with the abundance of God's gifts, we are called to ignore all the threats that create the tendencies of dependence and live that abundant life

that God has given us through his Son, Jesus Christ. For Jesus himself tells us in the gospel of St. John 10:10 that; “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.” (NIV) In this text Jesus seeks not to only preserve the life of his people, but to give them that abundant life they so deserved. This abundant life which the Episcopal Church of Liberia as a community possesses means something more meaningful and important than material possessions and wealth.

The Episcopal Church of Liberia as a community of the people of God also falls under this concept and is part of this abundant life community and should not live in scarcity even if the church in the United States of America discontinues its support to the church in Liberia. While it is true that Africa is one of the poorest continents in the world and Liberia is a third-world under-developed nation, Africa as a whole and Liberia in particular are rich in the abundance of natural resources which were given by God. And with all these resources, it is a scandal for the Episcopal Church of Liberia to continue to rely on support from the church abroad. “Africa is not a poor continent; rather, it has been disposed. Indeed, Africa is an abundant continent and poverty in Africa is a scandal. For Africa, including Liberia, is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof.”⁷ Liberia being of the Lord and the fullness thereof, includes all the benefits and provisions from above, which I think the church needs to tap into and make wise use of.

Liberia as a nation and the Episcopal Church of Liberia as a faith community are endowed and blessed with abundance of resources from God which over the years have been poorly managed, underdeveloped, and not utilized, thereby putting the state and the

⁷ Gary Simpson, *Africa is the Lord’s and the Fullness thereof. Praise be the Lord* (E-Reserved lecture notes for CL 0535, God’s Mission: Biblical & Theological Exploration).

church in the position of depending on foreign aid for the running and operation of both the state and church. Over the years, the ECL has acquired over a thousand acres of farmland all over the country which the church is not fully utilizing for the maximum output and benefit to the church, a situation that is seriously affecting the church negatively in terms of finance. With all these lands and human resources, the Episcopal Church of Liberia cannot, and should not, continue to depend on her counterpart in the United States of America for financial support to run the church. The time has come and now is the time for leaders of the church to make use of these abundant resources for the good of the church, especially in wake of the pending financial transition.

With the abundance of resources that the state and church are blessed and endowed with, members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia have the capacity to provide what it takes to run and operate the church even in the midst of the pending plan to discontinue support for the church in Liberia by her American counterpart. With the abundance of resources that the Episcopal Church of Liberia is blessed with, the church as a family even in the midst of the pending financial transition can handle whatsoever uncertain financial future that awaits the church and create those moments when the church will be self-sufficient and independent financially. McKnight and Block rightly put it when they wrote:

we believe that this family and neighborhood have the capacity to collectively handle an uncertain future and to endure and transcend whatever faces us. We can imagine creating together a future beyond this moment. We can learn how to make visible and harvest what up to now has been invisible and treated as though it were scarce.⁸

⁸ John McKnight and Peter Block, *The Abundant Community: Awakening the Power of Families and Neighborhoods* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publisher, Inc., 2010), 66.

Discernment

The transition or change from support or depending on the church in the United States of America to support or self-dependence by the Episcopal Church of Liberia is a very challenging transition that requires serious reflection and prayers, hence the call for discernment. Discernment is the ability to make wise and informed decisions through the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit. It is allowing the Spirit of God to decide or help us decide, and not ourselves. Discernment can also be considered as that capacity that one possesses regarding him or her to judge, test, or measure that which is good or bad, right or wrong. Discernment is according to Johnson, “that habit of faith by which we are properly disposed to hear God’s word, and properly disposed to respond to that word in the practical circumstances of our lives.”⁹ Leaders are called to make choices and decisions that are inspired by the Holy Spirit, thereby reflecting spiritually on what God might be up to in their communities. “In discernment, as the community seeks clarity regarding a choice to be made, the community does so in a way that makes room for the Holy Spirit to lead and move within the process if the Spirit so chooses.”¹⁰ The act of discernment can also be viewed as the ability to decide between what is the truth and what is error, or what is right and what is wrong. Discernment is also the ability to make sound discriminating judgments, to distinguish between things and recognize the moral and spiritual implications of every situation in one’s life as in the case of the pending financial transition that the Episcopal Church of Liberia is about to experience.

⁹ Luke Timothy Johnson, *Scripture and Discernment: Decision Making in the Church*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 110.

¹⁰ Robert Muthiah, “Christian Practices, Congregational Leadership, and the Priesthood of all Believers,” *Journal of Religious Leadership*, vol. 2 (Spring 2003): 184.

“Engaging in ministry as a Spirit-led, missional church requires the leaders of congregations to engage in discernment and decision making.”¹¹ Discernment is a process which leaders of the ECL are to engage in and trust in the power of the Holy Spirit to give them the ability to discern what God is doing or wants to do for the church as the church prepares to walk the road of this financial transition.

Discernment is also a spiritual act or practice which cannot be learned overnight by members and leaders of the church, but through trials and errors, and it may take some period of time. It is a deep spiritual journey that can gradually be attained with commitment and focus and allowing the will of the Spirit to prevail rather than our will. Leaders and members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia must therefore be willing and prepared to walk this journey irrespective of the outcome if the goal of achieving financial independence and sustainability is to be actualized. Discernment according to Rooms and Keifert is, “a spiritual practice, or holy habit, which is learnt by trial and error, experiment and failure, reflection and action. It is, in essence, a journey in and of itself.”¹² Social evangelist and blogger Sinclair Ferguson outlines these basic impacts of discernment in the lives of every believer or group of believers in these words:

It acts as a means of protection, guarding us from being deceived spiritually. It protects us from being blown away by the winds of teaching that make central an element of the gospel that is peripheral or treat a particular application of Scripture as though it were Scripture’s central message. Again, discernment functions as a key to Christian freedom. The zealous but undiscerning Christian becomes enslaved—to others, to his own uneducated conscience, to an unbiblical pattern of life. Growth in discernment sets us free from such bondage, enabling us

¹¹ Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 97.

¹² Nigel Rooms and Patrick Keifert, *Forming the Missional Church: Creating Deep Cultural Change in Congregations* (London: Grove Books Limited, 2014), 22.

to distinguish practices that may be helpful in some circumstances from those that are mandated in all circumstances. But in another way, true discernment enables the free Christian to recognize that the exercise of freedom is not essential to the enjoyment of it. Finally, discernment serves as a catalyst to spiritual development: “The mocker seeks wisdom and finds none, but knowledge comes easily to the discerning” (Prov. 14:6, NIV). Why? Because the discerning Christian goes to the heart of the matter. He knows something about everything, namely that all things have their common fountain in God. Increase in knowledge, therefore, does not lead to increased frustration, but to a deeper recognition of the harmony of all God’s works and words.¹³

Therefore, as the Episcopal Church of Liberia prepares for this historic financial transition in the life of the church, a period of discernment for both leaders and members of the church is very important and necessary. Leaders and members of the church now need to cultivate the habit and practice of discernment as a means of seeking God’s direction and guidance as the church embarks on this journey to financial independence. The church can achieve this call to discernment by organizing special times for this practice throughout the diocese and among the local churches and encourage leaders as well as members of the church to engage in this spiritual practice, so as to seek spiritual guidance and direction to be fully equipped and prepared for this transition as the church embarks on this herculean financial journey. Calling a time for prayers and discernment amongst the churches and the four archdeaconries of the church is a very important approach the church can take to seek God’s intervention as she prepares for this transition. This exercise will allow the church and all its members, including leaders, to soberly, biblically, and spiritually reflect on the way forward and be able to see and

¹³ Sinclair Ferguson, www.ligonier.org/blog/discernment-thinking-gods-thoughts, accessed January 5, 2020.

understand what God might be up to in the life of the church in the face of this pending financial transition.

Another approach that the church can take in this discernment process is by keeping God in the conversation. Keeping God in the conversation as the Episcopal Church of Liberia carries on this process of discernment is an essential dimension that leaders of the church must attend to in whatsoever decision they seek to make as doing so will bring into the discussions not only the perspectives of the church or its leaders, but God's perspectives as well. This approach of keeping God in the conversation can be done through reading, meditating, and studying the scripture as well as theologically reflecting on what God might be up to in the life of the church. "This is done both through accessing the teaching of scripture and theologically reflecting on it as well in allowing God to function as an acting subject through the presence of the Spirit of God working in the midst of the community."¹⁴ By keeping God in the conversation through the process of studying the scripture and theological reflection, leaders of the ECL will bring into the conversation both divine and human perspectives in such a creative way that will invite the Holy Spirit in the process of decision making and be able to clearly see what God might be up to in the life of the church in this crucial stage of her existence. Van Gelder rightly puts it when he said, "The general approach of these efforts to develop a method for theological reflection is to develop insights, perspectives, and an understanding of what God is doing in relation to the concrete issues of life."¹⁵ This

¹⁴ Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church*, 99.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 101.

financial transition which the Episcopal Church of Liberia is about to experience is such a concrete issue in the life of the church that without doubt needs the Spirit's direction and guidance if the church is to succeed and achieve this goal.

