NAVIGATING DUAL ROLES: THE CHALLENGES OF ANGLICAN PRIESTS IN BALANCING MINISTRY AND FAMILY LIFE IN THE DIOCESE ON THE NIGER

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Abstract
Anglican priests in the Diocese on the Niger face significant challenges balancing ministerial duties and family life due to factors like traditional expectations, financial constraint, and insufficient support systems. The paper exposes the challenges Anglica priests face with reference to the Diocese on the Niger, as they strive to balance their ministerial and family. It discovers that the unpredictable nature of pastoral work, which includes travelling, emotional stress, and financial constraints, frequently places a challenge on marital relationships, parenting responsibilities, and family well-being. It examines factors such as time management, financial limitations, and emotional burdens accompanying their calling. The paper, therefore, suggests that adherence to ecclesiastical principles, integrity, modesty, and robust church support can help priests achieve a balanced ministry despite these difficulties.

Keywords: Navigating, dual roles, challenges of Anglican priests, family life, diocese on the Niger

Introduction

The Anglican priesthood is a sacred vocation that requires dedication to spiritual leadership, pastoral care, and administrative responsibilities within the church. Priests are entrusted with the duty of ministering to their congregations, offering counselling, presiding over liturgical services, and engaging in missionary activities. However, these commitments extend beyond the church and impact their personal and family lives. As a result, priests face the challenge of balancing their ministerial duties with family obligations. The focus of this paper is on Diocese on the Niger which forms a hub for examining this challenge. Many priests within this diocese encounter difficulty in maintaining their spiritual calling and their family roles. The unpredictable nature of pastoral work, which includes travelling, emotional stress, and financial constraints, frequently places a challenge on marital relationships, parenting responsibilities, and family well-being. This study aims to expose the challenges Anglican priests face in the Diocese on the Niger as they strive to balance their ministerial and family responsibilities. It will examine factors such as time management, financial limitations, and the emotional burdens accompanying their calling. Furthermore, the study examines methods that should be adopted by priests and proposes practical strategies to enhance their ability to fulfil both their sacred and family roles effectively. This research seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on clergy well-being, advocate for supportive policies within the church, and provide recommendations that promote a more sustainable approach to ministry that accommodates and values family life.

Concept of Anglican Priesthood

The Anglican priesthood is a holy order in the Anglican Communion that is established to serve the church. The priesthood is exercised through worship, pastoral care, and administration of the

sacraments. The origin can be traced to the biblical tradition of priesthood, which is found in the Old Testament priestly functions and the New Testament exposition of ministry. In the Anglican setting, priests are seen as spiritual leaders who act as intermediaries between God and his people, not in the sacrificial sense of the Old Testament but as shepherds and teachers in the faith. The Anglican Church upholds a threefold order of ministry which includes: bishops, priests, and deacons, following the early church's pattern (Titus 1:5-9). While all baptized believers share in the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:9), ordained priests receive a distinct calling and authority through the sacrament of Holy Orders, conferred by a bishop through the laying on of hands (Cranmer, 1552). This ordination signifies apostolic succession, which maintains continuity with the early church. Anglican priests are entrusted with the responsibility of leading worship, preaching the Word of God, administering sacraments, and providing pastoral care. They serve as stewards of the church's spiritual and doctrinal integrity, ensuring that Christian teachings are preserved and faithfully communicated (Rowan Williams, 2004).

Functions of Anglican Priests

The role of an Anglican priest comprises various responsibilities essential for the spiritual growth of the church and its members. These functions can be categorized into liturgical, pastoral, educational, and administrative duties.

Liturgical Functions: Anglican priests preside over religious services, particularly the Eucharist (Holy Communion), which is regarded as the heart of Anglican worship. They also administer other sacraments, including: Baptism (Initiating new believers into the faith), Marriage (Blessing and officiating Christian unions), Confession and Absolution (Offering spiritual counsel and declaring God's forgiveness), Anointing the Sick: Providing prayers and sacramental healing for the ill (Hooker, 1594).

