

Church and the Political Development of the South-East: Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria in Focus

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Abstract

There has been a need to integrate the different parts and sectors of south-eastern Nigeria together in order to build a synergy that can foster the development of the region politically, economically, socially and otherwise. The church is a strong institution in the south-east that informs and transforms the mindset and behavior of the people. It is a platform that can facilitate effective integration of the south-eastern Nigeria into the mainstream of Nigeria's political architecture; hence this study on the church and political development of the south-east with focus on the Pentecostal fellowship of Nigeria. The questions that the researchers tried to sort answers to included; what are the programmes of the church in stimulating the political development of the south-east; what is the level of involvement of Pentecostal fellowship of Nigeria south-east region in the political development of south-east; how has the church sensitized her members in getting involved in the political affairs. This study is an empirical one and the researchers made more use of the secondary data and observation in reaching conclusion. The researchers found out that the church has programmes that stimulate political development of the south-east and that sensitization of members is a running exercise at various local churches in communities across the south-east. The researchers concluded that if the exercise embarked by the churches is sustained, the south-east will be a force to reckon with in political development. They therefore recommend that there should be a healthy political and social atmosphere to enable people participate in the political development of the south-east.

Keywords: Church, Political Development, South-East, Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, Community.

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Introduction

The political development of societies is a product of various actors who are driven by the passion of enhancing the socio-political wellbeing of the society. The church is one of the actors in the society and particularly the south eastern Nigeria, whose impact and contributions cannot be overemphasized. The south eastern Nigeria is a theo-centric region in Nigeria. This is because of its high level of devotion to religious activities. Most of the operations of this part of the country are driven by the principles of the church. The church therefore becomes the epi-centre of its political activities. It is not gainsaying the fact that our nation needs a turnaround in its political sphere. We are seriously in need of improvement in the political architecture of our nation. There is so much suffering in the land; the political atmosphere is not favourable for meaningful development that will enhance the living standard of the people, hence, the role of the church becomes sacrosanct in the political development of our country.

The church has been entangled in politics from early time, from the Roman Empire, to the Medieval Era and to the present day. In the New Testament, the Greek word “ekklesia” which is used for the church actually means a political assembly, a political association, a gathering or the called out ones. The separation of the state and the church, or the separation of secular and religious power, has not always been so clear-cut. This study will help us to unravel the place of the church in the political development of the south eastern region in particular and Nigeria at large.

The church is not a structure, rather a body of believers in Christ Jesus with a specific nature and purpose. There are biblical responsibilities or services of the church which are foundational to it. In looking at these responsibilities, they are numerous, but vital to any church are basics in worship, edification and evangelism. Worship is Christ-centered and God-centered. It is not regarding entertaining Christians with showy displays or performances, but about demonstrating our affection by worshipping our Creator. We are to praise and glorify God in worship. As such, every Christian needs to be part of regular fellowship and worship. Edification is also a role of the church. It involves edifying believers, but also nurturing, building up or helping believers to mature in Christ. To this end, churches are tasked with a variety of ministries such as Bible study, continuing education in related areas, praying for one another, acts of genuine hospitality and more. Evangelism is also a key role of the church. This means reaching out to a lost world with the Good News about Jesus. Since people often have questions or doubts about Christ and Christianity, knowing the truth and being able to defend it is also part of the role of the church. But beyond evangelism in the sense of reaching out with the gospel, the church must also express compassion and mercy tangibly by helping others. In following Christ’s example to love others, the church, too, must seek to make a real difference in the world while not neglecting to share the message of Christ. If a church fails to fulfill any of these key roles – worship,

edification, and evangelism – then the church is not functioning as God intends. Granted, there are times when churches face challenges and struggles to one degree or another, but a healthy church seeks to overcome such challenges in a way that honors God and His intentions for His church.(Velarde, 2009).