Summary

The biblical and theological lenses which constitute chapter four of this research examine the biblical and theological dimensions used to reflect on the research question upon which this research was framed. The chapter outlined the biblical story of Jesus feeding the five thousand, the parable of the lady with the lost coin, and the Old Testament text of Jeremiah 29:11 as biblical lenses that the Episcopal Church of Liberia can make use of in achieving financial independence and sustainability. The theology of abundant community and the practice of discernment are the two lenses upon which this chapter based its theological arguments in addressing the research question upon which this research was framed. Chapter five details the methodology used in carrying out this research.

CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter four of this thesis examined the biblical and theological lenses upon which this research question was framed. It outlined the feeding of the five thousand by Jesus as recorded in Luke 9:10-17, the parable of the lost coin in Luke 15:8-10, and Jeremiah 29:11 as its biblical lenses, and abundant community and discernment as the theological lenses for addressing the research question. Chapter five of this research describes the research methodology used to carry out this research and the process used in collecting and analyzing data collected for the research.

Research Question

The research question for this research paper is, “How can the Episcopal Church of Liberia achieve financial independence and sustainability?” The social science research methodology that was utilized to carry on this research was an exploratory research methodology. Exploratory research is a research methodology conducted for a problem that has not been studied fully and intended to establish priorities, and solutions, and improve the final research design. I used this methodology because as the Episcopal Church of Liberia seeks financial independence and sustainability, I explored strategies, suggestions, recommendations, and the way forward in achieving this goal.

Biblical Perspective of the Methodology

The Old Testament book of Numbers chapter 13 was the biblical text upon which I framed this research methodology. In this text, the Lord ordered Moses to send selected men of Israel to explore the land of Canaan and see what the land was like and whether the people who lived there were strong or weak, few or many, and report back to him. Moses decided what information was needed before the Israelites could enter the promised land, and he took careful steps to get that information. These men were sent to explore and come back with answers and results as the Israelites prepared to occupy the land of Canaan. In the same vein, as the Episcopal Church in the United States of America plans to discontinue her financial support to the Episcopal Church of Liberia and as the church in Liberia seeks financial independence and sustainability, I explored the diocese through this research and identified strategies, suggestions, recommendations, solutions, and the way forward as to how the church in Liberia can explore this new land of financial independence from the church in the United States of America in the wake of plans to discontinue all financial support to the Episcopal Church of Liberia. As the Episcopal Church of Liberia is in the process of making this huge financial decision and to assume this new responsibility, members and leaders of the Episcopal Church of Liberia like Moses need to ask themselves what they need to know about the transition that they are about to experience and then obtain that knowledge they will need to navigate this new financial terrain.

Research Methods

As I executed this research project, I made use of the qualitative research method which included interviews and focus group discussions. The population of the study was

the Episcopal Church of Liberia, a member of the world-wide Anglican Communion that was established by missionaries from the Episcopal Church in the United States of America, and with more than ten thousand members and over one hundred and fifty congregations. The sample of the research included key leaders of the Episcopal Church of Liberia, clergy as well as members of the laity. Five separate interviews were conducted with the ecclesiastical authority of the church, the chief administrator of the diocese, the dean of the Cathedral, the chairman of the diocesan board of trustees, and the financial officer of the diocese. This was a nonprobability purposive sample of the population because interviewees were selected base on their position, experience, and knowledge of the church, with each interview lasting for about an hour. All five interviews were recorded while the researcher also took notes. There were two focus group discussions conducted. Members of these focus groups were selected by nonprobability convenience samples with a limit of ten persons to a group through an open invitation to anyone who wanted to participate. Participants were drawn from attendance at the one of the annual gatherings of one of the three major organizations within the Episcopal Church of Liberia. The gathering was held at one of the local congregations in Bong County, and brought together both clergy and lay members of the church. The gathering was held from February 7 – 9, 2020. The second focus group discussion was conducted during a COVID-19 relief outreach organized and sponsored by another congregation of the Episcopal Church in Bong County and brought together clergy and members of the laity. The COVID-19 relief outreach was held on Saturday, April 25, 2020 and was geared toward reaching out to members of the community through the distribution of rice, vegetable oil, and other food items. The COVID-19 relief

outreach brought together two members of the clergy including heads of all the organizations within that congregation who benefitted from the relief exercise. The group discussions were guided discussions which were recorded with notes taken by the researcher and ideas written on boards as participants discussed. Participants in these two focus group discussions were comprised of members from both clergy and laity attending the gathering and benefitting from the relief exercise. Five clergy and five members of the laity constituted the first focus group discussion while two clergy and eight lay members made up the second focus group discussion. The original plan for both focus group discussions was to have five clergy and five lay members at each focus group discussion, but as indicated in the introduction of this chapter, the second focus group discussion was interrupted by the coronavirus pandemic, thereby reducing the number of clergy. Each focus group discussion lasted for about an hour.



Figure 2. Research Design

Interviews with key leaders of the church (Bishop, Dean of the Cathedral, Finance Officer, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and the Diocesan Administrator) ran from December 2019 through February 2020. The focus group discussions took place from February through April 2020 and brought together members from the clergy and laity.

Data analysis from the interviews and focus group discussions took place in April and May, 2020.

Due to the nature of the method of the research carried out, the instruments that were used for this project were interview and focus groups protocols (see appendices A and B), including my personal notes, memos, and the strategic plan drafted by the diocese at its special convention held in 2018, and were operationalized using the variables of the research. These instruments used in this research were field tested with members of the church who were not participants in this research and were mainly students of a local college of theology and members of an Episcopal congregation. Informed consent forms were sent to participants of the research and these are included in appendices C and D. All interviews and focus group discussions were done in English, the official language in Liberia, and were recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

Data Analysis

The process used in analyzing the qualitative data collected from the research included recording of interviews and focus group discussions, transcribing, and coding of data. I used an inductive coding in analyzing my data. I also read and interpreted raw data and developed concepts and themes through interpretations from my data using the first five steps of Rubin and Rubin's style of analyzing, as paraphrased below using relevant themes that emerged from the data.¹

- Transcribe and summarize each interview including focus group discussions.

¹ Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin, *Qualitative Interview: The Art of Hearing Data*, (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications Inc., 2012), 190.

- Coding excerpts that have relevant concepts, themes, events, examples, names, dates, and places, and by marking them in the text.
- Find the excerpts marked with similar codes from the interview and sort them into a single data file.
- Summarize the results of each sorting after sorting and resorting the material within each file by comparing the excerpts between different subgroups.
- Finally, integrate the description from your interviews, after weighing different versions, to create a complete picture.

Summary

The research methodology chapter summarized my research methodology and presented my research question and why I chose my research question. This chapter also gave a biblical perspective upon which the methodology used in this research was framed, and included a description of my research design. A description of the population of my study including samples of my population, with the criteria for their selection and participation, and the instruments used in the research were also discussed in this chapter. The chapter concluded by outlining how data from the research were analyzed, coded, and interpreted. Chapter six of this thesis reports the results of the research conducted and the interpretations of the results.

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS OF RESEARCH

Introduction

Chapter five of this thesis examined the social science research methodology used to carry out the research. The chapter outlined exploratory research as the social science research methodology that was utilized to carry out the research. Chapter six of this thesis examines the results of the research and the interpretation of data collected from the research. This chapter presents the results of the research project that I described in this thesis and begins with a description and review of the research process used to carry out the research. Report and interpretation of the results of the research which include the responses from both the interviews and focus group discussions also constitute this chapter.

Review of Research Process and Description of Participants

This research was an exploratory research that sought to explore the pending financial transition of the Episcopal Church of Liberia with the aim of finding strategies and the way forward. The social science research methodology that I used to carry out this research was an exploratory research methodology. Under this methodology, I explored strategies and the ways forward as to how the Episcopal Church of Liberia can

achieve financial independence and sustainability. I made use of the qualitative research method which included interviews and focus group discussions. Five interviews were conducted with five key leaders of the church and two focus group discussions were conducted among members of the church who were drawn from the clergy and laity including youths. The Episcopal Church of Liberia constituted the population of the research while the five key leaders that were interviewed and the twenty participants of the focus groups made up the samples used for this research. Participants for the interviews were selected as nonprobability purposive samples based on their positions, experience, and knowledge of the church while participants for the focus groups were selected as nonprobability convenience samples through an open invitation and their willingness to participate with a limit of ten persons to a group. The invitation for the focus groups was open in that participants were not selected by the researcher, but participated based on their willingness and availability.

As indicated in table 1, 100% of those interviewed were males, while members of the clergy and laity constituted 40% and 60% respectively. Participants of focus group one were made up of 50% males and 50% females, while members of the clergy and laity constituted 50% each. As for the participants in the second focus group discussion, 70% were males and 30% were females, while members of the laity and clergy made up 80% and 20% respectively. As stated in the methodology chapter in this thesis, the original plan for the focus group discussions was to have the same numbers of clergy and lay participants and with the same number of male and female, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the demographics for the second focus group participants were changed to the statistics indicated.