Pastoral Care: Priests are called to be shepherds of their congregations, offering spiritual guidance, counselling, and support in times of crisis. Their pastoral role involves: Visiting the sick and homebound, and bringing spiritual comfort to those unable to attend church. Providing moral and ethical guidance through helping individuals navigate life's challenges through biblical teachings. Counselling individuals and families: Addressing personal struggles, marriage issues, and spiritual crises (Chadwick, 1964).

Preaching and Teaching: Priests are responsible for preaching the gospel and teaching Christian doctrine. They deliver sermons, conduct Bible studies, and engage in catechesis (Christian instruction), ensuring that believers grow in faith and understanding. The Book of Common Prayer emphasizes the importance of sound biblical teaching in strengthening the faith of believers (Cranmer,1552).

Church Administration: Anglican priests also take on administrative responsibilities within their parishes. They oversee church operations, including: managing church property and finances; Ensuring proper stewardship of resources. Supervising church staff and volunteers such as

coordinating activities such as choir, Sunday school, and outreach programs. Working with church councils and wardens: Collaborating with lay leaders to guide the parish's mission and vision (Crockett, 1981).

Community and Social Engagement: Anglican priests engage with society through social justice initiatives, interfaith dialogue, and community development. They advocate for peace, support the poor, and contribute to humanitarian causes, reflecting the church's commitment to serving humanity (Rowan Williams, 2004).

Qualities of an Anglican Priest

An Anglican priest is a spiritual leader called to serve God and His people through preaching, teaching, pastoral care, and administration of sacraments. To effectively fulfil this calling, an Anglican priest must possess certain qualities that reflect Christ's character and leadership. These qualities are categorized into spiritual, moral, pastoral, intellectual, and administrative attributes.

Spiritual Qualities: The primary quality of an Anglican priest is that a priest must have a strong personal relationship with God through prayer, worship, and meditation on scripture. The Bible emphasizes the importance of faithfulness in ministry: "Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2). A priest is expected to be devoted to a life of prayer, not only for personal growth but also for the congregation. Also, a priest must be committed to the study and teaching of God's word. Paul instructs Timothy: "Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction" (2 Timothy 4:2, NIV). This requires a disciplined life of scriptural study and doctrinal soundness. Furthermore, an Anglican priest must administer sacraments such as Holy Communion, Baptism, and Confirmation, following the Anglican tradition (Hooker, 2003).

Moral and Ethical Integrity: A priest is a role model to the church and their moral conduct must be exemplary. Integrity, honesty, and purity should be non-negotiable virtues found in their lives. Paul writes: "Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain" (Titus 1:7). This means that a priest must avoid all forms of corruption, greed and immoral behaviour. Sexual purity and faithfulness in marriage are important for priests who are married, as the Bible says: "The husband of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, and able to teach"(1st Timothy 3:2). A priest must also be a person of humility. avoiding arrogance and pride. Augustine (2002) affirms that humility is the foundation of Christian leadership, as Christ Himself exemplified servanthood.

Pastoral and Leadership Qualities: As a shepherd of God's people, an Anglican priest must possess strong pastoral and leadership skills. The priest is responsible for offering spiritual guidance, counselling, and encouragement to believers. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, provides the perfect model: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep"(John 10:11). This implies that a priest should be willing to sacrifice personal comfort for the welfare of the

congregation. Furthermore, an Anglican priest should have the ability to resolve conflicts and bring unity among believers. Paul advises: "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). In a world filled with divisions, a priest should promote love, reconciliation, and peace.

Intellectual and Theological Competence: A well-equipped priest must have sound theological training and the ability to teach the scriptures accurately. The Anglican Church requires its priests to undergo formal education in theology, including biblical studies, church history, and doctrine (MacCulloch,1996). Paul's instruction to Timothy emphasizes this: “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). Moreover, an Anglican priest must be an effective communicator, capable of delivering sermons and teaching in ways that inspire faith and spiritual growth. This requires continuous learning and engagement with contemporary theological and social issues (Wright,2013).

