

Implementation of Church Programs in Fostering the Integration of Christian Faith into Daily Living at Methodist Church in the Kaaga Synod, Kenya

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Abstract

The Church programs are meant to foster ethical and moral values in the society. However, there is a gap in implementation of church programs. This paper seeks to assess the implementation of church programs for fostering the integration of Christian faith into daily living within the Methodist Church in Kenya, Kaaga Synod. Men, women, and youth fellowships, missions' teams, prayer groups, leadership and mentorship programs, and the children programs lack consistent implementation. If this problem remains unaddressed, it could lead to moral decadence, and render the Church irrelevant in the contemporary society. This study used a descriptive research design, qualitative approach, and proposes a constructivism research philosophy. The researcher establishes their analysis on transformational leadership theory, and leader-member exchange theory. The target population consisted 39,000 church members in 205 churches that make up the 27 circuits of Kaaga synod. The sample size was 380 respondents consisting of 339 church members, 32 lay leaders (including men, women, youth and circuit stewards), 8 superintendent ministers/clergy, and 1 synod Bishop. Data was collected using open-ended questionnaires for church members, interviews for lay leaders, focus group discussions for superintendent ministers, and documentary analysis for secondary data. The quality of data was ensured by checking content, construct, criterion, bracketing, and testimonial validities. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Kenya Methodist University, ethics committee and Nacosti. Data was analyzed thematically. Findings showed that Sunday school, youth and adult-member programs were present but lacked proper implementation and consistency necessary for fostering integration of Christian faith. This study recommended the Church leadership to support and oversee progressive implementation of church programs. It is also recommended that the Church leadership trains members on monitoring and evaluation of church structures. Adults were recommended to be role models to the young generation so as to enhance effective implementation of church programs.

Keywords: *Programs, Integration, Christian faith, daily living, Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK).*

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1.0 Introduction

Integration of Christian faith into daily living is a fundamental aspiration for believers. It entails application of religious principles and values in every aspect of a Christian’s life. The ability of a church community to effectively facilitate this integration plays a crucial role in nurturing spiritual growth and guiding its members towards a life that aligns with their faith. In the context of the Methodist Church in Kenya, Kaaga Synod, implementation of programs that seek to facilitate integration of Christian faith into day-to-day living becomes a topic of paramount importance.

Kaaga Synod faces challenges in bridging the gap between Christian teachings and their application. It is within this framework that the evaluation of programs aimed at integrating Christian faith into daily living becomes imperative.

“Incorporation of Christian faith into daily living has been a perennial challenge faced by Christians the world over, throughout the history of Christianity”

This research aims to assess implementation of programs for integrating Christian faith into daily living within the Methodist Church in Kenya, Kaaga Synod, in bid to enhance the church's ability to guide and support its

members in living out their Christian faith authentically. These programs encompassed different aspects of the church community, including men, women, and youth fellowships, missions' team, prayer groups, leadership and mentorship programs, and children's ministry. However, the effectiveness and impact of these programs in bridging the gap between faith and daily living has not been evaluated. This study employed a qualitative approach to capture the holistic understanding of implementation of integration programs within Kaaga Synod. Data gathered through questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary analysis provided insights into perceptions and experiences of church members, lay leaders, clergy, and the synod Bishop regarding integration of Christian faith into their daily lives.

The significance of this research extends beyond the confines of Kaaga Synod. The findings will contribute to literature on the role of the church in integrating Christian faith. Additionally, the results generated from this research can be generalized to benefit other religious organizations grappling with similar challenges. By assessing the programs and their implementation within Kaaga Synod, valuable recommendations were made to enhance effectiveness integration programs.