Table 1. Participants' Demographics

	Male	Female	Clergy	Lay
Interviews	100%	0%	40%	60%
Focus Group I	50%	50%	50%	50%
Focus Group II	70%	30%	20%	80%

Table 2. Interview Participants

Participants	Years in office	Age Range	Marital Status	Gender	Position
Interviewee 1	7	45-50	Married	Male	Accountant
Interviewee 2	8	51-55	Married	Male	Dean
Interviewee 3	6	56-60	Single	Male	Administrator
Interviewee 4	12	61-65	Married	Male	Chairman,
Interviewee 5	4	66-70	Married	Male	Bishop

Table 3. Focus Group 1 Participants

Participants	Years in ECL	Age Range	Marital Status	Gender	Position
Participant 1	15	15-25	Single	Male	Laity

Table 3. Focus Group 1 Participants (Cont'd)

Participant 2	20	26-30	Married	Female	Clergy
Participant 3	15	31-35	Single	Female	Laity
Participant 4	25	36-40	Married	Female	Laity
Participant 5	25	41-45	Married	Male	Clergy
Participant 6	20	46-50	Married	Male	Laity
Participant 7	33	51-55	Married	Male	Clergy
Participant 8	30	56-60	Single	Female	Laity
Participant 9	25	61-65	Married	Male	Clergy
Participant 10	30	66-65	Married	Male	Clergy

Table 4. Focus Group 2 Participants

Participants	Years in ECL	Age Range	Marital Status	Gender	Position
Participant 1	18	15-25	Married	Male	Clergy
Participant 2	20	26-30	Married	Male	Laity
Participant 3	20	31-35	Single	Male	Laity
Participant 4	25	36-40	Single	Female	Laity
Participant 5	25	41-45	Single	Female	Laity
Participant 6	30	46-50	Married	Male	Clergy
Participant 7	25	51-55	Married	Male	Laity

Table 4. Focus Group 2 Participants (Cont'd)

Participants	Years in ECL	Age Range	Marital Status	Gender	Position
Participant 8	30	56-60	Married	Female	Laity
Participant 9	40	61-65	Married	Male	Laity
Participant 10	43	66-65	Married	Male	Laity

Data Collected from the Research

Qualitative research methods which included five interviews and two focus group discussions were the research methods used to carry on this project, while the process used in analyzing the qualitative data was the first five steps of Rubin and Rubin's style of analyzing described in the methodology chapter of this thesis. These five steps of analyzing the data included arranging the data by transcribing each interview and focus group discussion into a text format, after which the data were organized in an orderly manner followed by coding of the data. The coding of the data enable me to condense a large amount of the information collected into themes from data with like or similar ideas or concepts. Following the coding process, the data were substantiated through summarizing the results of each sorting after sorting and grouping the material within each file by comparing the extracts between different subgroups. The process of analyzing the data concluded by integrating the description from the interviews and focus groups after weighing all the themes to create a complete picture of findings from the study.

Results from the research and the analyses of the data collected from the research, are presented in two tables. These two tables are tables 1 and 5 but the other tables represented demographics also of the interviews and focus groups and the common responses from participants of both the interviews and focus group discussions respectively.

Table 5. Common Responses

	Interviews	Focus Group I	Focus Group II
Members need to give more to the church (Stewardship)	100%	90%	100%
Church needs to engage in real estate, agriculture, and other forms of income generating businesses (Investment)	100%	100%	90%
Church needs to train more clergy & lay members in leadership & innovation (Leadership Development)	100%	100%	90%
Reducing/Halting the ordination and employment until the financial position of the church is strengthened (Cessation of Hiring)	40%	50%	50%
The church needs to prioritize professionalism and permanent employment rather than volunteerism (Permanent Employees)	50%	50%	40%
The church needs to identify and secure all of its available lands and utilize them (Proper Management Systems)	50%	40%	50%

Table 5. Common Responses (Cont'd)

	Interviews	Focus Group I	Focus Group II
Reclaim schools and as a means of evangelism and supporting the church (Evangelism/Education)	60%	60%	70%
Cut down expenditures (Austerity Measure)	60%	50%	50%

Explanation and Interpretation of Findings

This section of chapter six catalogues and gives the explanations and interpretations of the findings from the research. Responses from participants of both the interviews and focus group discussions are highlighted in this section of the thesis. The common responses gathered from participants of the interviews and focus group discussions, and as indicated in table 5, are the thrust of this portion of the thesis with the three most common responses highlighted. From the five interviews and two focus group discussions, eight common responses were gathered from participants and each response was themed based on the coding from the data. These responses were themed as stewardship, investment, leadership development, cessation of hiring, permanent employment, proper management systems, evangelism and education, and austerity measures. We shall now look at these eight common responses and from them highlight the three most common responses and see how they relate to the lenses outlined in this thesis.

Common Responses

Stewardship was one of the themes that emerged from the common responses gathered from the research. Under this theme, participants suggested that members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia cultivate the practice of giving more of their treasures, talents, and time to the church and see the church as their own and not their counterparts in the United States of America. Participants from both the interviews and focus group discussions also called on both leaders and members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia under this theme to see stewardship as a religious discipline and obligation and not just as giving for the sake of helping the church or those in need. According to a participant from one of the interviews, “Members of the church, both leaders and lay members, now need to give more of their resources and talents to the church and do away with the practice of depending on foreign missions to support the church.”²

Investment was another common response gathered from participants from the research. Participants under this theme suggested that the church find alternative means of generating funds in addition to the traditional offerings and plate collections. Investing in the vast farmlands own by the church through agriculture and other farming ventures for income generation was a key suggestion proffered under the theme investment. “Land has always been identified as a key investment; investment that can last for many, many years,”³ averred one of the participants at one of the focus group discussions. The church now needs to make use of her farmlands by first securing, and then utilizing what she has

² Personal interview, Monrovia, Liberia, December 19, 2019.

³ Focus group discussion, Gbarnga, Liberia, May 17, 2020.

now. According to another participant, “The church needs to graduate from the traditional offerings, tithes, and pledges and engage in business, that is, investment in agriculture, real estates, and other income generating ventures.”⁴

Building the leadership capacities of both clergy and members of the laity was also a key suggestion described by participants as the way forward for the church in achieving financial independence and sustainability. Participants under this theme called for the training of both members of the clergy and laity in disciplines like management, agriculture, investment, stewardship, project writing and proposals, and other professional skills that will help the church in recruiting the best minds that can change the financial paradigm of the church. According to an interviewee, “Building the competence of both clergy and lay members of the church is crucial because no matter how viable the church is financially, once the right and competent leadership structures and personnel are not put in place, the church cannot achieve financial independence and sustainability even in the midst of surplus.”⁵

Cessation of hiring new staff and the ordination of additional clergy was another theme that emerged and was suggested as a way forward to help the church in its pending financial transition. According to participants from both the interviews and the focus groups, putting to stop for now the hiring of personnel and the ordination of clergy are measures that can be taken to change the financial paradigm of the church and help the church in achieving financial independence and sustainability. This theme is also parallel

⁴ Focus group discussion, Gbarnga, Liberia, February 8, 2020.

⁵ Personal interview, Monrovia, Liberia, December 22, 2019.

to the theme of *permanent employment* which emerged as one of the common responses from participants. Unlike cessation of hiring, permanent employment will ensure that staffers who are now volunteers, but receiving honorarium from the church, will be made permanent and with more responsibilities and will cost the church less than hiring new and more people. Under this theme participants called for the complete revision of the terms of reference for hiring staff and adjustment of the current benefits and salaries of employees so as to fit the present financial realities of the church. Putting into place the proper mechanism in terms of personnel hiring and financial policies that will guide the steps of the diocese in achieving this financial independence and sustainability was key under the theme cessation of hiring.

Putting into place *proper management system* which will allow leaders of the church to identify and secure all of the available properties of the church including land and utilize them wisely for the benefit of the church was another response participants of the research suggested for the achievement of financial independence and stability. Setting up a proper management team for the robust and effective management of all properties of the church was key under this response.

In addition to stewardship, investment, leadership development, cessation of hiring, and proper management systems, hiring permanent professionals, rather than volunteers, was another common suggestion that emerged from the participants. Currently, many of the church's key leaders who manage the finances and properties of the church are mostly volunteers who are not on salary but receive honorarium for their services to the church. According to participants, if these individuals with such important and sensitive responsibilities are hired permanently and their honorarium increased, they

will give their best and see their work as a responsibility and commitment and not just as a means of helping or volunteering for the church. “Prioritizing professionalism and the hiring of permanent professional employees, which will cost the church less resources than hiring new employees, is a key way forward in achieving financial independence and sustainability,”⁶ said a participant at one of the focus group discussions who is a financial expert.

Evangelism and education were other key themes that came out from the common responses that emerged from the research. These two common responses go hand in hand and together they can change the financial paradigm of the church. Education, for example, can be handled from two angles. First is by educating members of the church including both ordained and lay on the importance of supporting the church and taking possession of the church as their own. With this level of education and awareness, members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia will be open to supporting the church and minimize, if not eradicate, the practice of depending on foreign missions for the support of the church. Secondly, taking ownership and exercising oversight over our schools and other educational institutions, through the organization of a diocesan educational secretariat, as a means of income generation and evangelism will be another salient way that the church can achieve financial independence and sustainability in the wake of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America’s plan to cut off financial support to the church in Liberia. As privately owned and operated educational institutions, our

⁶ Focus group discussion, Gbarnga, Liberia, May 17, 2020.

schools will bring in revenues from tuitions and other fees paid by students and also be used as grounds for evangelism and bringing more members to the church. Evangelism, on the other hand, can be seen as a means of bringing in more members and also spreading the gospel of Christ. “The church now needs to reclaim and take ownership of all its schools and educational institutions and start running them not only for molding the minds of the students, but also as a means of evangelism and generating the needed resources to support the church,” stated a participant at one of the focus group discussions.

