



THINKING THEOLOGY

LETTING THE BIBLE SHAPE OUR DEVELOPMENT WORK

JUBILEE 2018
Thinking Theology Nigeria
5 – 10 February 2018

REPORT

CHURCH OF NIGERIA
Anglican Communion



tearfund



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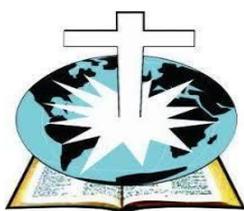
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About the Organisers

Anglican Diocese:

The Church of Nigeria is the Anglican church in Nigeria. It is the second-largest province in the Anglican Communion, as measured by baptized membership (but not by attendance). The administrative headquarters are located in Abuja. Its current primate is Archbishop Nicholas Okoh. In the year 2000, the church of Nigeria elaborated her vision as “The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) shall be; Bible-based, spiritually dynamic, united, disciplined, self-supporting, committed to pragmatic evangelism, social welfare and a Church that epitomizes the genuine love of Christ.”



COCIN:

COCIN envisions a Church in which the leadership and membership are maturing in Christ by obeying the word of God, living holy lives, united and committed to worshipping God and spreading the holistic gospel thereby impacting the world as salt and light of the world of her time to the glory of God till the return of Jesus Christ.



ECWA :

We are a congregation of Christian people seeking to spread the news of Jesus Christ through bible and prayers. We welcome people from all walks of life, no matter what their origin, race, color or nationality. Our faith community is a diverse and inclusive community that emphasizes the display of God’s glory in all races and cultures. We are a prayerful church that realises that apart from

Christ, it can do nothing. ECWA is more than just a Church. It’s a composition of people like you and me worshipping together and helping one another.



JETS:

JETS, as a training institution of ECWA, exists to glorify God, by providing sound

biblical and theological education (knowledge), spiritual formation (character), and practical ministry skills (skills or competencies) in the context of the church and contemporary African society. JETS is committed to Christ-likeness, Biblical, Innovation, Scholarship, Community (Partnership), Mission Focus, Prayer and Holistic Ministry.



TCNN:

Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TCNN) is an interdenominational and Evangelical theological institution that exists to train pastors, teachers, scholars and Bible translators for the church and the larger society, TCNN exists to provide training for Christian ministry in the service of the kingdom of God and relevant to the needs of the proprietor denominations, striving equally for the highest spiritual and academic standards.

1. Overview

1.1 Context

Nigeria with over 250 ethno-linguistic groups, is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world, blessed with human and natural resources. Nigeria is however a broken nation as reflected in the collapse of the nation's ethical structure evidenced in the brokenness of the nation's seven gates. ("Spiritual/Social, Government/Politics, Business/Economy, Education, Media, Culture/Entertainment/Arts, and Sports"). Emblematic of Nigeria's brokenness is that it is also a very divided nation with poor social cohesion being the 54th least stable country out of the 178 countries surveyed in the Fragile state index in 2005 but becoming very unstable by 2017 sliding down in the index to become the 13th least stable country out of 178 countries (www.fundforpeace.org).

The Church in Nigeria is large with 81,123,521 Christians representing 51.26% of the nation's population. Of this population of Christians, Evangelicals are 48,806,250 making up 30.8% of the population (Patrick Johnstone's 'Operation World'(2009). In spite of these impressive numbers and the nation's endowment (human and natural resources), the nation is characterized by the collapse of its ethical structure. Though there have historically been isolated efforts by Churches, Ministries etc to engage the nation in the direction of spearheading social and cultural transformation as part of the Church's mission, these efforts good intentioned as they are have largely been like drops in a wide ocean. Relatedly, dualistic mission approaches adopted by several Churches and ministries has resulted in narrow interpretations of the Great Commission, the abandonment of the 'Public square' of moral, political and social debates with the result there hasn't been robust engagement with the big national and global issues that shape the context of Ministry of the Church in the nation.