Spooky missionary activities started in Benin in 1515 when some Catholic missionaries set up a school in the Oba's palace for his sons and the sons of his chiefs who were converted to Christianity. The Catholics, through the influence of the Portuguese traders, were the first missionaries to set foot on Nigerian soil. The primary objective of the early Christian missionaries was to convert the 'heathen' or the benighted African to Christianity via education. The second missionary endeavor to Nigeria was marked by the advent of the first English-speaking Christian mission in Badagry in September 1842. The Christian missionary school in Nigeria was without any doubt an adjunct of the Church. It was a replica of a similar development in Britain during the Dark Ages. The missionaries were generally strong disciplinarians and they had abiding faith in manual labour and the rod as the cure to all ills— idleness, laziness, slow learning, truancy, disobedience, and irregularity of attendance. In the 17th century, the Roman Catholic missionaries found their way to Nigeria. They came into cities like Benin and Warri where they preached Christianity. But they were unable to convert the kings and traditional rulers as these leaders were only interested in the guns and mirrors the Europeans offered them. Eventually, slave trade was abolished in the British Empire in 1833 and many of the slaves were freed. Many years later, some of these slaves returned to Nigeria with the religion they had learned from their Europeans masters. The education provided by the missionaries was also instrumental in converting a good number of slaves to Christianity. One of the slaves that was instrumental to the advent of Christianity in Nigeria was Samuel Ajayi Crowther who was captured by the age of 12 by Fulani slave raiders and sold to Portuguese slave traders. Ajayi Crowther later regained his freedom and became the first African to be ordained bishop by the Christian Missionary Society (CMS). Additionally, Crowther was a pioneer of local Christian missionary work in the country and he was pivotal in the translation of the Bible into Yoruba language. Over the years, Christianity has grown rapidly. In 1953, the percentage of the Christian population was 21.4% and that percentage has doubled to over 50% with over 75

million Christians in Nigeria. Currently, the Southern part of the country is dominated by Christians while the Northern part is composed of predominantly Muslims. Recent estimates put the percentage of Nigeria's population that practice Christianity between 40% – 49.3%. Of that percentage, about 74% are Protestants, 25% Roman Catholic, while the rest are split among other Christian denominations (school software, 2022)

Christians in Nigeria comprise an estimated 49.3% of the population. Christians are dominant in the southern (south-east/south-south/South west and central region) in Nigeria. According to the Pew Research Center, Nigeria has the largest Christian population of any country in Africa, with more than 80 million persons in Nigeria belonging to the church with various denominations. The majority of Christians in Nigeria is Protestant. The Catholic Church has an increase of followers in Nigeria. In 2005, there were an estimated 19 million baptized Catholics in Nigeria. The Archdioceses of the Roman Catholic Church are Abuja, Benin City, Calabar, Ibadan, Jos, Kaduna, Lagos, Onitsha, Owerri, and Sokoto. Cardinal Francis Arinze is a Roman Catholic Cardinal from Nigeria. The ecclesiastical provinces of the Church of Nigeria are Lagos, Ibadan, Ondo, Edo, The Niger, Niger Delta, Owerri, Abuja, Kaduna, and Jos. Its primate is Nicholas Dikeriehi Orogodo Okoh. The Church of Nigeria claims about 18 million members with an estimated 2 million members being active. The National Church of Nigeria (previously known as the Nigerian Ecumenical Centre and officially known as the National Christian Centre) is a non-denominational church building of the Christian Association of Nigeria, the umbrella body of many of Nigeria's Christian denominations. The church is located in Abuja.

Christianity Today in Nigeria

When it comes to Christianity in recent times, the tides seem to have changed as the country has begun to export its Christianity to other parts of the world. This is having been partly due to a new type of churches called the mega churches. Mega churches seem to have arrived with the advent of Pentecostalism which can be traced to the early 20th century in America. The mega church syndrome can be traced to 1910 when a local charismatic movement led by an Anglican deacon split from the Anglican church to become the Christ Army Church. There was a revival

in this new church and as a result, the church grew in size forming independent churches. These churches were characterized by fervent prayer styles, known by the Yoruba word Aladura (praying people). Some of the early Aladura churches include the Eternal Sacred Order of the Cherubim and Seraphim Society, founded in 1925, and the Church of the Lord (Aladura), founded in 1930. One of the most popular preachers during this period was Joseph Babalola of Faith Tabernacle. The preacher led a revival in the 1930s that converted thousands of locals. In 1932, his church was initially associated with the Pentecostal Apostolic Church of Great Britain but later broke away to form an independent church, the Christ Apostolic Church. Over the next two decades, foreign Pentecostal churches began to plant branches in Nigeria. It was during this period the Welsh Apostolic Church was established in 1931 and Assemblies of God in 1939. Also, the Foursquare Gospel Church was also introduced in Nigeria at the same time. Some local Pentecostal churches also sprung up; these include the Celestial Church of Christ which arrived in western Nigeria from Benin to become one of Africa's largest Aladura churches. In 1952, a former member of the Cherubim and Seraphim society, Pa Josiah Akindayomi, founded the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG). He was succeeded by Enoch Adejare Adeboye. Under Adeboye, the church became increasingly Pentecostal in theology and practice; this was probably influenced by the Pentecostal wave in the 1960s and 1970s which was mainly experienced by students on college campuses. One of the leaders behind these revivals during this period was Benson Idahosa. He was one of Africa's most influential Pentecostal preachers of the 20th century and he was the founder of the Church of God Mission International which was established in 1972. Other churches have since been established since then. These include the Deeper Life Bible Church founded by William Folorunsho Kumuyi in 1975. He was a mathematics professor at the University of Lagos before going on to found the Deeper Life Bible Church. In 1986, David Oyedepo founded Living Faith Church which is popularly known as Winners Chapel. Nigeria. Currently, the prominent churches in Nigeria include The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Deeper Life Bible Church, Living Faith Church (Winners' Chapel), Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries and Christ Embassy. There are also some new generation churches that are popular in Lagos and many other major cities in the country. These