Austerity Measures calls for the church to reduce some of its huge expenditures and halt for now employment and ordination and put into place proper control systems that will robustly manage the properties and finances of the church. Under this theme participants called for the cutting down of unnecessary travels and trips both locally and internationally that will cost the church huge financial burdens and less or no returns to the church.

Most Common Responses

From the many responses, especially the eight most common responses that are outlined in this thesis, three of them were the most commonly expressed responses that participants proffered as the ways forward for the Episcopal Church of Liberia to achieve financial independence and sustainability. These three most common responses are stewardship, investment, and leadership development. Over ninety-five percent of participants from both the interviews and focus group discussions suggested these responses. We shall now look at these most common responses.

Table 6. Most Common Responses

	Interviews	Focus Group I	Focus Group II
Members need to give more to the church (Stewardship)	100%	90%	100%
Church needs to engage in real estate and other forms of income generating businesses (Investment)	100%	100%	90%
Church needs to train more clergy & lay members in leadership & innovation (Leadership Development)	100%	100%	90%

About ninety-six percent of participants from both the interviews and focus group discussions named stewardship as a key strategy to the church achieving financial independence and sustainability. According to them, it is about time now that members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia cultivate the practice and habit of giving more generously to the church and take ownership of the church. Establishing a well-organized stewardship program both on the diocesan level and within the local churches can help shift the financial paradigm of the church if and only if the Episcopal Church of Liberia makes stewardship a major strategy and priority. Training of both clergy and lay members in the ministry of stewardship and encouraging all members of the church through their respective local congregations to contribute meaningfully and generously their treasures, talents, and time to the church can help the church achieve financial independence and sustainability. As stated in chapter three of this thesis, one of the main

duties or responsibilities of being a part of any church or faith community is supporting that church or faith community financially. Every church or faith tradition, the Episcopal Church of Liberia being no exception, costs money to operate, and in most if not all cases rely on the donations and contributions of its members. For the Episcopal Church of Liberia to achieve this financial independence and sustainability, members of the church need to start giving to the church and increase their support to the church.

Stewardship in light of giving to the church generously should be seen as a religious discipline and obligation and not just as giving to the church for the sake of helping the church or those in need. If members of the church see stewardship through this lens, giving to the church will come from their hearts with faith, keeping in their minds that they are giving for the work of God and that the God to whom they give and from whom comes every good and perfect gift will reward them accordingly.

Stewardship in light of the above should also be viewed as the able utilization and responsible management of all the resources the Lord provides for us to his glory and the improvement of all his creation, which includes the church. This calls for the proper management of everything God blessed us with in a manner that will impact his church positively and brings honor to his name. Viewing stewardship from this perspective is also about seeing ourselves as responsible managers of all that God has blessed us with and caring for the resources, he has blessed us with which is not only limited to our treasures, talents, and time, but also includes his church.

From our research and data collected from the research, investment, like stewardship, was the response from about ninety-six percent of participants from both the interviews and the focus group discussions. Under this theme, nearly all participants

called for the church to now engage in income generating initiatives in addition to the traditional plate collections and offerings. According to one of the participants from the focus groups, “Gone are the days when the church used to survive on plate collections, offerings, and gifts from the missionaries.”⁷ “The church needs to now graduate from the traditional offerings, tithes, and fundraising campaigns and engage in investment, that is, investments in agriculture, real estates, and other income generating investments,”⁸ said another participant at the focus group discussions.

As stated by one of the participants in this research, gone are the days when the church could survive only on the traditional pledges, tithes, or Sunday collections from its members. With the increase in the cost of living and a global economy of insecurity and uncertainty, compounded with the recent coronavirus pandemic, it is about time now that the Episcopal Church of Liberia, like her counterparts in the west and other parts of the world, engage and develop another means of income generation in addition to their regular pledges, tithes, or Sunday collections. Actively pursuing sources of income outside of the pledges, tithes, and offerings and creating alternative opportunities for sources of income should be encouraged if the Episcopal Church of Liberia is to move forward and attain financial stability and independence. According to Raul Rivera, “When a church develops multiple income streams, it breaks away from the traditional means of sources and also sets an example to its members that is worthy to be emulated.

⁷ Focus group discussion, Gbarnga, Liberia, May 17, 2020.

⁸Focus group discussion, Gbarnga, Liberia, May 17, 2020.

When a church relies on traditional fundraisers to help meet budget, it limits itself to small thinking and may come across to society as a harmless and irrelevant group of people.”⁹

In addition to developing leadership competence and the establishment of a vibrant and effective stewardship program, engaging in meaningful investments as gathered from the research is another way that the Episcopal Church of Liberia can become financially independent and change the culture of depending on support from foreign missions. The Episcopal Church of Liberia is very rich and endowed with an abundance of resources which, when put into proper use and effective management, can generate income for the church so that the church will no longer depend on outsiders for support. For example, some of the vast quantities of lands owned by the church can be used for the purpose of agriculture and other farming activities which, in return, can bring income to the church. Most of these lands have been unused and idly sitting for over decades while the church is barely surviving. It is about time, in the responses gathered from the research, that the church partners with institutions or individuals within or outside of the church to turn some of these lands into farm land for the purpose of income generation. Agriculture, without a doubt, plays a strategic role in the process of the economic development of any country. This sector has already made significant contributions to the economic prosperity of advanced states and its role in the economic development of less developed nations, like Liberia, is of vital importance. It will therefore be rational and appropriate if the Episcopal Church of Liberia places some

⁹ Raul Rivera. *Can Our Church Own a Business?*, www.startchurch.com/blog/view, (accessed August 2, 2020).

emphasis and interest in investing in the agricultural sector as a means of increasing its financial stability and at the same time reduce the rate of poverty for both its members and the people of Liberia. Throughout scripture, the Bible encourages the practice of agriculture and farming if the people of God are to rise above poverty and degradation. The writer of Proverbs, for example, encourages believers into agriculture with these words: “Anyone who tills the land will have plenty of bread, but the one who follows worthless pursuits will have plenty of poverty”¹⁰ (Proverbs 28:19). Making use of the vast quantities of unused lands through engaging in agricultural activities is therefore one of the surest ways for the Episcopal Church of Liberia to gain financial stability and independence, the research revealed.

Another important way for financial stability and independence gathered from the research in addition to investing in agriculture is investing in real estate. The real estate industry in Liberia is currently booming, with huge dividends when invested into. As a result of the fourteen years of civil unrest in Liberia, many buildings, including homes, were destroyed, leaving many families and institutions without homes and office spaces. By purchasing properties and partnering with developers or builders to construct communities that can include subsidized units, full-price residences, and even commercial spaces in addition to the current buildings owned by the church, the Episcopal Church of Liberia can change its financial position and locally support its ministries and programs void of any foreign assistance, the research revealed. Investing

¹⁰ Harold W. Attridge, *The Harper Collins Study Bible* (San Francisco, Harper One, 1989).

in this industry will be a good source of income generation and a long-term investment which the church can benefit from for generations to come.

Investment is so important to the church and the community of faith that the scripture encourages investment in many ways as a form of stewardship. Jesus Christ, for example, encouraged investment when he commended and multiplied the talents of the servant who invested and increased the talents entrusted to him by his master in the parable of the talents, as recorded in the gospel account of St. Matthew 25:14-30. Jesus, also in this parable, condemned the servant who failed to invest his talent and what he had was taken away from him. Jesus then concluded the parable with these words, “For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away” (Matthew 25:29). It is about time now that the Episcopal Church of Liberia makes wise use of what they have by investing in income-generating activities such as real estate. Responses from the research suggest this will help shape the future financial paradigm of the diocese. This kind of investment by the church is succeeding in other faith-based institutions around the world and even in Liberia and the Episcopal Church of Liberia can succeed in the market if the right mechanisms and structures are put into place.

While it is true that financial independence and sustainability is cardinal and essential for the Episcopal Church of Liberia to shape the current paradigm of dependence on foreign support, developing leadership competence was another key theme that came out of the research, and a factor that should be considered and not overlooked if the Episcopal Church of Liberia is to realize economic stability and change its dependency syndrome. Building the competence of leaders is crucial because as stated

earlier in this thesis, no matter how financially vibrant or strong the church may be, if the right competent, well-trained, qualified, and innovative leadership structures and individuals are not put in place, the desire and objective of making the church financially sustainable will be a dream far from reality. The Rev. William Hybels, founder and senior pastor of Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois, one of the most attended churches in North America, once said, “The church is the hope of the world, and leaders of the church are the hope of the church.”¹¹ According to Kouzes and Posner, “Without the knowledge, skills, information, and resources to do a job expertly, and without feeling competent to skillfully execute the choices required, people feel overwhelmed and disabled.”¹² They continue, stating, “developing competence and building confidence are essential to delivering on the organization’s promises and maintaining the credibility of leaders and team members alike. To make extraordinary things happen, you must invest in strengthening the capacity and resolve of everyone in the organization. This is especially important during times of great uncertainties and significant challenges.”¹³ For leaders, developing the competence and confidence of their constituents so that they are more qualified, more capable, and more effective and are leaders in their own right reflects their appreciation of the truth that they cannot get anything extraordinary accomplished all by themselves.