1.2 The Thinking Theology Gathering

The Nigeria gathering was organised by Anglican Diocese, COCIN, ECWA, JETS, TCNN and Tearfund. The gathering took place from 5 to 10 February 2018 at the Carter Conlon Center in Jos.

As Tearfund celebrated 50 years of working alongside churches to help transform communities around the world, we took time to reflect on the successes and failures of the past and look to how the church can be more effective in overcoming poverty in the years to come. Nigeria is where Tearfund's work began 50 years ago in response to the humanitarian crisis stemmed from the Civil War of 1967. The vision for this gathering was to create the space for Tearfund to re-engage with its historical roots and explore the theology and practice around Jubilee and how this links to overcoming poverty.

The 2018 theological gathering with the theme 'We won't Stop until poverty Stops' aimed to delivered with an African feel and flavour with dance and drumming as a recurring motif. In Nigeria like in other parts of Africa, dancing is not only a powerful form of communication but expresses something that connects with individuals in a deeper way.

Committed to hearing from young emerging voices in the region and bridging the generational divide, the gathering will be split into two starting with 2 days with the older church leaders and theologians and ending with a 1 day session for the younger theologians. There was also an intersect day in between where the delegates from different generations could share and learn from each other.

The gathering was a wonderful time of building new friendships and networks. The five-day gathering brought together 227 participants from across Nigeria and featured plenary sessions, workshops, group discussions and daily times of devotion and worship.

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Church Leaders	33
NGOs	14
Theology students	48

Some of the key themes and topics explored include:

- The principles of jubilee
- Loving your neighbour
- Relationships between Christians and Muslims
- Integral mission

2. Key learning

Each day incorporated various, devotions, workshops, plenaries as well as group discussions. Outlined below are key areas of learning and topic discussion.

Church Leaders sessions

Each morning commenced with praise and worship lead by Pastor Oscar Danladi and a time of prayer.

2.1 Day 1

2.1.1 Tearfund's History

After worship led by Oscar Fwangmum the program commenced with an historical overview of Tearfund and its work within Nigeria.

Tearfund's Advocacy Manager, Ben Osawe, took delegates through the 'Acorn to Oak' story of Tearfund, outlining the chronology of Tearfund and the humanitarian crisis in Biafra that prompted its in 1967. While other nations were "playing safe" in order not to be seen as working with the

enemy or those fighting the Nigerian government, the very need for relief solutions brought about the flagship of what from an Acorn became a huge oak under what started about 50 years ago known as Tearfund.

Tearfund's current (Paul Mershack) and former (Danladi Musa) Country Representatives followed with key successes and highlights of the work of Tearfund in Nigeria since 2006 until the present day.

2.1.2 Dance of the New Birth and Brokenness

Prof. Umar Danfulani

The speaker, starts his presentation of the Dance of New Birth and Brokenness by giving Tearfund a big kudos. According to him, Tearfund as a body has taken the steps and dance style of Jesus. This statement sets the tone for his discussion of New Birth amidst broken. In his analysis, Tearfund as a problem solver within the system is in many ways was giving beauty for ashes, hope to the hopeless in areas such as poverty reduction, combating HIV/AIDS, hunger, educational interventions, and ways for finding lasting solutions around the system.

He analyses the reasons for the brokenness in Nigeria through a historical overview of Nigeria, touching upon issues such as Boko-Haram, farmers herdsman crisis, pipeline vandalization, rising cases of militancy and situations leading to the Jos 2001 crisis and the Miss World Debacle. He argues that in the presence of these known situations, Tearfund and its global partners have been very much present in these places crisis situations rendering the best possible solutions and working templates in moving forward.

He also implores that the church gets much more involved in politics and governance, instead of the disengaged stance it has taken over the years.

2.1.3 Dance of the Nazarene

Prof. Randee O.Ijatuyi Morphe

Prof. Morphe starts his presentation highlighting that 'progress is key'; not only for the nations, but also for the individuals because there is no nation without individuals. The presentation consists of two parts: the journey from poverty; and the journey into progress.