include Daystar Christian Centre, Covenant Christian Centre, House on the Rock and Commonwealth of Zion Assembly (COZA) (School software, 2022)

The South Eastern part of the country seems to be lagging behind in the political development of the country. Politics is viewed by many from this part of Nigeria as a dirty game and as a result there is high level of nonchalant attitude towards politics. This scenario has prevailed over the years and has cost this part of the country meaningful development that would enhance the living condition of the people. Since the return of democratic rule in Nigeria, the south east is yet to produce the president of Nigeria. Some important political positions in the country have eluded the south-Eastern Nigeria since the return to democratic rule. The church as an important sector in this region has a responsibility which must be harnessed to the fullest in sensitizing the people for active participation in political affairs of the country.

Conceptual Framework

The Church

“Church” is the translation of the Greek term *ekklesia*, and is used in the New Testament to identify the community of believers in Jesus Christ. It literally means “assembly,” “congregation,” or “meeting.” A similar term was used in the Old Testament referring to experiences such as “the day of the assembly,” “the Lord’s congregation,” or “meeting before the Lord.” Thus, when Jesus declares: “I will build my church” (Mt 16:18), it did not come as something unfamiliar to the common listener. Shortly after, in the New Testament, the word is confined strictly to refer to the congregation of believers in Jesus Christ. It is worth mentioning that in the New Testament, no synagogue, temple, chapel, tabernacle, building or any other meeting place was ever called a “church.” The term always referred to the Christian assembly and, in the New Testament, it was used for both the local community of believers and the overall collection of Christians.

The first sense for which the word “church” is used, what we call “local,” is defined by its geographical setting. The churches in the New Testament were identified by the name of a city,

never by the name of a country or region. For example, one would speak of “the churches of Galatia” in plural because Galatia was a region with many cities, and therefore, many local churches. When talking about Corinth, Ephesus, Thessalonica, etc., the singular form is used and the name of the city identifies the church. For example, the church in Corinth or the church in Ephesus; each one of these churches was comprised of the Christian residents of the same city.

The second sense, called “universal,” refers to the collection of believers in Jesus Christ from all times and places. This church consists of both Jews and Gentiles. The first meeting of the universal church will occur during the rapture: “For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the archangel’s voice, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are still alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord” (1Th 4:16-17). Jesus declared that building or edifying the church is something He would do personally. He said: “I will build my church” (Mt 16:18), but that does not mean that He will not also use others for the task. One of the most well-known metaphors used to refer to the church is the “body of Christ.” Jesus Christ states that He is the head, and that all believers form His body. The emphasis of the metaphor is on the union of Christ and the church and between the believers themselves—something indispensable to the understanding of how the church functions under the authority of Jesus Christ (Diaz-Pabon, 2019).

The church is the new covenant people of God, rooted in the promises to Israel and inaugurated by the Holy Spirit, which refers both to all believers in Jesus Christ, both living and dead, and to local gatherings of believers. The church is the new covenant people of God. The word church can be used to refer both to all believers, both living and dead (universal church), and to individual local gatherings of believers (local church). The church has its roots in the promises made to God’s people in the Old Testament, particularly that God would bless the world through Abraham’s offspring. While there is continuity between the Old Testament people of God and the church, the church is the community of Jesus, new at Pentecost. As such, the church is the fulfillment of God’s promise to the prophets that he would make a new and better covenant with his people and write his law on their hearts. The mission of the church is the Great Commission

(Matt 28:18-20): to go out into the world with the authority of the risen Christ and make disciples, baptizing them and teaching them to follow Jesus until he returns, all to the glory of God (Morgan, 2023).