These recommendations range from modification of existing programs to developing new initiatives to foster a culture that supports practical application of Christian values in Christians’ daily lives. Ultimately, the goal of this study is to empower the Methodist Church in the Kaaga

Synod to better serve its members in their pursuit to integrate Christian faith into their daily lives through adopting spiritual discipline as guided by set Church programs

Background of the Study

Incorporation of Christian faith into daily living has been a perennial challenge faced by Christians the world over, throughout the history of Christianity (Hoffman, 2017). The Methodist Church, as part of the global Christian community, is not exempt from this struggle. Fear (2019) identified various areas where Christians can demonstrate integration, including trustworthiness, justice, benevolence, intelligence, and compassion. These areas highlight the need for the church to actively engage the public in integrating Christian teachings into daily life beyond the confines of church assemblies. The Methodist movement, which originated in the 18th century, has a rich history of promoting holistic living through integration of faith into daily life. Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience serve as pillars within the Methodist Church, providing a foundation for the application of Christian faith in all aspects of life (Hoffman, 2017).

One of the key aspects of the Methodist movement is the practice of class meetings (class program) introduced by its founder, John Wesley. These meetings provide a platform for members to read scripture, share personal testimonies, sing hymns, pray together, and support each other in living according to biblical teachings (Hall, 2019). Wesley emphasized social holiness, by encouraging Christians to live out their faith not only in private but also in the marketplace. This accountability and support system within class meetings fostered

spiritual growth and enabled Methodists to manifest their faith in their daily lives. The implementation of Church programs for integration of Christian faith into daily living requires active participation and engagement of both the clergy and the laity in various roles and responsibilities that are not directly related to spiritual disciplines observed in church services/assemblies (Roux et al., 2016) In the contemporary world, people may have diverse perspectives on the meaning and practice of Christian faith. However, the process of integration needs to take into account individual perceptions, their relationship with God, proficiency of the clergy in articulating church programs, and the subject matter of various Church programs (spiritual disciplines) (World Vision International, 2018).

In Australia, Gallet (2016) stresses the importance of networking programs in the church; particularly, with various organizations and community groups. This implies that the church's involvement in community events and initiatives adds value and promotes Christian values to the wider community. However, literature does not clearly address monitoring and evaluation of these church initiatives and their impact on nurturing the integration of Christian faith.

In Uganda, some churches provide youth with education on sexuality and self-sustenance, while in Kenya, religious leaders motivate and empower young people through seminars that equip Christians with life skills, spirituality, and moral formation (Kahiu, 2020; Njoroge, 2019). Programs for children such as Sunday school rallies, entertainment, and Bible study, have also been successful, but there is a need to involve parents in program implementation and monitoring to

ensure their consistency (Wilson, 2019; Agaba, 2018).

Minutes of the meetings of MCK Kaaga synod revealed deficiency in the implementation of the laid down programs which eventually have affected fostering integration of Christian faith (MCK Kaaga Synod, 2017; 2018; 2019, 2020). Despite extant literature on faith integration in areas such as education, psychology, medicine, and business, there is need for research on effectiveness of implementation of Church programs becomes imperative. (Beech, 2018; Matisse & Mosci, 2017; Laine & Kelly, 2016). The purpose of this study was to address this concern within the Methodist Church in Kenya, Kaaga Synod. By evaluating the effectiveness of these programs, this study aims to provide insights and recommendations for enhancing the church's ability to guide and support its members in living out their Christian faith. The research focused on the input of church members, the clergy, lay leadership, and the structures and programs put in place for this purpose.

Drawing upon a qualitative research approach, data was collected through questionnaires interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary analysis. The findings of this research will contribute to better understanding of the role of the church in integrating Christian faith into daily Christian living, and inform development of effective strategies and initiatives for the Methodist Church in Kenya, Kaaga Synod. Generally, the study seeks to address the disconnect between Christian teachings and their practical application.