In discussing "The Journey from Poverty," Prof. Morphe profiled the ravages and ravishments of poverty in antiquity. This was done by exploring what shaped the everyday life of the ancients, and how they navigated their world. He argued that in the ancient world, religion is not in short supply, and given its affinity to nature—an impetus for the rise of (folk) religion—a need for developing 'survival strategies' also arose to help people cope existentially. Therefore, poverty is not peculiar to us today

He then went onto discuss "The Journey into Progress: Messianic Redemption from a Holistic Perspective." He argued that the jubilee hoped for a re-ordered society Of optimal equity in all areas of social and political relations (C.f. Exod 23: 10-13). He further submits that two 'institutions' merit reflecting on, to show how their

critical reappraisal can be applied to other areas of building or renewing African institutions. Luke's gospel (with Acts) testifies to issues and problems of civilization and culture then and now, and the role of institutions in shaping both in the history of Israel and the first-century church.

2.1.4 Daily Reflection

Dr. Ruth Valerio

As the day's sessions came to an end, Dr. Ruth Valerio, the Director Global Advocacy and Influencing at Tearfund, led a session of final reflection. She established that jubilee was part of the rhythm that God gave to His people (Gen-Deut), as expressed in their work, worship and rest. We should therefore live in view of the reality that the church is the only group that exists for the benefit of its non-members. She left delegates with audience to ponder on words: poverty comes through the breakdown of relationship. Thus, we need to go back to the theology of Relationships. Participants prayed for each other in pairs, after which Dr. Valerio closed the session with prayer.

2.2 Day 2

2.2.1 DEVOTION: Who is my neighbour?

Rev. Dr. Datiri Dacholom

Rev Datiri Dacholom led the devotion from the book of Luke 10:25-37, with an alternative topic: "The Good Samaritan." He established that the question that the teacher of the law asked in verse 25 was a good question, but not an honest question. In response, Jesus gave an impossible standard (vv. 27-28); "Love the Lord your God with all that you are and all that you have and love your neighbor as yourself." In addition, Dacholom showed that while the Priest and the Levite may have had valid cultural reasons for refusing to assist the wounded man, their understanding of human dignity, ability to empathise and see God's image in the other should have aided them in doing what was truly "godly." He concluded by urging participants to reflect and apply the truths gleaned from the question: How would Jesus tell this story to you or me? Given culture, religion, tradition, and region are some factors hindering many of us from showing Christ-like love to our neighbour, the speaker concluded by enjoining all participants that Jesus calls us to... "Trust in Him, not ourselves; holiness that is positive; love 'without frontiers,'" like His for us.

2.2.2 WORKSHOP: Who is my neighbour?

Engr Steve Chia

The session was followed by an interactive workshop led by Engr Steve Chia where he established that the Ten Commandments have two major parts: love God (1-4), and love neighbor (5-10). This was further narrowed down to one; love your neighbour (Matt 7:12; John 15:12). From this understanding, Chia shared the thought that the ethical behavior of participants and other believers should be guided by love. Questions were then posed about the practical/application of terms, loving your neighbour in the workplace, which were discussed and concluded this would involve providing the best-quality product or service, keeping your word, being diligent, treating co-workers and customers with dignity and respect as fellow image bearers of God, etc.

2.2.3 PLENARY: Communion and Commission - Between Koinonia and Diakona

Prof. Tersur Aben

After describing the English equivalents of the concepts Koinonia and Diakonia (fellowship and communion), Prof. Aben argued that the biblical justification for both are at the heart of the Church's ministry. Apart from the great commission that Jesus gave to the church (i.e., to preach the good news to all nations), no other assignment ranks as high as the cultivation of koinonia and the maintenance of diakonia among church members. He highlighted that another reason why these two concepts are at the heart of the Church is that they signal to the world that the kingdom of God is here on earth. They signal the end of Satan's kingdom on earth.