In the language of the Westminster Confession of Faith, the church comprises the "whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be, gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof" (25.1). This is otherwise known as the invisible church. In another sense, the church is the body of the faithful (1Cor.12:27; Eph.2:21-22; Rev. 21:2,9), consisting of those throughout the world who outwardly profess faith, together with their children (WCF 25.2). This is otherwise known as the visible church.

The Greek word that is translated as "church" in the Bible is *ekklēsia*. Conscious as we should be of the etymological fallacy (the idea that a word means what its composite root means), in this case it would seem to have merit. Thus, *ekklēsia* translates the Hebrew word *qahal*, the noun form meaning "assembly" or "congregation" and the verb essentially signifying "to call." (Thomas, 2018)

Political Development

The development of the organizations, dispositions, and virtues that form the political power system of a society. Political development has also been viewed in many ways that reflect the passage of societies' and analysts' preoccupations. One formulation dwells on the emergence of national sovereignty and the integrity of the state, demanding respect and upholding commitments in the international system. Others identify the domestic attributes of constitutional order and political stability, attained through the formation of a settled framework of government, reliable procedures for leadership succession, and a consolidation of the territorial administrative reach of government institutions. This conspectus owes to the fascination exerted by nation-building and state-building in new states of Africa and Asia. It also relates to earlier studies of legal-rational authority: an endowment of coercive powers and the ability to command obedience. The establishment of bureaucracy, displaying characteristics like division of labour

and functional specialization, hierarchy and chain of command, and merit-based recruitment, is connected (Oxford, 2023).

Political development enhances the state's capacity to mobilize and allocate resources, to process policy inputs into implementable outputs. This assists with problem-solving and adaptation to environmental changes and goal realization. The contemporary notion of good governance also dwells on efficient, effective, and non-corrupt public administration.. Most Marxists identify political development in advanced industrial societies from the angle of the growth of the class consciousness and political organization of the proletariat, driving, ultimately, to the overthrow of capitalism and the approach of communism. A more familiar, though ethnocentric and currently very fashionable view is progress towards liberal democracy, involving accountable government, and opportunities for participation (also seen by some as an aspect of modernization, rather than development), through the exercise of such freedoms as association and expression (Oxford, 2023)

Concept of Political Development

The concept of political development can be discussed in the following different ways:

Geographical – It refers to the politics of the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. In this sense almost any study on some aspect of the politics of these countries could be termed as study of political development.

Derivative – This dimension implies that the study of political development is a study which refers to the political aspects and consequences of the boarder process of modernisation. Modernisation involves industrialisation, urbanisation, increased literacy, expansion of mass media, economic growth, great social and occupational mobility and other related processes.

Teleological – From this dimension political development can be analysed in terms of a movement toward one or more goals or status for the political system. The different goal with which political development has been identified includes democracy, stability, legitimacy, identity penetration, distribution, integration, rationalisation, bureaucratisation, security, welfare, justice, liberty etc.

Functional – Political development from this angle can be conceived in terms of a movement towards the political characteristics of a modern industrial society. It has to be remembered that most industrialised societies do have some types of political party system. Thus, it can be inferred that the existence of an urbanised political party system is one aspect of political development.

Factors Influencing Political Development

Social factors – The social factors include the nature and evolution of the status system in the society, the opportunities for social mobility and the nature of communal, religious differences in the society.

Economic Factors – The Marxian approach particularly would place primary emphasis on economic factors. They like to analyse the extent to which and the manner in which the capitalist structure of economy developed and the manner in which the bourgeois class has risen.

Cultural Factors – Cultural factors also play a major role in influencing political development, particularly in all phases in the process of modernisation while examining the process of adaptation to modernisation.

Political Factors – The nature of the traditional political system, the sequences and ways in which new groups enter politics, the values of the newly emerging political elites, the skills of political leaders, the nature and extend of political participation and the development of political institutions are important variables shaping the political development. (Government Aizawl West College, 2022)

The founder of Christianity had little interest in political doctrines. In appealing to the lowly and oppressed, the importance of the rich and the powerful was disparaged. In emphasizing the principle of the Golden Rule, the morality of the individual was appealed to, and the authority of government was there by minimized. Jesus carefully distinguished the spiritual kingdom, which he aimed to establish, from the kingdoms of this world, and evaded every attempt to entangle him with the Roman authorities by insisting that he was not concerned with temporal affairs. This same spirit pervaded the writings of the Apostles.

