

# POST COVID-19 NIGERIAN CHURCH

## SEVEN CHARACTERISTICS OF A POST COVID-19 NIGERIAN CHURCH



WHERE JESUS CHRIST IS CENTRAL AND NOT GOs, PRESIDENTS, FOUNDERS ETC.



CASTING AN ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVE OF HOPE AND HEALING FOR A BROKEN NATION.



SAVING LIVES, PROTECTING LIVELIHOODS AND SOWING SEEDS FOR FUTURE RESILIENCE IN THE MIDST OF ADVERSITY.

### A NIGERIAN CHURCH



WITH AN INTEGRAL BALANCE PERSPECTIVE OF MINISTRY (PROCLAIMING AND DEMONSTRATING OF THE GOSPEL)



WITH A JUSTICE AGENDA, UPHOLDING THE RIGHTS OF THE POOR, WEAK AND VULNERABLE.



BEING AT THE FOREFRONT OF SUPPORTING THE NATION'S TRANSITION TO A FREE, JUST AND COMPASSIONATE NATION.



ENGAGED IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE, SUPPORTING THE EMERGENCE OF AN ALTERNATIVE ETHICAL STRUCTURE FOR THE NATION AND INFLUENCING ITS SEVEN GATES.

#MovementForSustainablePostCOVID19Nigeria

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...A different World; A different Church, A different Nation.

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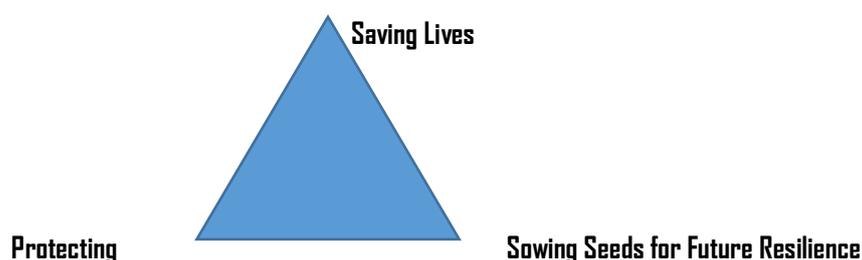
## **Worlds on Marble**

‘Church: God’s new Community...God intends us to penetrate the World. Christian Salt has no business to remain snugly in elegant little ecclesiastical saltcellars; our place is to be rubbed into the secular community, as salt is rubbed into meat, to stop it going bad. And when society does go bad, we Christians tend to throw up our hands in pious horror and reproach the non-Christian world; but should we not rather reproach ourselves? One can hardly blame unsalted meat for going bad. It cannot do anything else. The real question to ask is: Where is the salt?—**John Stott**

**1.0 Background on COVID-19:** On December 31st 2019, China alerted World Health Organization (WHO) to several cases of unusual pneumonia in Wuhan, a port city of 11 million people in the central Hubei province. On January 1st 2020. On January 7th 2020, officials announced they had identified a new virus, according to the WHO. The novel virus was named 2019-nCoV and was identified as belonging to the coronavirus family, which includes SARS and the common cold. On January 30th 2020, the WHO declared coronavirus a global emergency as the death toll in China jumped to 170, with 7,711 cases reported in the country, where the virus had spread to all 31 provinces. On February 1st 2020, the WHO announced that the new coronavirus would be called "COVID19". There are currently 537,178 confirmed cases and 24,126 deaths, 124,440 Recovered cases from the coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak as of March 27th 2020<sup>1</sup>. The first confirmed case of the pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 in Nigeria was announced on 27 February 2020, when an Italian citizen in Lagos tested positive for the virus<sup>2</sup>. In Nigeria as at 16th April 2020, there are total confirmed cases stood at (442cases), Total discharged(152), Total deaths (13)<sup>3</sup> <sup>1</sup>with currently active cases put at 267 people. There is currently huge fears of community transmission of the virus.

**2.0 COVID-19 pandemic and Multi-dimensional impacts on the Nigerian Economy:** has brought about multi-dimensional disruptions spanning social, economic, environmental, political etc domains of society. Nigeria is an Oil dependent nation, which places it at huge risks of vulnerability to external shocks from international oil price fluctuations, which has negative socio economic impacts on the poorest segments of society who constitute 89% of the Informal sector providing employment to 90% of Nigerians. Prior to the current truce among oil producing countries to cut down the oil price, the oil price war between Russia and Saudi Arabia led to a 33% drop in prices and went as low as 50%. This led to massive revenue losses for Nigeria and other oil dependent nations.