Community and Social Engagement: Also, beyond spiritual duties, an Anglican priest must actively engage in social justice and community development. The Bible emphasizes concern for the poor and marginalized: "Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed” (Psalm 82:3). A priest should be a voice against injustice, corruption, and oppression in society. As a leader, a priest must encourage the congregation to participate in charitable works and advocate for social change (Rowell, 2004).

Administrative and Organizational Skills: The Anglican priest is responsible for managing church affairs, which include overseeing finances, organizing church programs, and leading the clergy and laity. Effective administration ensures the smooth operation of the church. The Bible highlights the importance of order in leadership: “But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way" (1 Corinthians 14:40). A priest must work closely with church committees, delegates, and volunteers to achieve the church's mission.

Evangelistic and Missional Spirit: Another aspect of an Anglican priest's calling is the expansion of God's kingdom. Jesus commanded: "Go and make disciples of all nations"(Matthew 28:19). A priest should be passionate about evangelism, encouraging outreach programs and missionary activities. In the modern era, digital evangelism is becoming increasingly relevant. An Anglican priest should embrace media platforms to reach a wider audience with the gospel message (Chester, 2021). Also, interfaith dialogue and peaceful coexistence with people of other religions are important for societal harmony.

Historical Perspective of Diocese on the Niger

Before Crowther's death, he built the Niger Mission on sound and solid foundations that after his death the mission survived and continued. Adiele (1996) narrates that the two missions, the Yoruba and the Niger were merged and given the name Diocese of the Western Equatorial Africa. Bishops J.S. Hill (1891-1894) and H. Tugwell (1894-1915) were the Diocesan Bishops successively. When

the Diocese of Lagos was later carved out of the Diocese in 1919, the Diocese was renamed Diocese on the Niger. With time, Diocese on the Niger which is the first Diocese of Anglican Church in Igbo land, had Cathedral, Bishops court, Diocesan Secretariat and other infrastructural features were sited. This is the chronological order of Bishops of Diocese on the Niger, Bertram Lasbrey (1922-1945), Cecil Patterson (1945-1969), Assistant Bishop Denis Hall (1947-1957), Assistant Bishop Samuel Nkemena (1955-1961), Lucius Maduka Uzodike (1969-11975, Jonathan Onyemelukwe (Archbishop of Province 2 and later Dean of the Church of Nigeria) (1975-2000), Ken Sandy Edozie Okeke (2000-2010), Owen Chiedozie Nwokolo (2011-present).

Challenges of an Anglican Priest in Diocese on the Niger

Anglican priests in the Diocese on the Niger face numerous challenges that impact their ministry, effectiveness and personal lives.

Time Management: Ibenwa (2014) notes that one of the most significant challenges Anglican priests face is time management. A priest's schedule is often overcrowded with spiritual duties, administrative responsibilities, pastoral care, and social engagements. Even as a priest, the expectation to be available at all times for church members makes it difficult to prioritize tasks effectively. As a result, many priests experience exhaustion due to long working hours with little personal time (Adeyemo, 2015). Also officiating multiple services, attending church meetings, and engaging in diocesan programs can be overwhelming. The lack of structured scheduling tools in many parishes contributes to disorganization and inefficiency (Omenka, 2020). Unlike secular n professionals who have designated work hours, priests are often on call 24/7, leading to neglect of personal development and family life.

Emotional and Mental Stress: Oduyoye (2011) emphasizes that emotional and mental stress is a prevalent issue among Anglican priests. The pastoral role requires priests to offer counselling, resolve conflicts, and provide spiritual guidance, all of which can be emotionally draining. Many priests encounter difficult cases, such as domestic abuse, youth delinquency, and financial crises, which weigh heavily on their mental health (Ibenwa,2014). Furthermore, the pressure to be a moral example often prevents priests from openly discussing their own struggles. There is a general expectation that they must always be strong, which leads to internalized stress and, in some cases, depression (Adeyemo, 2015). Research shows that clergy burnout is increasing due to a lack of emotional support systems within the church (Okonkwo, 2019). Without proper care, this stress can manifest as anxiety, irritability, and withdrawal from ministry duties.