Passive obedience to the powers that he was enjoined, government was conceived as a means of carrying out God's will on earth, and meekness and humility were insisted upon. Only when the state interfered with the teachings of the church was disobedience permitted. Then the injunction to obey God rather than man led to the passive resistance of the martyrs. At the same time there were certain elements of political theory which the early Christian writers drew from the ideas current in their times, and which increased in importance as Christianity spread to the upper classes and was more influenced by Stoic philosophy. The New Testament contains important statements concerning the doctrines of natural law, of human equality, and of the nature of government.

St. Paul, in referring to the Gentiles, who "do by nature the things of law," implies a conception of natural law, written in men's hearts and revealed by reason, distinct from the law of the state. This Stoic idea of the law of nature was taken up by the Church Fathers and became an important element in medieval political thought. The Apostles also adopted the cosmopolitan ideas of the later Greek philosophers concerning the equality of men. The universal fatherhood of God, and the teaching that all classes and peoples are one in Christ Jesus, led to a conception of the identity of human nature in all parts of the world, and to a belief in human equality.

On the question of slavery however, the attitude of the early Christians, like that of the Stoic philosophers, was not altogether consistent. In the sight of God there was no distinction between bond and free. Slavery might control men's bodies, but it could not control their spirits. St. Paul wrote that there can be neither bond nor free.

For ye are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28).

Yet as a human institution, slavery was recognized and was not considered unlawful. Slaves were advised in fact to serve their masters faithfully and to obey them in all things. The New Testament taught a definite theory of the nature of government which was of the greatest importance in the later history of political thought. Civil government was viewed as a divine

institution, deriving its authority from God. Obedience to the state was demanded as a religious obligation as well as a political necessity. The state existed to maintain justice. It therefore had a sacred character, its ruler was God's servant, and obedience was essential. These ideas were stated by the Apostles, not only because of the necessity of adjusting the relations of the early church to the Roman government, but also because of the desire to counteract the anarchically tendencies in the early Christian societies.

The Christian theory of the state was essentially based upon that of the later Stoics, that government is necessary to proper human development. The Christian writers, in adopting the Stoic rather than the Epicurean attitude toward the state, and in adding the Christian conception of the divine order in human society, laid the foundation for the political thought of the following thousand years. The early Church Fathers, who followed the Apostles, furthered these ideas. They adopted the conception of natural law as worked out by Cicero and suggested by St. Paul, and they taught that men are by nature free and equal. This did not prevent them, however, from also recognizing slavery as a legal and even necessary institution. It was necessary, they suggested, as a punishment for sin, due to the fall of man from the state of nature when all men were equal. At the same time the church held masters responsible for the treatment of their slaves and aimed to mitigate the worst evils of the system. The Fathers likewise accepted the state as a divine institution. They taught that ultimate authority for government must be sought in God as the creator of all things, and that the authority of the ruler was to be held sacred.

The Fathers added, however, that while government was divinely ordained, it, too, was the consequence of sin, resulting from the fall of man from original innocence to the depraved condition that made coercive authority necessary. It was, in short, a divine remedy for human wickedness. This change in attitude, considering coercion as a necessary evil, tended to diminish the importance of government and to increase the relative position of the church. As Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, gradually developed its semi-political organization, acquired property and power, and built up its system of theology, a new attitude began to appear in its political ideas. The church began to assume rights and dignities equal to those of the empire. The Roman bishops began to exercise authority in spiritual and moral affairs

over even the emperors, and the Church Fathers claimed that there were rights possessed by the church with which the imperial authority could not interfere. While the civil ruler was considered the “vicar of God,” and a clear statement of the theory of the divine right of kings may be found in the writings of the Church Fathers, a line of separation began to be drawn between ecclesiastical and secular authority. (Political Science, 2022)

Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria and Political Development in the South East

The Pentecostal fellowship of Nigeria was inaugurated on the 14th day of November, 1986 in Lagos Nigeria. It is the national body that binds all Christians churches, organization and believers who believed, experience, practice and cherish the Pentecostal experience as contained and described in Acts 2:4. These are believers who accepted as valid for today the baptism of the Holy Spirit, with the physical initial evidence of speaking in tongues as it was spoken of those who experienced same in the bible days (Acts 10:45-47). In addition, they are those who accepted the evangelical truth of justification by faith as propounded by Martin Luther, the Westley, the experience of holiness as preached by John Wesley and the heat of Evangelistic zeal of fire and blood by William Booth of the Salvation Army. It is not a union of churches brought together for a central administration and control; rather, it’s a body of believers having identical unity of purpose and cooperation in agreed programs (PFN, 2022)