**3.0 COVID-19 Pandemic: Challenge and opportunities:** However with the massive negative impacts and challenges comes huge opportunities for the Nigerian Church to lead the way for the nation by modelling seven key characteristics that leads to the saving of lives, protection of livelihoods and the sowing of seeds for future resilience.



**4.0 Jubilee Vision of Society and Seeds for Future Resilience in Nigeria:** We believe as Church in Nigeria that the biblical concept of jubilee gives us a framework as a source of hope and inspiration for sowing seeds of future Resilience for the nation. We recognize that it is 102 years since the Spanish Flu (Influenza) pandemic of 1918, which began in January 1918 and

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<sup>1</sup> Nigeria Centre for Disease Control(080097000010)

ended in December 1920 resulting in the deaths of an estimated **17-50 Million<sup>2</sup> people globally**. Given that, the Biblical Jubilee is 50 years, society has an opportunity to rest and to reset relationships. The implication here is that it has been two Sabbaths of 50 years between 1918 and 2020, in other words the transcendent God ushered in two periods of rest and reset on humans and creation in 1918 and 2020.

**4.1 What is Jubilee?** :The **Jubilee** (Hebrew **Yovel** יובל) year, is the year at the end of a seven cycles of Sabbatical years (Hebrew *Shmita*), The English term *Jubilee* derives from the Hebrew term *yobel* (via Latin: *Jubilaeus*), which in turn derives from *yobhel*, meaning *ram*. The Jubilee year was announced by a blast on an instrument made from a ram's horn, during that year's Yom Kippur<sup>3</sup>.

**4.1.1 What is the Jubilee Vision of Society?** Miles Giljam in his extracts from Tearfund Restorative Economy Report(2015) put forth a brilliant summary of the three demands of the Jubilee as follows:

**4.1.2 Jubilee** speaks of *environmental restoration*. Each jubilee year was also a Sabbath year – a time of ‘solemn rest for the land’. Jubilees were about sufficiency, recognition of limits, the need for God’s creation to rest. They recognised that the land, and by extension the rest of natural creation, belongs to all of us and ultimately to God (Leviticus 25:23; Psalm 24:1). As Chris Wright says ‘The Jubilee laws of Israel regulated the Israelites’ ownership and use of the land so that it was sustainable and so that shalom might exist in the community’.

**4.1.3 Jubilee** also emphasises *rest for those living in poverty*. Liberty was proclaimed throughout the land; everyone, slaves included, was free to go home. No one was to lend money at interest to those in need, or sell them food for profit. While markets and trade were allowed, the jubilee principles aimed to ensure that human welfare was not made subservient to these markets. And if these principles were followed correctly, then ‘there need be no poor people among you’ (Deuteronomy 15:4), just as there were no needs left unmet in the community described in Acts 4.

**4.1.4** Finally, the idea of jubilee proclaims the need for *fair allocation of wealth*. God tells Moses, ‘The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers. Throughout the land that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land’ (Leviticus 25: 23–24). This meant a managed reset of land ownership: as author, Kim Tan puts it, ‘Every fifty years each family had an opportunity to start afresh – free of debt and in possession of their own land.’

The idea of jubilee is intimately bound up with the restoration of **right relationships between God, people and creation**. When humans act with wisdom, on the basis of steadfast love and justice, they act in ways that accord with the unity and wholeness of creation (shalom). But **the bonds of this crucial web of relationships can unravel as a result of what the Bible calls ‘iniquity’** – for example, through idolatry (worshipping things rather than God), injustice or ignorance. When that happens, the result is catastrophic damage: as Isaiah puts it, ‘The earth dries up and withers’ (Isaiah 24:4). Atonement is the central element of Jesus’ ministry – an act of self-sacrifice that was both intended to deal with sin and usher in ‘His Kingdom come’ on earth. **Atonement is about reuniting relationships that have been torn asunder; about healing, reconciliation and peace in the fullest sense.**

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<sup>2</sup> www.google.com

<sup>3</sup> www.google.com

Atonement is also a very practical idea that finds its political and economic expression in jubilee. Jubilees, and the closely linked idea of sabbaths (every seven days and every seven years), set out concrete procedures for how to correct economic, social and environmental imbalances – in effect, providing an instruction manual for how to build and maintain a *restorative economy*.