¹¹Church Central, “How to Develop Leaders in Your Church,” www.christianitytoday.com/lc/2009/june-online-only/howtodevelopleadersinyourchurch.html, (accessed August 5, 2020).

¹² James Kouzes and Barry Posner, *The Leadership Challenge: How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 255.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 256.

“If the Episcopal Church of Liberia is to grow and succeed, and be financially independent and sustained, building the leadership competence of leaders of the church should be prioritized,”¹⁴ an interviewee asserted. It is about time now according to the research that the Episcopal Church of Liberia recognizes the critical importance of developing leaders’ competence in order to guide the church through these changing times. Competent, principled, innovative, visionary, qualified, and effective ordained and lay leaders can tremendously help the church grow in faith, wealth, and the sharing of God’s love in the world. To realize this goal, leadership development of both members of the clergy and the laity in disciplines like stewardship, mission development, property management, and investment is essential and should in no way be taken lightly.

Other Five Common Responses

While the above three outlined responses were the most common responses that participants from both the interviews and focus group discussions proffered, cessation of hiring, permanent employment, proper management systems, evangelism and education, and austerity measures were the other five common responses that emerged from the research. While it is true that these five responses were not the most common, they are important and can also help shift the financial paradigm of the church if taken into consideration. Under cessation of hiring, for example, if the church can stop the employment of personnel until the financial position of the church is stable, this will help reduce the financial stress of the diocese and reduce the practice of depending on foreign

¹⁴ Personal interview, Monrovia, Liberia, December 22, 2019.

missions for support. According to one of the interviewees, “Employing more personnel in the absence of funds is a burden on the church and will cause the church more financial instabilities.”¹⁵ Similarly, prioritizing permanent employment rather than volunteering can be another key means through which the church can improve its financial and properties management thereby achieving financial stability and independence. “Employing permanent employees rather than volunteers is a factor of motivation and can result to maximum output,”¹⁶ said one participant at one of the focus group discussions. Cessation of hiring is stopping the employment of personnel while prioritizing permanent employment is making those who are volunteers but receiving honorarium become permanent employees, which will cost the church less resources and increase the productivities and efficiencies of the volunteers.

Putting into place proper management systems was another theme that emerged with participants calling on the church to put into place a system that will be able to identify and secure available properties of the church with the aim of utilizing them for the purpose of income generation and proper accountability. According to a participant at one of the interviews, “Putting into place proper management systems for the church will help the church manage and control all resources coming in and leaving the church, including all its properties professionally and wisely.”¹⁷ As for evangelism and education, participants from both the interviews and focus group discussions called on the church to exert all efforts in reclaiming all of its schools and start operating them as a means of

¹⁵ Personal interview, Monrovia, Liberia, December 22, 2019.

¹⁶ Focus group discussion, Gbarnga, Liberia, May 17, 2020.

¹⁷ Personal interview, Monrovia, Liberia, December 22, 2019.

evangelism and income generation and not just for education. “Other churches are making money from their schools and gaining members through their schools while ours are bringing us nothing. It is about time now that we take over our schools and start supporting our church from revenues generated from our schools,”¹⁸ averred a youthful participant at one of the focus group discussions. Finally, under the theme austerity measure, participants of the research called on leaders of the church to cut down on the expenditures of the church and prioritize expenditures based on the benefits and returns to the church and the missions of the church.

Summary

Chapter six of this thesis reported the results and the interpretations of the results from the research. The review of the research process, summary description of participants of the research, and the data collected from the research are all presented in this chapter. The common responses and the most common responses gathered from participants of the research and their interpretations are also highlighted in chapter six. Chapter seven examines what the researcher learned from the research coupled with the importance of the findings from the research in light of the perspectives of the biblical, theological, and theoretical lenses outlined in this research.

¹⁸ Focus group discussion, Gbarnga, Liberia, May 17, 2020.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

As the title of the preceding chapter depicts, chapter six examined the results gathered from the research coupled with the interpretations of these results. Chapter seven of this thesis is the concluding chapter. This chapter summarizes what the researcher learned from the research and the importance of the findings gathered from the research. Also, in this chapter, the researcher views the findings from the research from the perspectives of the biblical, theological, and theoretical lenses provided in this thesis. Chapter seven concludes with the limits of generalization from these findings and questions for future research that emerged from the study conducted.

Summary of What Was Learned from the Research

From the findings collected as a result of the research conducted, many lessons were learned as outlined in the results chapter of this thesis. These summaries of what was learned from the research are the recapitulations of what was stated in the results chapter. From the research as stated in chapter six of this thesis, eight common responses were gathered from both the interviews and the focus group discussions conducted. These eight common responses were then reduced to the three most common responses and are highlighted in chapter six. While three of the eight common responses were considered

most common because they were the highest-ranking suggestions from participants, the other five are also important and can contribute to the Episcopal Church of Liberia achieving financial independence and sustainability. These common responses were themed as stewardship, investment, leadership development, cessation of hiring, permanent employees, proper management systems, evangelism and education, and austerity measures.

Stewardship as indicated above, was one of the themes that emerged from the common responses gathered from the research. Under this theme, participants suggested that members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia cultivate the practice of giving more of their treasures, talents, and time to the church and see the church as their own and not their counterparts in the United States of America. Participants from both the interviews and focus group discussions also called on both leaders and members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia under this theme to see stewardship as a religious discipline and obligation and not just as giving for the sake of helping the church or those in need. Giving more and generously to the church by members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia was the way forward as suggested by participants of both interviews and focus groups under the theme stewardship.

Investment was another common response gathered from participants from the research. Under this theme, participants suggested that the church find alternative means of generating revenues for the church in addition to the traditional offerings and plate collections. Investing in the vast land own by the church through agriculture and other farming ventures for income generation was a key suggestion proffered under the theme investment. Participants under this theme called on the church to now start making use of

her lands by first identifying and securing the lands, and then making wise utilization of what she has now.

Building the leadership capacities of both clergy and members of the laity was another key finding suggested by participants as the way forward for the church in achieving financial independence and sustainability. Participants under this theme called for the training of both members of the clergy and laity in various professional and technical disciplines like management, agriculture, investment, stewardship, project writing, and proposals that will help the church in recruiting the best minds that can change the financial paradigm of the church. Human resource development or capacity building was the core of this theme as suggested by participants for the achievement of financial independence and sustainability.

Cessation of hiring was another theme that emerged and was suggested as a way forward to help the church in its pending financial transition. According to participants from both the interviews and the focus groups, halting for now the hiring of personnel and the ordination of clergy are measures that can be taken to change the financial paradigm of the church and help the church in achieving financial independence and sustainability. This theme is also parallel to the theme of permanent employment which also emerged as one of the common responses from the research. Both cessation of hiring and permanent employment will ensure the putting into place the proper policies regarding personnel hiring and finances that will guide the diocese in achieving this financial independence and sustainability. Under this theme participants called for the complete revision of the terms of reference for hiring staff and adjustment in the current benefits and salaries of employees so as to fit the present financial realities of the church.

In addition to the five common responses indicated above, hiring permanent professionals, rather than volunteers, was a strong suggestion that emerged from the research. Currently, many of the church's key leaders and workers who manage the finances and properties of the church are volunteers who are not on salary, but render their services to the church as volunteers. According to participants, if these individuals with such important and sensitive responsibilities are hired permanently and placed on a regular monthly salary, they will give their best and see their work as a responsibility and commitment, and not just as a means of helping or volunteering for the church. Hiring permanent personnel and not volunteers was the key message under this theme.

Evangelism and education were the other key themes that came out from the common responses that emerged from participants from both the interviews and focus group discussions. These two common responses are parallel and together they can change the financial trajectory that the church is currently experiencing and bring in more income and members to the church. Education, for instance, can be looked at from two viewpoints. Firstly, by educating members of the church including both ordained and lay on the importance of supporting the church and taking possession of the church as their own will in a great way increase members' support to the church. With this level of education and awareness, members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia will be open to supporting the church and minimize, if not eradicate, the practice of depending on foreign missions for the support of the church. Secondly, taking ownership and exercising oversight over our schools and other educational institutions, through the organization of a diocesan educational secretariat, as a means of income generation and evangelism, will be another salient way that the church can achieve financial independence and

sustainability in the wake of the pending financial transition. As privately owned and operated educational institutions, our schools will bring in revenues from tuitions and other fees collected from students and also be a fertile ground for evangelism and bringing more members to the church, and the kingdom of God at large. Generating income and bringing in more members to the church are the thrusts of the theme evangelism and education.

Austerity Measures like the other common responses was a suggestion proffered by over ninety percent of participants at both interviews and focus group discussions. Participants under this theme called for the putting into place proper financial management systems and the reducing of expenses. Reducing local and international travels was a key suggestion under this theme.

Most Common Responses

From the many responses, especially the eight most common responses that were gathered from the research, three of them were ranked as the highest responses that participants suggested as actions for the promotion of financial independence and sustainability. Over ninety-five percent of both participants of the interviews and focus group discussions suggested these themes as the way forward for the church in achieving financial independence and sustainability. These three most common responses are stewardship, investment, and leadership development.