The theological basis for communion and fellowship is centered in the person of Christ, in that the coming of Jesus to earth brought God's kingdom to earth and therefore the prayer taught to his disciples was for them to ask for the kingdom of God to come on earth. Jesus came to recapture the kingdom of God on earth for its rightful king. The reign of God came through the preaching, miracles, death, resurrection, ascension and heavenly enthronement of Jesus Christ. Prof Aben emphasised that the diakonia ministry of the church, even to those who seek to destroy the church, testifies to the fact of their transfer from the principles of the world into the principles of the kingdom of God. He concluded "It must be noted that it is to glory of God that we gather weekly in churches to celebrate his victory, extol his majesty, and receive spiritual blessings from our God and king. Every worship service signifies that Jesus Christ reigns as Lord and King in God's kingdom and that he would return in his glorious splendor to take us home so that where he is there we shall also be."

2.2.4 PLENARY: Dance of the New Beginning: Jubilee as a Vision for New Community

Dr Mrs Rahila Jakawa

Commencing her presentation stating that the aim of jubilee was to ensure that no Israelite remains a perpetual slave Dr Jakawa the notion that man been an enemy of the land over the years, resulting to pollution, deforestation, etc. The basic problem confronting us today as a nation is poverty. Consequently many people are unable to eat and have turned into instruments of social vices in our societies.

Jubilee was meant to bring hope to the hopeless in the society. This is especially true, in that jubilee emphasises rest; rest for the land, leading to more productivity for man in the future; and rest for the people. Jubilee is aimed at advocating for justice, which will bring peace. Poverty does not respect any status and therefore everybody should be seen as an important partner in the fight against poverty. More specifically, empowering is indispensable in the fight against poverty in any given context. Dr. Jakawa concluded her presentation that Jubilee should provide us a forum for restoration, bringing about rest to the poor.

2.3 Day 3

The young people arrived to join the church leaders for a joint day of learning, sharing and collaborating to brainstorm key strategies and tools needed to be put in place to move Nigeria forward.

Ben Osawe commenced the day's sessions highlighting the importance of dance and the use of drum in Africa and in Nigeria in particular. He shared that cultural dancing and the use of drum is an African way of living. Delegates were the presented with 30 mins of dance by local dance group Cultural Pride.

The group of 14 males and females connected the themes of the last few days using mime and dance as their mode of the drama. They successfully told the narrative of Nigeria from pre-colonisation up unto today, covering issues including missionary, modernization and urbanization, ethnic and religious crisis and the need to live in harmony. There were brief incursions of a narrator during the presentation.

2.4 Day 4

2.4.1 PLENARY: Dance of the Nazarene

Pastor Venerable Justice Okoronkwo

In introducing his presentation, Venerable Justice Okoronkwo highlighted a thread of the theology of mission from Luke 4:18-19, stating that the primary theological basis for the “release” of slaves, debts and land was Yahweh’s ownership of both the people and the land. He further establishes that the presentation was a call to the church to stop emphasizing the building of dead static monuments and start investing in raising living dynamic movements of young people who have the mandate to transform society positively as their Christian witness and obligation to church.

He highlighting four main attitudes of young Nigerians and how they shape minds and senses, manifesting in behavioral patterns that eventually lead to the sustenance of the cycle of poverty. He tagged them I-GAP, meaning: Ignorance, Greed, Anger and Pride. Ignorance takes away their sense of worth; greed takes away their sense of contentment; anger takes away their sense of appreciation and aspiration, while pride takes away their sense of wonder. When these four vices are sown, poverty will be reaped.

Okoronkwo concluded that until the messages preached by the church are communicated in deliberate social actions addressing the social problems, the church will lose grip on this segment of the society. If this is true, then the church has the key to the problem of poverty.