### **The restorative economy**

A restorative economy depends on *restorative living* – with the whole of society engaged in repairing creation, taking opportunities to be producers rather than just passive consumers, building resilient communities that are creative and fun to be part of, and restoring bonds of fellowship and friendship. **What might it look like to organise the Nigerian economy around the idea of jubilee?** We argue that a restorative economy will:

- 1) Ensure we live within environmental limits** – so that the **Nigerian economy** works with, rather than against, the creation that God has given us. We must steward the earth carefully and share the proceeds of that natural wealth *fairly*, just as jubilees reset land ownership on an equal per capita basis.
- 2) Ensure Nigerian is able to meet their basic needs** – providing an enabling environment and basic floor of economic security so that every Nigerian can flourish and realise their full potential.
- 3) Keep inequality within reasonable limits** – including both income inequality and wealth inequality, at local, state and national levels.

## **5. The Seven Characteristics of a Post COVID-19 Nigerian Church: Interpretations with Jubilee Lenses**

### **5.1 First principles for understanding the Seven Characteristics of a Post COVID-19 Nigeria**

Oscar Fwangmun Danladi in his engaging work with the title *‘The Church in the age of Digital Babylon: Rethinking the Model of the Church in a fast Changing Context’* (2020), put forward seven first principles which we are applying as key foundations in understanding the seven characteristics of a post COVID-19 Nigerian Church. These principles are:

#### **5.1.1 Family-community based model rather than Organizational-based Model**

God’s call is a call to relationship and community. The family based home Churches in the New Testament was a sustainable model which embedded the community, modelling and bringing God’ truth to the community leading to reconciliation, healing and social cohesion. Examples of key home or house Churches in the New Testament were found *in Acts 1:13, Acts 2:42, Acts 2:46, Acts 5:42, Acts 20:20, 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 16:19, Colossians 4:15, Romans 16:5, Mathew 18:20, Philemon 1:2*. Over the years however, the organizational model replaced this united community model. Though the organizational model contributed in creating order, systematization of Church activities and ministries over the years, it resulted in a sense in alienating the Church from its community as members and indeed the Church becomes

inclusive with members becoming preoccupied with contentions around who occupies what office in the hierarchy of the Church.

### **5.1.2 Outward centred rather than inward centred**

As we saw in 5.1.1 above as Churches take on the organizational model members become preoccupied with themselves, their needs and the Church becomes increasingly inclusive. This inward centeredness makes the Church comfortable and becomes a disincentive to reach out to broken individuals, communities and nations. As this happens, the Church finds itself not only focusing on its interest but also the General overseers, Presidents or founders increasingly become objects of adoration. This is not because they necessarily want to be adored but that the expression of fallen humanity is usually reflected in members' actions that seek in many instances to make the General overseers, Presidents or founders a small god, seen as perfect and infallible etc. This is a weakness of humans as we also see in John 6:15 that the people in Jesus days wanted to make him King after being witnesses of his miracles but he turned it down.

### **5.1.3 Movement rather than institution**

The biblical model as revealed in the ministry of Jesus is of a movement rather than an institution. In calling twelve disciples, the Bible said-'He called them to himself' so they can be formed and then sent out. As a movement they were so effective that it was said of the disciples, that 'they turned the world upside down' (Acts 17:6). Beyond this New Testament picture, which shows the effectiveness of the Church as a movement, is the fact that just from calling twelve disciples a global Church emerged.

### **5.1.4 Authentic relationships rather than social gathering**

The Church is a place for authentic relationship not social gatherings. True worship can only take place in the context of authentic relationship with God and between humans. Unfortunately, many Church gatherings have become social gatherings where members gather to meet to exchange business cards, new business contacts, socialize etc. These things are not bad in themselves however in many cases Churches unconsciously slips into the pit of nothing more than a social club or social gathering.

### **5.1.5 Relevance rather than prestige**

As Churches move towards becoming institutions they integrate complex organizational approaches and structures to support these approaches. Again, given the fallen nature of humans, the attraction of ministry is about positions, power, prestige rather than relevance as instruments of transformation committing to promoting the establishment of the Kingdom of God in the lives of individuals, communities and nations. This is the reason why in many parts of our nation supposedly vibrant Churches stay side by side huge levels of brokenness in the nation.