Multiple Expectations from Church and Society: Kalu (2008) asserts that Anglican priests face the challenge of meeting multiple expectations from both the church and society. In addition to preaching and spiritual leadership, they are expected to be community mediators, educators, and even political influencers. This demand often puts immense pressure on them, as failing in one area may lead to criticism from parishioners (Oduyoye, 2011). Priests are frequently called upon to officiate social events such as weddings, burials, and civic functions, making it difficult to focus

solely on their core spiritual responsibilities. The expectation to balance spiritual duties with societal roles can lead to frustration and exhaustion.

Poor Parenting of Priests' Children: Adeyemo (2015) highlights that poor parenting among priests is a significant challenge, as the demands of ministry often leave little time for family life. It is discovered that Anglican priests devote so much attention to their congregations that they unintentionally neglect their own children. This often leads to rebellion among clergy children, as they feel abandoned and struggle with identity issues. Additionally, the high moral expectations placed on priests' children create undue pressure, making them more susceptible to societal scrutiny. In some cases, priests' children engage in deviant behaviour as a way of rebelling against the strict standards imposed on them (Ibenwa,2014).

Financial Constraint: Kalu (2008) argues that financial constraint is one of the greatest challenges Anglican priests' faces, particularly in diocese on the Niger. This financial struggle often leads to frustration and, in some cases, unethical practices such as soliciting money from parishioners. Some parishes who fail to provide adequate housing, healthcare, and welfare benefits for priests, promotes their financial difficulties.

Strategies for Achieving Balance Between Church Work and Family

Balancing church work and family life is a significant challenge for many Anglican priests. The nature of ministry demands continuous attention, often leaving priests with little time for personal and family life. According to Osmer (2008), the inability to strike a balance between pastoral responsibilities and family obligations can lead to burnout, strained relationships, and even reduced ministerial effectiveness. Many clergy members struggle to separate their professional and personal lives, making it difficult to provide adequate attention to their spouses and children (Robbins, 2017). To achieve a sustainable balance, priests must intentionally develop strategies that allow them to fulfil their calling while nurturing their families.

Effective Time Management: One of the most critical strategies for balancing church work and family life is effective time management. Priests often face multiple responsibilities, including preparing sermons, officiating sacraments, providing pastoral care, attending meetings, and engaging in community service. If not well managed, these responsibilities can consume all available time, leaving no space for personal and family life (Drucker, 1999). Time management begins with careful planning. Maxwell (2007) suggests that clergy members should create daily, weekly, and monthly schedules to allocate time appropriately to their various duties. Having a structured timetable allows priests to dedicate specific hours to ministry, personal prayer, family interactions, and rest. Also, proper time management includes avoiding unnecessary engagements that do not contribute meaningfully to pastoral work. By maintaining a disciplined approach to time, priests can improve efficiency and create room for family bonding.

Setting Priorities and Boundaries: Establishing priorities is crucial for Anglican priests who seek to balance ministry and family. According to Covey (1989), prioritization helps individuals focus

on what truly matters, reducing the risk of being overwhelmed by non-essential tasks. A priest must recognize that while ministry is a divine calling, family is also a God-given responsibility. Ephesians *5*:25 commands, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her". This implies that neglecting family for the sake of ministry contradicts biblical principles. Priests must set clear boundaries between work and family time. This means establishing specific hours for ministry and ensuring that personal time is protected. Hybels (2004) emphasizes that clergy should avoid the tendency to always be available for church matters, as this often leads to burnout and family dissatisfaction. Church members should also be educated on respecting their pastor's private life. By maintaining well-defined priorities and boundaries, priests can ensure that neither their ministry nor their family suffers neglect.

Delegation and Teamwork in Ministry: Delegation is an essential leadership principle that enables ministers to balance their responsibilities effectively. Many Anglican priests struggle with trying to handle all church duties by themselves, leading to exhaustion and inefficiency (Warren, 2002). Instead of attempting to do everything alone, priests should delegate tasks to associate clergy, lay ministers, and church committees. For example, Moses' leadership style provides a biblical example of effective delegation. In Exodus 18:17-18, Jethro advises Moses, "What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone". Following this advice, Moses appointed leaders to assist him, thereby reducing his workload. Priests should adopt a similar approach by training and empowering church workers to share ministerial duties. By working as a team, they can focus on key pastoral roles while ensuring their personal lives are not completely overtaken by church responsibilities.