2.4.2 WORKSHOP: Dance of the Nazarene

Pastor Oscar Danladi

This interactive workshop session, delivered an integral theology of mission that inspired and motivated the young people into thinking and acting integrally from an intentionally biblical worldview in every sphere of society. Pst. Oscar Danladi further discussed the workshop with an analogy he tagged: “The God-Man Dance: The making of History.” According to C.S Lewis, “God and Man are in a dance...” The very nature of many dances is: There are two partners; one leads and the other follows. Hence, the movement is fluid, alive and dynamic. The relationship can be described as sovereign-freedom. One partner is sovereign the other is free. In the dance, God leads. He is absolutely sovereign but not in a fatalistic or deterministic fashion. Man follows God’s lead, but he is free, responsible, and responds to God’s lead. But man is not autonomous. As they dance together, history is made. Christians/Church must then be willing to make history, and not bury their head in the sand ignoring the brokenness around and claiming to be “praying for god to intervene...”

2.4.3 DEVOTION: Who is my neighbour? The other and I?

Rev. Sr. Dr. Gesila Nneka Uzukwu

Rev. Sr. Dr. Gesila Nneka Uzukwu began her presentation with a quote by Emmanuel Levinas, that “The responsibility to love my neighbour is always there, even if I choose to ignore it.”

We live in a stratified society marked by differences in ethnic identities, language, nationalities, sexuality, occupation, income, wealth, social status, body form, culture, and other features that may not be visible to the human eyes. We either create or at best emphasise (especially those that are part of our human variability) these differences, to appreciate the richness of our diversities or at worst to scorn and reject the persons we do not want and cannot be.

The thrust of her presentation was an attempts to understand the reason why there is so much pain in the society despite our religious inclinations. It sought, in the exposition of the story of the neighbouring Samaritan of Luke 10:25-37, to look at how the story contributes to our understanding of ‘who one’s neighbour is’, how the text could be a paradigm to apprehend the effect of living in a divided and broken world, and how the Church can deal with the whole question of the ideals, identity and mission of Christ in a divided and broken humanity. We have a responsibility to identify the “other” in the “I”, to be concerned about the “other” as I am concerned about “myself” and the responsibility to love my neighbour, even if I am capable of choosing to ignore this responsibility.

Dr. Uzukwu submitted in conclusion that the church has contributed greatly in tackling some of the issues in our society, advocating for the inclusion and growth of every citizen and for alleviating the problem of those in need. But there is still more to be done – to create a concrete community of love for the other, treat the other as me in relation to myself, speak for the other as I would speak for myself, and provide for the other as I would provide for myself.

2.4.4 PLENARY: Dance of the New Birth and Brokenness

Pastor Chorwunna Bako Gonjing

The speaker started by looking at the history of Nigeria. A timeline of some of the factors that resulted in a broken nation such as nepotism, tribalism, religion and poverty among others situations were noted and seen as the major cause that have left the country broken.

The speaker noted that the birth of Tearfund came as a result of the darkness that engulfed the Nigerian nation in May 1967 when the Eastern region was declared a sovereign nation called Biafra. Tearfund came about as a result of churches in the United Kingdom (UK) coming together to look at ways of making relief materials reach troubled Biafra as the International Red Cross who were then at the forefront of the war situation were not able to cover much as the war crisis deepened and a humanitarian crises was already looming and already escalating beyond them.

3. Connect Groups

Throughout the gathering there were various opportunities for delegates to discuss in groups some of the key themes that were brought out from the presentations. It also gave delegates the opportunity to start thinking about potential solutions and action plans needed to over some of the key issues that had been raised.

3.1 Day 1

Some of the questions that guided the discussion were:

1. What is the central concern of the paper?
2. Are there any other perspectives to what has been presented?
3. How can this knowledge be applied practically in the context of Nigeria?
4. What are the challenges of this application and how do we overcome them?

Group 1.

1. Christians need to get involved in politics and to go back into discipleship so as to lead others into understanding our real identity as those who dance the dance of Christ.
2. Developing market place leadership and discipleship.
3. There is need for a paradigm shift from being consumers to being producers and sustenance of resources by doing the needful.