About ninety-six percent of participants from both the interviews and focus group discussions named stewardship as a key strategy to the church achieving financial independence and sustainability. According to the participants, it is about time now that members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia cultivate the practice of giving more

generously to the church and take ownership of the church. Establishing a well-organized stewardship program both on the diocesan level and within the local churches can help shift the financial paradigm of the church if and only if the Episcopal Church of Liberia makes stewardship a major strategy and priority. Training of both clergy and lay members in the ministry of stewardship and encouraging all members of the church through their respective local congregations to contribute meaningfully and generously to the church can help the Episcopal Church of Liberia achieve this goal. As stated in chapter three of this thesis, one of the main duties or responsibilities of being a member of any church or faith community is supporting that church or faith community financially in its missions and programs. Every church or faith tradition, the Episcopal Church of Liberia being no exception, needs financial resources to operate, and in most if not all cases, these churches or faith communities depend on the donations and contributions of its members. For the Episcopal Church of Liberia to achieve this financial independence and sustainability, participants of the study called on members of the church to start giving more to the church and increase their support to the church. If members of the church see stewardship through this lens, giving to the church will come from their hearts with faith, keeping in their minds that they are giving for the work of God and that the God to whom they give and from whom comes every good and perfect gift will reward them accordingly. This is my personal theology of stewardship which I hope to propose as I lead and serve in the Episcopal Church of Liberia. This theology of stewardship believes that God is the source of all we have as humans and whenever we learn to give to God from the heart and with faith, God rewards us bountifully. Stewardship in light of the above should also be viewed as the able utilization and

responsible management of all the resources the Lord provides for us to his glory and the improvement of all his creation, which includes the church. This calls for the proper management of everything God blessed us with in a manner that will impact his church positively and brings honor to his name. Viewing stewardship from this perspective also calls on us to see ourselves as responsible managers of all that God has blessed us with which is not only limited to our treasures, talents, and time, but also the church.

Investment, like stewardship, was the response from about ninety-six percent of participants from both the interviews and the focus group discussions as revealed from the data and findings from this research. Under this theme, nearly all participants called for the church to now engage in income generating initiatives in addition to the traditional plate collections and offerings. As stated by one of the participants in this research and quoted in chapter six, gone are the days when the church could survive only on the traditional pledges, tithes, or Sunday collections from its members. With the increase in the cost of living and a global economy characterized by insecurity and uncertainties, compounded with the ongoing pandemic, it is about time now that the Episcopal Church of Liberia, like her counterparts in other parts of the world, engage and develop other means of income generation in addition to their regular pledges, tithes, or Sunday collections. Actively pursuing sources of income outside of the traditional means and creating alternative opportunities for sources of income should be encouraged if the Episcopal Church of Liberia is to move forward and attain financial stability and independence. According to Raul Rivera, “When a church develops multiple income streams, it breaks away from the traditional means of sources and also sets an example to its members that is worthy to be emulated. When a church relies on traditional

fundraisers to help meet budget, it limits itself to small thinking and may come across to society as a harmless and irrelevant group of people.”¹⁹

In addition to developing leadership competence and the establishment of a vibrant and effective stewardship program, engaging in meaningful investments as suggested by the research is another way that the Episcopal Church of Liberia can become financially independent and change the culture of depending on support from foreign missions. The Episcopal Church of Liberia is very rich and endowed with an abundance of resources which, when put into proper use and effective management, can generate income for the church so that the church will no longer depend on outsiders for support. For example, some of the vast quantities of lands owned by the church can be used for the purpose of agriculture and other farming activities which, in return, can bring income to the church. Most of these lands have been unused and idly sitting for decades while the church is barely surviving. The responses gathered suggest it is about time the church partners with institutions or individuals within or outside of the church to turn some of these lands into farmland for the purpose of income generation. Agriculture, without a doubt, plays a strategic role in the process of the economic development of any country. This sector has already made significant contributions to the economic prosperity of advanced states and its role in the economic development of less developed nations, like Liberia, is of vital importance. It will therefore be rational and appropriate if the Episcopal Church of Liberia places some emphasis and interest in investing in the agricultural sector as a means of increasing its financial stability and at the same time

¹⁹ Raul Rivera. *Can Our Church Own a Business?*, www.startchurch.com/blog/view, (accessed August 2, 2020).

reduce the rate of poverty for both its members and the people of Liberia. Throughout scripture, the Bible encourages the practice of agriculture and farming if the people of God are to rise above poverty and degradation. The writer of Proverbs, for example, encourages believers into agriculture with these words: “Anyone who tills the land will have plenty of bread, but the one who follows worthless pursuits will have plenty of poverty”²⁰ (Proverbs 28:19). Making use of the vast quantities of unused lands through engaging in agricultural activities is therefore one of the surest ways for the Episcopal Church of Liberia to gain financial stability and independence, the research revealed.

Another important way for financial stability and independence gathered from the research in addition to investing in agriculture is investing in real estate. The real estate industry in Liberia is currently booming, with huge dividends when invested in. As a result of the fourteen years of civil unrest in Liberia, many buildings, including homes, were destroyed, leaving many families and institutions without homes and office spaces. By purchasing properties and partnering with developers or builders to construct communities that can include subsidized units, full-price residences, and even commercial spaces in addition to the current buildings owned by the church, the Episcopal Church of Liberia can change its financial position and locally support its ministries and programs void of any foreign assistance, the research revealed. Investing in this industry will be a good source of income generation and a long-term investment which the church can benefit from for generations to come.

²⁰ Harold W. Attridge, *The Harper Collins Study Bible* (San Francisco, Harper One, 1989).

Investment is so important to the church and the community of faith that the scripture encourages investment in many ways as a form of stewardship. Jesus Christ, for example, encouraged investment when he commended and multiplied the talents of the servant who invested and increased the talents entrusted to him by his master in the parable of the talents, as recorded in the gospel account of St. Matthew 25:14-30. Jesus, also in this parable, condemned the servant who failed to invest his talent and what he had was taken away from him. Jesus then concluded the parable with these words, “For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away” (Matthew 25:29). It is about time now that the Episcopal Church of Liberia makes wise use of what they have by investing in income-generating activities such as real estate. Responses from the research suggest this will help shape the future financial paradigm of the diocese according to responses from the research. This kind of investment by the church is succeeding in other faith-based institutions around the world and even in Liberia and the Episcopal Church of Liberia can succeed in the market if the right mechanisms and structures are put into place.

While it is true that financial independence and sustainability are cardinal and essential for the Episcopal Church of Liberia to shape the current paradigm of dependence on foreign support, developing leadership competence was another key theme that came out of the research, and a factor that should be considered and not overlooked if the Episcopal Church of Liberia is to realize economic stability and change its dependency syndrome. Building the competence of leaders is crucial because as stated earlier in this thesis, no matter how financially vibrant or strong the church may be, if the

right competent, well-trained, qualified, and innovative leadership structures and individuals are not put in place, the desire and objective of making the church financially sustainable will be a dream far from reality. This is true, because as leaders, we are the hope of the church and the church relies on its leaders to effectively carry out the missions and ministries of the church. According to Kouzes and Posner, “Without the knowledge, skills, information, and resources to do a job expertly, and without feeling competent to skillfully execute the choices required, people feel overwhelmed and disabled.”²¹ They continue, stating,

developing competence and building confidence are essential to delivering on the organization’s promises and maintaining the credibility of leaders and team members alike. To make extraordinary things happen, you must invest in strengthening the capacity and resolve of everyone in the organization. This is especially important during times of great uncertainties and significant challenges.²²

For leaders, developing the competence and confidence of their constituents so that they are more qualified, more capable, and more effective and are leaders in their own right reflects their appreciation of the truth that they cannot get anything extraordinary accomplished all by themselves.

“If the Episcopal Church of Liberia is to grow and succeed, and be financially independent and sustained, building the leadership competence of leaders of the church should be prioritized,”²³ an interviewee asserted. It is about time now according to the

²¹ James Kouzes and Barry Posner, *The Leadership Challenge: How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 255.

²² *Ibid.*, 256.

²³ Personal interview, Monrovia, Liberia, December 22, 2019.

research that the Episcopal Church of Liberia recognizes the critical importance of developing leaders' competence in order to guide the church through these changing times. Competent, principled, innovative, visionary, qualified, and effective ordained and lay leaders can tremendously help the church grow in faith, wealth, and the sharing of God's love in the world. To realize this goal, leadership development of both members of the clergy and the laity in disciplines like stewardship, mission development, property management, and investment is essential and should in no way be taken lightly.

Importance of the Findings

The importance of the findings gathered from this research is so vast and of great importance to the researcher and the Episcopal Church of Liberia at large. These findings as outlined in this thesis, when wisely implemented, will yield great dividends for the Episcopal Church of Liberia and help the church achieve financial independence and stability. Stewardship, for example, is so important to the church because it will help members of the church to embrace and cultivate the practice of giving to the church generously and see the church as their possession and not a possession of the church in the United States of America. On the other hand, leadership development like stewardship is also important to the church because if implemented, both lay and ordained members of the church will acquire professional skills that will improve the human resource capacities of the church, thereby boosting the leadership capacity of the church both from the lay and ordained. Leadership development is also important to the church in that it will help the church train its own members and clergy into professionals who will help manage the church's finances and properties professionally for the good of the church.