Maintaining a Strong Family Support System: According to Swenson (2004), clergy members who involve their families in their ministry experience greater satisfaction and reduced stress. When a priest's spouse and children understand and support the demands of ministry, they are more likely to be patient and cooperative. Involving family members in church activities can also strengthen their bond. For instance, a priest can encourage their spouse to participate in church leadership roles while their children engage in youth ministries. According to by Lee and Balswick (2006), clergy members who engage their families in ministry experience fewer conflicts between work and home life. Family retreats, vacations, and quality time together are necessary to reinforce emotional connections. The more a priest invests in their family's well-being, the better equipped they are to handle ministerial duties without personal distress.

Self-Care and Personal Well-Being

Self-care is often overlooked in ministry, yet it is one of the most vital aspects of maintaining balance. Many Anglican priests suffer from burnout due to excessive workload and lack of personal rest (Piper, 2013). Self-care involves physical, mental, and spiritual nourishment. Regular exercise, healthy eating habits, and adequate sleep are essential for maintaining good health (Cloud and Townsend, 2010). Mental well-being is equally important. Priests should take time to read, engage in hobbies, and seek emotional support when needed. According to Scazzero (2015), one

of the most significant issues clergy face is emotional exhaustion, which can lead to depression if not properly managed. Seeking mentorship, counselling, and attending spiritual retreats can help priests rejuvenate their inner strength. Spiritually, maintaining a personal prayer life is crucial. While priests are always involved in leading prayers and church services, they also need personal moments of intimacy with God. Jesus often withdrew to pray alone, as seen in Luke 5:16, "But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed". Following this example, Anglican priests should prioritize personal devotions to sustain their spiritual vitality.

Conclusion

The Anglican priesthood is a vocation that requires a balance of spiritual commitment, leadership skills, and personal integrity. As spiritual leaders, Anglican priests serve as shepherds to their congregations, guiding them in faith, moral instruction, and pastoral care. The Diocese on the Niger, as one of the prominent dioceses in south-east, has played a role in sustaining and promoting the ideals of Anglican ministry. However, priests in this diocese face numerous challenges, including time management issues, emotional and mental stress, multiple societal expectations, financial constraints, and spiritual struggles. These challenges, if not properly managed, can lead to burnout, decreased ministerial effectiveness, and personal distress. Despite these challenges, there are practical strategies that Anglican priests can adopt to achieve a balance between church work and family life. Effective time management, setting priorities and boundaries, delegation of responsibilities, building strong family support systems, and prioritizing self-care are essential for sustaining a fulfilling and impactful ministry. Through the implementation of these strategies, Anglican priests can maintain their spiritual strength, provide better pastoral care, and nurture healthy family relationships.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are required for balancing of ministry and family responsibilities:

1) The Diocese on the Niger should develop structured programs to provide psychological, financial, and spiritual support for priests. Regular retreats, counselling sessions, and welfare packages should be prioritized to enhance their well-being.
2) Anglican priests should undergo continuous training on time management, leadership, and pastoral care strategies. Workshops and seminars should be organized to equip them with modern techniques for managing ministry and personal life effectively.
3) The church should promote a family-friendly ministry approach, where priests' spouses and children are actively involved in church programs. This will strengthen family bonds and reduce the risk of neglecting family responsibilities.
4) The diocese should ensure that priests receive adequate salaries and benefits that reflect their labour in ministry. More so, financial literacy training should be provided to help clergy manage their income and savings effectively.
5) Priests should be encouraged to delegate duties to associate clergy, church elders, and lay workers. This will reduce workload pressure and create a more sustainable ministry model.
6) The church should create awareness on mental health challenges among clergy and provide support systems such as access to professional counselling and wellness programs.

7) Priests must prioritize their personal relationship with God through regular prayers, fasting, and spiritual retreats. A spiritually strong priest is better equipped to handle the demands of ministry and family life.

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