Group 2.

1. Intervention and investment strategies must also address, current survival issues so as to engender real hope and restoration with a Biblical foundation.

Group 3.

1. The church should be more engaged and desir greater role in politics.
2. Theological institutions should have a more robust and context specific curriculum.
3. The church/community should demand for the implementation of our laws.

Group 4.

1. Faithful older generations to intensively mentor (disciple) the younger generation in every aspect of life.
2. Tensional literacy education/empowerment that is Bible based and holistic.
3. Harnessing the strengths of all church denominations for a holistic ministry and practical Christianity.

Group 5.

1. Rally around CAN (Christian Association of Nigeria) and speak in one voice prophetically.
2. Curriculum should be reviewed holistically and made to address holistic real life issues.
3. Proper sensitization of members should be made for members for active participation in politics.

Group 6.

1. Mentor our youths to be engaged in society—labor with dignity.
2. Youth must be involved in mentoring their peers.
3. Ministers of the gospel must use the pulpits to shape society positively.

3.2 Day 2

On the second day the connect groups particularly focused on the theology of what had been discussed and how this had challenged their own thoughts and beliefs. Each group then presented their action plans which included 3 top priorities needed to focussed on in order to move forward. Questions discussed were:

1. What have you heard that has challenged your theology? Discuss different viewpoints?
2. What is the central concern of the paper?
3. Are there any other perspectives to what has been presented?
4. How can this knowledge be applied practically in the context of Nigeria?
5. Why is communion and commission important?

Action Plans:

Group 1

1. Our Christianity should be demonstrated practically by living sacrificially
2. Leadership development in the church for the market place –we can achieve this by integrating public theology in seminary curriculum and teaching from the pulpit
3. There should be an effort at promoting unity in Christianity by de-emphasizing denominationalism, encouraging inter denominational marriage.

Group 2

1. Obeying God in fellowship and acre does not depending our convenience: it is a command from God that must be obeyed by his grace

2. We must all engage in Biblical and ongoing discipleship based on evangelism.
3. We must carry out meaningful engagement that encompasses (and sometimes involves others) in counselling, enquiry, focus group discussion, etc, since some people we attempt to help may be fraudulent or even dangerous.

Group 3.

1. Deepening vertical relationship and fellowship with God through:
 - a. Personal/family devotion
 - b. Bible studies/discussions
 - c. Prayers/fasting
2. Teaching (sound biblical teaching).
 - a. Preaching
 - b. House fellowship/breaking of bread
 - c. Discipleship
 - d. Giving/sharing of resources
3. Accountability
 - a. Mentoring and coaching
 - b. Local houses of prayer
 - c. Visitation

Group 4

1. Involvement in holistic ministry on individual and church bases through provision of social services/care, refil aids, empowerment and evangelism
2. Speaking out against injustice in every sphere of structures that promote injustice eg. Women subjugation, underage marriage etc.
3. Encourage Biblical worldview through teaching, preaching, discipleship (formally and informally).

Group 5

1. Christian social workers, pastors, Christian educators should lay emphasis on salvation in their teachings leading to transformed lives
2. Jubilee should be concretized by taking responsibility towards humanity and creation.
3. The church should speak against injustice and be the voice for the voiceless.

3.3 Day 3

The connect group for this day brought together the older theologians with their younger counterparts. They were to collectively reflect in on the dance presentation performed at the start of the day by the group Cultural Pride.

Group 1

The group noted on how the older generation can motivate, integrate and to contextualize the younger generation

Group 2

Noted that theology should be contextualized

Love and constant evaluation and investigation of our theology

Group 3

A return to the holistic discipleship and leadership development

Reviewing theology based curriculums

A deliberate effort in bridging the gap through

- Character
- Empowerment
- creativity

Group 4

Need for the church to emphasis discipleship and character development through understanding the gospel and transforming each other

Understanding each other

Conducive atmosphere to creating a path for thoughts creation were both the older generation and the younger generation make idea exchange.