### **5.1.6 Invest in building people rather than in projects**

Church projects and buildings have taken the stage so much that there is very little investment in building people. The drive to have the biggest Church buildings, Campgrounds, Retreat centre displaces the interest to build people. Tragically, the attachment to Church buildings in many denominations has communicated an unconscious message to members that the building

represents the Church to the extent that given the disruptions caused by COVID-19 resulting in Lock downs with Church congregation not being able to meet; several Church members are unable to recognize that worship in their family unit is a Church.

### **5.1.7 Vocational discipleship rather than intellectual Bible Study**

The command to disciple the nations in Mathew 28 goes beyond an intellectual Bible Study. The call to the Church to reconcile all broken people, communities and nations is a call to vocational discipleship which influences the domains of society towards wholeness and transformation of society..

## **5.2 Jubilee framework Interpretation of the seven Characteristics of a Post COVID-19 Nigerian Church**

### **5.2.1 Nigerian Church Where Jesus Christ is Central and not the General Overseers(GOs), Presidents or Founders**



The Atonement as we saw in (4.1.4) above is the central element of Jesus' ministry – an act of self-sacrifice that was both intended to deal with sin and usher in 'His Kingdom come' on earth. Jesus Christ is the Lamb God(John 1:29) who through the his shed blood atoned for the sins of humanity. As the slain Lamb all worship are centred on Him in Heaven as we read from( Revelation 5:6).*'Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the centre of the throne encircled by the four living creatures and Elders'* Given that, the appropriate way of praying is 'Your Kingdom Come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven'. We argue that true worship that reflects God's will on earth is Jesus Christ centred. Additionally when we read Colossians 1:15-17 – *' He is the image of the invisible God, the first born over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together'*. The implication of these verses is that the pre-COVID template of ministry which many Churches operated from which seemed to place the General Overseer, President or Founders as the centre of motions, movements , worship etc needs to give way for the adoption a post COVID-19 outlook where Jesus Christ is rightly worshiped and adored as the head of His Church. This is so because if the Church would make the needed difference in the lives of individuals, Communities and the nation, the Lord of the Church must be at the centre of His Church!

### 5.2.2 A Nigerian Church casting an alternative narrative of hope and healing for a broken nation



The jubilee vision of society following the command from God- **‘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)** provides an alternative vision of hope and healing for a Nigeria broken by the disruptions of COVID-19. This is so because the Jubilee is a time for the following:

- Restoration of possession and families (Lev 25:10b).
- A time of increase and multiplication (Lev 25: 10b).
- A season of deliverance from bondage, debt and indebtedness. (Lev 25:39-43)

The implication was that the Jubilee provided an opportunity for a new start. A fresh hope to members to be reintegrated into community freed from the bondage of indebtedness. This provided a common floor for everyone to grow afresh.

In this sense, the Jubilee vision enables the Nigerian Church to recast the current narrative with a view to putting forth a fresh narrative of hope and healing from the delirious effects of COVID-19

### 5.2.3 A Nigerian Church saving lives, protecting livelihoods and sowing seeds for future resilience in the midst of adversity.



We noted in (2.0) above that the implication of reduced earnings from oil and COVID-19 is the fact that the World Bank predicted a 6%-8% reduction in Nigeria’s GDP with the International monetary fund predicting a 3.4% contraction in Nigeria’s economy in 2020 depending on the scenario that plays out<sup>4</sup>. We noted further that the impact of a contraction of

<sup>4</sup> Africa Pulse Report: Impact of Corona Virus on African Economies, April 2020, World Bank

Nigeria's oil dependent economy is that the poorest segments of the society who constitute 89% of the Informal sector providing employment to 90% of Nigerians would withstand the worst of the harsh economic realities, which is likely to translate to increased insecurity and conflicts. A jubilee vision of society as we noted in 5.2.2 above is a season of deliverance from bondage, debt and indebtedness. (Lev 25:39-43). Looking in from Jubilee lenses means prioritizing the **saving of lives, protecting livelihoods and sowing seeds for future resilience in the midst of adversity**. This implies that the Church will support the nation to do the following:

- **Ensure every Nigerian is able to meet their basic needs** – providing an enabling environment and basic floor of economic security so that every Nigerian can flourish and realise their full potential.
- **Keep inequality within reasonable limits** – including both income inequality and wealth inequality, at local, state and national levels.