Like stewardship and leadership development, investment is important to the church because it will help the church identify and utilize alternative sources of income generation in addition to the traditional means of income generation for the church. This finding will place the church in the position of engaging in income generating investment as a means of strengthening its revenue base and reducing the church's dependence on foreign support. Investment is also important to the church because it will also create employment opportunities for members of the church which will in turn empower them financially to support the church. Both proper management systems and cessation of hiring are important to the church in that they will help the church manage her meager resources and finances wisely and prudently in the interest of the church. These findings are also important to the church and will help the church put into place proper management and the right policies for her finances and meager resources. Additionally, evangelism and education on the other hand are important to the church because through evangelism the church will win more souls for Christ thereby increasing the membership of the church while through her education institutions the church will increase her revenue base from tuitions and fees paid by students and also bring in more members to the church. Austerity measures are important because it will help the church wisely expend its meager resources and manage the finances of the church based on priorities and due diligence. Austerity measures are also important to the church because they will help the church cut down on the expenditures of the church and expend the church's meager resources base on priorities and the benefits and returns of such expenditure to the church and the missions of the church.

Viewing of Findings from Biblical Perspective

The biblical lenses used in this thesis and for this research were the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand, the parable of the lost coin, and Jeremiah 29:11. The story of Jesus feeding the five thousand with five loaves of bread and two pieces of fish is a story that teaches faith in the provision of God even in the midst of scarcity. Though the Episcopal Church of Liberia is currently in the state of financial meltdown and lack of sufficient resources to operate and run the church adequately if support from the church in the United States of America ceases, with faith void of doubts, and the wise implementation of all the findings gathered from this research, the church can achieve the desired financial independence and sustainability. If members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia under the theme of stewardship cannot withhold their treasures, talents, and time from the church and like the little boy and the disciples of Jesus in the story of the feeding of the five thousand who did not withhold the five loaves of bread and two pieces of fish, God cannot only meet the needs of the Episcopal Church of Liberia, but also show his compassion for the church by providing for the church if support from the church in the United States of America discontinues. Similarly, if members of the church learn to give to God what they possess no matter how small it may be, God is able to shatter their small expectations and dreams into big and meaningful realities.

The parable of the Lost Coin is an account of how a lady sought diligently until she found one of her ten pieces of coin that was lost. This lady searched diligently until she found the lost coin and filled with joy, invited her neighbors to rejoice with her. The Episcopal Church of Liberia by putting in place proper management systems, engaging in meaningful investments, and implementing the necessary financial austerities can regain

the lost blessings and favor from God through all the resources that the church is endowed with. While it is true that the thrust of this parable is God's love for the sinner, especially the one who repents, the lady's example of not giving up and searching diligently until she finds her lost coin is an excellent example that the Episcopal Church of Liberia can emulate through the putting in place a proper management system, meaningful investments, and sound financial austerity as a means of achieving financial stability and independence. The parable of the Lost Coin brought joy in heaven and in like manner can bring joy to the Episcopal Church of Liberia if and only if leaders as well as members of the church search diligently for those hidden resources through the implementation of proper management systems, investments, and sound financial austerities.

The Old Testament text of Jeremiah 29:11 is a passage of hope, hope for the church and the people of God that the future will be bright and not doomed. This future of hope as promised by God is a future of abundance and provision which the Episcopal Church of Liberia like any other church in the world is endowed with. The Episcopal Church of Liberia through building its leadership competence and the development of its ordained and lay members, coupled with the wise use of its meager resources through meaningful investments and sound austerity measures, and a vibrant evangelism and educational programs, can live and experience this future of hope even in the midst of her pending financial transition. God has a plan and a future of hope for all his people which include the Episcopal Church of Liberia because he is not the God of a particular group of people or region, and this promised hope for a better future is not for a particular group of people and region as well. So, as the church in the United States of America plans to

discontinue its support to the church in Liberia, let the leaders as well as members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia see this transition as a means of making the church in Liberia to totally rely and depend on God and muster the courage to implement all the findings as contained in this thesis.

Viewing of Findings from Theological Perspective

Abundant community and discernment were the two theological lenses under which this research was conducted. Abundant community is a theological teaching that teaches that God has endowed and blessed every community, including the Episcopal Church of Liberia, with the abundance of gifts and resources. With the abundance of resources from God and as an abundant community, members of the Episcopal Church of Liberia can support the church without depending on support from the church in the United States of America. Similarly, as an abundant community and a community blessed and endowed with gifts and resources from God, the church has all it needs to care for the church and be financially stable and independent. Also, as an abundant community the church can invest into meaningful income-generating ventures and build up its income-generating capacity thereby reducing or eradicating the practice of depending on the church in the United States of America for support. With the abundance of resources that the country Liberia and the Episcopal Church of Liberia are blessed with, coupled with the implementation of proper management systems, sound austerity measures, and genuine investments, the church will have the capacity to provide what it takes to run and operate the church void of support from the church in the United States of America. Liberia as a nation and the Episcopal Church of Liberia as a community of faith are endowed with abundance of resources which have over the years been poorly managed

and under-utilized, but with the implementation of the findings contained in this thesis, the church as an abundant community can change its financial paradigm and achieve the desired financial stability and independence. With the abundance of gifts and resources that the Episcopal Church of Liberia is blessed and endowed with from God, the church as a family and as an abundant community even in the midst of the threats from the church in the United States of America to discontinue its financial support to the church in Liberia can and should be able to handle whatsoever uncertain financial future that awaits the church and at the same time be able to create those moments when the church will be self-sufficient financially and achieve financial stability and independence. McKnight and Block were right when they said: “We believe that this family and neighborhood have the capacity to collectively handle an uncertain future and to endure and transcend whatever faces us. We can imagine creating together a future beyond this moment. We can learn how to make visible and harvest what up to now has been invisible and treated as though it were scarce.”²⁴

As the Episcopal Church of Liberia prepares for this financial transition, taking some time and period for discernment by both members and leaders of the church is very important. With discernment leaders of the church will be inspired to implement and put in place all the findings gathered and outlined in this thesis based on the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Similarly, through the practice of discernment, which is the ability to make wise and informed decisions through the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit, leaders of the Episcopal Church of Liberia will make choices and decisions

²⁴ John McKnight and Peter Block, *The Abundant Community; Awakening the Power of Families and Neighborhoods* (San Francisco, CA. Berrett-Koehler Publisher, Inc., 2010), 66.

that are inspired by the Holy Spirit, thereby reflecting spiritually on what God might be up to in the midst of this pending transition. Through spiritual discernment members and leaders of the church can also make the right choices as it relates to investments, proper management systems, evangelism and education, cessation of hiring, and the development of the human resources of the church. Engaging in discernment will allow leaders and members of the church to soberly, biblically, and spiritually reflect on the findings contained in this thesis and from this research and be able to understand what God might be up to in the life of the church in the wake of the pending financial transition.

Viewing of Findings from Theoretical Perspective

Adaptive change, stewardship, and leadership competence were the lenses through which this research was examined theoretically. Adaptive change is a kind of change or initiative that requires change in the beliefs, practices, and at times the values of an institution, organization, or a group of people. As the Episcopal Church of Liberia prepares for this transition in its financial posture, adaptive change without doubt is necessary and will help leaders as well as members of the church embrace this transition. For instance, members of the church embracing the idea of supporting the church generously with their treasure, talents, and time requires some level of change in the mindset of the members and requires time. Similarly, the church initiating alternative means of income generation other than the traditional means of funds generation calls for adaptive change which will involve the participation of all members of the church including the leaders. Additionally, putting in place proper management systems and sound financial austerities and meaningful investments require members and leaders of

the church going through some period of adaptive change, because solving such problem and implementing such initiatives will involve the participation of all and at the same time call for new ideas, discoveries, innovations, and require a considerable period of time. As a church, both clergy and members alike, including leaders of the church, should be prepared and willing to adapt and embrace alternative ways of governing the church and generating revenues if the Episcopal Church of Liberia must achieve this financial stability and independence. If the Episcopal Church of Liberia is to succeed in this financial transition and achieve this financial stability and independence, leaders and members as well must embrace alternative ways of leading the church and generating incomes for the church. Zscheile rightly puts it when he said: "If the church has to be successful and faithful, the church must embody alternative ways of seeing and living in the world."²⁵ Hence, the church now needs to embody the alternative ways of income generation for the church through investments, stewardship, proper management of the church's finances and resources, leadership development, education and evangelism, and cessation of hiring as outlined in the findings contained in this thesis.

Similarly, with stewardship and leadership competence leaders and members of the church will cultivate the culture and practice of supporting the church generously and at the same time prioritize the human resource development of both clergy and members of the church. From the findings gathered from this research and as outlined in this thesis, stewardship and leadership development were two of the most common responses that emerged, and when these responses are implemented, the church will achieve the

²⁵ Dwight Zscheile, *The Agile Church; Spirit-Led Innovation in an Uncertain Age* (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2014), 8.

necessary results in achieving financial stability and independence. Stewardship through this lens calls for members and leaders of the church seeing stewardship as a religious discipline and obligation and not just giving for the sake of helping the church or those in need. Leadership competence on the other hand calls for the training and capacity building of leaders and members of the church with the aim of developing competence and building the confidence in the leaders of the church as the church prepares for this financial transition.