Group 5

Presenting of theology for the people

Preaching to the people and disciplining them

Marketplace leadership and discipleship

Group 6

Engaging both generation

Use of technology to hold each generation better

The need and willingness to accept responsibilities.

Group 7

Theology should draw a live plan

Productivity between both generations should be sustained

Active church perception in our development

Group 8

African Christians should help and promote the gospel properly

Discipleship and mentoring from both generation

There should be creation care and stewardship.

Group 9

Deliberate introduction of theological discussions in our homes and offices by training and re-training

Inculcate drama as a form of making a connection in our teachings

Create a common ground and platforms for both generation to meet and share ideas

Group 10

All round empowerment in all aspects of life especially for the younger generation

Holistic ideas of ministry

Practical application of the scripture in the society must specially outside the church

Actors of theology should reflect that which we say and do.

4. Summary statement

‘Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you.’

(Leviticus 25:10, NIV)

As Tearfund celebrated 50 years of working alongside churches to help transform communities around the world, we took the time to reflect on the successes and failures of the past and look to how the church can be more effective in overcoming poverty in the years to come. Nigeria is where Tearfund’s work began 50 years ago in response to the humanitarian crisis stemmed from the Civil War of 1967. The Nigeria Thinking Theology gathering created the space for Tearfund to re-engage with its historical roots and explore the theology and practice around Jubilee and how this links to overcoming poverty.

Theological reflection is a key principle of Tearfund’s work, as we believe that it is essential to our ability to truly seek the kingdom of God in the course of our work. Contextual reflection is a key aspect of this, as it recognises that the Bible is read and applied differently in different contexts, and that theological ideas need to be understood, articulated and applied in particular contexts if they are to have a sustainable long term impact on the life and work of the church in these contexts. Tearfund’s Theological Paper on Jubilee emphasises the importance of restoration and liberation within God’s mission to redeem his creation. These themes, and the principles enshrined in Jubilee are essential to the work of Tearfund and the church in Africa - and are already a part of our understanding of and reflection on our work in this region.

This gathering was unique for two key reasons, firstly given the historical linkage between Tearfund’s founding and Nigeria, in particular, the fact that Tearfund was formed as a response to the civil war in Nigeria during which it intervened to deliver life saving relief to people impacted by the humanitarian crisis. Secondly, the fact that it marks 50 years since the birth of Tearfund. In covering the last 50 years another crucial element of the gathering was bridging the gap between the younger and older generation. The Thinking Theology Jubilee gathering was committed to hearing from young emerging voices in the nation and bridging the generational divide. For this reason it was split into two; starting with a 2 day session with the older church leaders and theologians and ending with a 1 day session for the younger theologians. There was an intersection day in between where the delegates from different generations shared and learned from each other.

The gathering with the theme ‘We won’t Stop until poverty Stops’ was delivered with an African feel and flavour with dance and drumming as a recurring motif. In Nigeria like in other parts of Africa, dancing is not only a powerful form of communication but expresses something that connects with individuals in a deeper way.

The objectives of the gathering were:

- Acknowledge the areas where the Nigerian Church has not done well in the last 50 years in addressing the causes and consequences of Poverty as well as the lessons learnt with a view to integrating these
- Repositioning
- Refreshing the ministries of the Church
- Undertake biblical reflections leading to shaping the Church's responses to addressing poverty in all its forms consistent with the Salt and light imagery in Matthew 5:13-16
- Explore the Jubilee themes of reconciliation, restoration, redemption, renewal etc such that the Church becomes an instrument for losing the chains of injustice, which lies at the root broken relationships and poverty (Isaiah 58)
- Greater integration of theology in development processes such that we see inspired actions that bring about the healing and flourishing of the Nigerian nation.