Drawing from Tearfund quality standards apart from the above roles, the Church will be 'committed to helping people to understand, reduce and manage the risks they face, as well as to address the drivers of vulnerability. This includes supporting people and communities in developing resilient livelihoods, strengthening social cohesion, improving access to services, stewarding environmental resources, reducing disaster risk and adapting to climate change'<sup>5</sup>

#### **5.2.4 A Nigerian Church with an integral balanced perspective of ministry (proclaiming and demonstrating of the gospel).**



Jesus in the Nazareth Manifesto (Luke 4:18-19) put forth the jubilee vision of an alternative Society when he read from Isaiah 61:1 clearly advancing the path for not only his ministry engagement but as a model for Churches that will follow after his ministry on earth in these words:

*'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour'*

This ministry approach adopts a 'Wholistic' or Integral perspective. The word 'Wholistic' comes from the Greek word *HOLOS* meaning: total, whole, complete, entirely. This ministry approach integrates 'Proclamation and Demonstration' of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Proclamation has to do with such engagements like Evangelism, Church planting etc. while Demonstration has to do with social engagements which involves showing the love of God to a broken world for instance giving out relief to Internally displaced persons in refugee camps

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<sup>5</sup> Tearfund Quality Standards Documents, 2019

after conflicts, floods or other disasters, upholding the rights of poor vulnerable persons through the pursuit of justice issues etc. In essence, Wholistic ministry has to do with ministering or addressing the total (complete, whole, entire) needs of individuals, communities or nations.

‘Integral mission’ as wholistic mission is the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. ‘It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ. If we ignore the world we betray the word of God which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the word of God we have nothing to bring to the world. Justice and justification by faith, worship and political action, the spiritual and the material, personal change and structural change belong together. As in the life of Jesus, being, doing and saying are at the heart of our integral task. In-order to understand Integral Mission, there is the need to recognize the centrality of Jesus Christ. His life of sacrificial service is the pattern for Christian discipleship. In his life and through his death Jesus modelled identification with the poor and inclusion of the other. On the cross God shows us how seriously he takes justice, reconciling both rich and poor to himself as he meets the demands of his justice. We serve by the power of the risen Lord through the Spirit as we journey with the poor, finding our hope in the subjection of all things under Christ and the final defeat of evil. The grace of God is the heartbeat of integral mission. As recipients of undeserved love we are to show grace, generosity and inclusiveness. Grace redefines justice as not merely honouring a contract, but helping the disadvantaged’<sup>6</sup>.

### **5.2.5 A Nigerian Church with a justice agenda, upholding the rights of the poor, weak and vulnerable.**



Debt cancellation is a key demand of a Jubilee vision of society in-order to give the poor who are often indebted a fresh start. Jubilee 2000 movement pointed that debt is a justice issue for the following reasons:

- That debt cancellation is a question of justice.
- That debt is a tool of power.

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<sup>6</sup> Lausanne Conference paper on Integral Mission

The four elements in Leviticus 25 that relate to the concept of Jubilee and debt cancellation are:

- All fields lie fallow.
- Family members have the right to redeem family land that had been sold below its full market value when the family were in dire circumstances.
- All debts are remitted.
- All slaves are set free

In pushing for the Jubilee vision of society therefore, the rights of the poor, weak and vulnerable are prioritized such these groups benefit from cash transfers and cancellation of their debts to enable them survive the adverse effects of the impact of COVID-19 on their businesses. Loans on soft terms with Moratorium on repayments, tax holidays for specified period. This is because they run the informal sector and Small, medium enterprises that would be impacted negatively due to their inability to refinance their businesses. These concessions will allow these businesses have a fresh start which from a jubilee perspective points to the principle of giving the most vulnerable members of society an opportunity to be reintegrated into community.

Beyond the issue of the rights of the poor, weak and vulnerable in terms of economic justice is the whole question of the security of these segments of society who often withstand the worst of the cyclic conflicts in Nigeria. Below is a catalogue of the pain the poor, weak and Vulnerable have borne from 2015-2018:

#### **The Poor, Weak and Vulnerable: A Tale of Blood and Tears**

- Between 2010 and 2015, Nigeria lost 6,500 citizens, \$14.7bn and 62,000 displaced in record 850 perennial attacks and counter attacks by farming and herder communities in the Middle<sup>7</sup>
- In 2015 the attacks on Farming communities spread to the North West geopolitical zones of Nigeria comprising Zamfara, Sokoto, Katsina, Kaduna state especially Birnin Gwari area. However, many of these attacks were unreported . In parts of the North West, including Southern Kaduna, Birnin Gwari in Kaduna state and much of Zamfara state vast swathes of ungoverned territory have been taken over by rustlers, bandits and vigilantes whose preferred currency is blood.
- On October 21st 2017, there was a spike in the attacks on the North West Farming communities, which resulted in a national outcry as 120 Farmers were killed in Zamfara<sup>8</sup>. On 16th February 33 were killed<sup>9</sup> while in April 26 Farmers were killed in a fresh attack<sup>10</sup>. Between March 13 and May 6, 2018, Herdsmen have killed not fewer than 84 persons, including 11 men of the Nigerian Army in Birnin Gwari<sup>11</sup> while in June 5 persons were killed<sup>12</sup>In Sokoto state 40 Farmers were killed by herdsmen in early July 2018<sup>13</sup>
- As at April 2018, the number of displaced persons in Benue state was more than 180,000 sheltered in Makeshift camps and Primary schools<sup>14</sup>. There are over 40,000 Orphans who are hungry and abandoned, 200,000 Secondary School students, out of School, 100,000 Primary School students out of School,

<sup>7</sup> Responses to Farmers and Herders Conflicts in the Middle Belt of Nigeria- Chris Kwaja and Bukola Ademola-Adel belt region of Nigeria comprising (Plateau, Benue, Taraba, Adamawa, Southern Kaduna stateehin, 2017

<sup>8</sup><http://www.nigerianmonitor.com/bodies-of-120-people-killed-by-fulaniherdsmen-buried-in-zamfara/>.

<sup>9</sup> [sunnewsonline.com/gunmen-kill-33-in-zamfara/](http://sunnewsonline.com/gunmen-kill-33-in-zamfara/)),

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2018/04/13>.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.icirigeria.org/question-85-killed-inone-month-%E2%88%92-whats-in-birnin-gwari/>)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/06/armed-bandits-attack-village-birnin-gwarikill-5>).

<sup>13</sup> <http://saharareporters.com/2018/07/13/32-get-mass-burial-nass-tambuwal-govscondemn-sokoto-killings>.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/.../274325-benue-idps-returning-homeofficial.htm>.

Schools shut for more than two years<sup>15</sup> Between 2011 and 2017, Benue state lost N173, 440 billion worth of property to Herders and Farmers Conflicts.

- Plateau state has borne it's experience of attacks with a spike on June 23rd -25th 2018 leading to the death of 213 persons and displacement of 38,000. Tragically these killings have not abated in the state as reports of silent killings keep filtering into town with the latest being the killing of 8 persons(including a Pastor of the Church of Christ in Nigeria, his wife and Children on 28/8/18) as well as the 13 persons reported shot at Dwei Du on 4/9/18
- In the first 70 days of 2018, over 1,400 persons were killed violently across the country, an average of nearly 40 per state and the Federal Capital Territory
- The Southern states of the country have not been spared in the ongoing bloodletting, as at least 34 out of the 36 states have experienced at least one episode of violent killings within the first quarter of 2018<sup>16</sup>. Tragically, there is this tendency to look at statistics of various killings across Nigeria and forget that those killed have real faces, had families, they had dreams and aspirations within lived with communities.

The post COVID-19 Nigerian Church should uphold the rights of the poor, weak and vulnerable consistent with biblical imagery of 'light'. The Biblical usage of the words 'Light' in Mathew 5:16 with reference to the Church by our Master, pre-supposes that the Church would play its prophetic role of upholding the truth, upholding the rights of the poor, weak and vulnerable who are excluded and at the margins of society. In doing this, the Church would be promoting inclusive, just, peaceful societies where diverse peoples in multicultural, multi-linguistic, multi-religious societies like Nigeria live in peace deploying their potentials to attain the purposes that God intends.