Limits of Generalization

The research conducted under this study and the findings herein contained were done and gathered from the Episcopal Church of Liberia, my home diocese and a member of the worldwide Anglican Communion. All research and studies conducted throughout this process were limited to the Episcopal Church of Liberia and participants included clergy and lay members of the church. While it is true that the research was limited to the Episcopal Church of Liberia, the findings herein can be applied to other contexts or faith traditions where applicable. The topic for the study was “The Episcopal Church of Liberia Gravitating towards Financial Independence: Strategies and the Way Forward.” The research focused on the pending financial transition that the Episcopal Church of Liberia is about to experience and sought to find strategies and the way forward as to how the church can achieve financial stability and independence.

Questions for Future Research

While the research conducted under this study sought to find answers as to how the Episcopal Church of Liberia can achieve financial independence and sustainability,

many questions also emerged from the study for future research. They include the following. 1. How can the Episcopal Church of Liberia use the findings from this research to transform the financial situations of its local parishes? 2. How can the Episcopal Church of Liberia using the findings that emerged from this research impact the financial situations of other faith traditions in Liberia? 3. Can the Episcopal Church of Liberia really achieve total financial stability and independence? 4. Can the Episcopal Church, the parent body of the Episcopal Church of Liberia, discontinue her support to the church one hundred percent? All the above questions are ones that I hope to answer as I apply the results from my research as I serve and minister within the Episcopal Church of Liberia.

Conclusion

From the research conducted coupled with the findings that emerged from the research, the Episcopal Church of Liberia can achieve financial stability and independence. This can be achieved by putting into place the right and proper stewardship programs both on the diocesan and local parishes levels with the aim of educating members of the church on the importance of supporting the church and taking possession of the church. Additionally, with the abundance of resources which include vast areas of farmlands, the church can invest in agriculture and other income-generating initiatives for the purpose of achieving this financial stability and sustainability. Likewise, developing the human resource of both members and leaders of the church with the necessary skills on how to manage the finances and properties of the church, the church can achieve this financial stability and independence. Like these three most common responses, cessation of hiring, proper management systems, permanent

employment, education and evangelism, and austerity measures as indicated in this thesis are also important and the church can achieve the desired financial independence and sustainability if these findings are also put into place and made use of by the church.

EPILOGUE

This research and Doctor of Ministry program have influenced me greatly as a person. Through this program and study, I was able to acquire the biblical and theological understanding of the Triune God and his relationship to the mission of the church as revealed through the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This program and research have also influenced me as a Christian public leader because they positively helped me to engage effectively members of my context in witnessing to the Triune God's life and mission, thereby enabling me to faithfully participate in the mission that we all as believers are called to as a church and followers of Christ.

On the other hand, this research and degree program have influenced me as a leader and have impacted my approach to ministry because with the acquisition of new and diverse knowledge and skills through this program and research, I can confidently say that I am now fully equipped for a more responsible and faithful leadership role in whatsoever context I may be called to serve. Helping my context to discern God's calling and vision for this common life and recognizing the diverse natures of community formation and transformation through my ability to confidently lead in times of changes and conflicts for the sake of the mission that God has entrusted me with are other ways that this research and degree program have influenced me as a leader. Also helping my current context to recognize their identity and be willing to stand the tests of times for the proclamation of the gospel and their services to the world are other significant ways in

which this program and research have influenced me as a leader and impacted my ministry. Acquiring key and new insights as they relate to organization and leadership from both biblical and theological perspectives and from examples outside of the Church or called people and using these skills and knowledge in discerning as well as developing my own leadership potentials and abilities were such a great influence this research and study had on me as a leader.

Final Comments

As I conclude this research and degree program, I hope to use these new skills and knowledge of leadership and ministry acquired in ways that will positively impact my context and those that I serve. Also, with the knowledge and skills acquired from this program and the research conducted, I hope to encourage, equip, and empower members of my context and those that I serve for ministry and at the end enable them to discern and develop their own gifts for leadership and ministry among God's people.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. How long have you served in this capacity?
2. What do you appreciate about the office you occupy?
3. What challenges do you envisage for our diocese after support from the church in the United States of America is cut off?
4. What are some prospects (Positive developments) you envision for our diocese after the church in the US cuts off its support?
5. What are some ways you can suggest as solutions?
6. Do you think we are prepared as a diocese for this change? (If no, what steps do we need to take in order to be prepared? If yes, which area(s) do you think we are more prepared?)
7. What ministry(ies) or program(s) of the church do you think will be affected by this change?
8. How might this/these ministry(ies) or program(s) will be affected?
9. Is there anything else you will like to talk about?

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUPS PROTOCOL

1. What role do you play in your local congregation?
2. Have you ever attended a Diocesan Convention?
3. Are you a communicant in good standing in your local congregation?
4. What challenges do you envisage for our diocese after support from the church in the United States of America is cut off?
5. What are some prospects (Positive developments) you envision for our diocese after the church in the US cuts off its support?
6. What are some ways you can suggest as solutions?
7. Do you think we are prepared as a diocese for this change? (If no, what steps do we need to take in order to be prepared? If yes, which area(s) do you think we are more prepared?)
8. What ministry(ies) or program(s) of the church do you think will be affected by this change?
9. How might this/these ministry(ies) or program(s) will be affected?
10. How do you wish to rethink/reconsider your giving/support to the change after this change?
11. Is there anything else you will like to talk about?

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS

The Episcopal Church of Liberia Gravitating Towards Financial Independence: Strategies and the Way Forward

You are invited to be in a research study of how the Episcopal Church of Liberia can achieve financial independence and sustainability. You were selected as a possible participant because of your position in the church and your experience and knowledge about the workings of the church. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Rev. Fr. Slewion P. Lewis as part of my Doctor of Ministry thesis project in Congregational Mission and Leadership at Luther Seminary”.

My advisors are: Dr. Daniel R. Anderson and Dr. Alvin Luedke

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is: How can the Episcopal Church of Liberia achieve financial independence and sustainability is the question which this research seeks to answer by providing strategies and the way forward in achieving this goal.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things. Participate in an interview that will be recorded and will last for an hour.

There are no direct benefits for participating in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept confidential. If I publish any type of report, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. All data will be kept in a locked file in the researcher personal computer; only my advisors, Dr. Daniel Anderson and Dr. Alvin Luedke and I will have access to the data and, if applicable, any tape or video recording. If the research is terminated for any reason, all data and recordings will be destroyed. While I will make every effort to ensure confidentiality, anonymity will be guaranteed (due to the small number to be studied—this phrase must be added when dealing with a small group).

Any tape recordings or videotapes created from this research will be accessed only by the researcher and advisors and will be used only for the purpose of this thesis.

Indicate one of the following:

- a. Raw data will be destroyed by the end of May, 2024. (Federal guidelines specify a minimum of 3 years for retention of data)
- b. Raw data will be retained but all identifying information removed by May, 2020.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Luther Seminary and/ or with other cooperating institutions, Episcopal Church of Liberia. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Slewion P. Lewis. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at xxx-xxx-xxx.

My advisors are: Dr. Daniel R. Anderson and Dr. Alvin Luedke

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information or have had it read to me. I have received answers to questions asked. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature of investigator _____ Date _____

I consent to be audiotaped (or videotaped):

Signature _____ Date _____

I consent to allow use of my direct quotations in the published thesis document.

Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR FOCUS GROUPS

The Episcopal Church of Liberia Gravitating Towards Financial Independence: Strategies and the Way Forward

You are invited to be in a research study of how the Episcopal Church of Liberia can achieve financial independence and sustainability. You were selected as a possible participant because of your participation in a workshop organized by the Christian Education Department recently conducted within your archdeaconry. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Rev. Fr. Slewion P. Lewis as part of my Doctor of Ministry thesis project in Congregational Mission and Leadership at Luther Seminary.

My advisors are: Dr. Daniel R. Anderson and Dr. Alvin Luedke

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is: How can the Episcopal Church of Liberia achieve financial independence and sustainability is the question which this research seeks to answer by providing strategies and the way forward in achieving this goal.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things. Participate in a focus group discussion that will be recorded and will last for an hour.

The direct benefit of participation is that lunch will be provided for the focus groups discussions.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept confidential. If I publish any type of report, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. All data will be kept in a locked file in the researcher personal computer. Only my advisors, Dr. Daniel Anderson and Dr. Alvin Luedke and I will have access to the data and, if applicable, any tape or video recording. If the research is terminated for any reason, all data and recordings will be destroyed. While I will make every effort to ensure confidentiality, anonymity will be guaranteed (due to the small number to be studied—this phrase must be added when dealing with a small group).

Any tape recordings or videotapes created from this research will be accessed only by the researcher and advisors and will be used only for the purpose of this thesis.

Indicate one of the following:

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Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Slewion P. Lewis. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at xxxx-xxx-xxx.

My advisors are: Dr. Daniel R. Anderson and Dr. Alvin Luedke

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information or have had it read to me. I have received answers to questions asked. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature of investigator _____ Date _____

Signature _____ Date _____

I consent to allow use of my direct quotations in the published thesis document.

Signature _____ Date _____

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