The sessions presented during the gathering were:

- Dance of New Birth and Brokenness
- Who is my Neighbour?(Luke 10:25-37)
- Dance of the Nazarene (Luke 4:18-19)
- Dance of Communion and Commission: Between Koinonia and Diakona
- Dance of new beginning: Jubilee as vision for new Community (Lev 25)
- Dance of Hope- Jubilee, renewal, reconciliation and Restoration (Isaiah 65:18-25)

Six key thematic issues were identified by participants around which the Church should pursue joint agendas that results in the healing and flourishing of the Nigerian nation. These were:

- Broken Relationships
- Theological Education
- Bridging the generational gap
- Development of Market place Leadership (Politics, Economy, etc)
- Discipleship and Mentoring
- Advocacy

Steps towards developing a generic framework for implementation of the thematic issues generated at the Thinking Theology gathering are listed as follows:

- STEP 1: Develop a document to stimulate conversations on follow-up plans
- STEP 2: Create Awareness on plan for development of generic framework for implementation of thematic issues from the Thinking Theology Gathering.
- STEP 3: Develop criteria for invitation of 3-5 participants from each of the thematic issues to a 5-day strategic planning session to develop a 3 year generic framework/strategic plan for implementation of thematic issues
- STEP 4: Select 3-5 participants from each of the thematic issues to attend a 5-day strategic planning session for development of a generic framework for implementation of thematic issues from the Thinking Theology Gathering.
- STEP 5: Send a template to those not participating at the strategic planning session to generate issues related to the themes, which will be fed into the strategic planning process.
- STEP 6: Hold 5-day strategic planning session to develop the generic framework.
- STEP 7: Publish the generic framework developed from the 5-day strategic planning process

- STEP 8: Send-e-copy of generic framework to each participant that participated in the Thinking Theology Gathering
- STEP 9: Each Thematic issue becomes a program area to be implemented so a Team Leader is selected for each programme area with a steering team to ensure implementation of the activities related to each programme area.

6. Next steps

Robust conversations were held at the end of which eight broad themes emerged as key clusters around which the Nigerian Church can engage to bring healing and transformation to the nation. These eight themes were

- Broken Relationships - loving your neighbour
- Theological Education
- Development of Market place Leadership (Politics, Economy etc),
- Discipleship and Mentoring
- Advocacy
- Networking and partnership
- Resource development

Each delegates at the gathering signed up to one or more of the themes above which were of particular interest to them.

6.1 Transitioning from talk to implementation

There was a sense that participants at the end of the gathering wanted to see a departure from the usual approaches where churches hold robust discussions at conferences and gatherings without accompanying implementation of the outcomes within the context of the nation. For this reason a whatsapp group was created to enable participants to continue to connect and share key thoughts and ideas to move the discussion over the gathering into action. The initial idea had been to create small cluster meetings based around the key themes after the event, however this was proving difficult to do.

As a new approach a proposal was put forward to hold a 3 day strategy session to develop a three year a strategic plan (2018 - 2021). From each of the thematic groups, three participants were requested to put themselves forward as the group leads and commit to attending the three day strategy day and providing leadership and guidance in their thematic area.

7. Acknowledgements

We would like to explicitly acknowledge the efforts of all members of the local organising committee of this gathering. They worked tirelessly to make this event possible, helping to coordinate the complex planning and implementation with patience and dedication.

Special mention must also go to Tearfund's Nigeria country team. They committed time and effort to ensuring the gathering consisted of engaging and informative sessions, bringing together some of the very best speakers on holistic mission and the topics we engaged with.

We would also like to acknowledge the wonderful support and enthusiastic cooperation of Promise Salwu. Thank you for all your efforts in making Nigeria Gathering run as smoothly as possible.

Finally, we would like to express appreciation to all the individuals who attended the gathering. Thank you for your interest in, and passion for, being 'salt and light' in your communities. We recognise that it is only through individuals, churches and organisations seeking to respond to the holistic needs of individuals and our communities in a Christ-centred way that will truly see individuals flourish and communities thrive.

The Thinking Theology Nigeria Team