#### **5.2.6 A Nigerian Church being at the forefront of supporting the nation's transition to a free, just and compassionate nation**



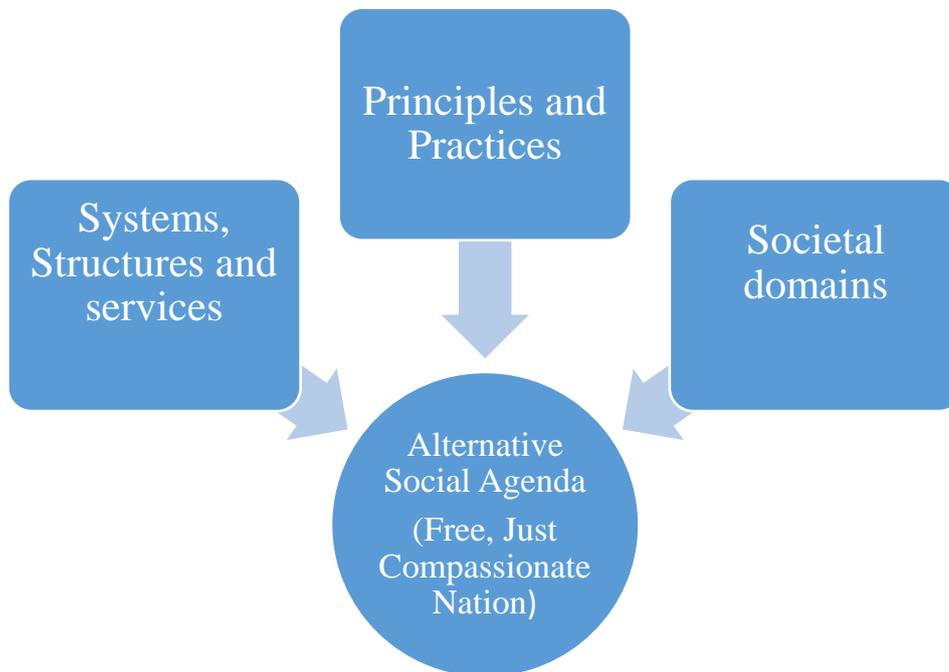
We note that at critical historical moments, conversations for alternative social order do not just happen; there is the critical need for leadership. Given the disruption occasioned by COVID-19, it is critical that the Nigerian Church demonstrates leadership that rises above the primordial sentiments prevalent in the nation. This is with the intent of playing a Shepherding catalytic role in shifting the tides under the Nigerian nation with the intent of steering the nation from the current social order to an alternative order that supports the birthing of a free, just and compassionate nation.

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<sup>15</sup> Bethseda Orphanage, Igede , Benue State, Nigeria.

<sup>16</sup> Civil Society Joint Nigeria Crisis Action Committee(JN-AC).

We propose an eco-system for the delivering of an alternative social order for Nigeria as reflected in the diagram below:



- 1. Principles and Practices:** These refer to the first principles upon which the enduring alternative social agenda for Nigeria is built. They represent the substructure upon which the systems and structures that supports the delivery of the social order is built. These key seven principles are:
  - Commitment to upholding the sanctity of Life as a first critical principle
  - Alternative Social Agenda
  - Systems, Structures and services
  - Principles and Practices
  - Societal domains
- 2. Societal domains:** These groups are usually excluded, weak and vulnerable within the nation such that the social agenda would commit to serving them in-order to create the kind of society that honours God. These groups are- women, Children, youth, Aged, Physically challenged, Internally displaced persons(IDPs), Prisoners etc
- 3. Systems, Services and Structures:** These Refer to the Police,Laws and Judicial systems, Parliament, State/National Assemblies

### 5.2.7 A Nigerian Church engaged in the public square, supporting the emergence of an alternative ethical structure for the nation and influencing its seven gates.



Nigeria is blessed but broken 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”). Nigeria’s pre-COVID-19 ethical structure could not support the emergence of restorative economy.

Drawing from section 4.1.4 above, in looking in with Jubilee lenses, we note that the Atonement is a very practical idea that finds its political and economic expression in jubilee. Jubilees, and the closely linked idea of sabbaths (every seven days and every seven years), set out concrete procedures for how to correct economic, social and environmental imbalances – in effect, providing an instruction manual for how to build and maintain a *restorative economy*.

The reference to ‘Salt’ by our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ is a powerful imagery, which presupposes that the Church on earth would flavour the nations of earth. In doing this, the expectation is that the Nigerian Church would prevent societal decay, uphold integrity and support the cultivation of appropriate ethical substructure upon which the society would build the superstructure of social, political and economic development

Conclusion: *‘The Church lies at the very centre of the eternal purpose of God. It is not a divine after thought...We should not ask, ‘What is wrong with the world? For that diagnosis has already been given. Rather we should ask, ‘what has happened to salt and light?’-John Stott*