The Pentecostal fellowship of Nigeria exists among other things:

- To unite all Pentecostal churches, bodies and believers for the purpose of fellowship, encouragement and inspiration.
- To form a common platform of solidarity against the common foe in the time of persecution, opposition and religious tolerance on account of the Pentecostal faith and to offer relief and support to afflicted people.
- To undertake joint programs and execute projects for the furtherance of the full gospel in such areas as literature distribution, Bible College and Christian education, evangelism, etc.

- To provide representatives for the Pentecostal movement to governments, ecumenical bodies and serve as defender of the faith for Pentecostal believers.
- To set up standard of faith and doctrines along with the code of ethic to guide and identify true Pentecostal believers and organizations (PFN, 2022)

The Pentecostal fellowship of (PFN) is focused in strengthening cooperation between member churches, cooperation with other Christian organizations, spreading of Christian teachings and propagating of Christian values within Nigeria, working with government and government agencies to uphold religious freedom and unimpeded practice of religion, representation of the Nigeria Pentecostal movement as their organ and mouthpiece, setting doctrinal and ethical standards to which members must commit and organization of national programs such as a Pentecostal conference, seminars, training course and rallies.

Pentecostal political activism originates with the founding of the Christian Students' Social Movement of Nigeria in 1977. The emphasis of this early activism is on the spiritual forces that govern politics and on bringing about reform through prayer. In the 1980s, pentecostals become active in the Christian Association of Nigeria. Founded in 1976, the Association initially includes only Catholic and mainline Protestants, but by 1988 it incorporates churches associated with the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, a pentecostal umbrella group, and the Organization of African Instituted Churches. In 1986, under General Babangida, Nigeria becomes a member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, triggering numerous pentecostal protests. Benson Idahosa, the popular pentecostal preacher, threatens to call for a Christian boycott of newspapers favoring Islamization. In 1987, Sheikh Abubakar Gumi, a leading Muslim cleric, stokes further controversy by publicly declaring that Muslims will never allow non-Muslims to assume political leadership in Nigeria. In response, pentecostal leaders ally with other Christians in Kaduna state and launch a campaign to field candidates in the 1988 local government elections (Pew Research Center, 2006).

During the 1993 elections, Pentecostal and other evangelicals competed at various level with priests, deacons, prophets' pastors and apostles emerging as governors, deputy governors, local

government chairmen and councilors. There was a serious call and encouragement for Christians to push for political reform (Pew Research Center, 2006).

The Pentecostal Fellowship and Politics in the South East

In the current political dispensation in the south east, the Pentecostal movement has thrown its weight in the political development of the south eastern Nigeria. Prior to this time, politics was regard by many Pentecostals as a dirty engagement. We have witnessed in recent times the level of mobilization of the populace by the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria. In 2015, the Pentecostal fellowship of Nigeria south east in partnership with National Transformation Institute hosted a leadership training at Overcomers Bible church in Umunze. This training was to equip the people and enhance their capacity for active involvement sociopolitical affairs in the south east. In the 1999 general election, Anyim Pius Anyim a member and a Deacon in Assemblies of God Church was elected to the senate and later became the Senate President. Dr Sam Egwu also of the Assemblies of God church was also elected the Governor of Ebonyi state (Pew Research Center, 2006). In the just concluded general election, there was a massive sensitisation of members of pentecostal movement to actively involve in the electioneering process (Daily Trust, 2021).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the researchers concluded that if the exercise embarked by the churches is sustained, the south-east will be a force to reckon with in political development. There is need for all hands to be on deck for the common course of the south east. The south east has all it takes to drive the political architecture of this nation. There should be a unity of purpose.

Recommendation

The authors recommend that there should be a healthy political and social atmosphere to enable people participate in the political development of the south-east. It is also imperative for us to have an inclusive system where all and sundry especially the church can engage actively in the

political wellness of the south east. We also recommend that there should be an effectual database to enable people to access relevant information from the local government level of their various locations necessary for political enlightenment and there should be a continuous political enlightenment and awareness. It should not be when election is approaching before we start sensitizing our people, and finally there should be a political plan for the south east.

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