Statement of the Problem

MCK churches have implemented Sunday school, youth, adults and mentorship

programs for its church congregants. Members are therefore expected to attend respective forums intended to foster integration of Christian faith into daily living (Liske, 2015). These programs are expected to be impactful, persistent, representative, transformative, consistent, educative and motivating to members. This is demonstrated when church leaders give support through modeling, training, sensitization, and evaluation and monitoring in order to sustain relevancy. However, there is a noticeable gap on lack of the will to implement Church programs. Due to this, moral and ethical issues such as substance abuse, corruption, domestic violence, and sexual immorality across the world that result from a failure to apply the content of Church programs have become a growing concern among Christians. (Lehr, 2017). The Methodist Church in Kenya, Kaaga Synod also faces challenges in implementing the stipulated programs. Reports and minutes reveal cases of sorcery, participation in anti-Christian cultures, family conflicts, and moral transgressions are prevalent, despite the presence of various church programs that could deter the same (MCK-Kaaga Synod, 2020). Moreover, there is a lack of clear roles for both the clergy and the laity as regards propagating integration of faith into daily life through church programs, particularly in the marketplace.

Existing scholars have addressed various aspects of faith integration in specific contexts (Neubert & Doughert, 2015; Armstrong, 2015; Haris, 2014). However, none has touched on the implementation of Church programs to foster integration of its teachings into daily living.

Research Objective

To assess the implementation of programs put in place by the Methodist Church in Kenya, Kaaga Synod, for integrating Christian faith into daily living.

Research Question

How are the existing church programs implemented to foster the integration of Christian faith into the daily living of the Church members in the Methodist Church in Kenya, Kaaga Synod?

Literature Review

The implementation of church programs play a significant role in shaping Christian living. These programs are designed to engage and influence church members and leaders, to foster integration of Christian faith into daily life. This suggests that clear program designs are necessary for progressive growth, and that both leaders and the members should execute the relevant programs. (Bezzarides, 2020).

Teo (2017) supports this view by emphasizing the importance of implementing strategies that motivate consistent member involvement in program activities. Teo(2017) stress the significance of intentional execution and commitment to the relevance of church programs.

In the United States, many churches have adopted family-equipping model, which aim to integrate Christian faith into the daily lives of their members, especially the youth (Kennedy, 2022). However, the sustainability of this model remains unclear. Sider (2018) points out that inadequate church management systems in the United States hinder consistent implementation and monitoring of programs by exploring digital church management software to promote growth and sustainability, while utilizing

platforms such as live streaming, social networks, websites, and other internet forums.

Rowe (2021) underscores church's role in safeguarding morality through relevant programs. However, Rowe (2021) argument lacks the consideration of continuous and consistent Christian behavior. This study addresses the need for ongoing counseling programs that progressively nurture Christian virtues in the daily lives of Christian couples.

In Africa, several churches have programs that aim to foster integration of Christian faith into daily life. These programs encompass political, socio-economic, and technological aspects (Morris, 2016; WCC, 2020). However, they are often treated by church members as routine church events, rather than transformative endeavors. Though the authors highlight the importance of mission and evangelism in fostering faith integration, they have not explored how it is integrated into the daily lives of Christians in South Africa. Mbewe (2021) suggests a re-examination of evangelism, since various engagement methods and the influence of African culture, requires further study.

In order to gather secondary data for this study, the researcher identified gaps such as lack of clear involvement of adults in children's church programs meant to foster integration of Christian faith into daily living; deficiency in prior and post evaluation; as well as poor and inconsistent monitoring of programs to advance integration of Christian teachings into all aspects of daily life. The literature review therefore highlighted the significance of continuity, sustainability, and progressive influence of integration programs.

2.0 Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in the Kaaga Synod of the Methodist Church in Kenya. Kaaga Synod is located in Meru County in the Eastern part of Kenya, and encompasses North Imenti, South Imenti, Central Imenti, and Buuri sub-counties. The choice of Kaaga Synod as the study site stems from its historical significance as the origin and mother synod of the Methodist Church in Meru region since 1912 (Nthamburi, 1982). A sample size of 380 was determined using sampling size determination table by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The sample included 1 synod bishop, 8 circuit superintendents, 8 circuit ministers, 8 leaders each for women, men, and youth fellowships, as well as 339 church members. Proportionate random sampling was employed to ensure adequate representation from the circuits and groups within the synod. Church members were selected using simple random sampling. This study proposes constructionism research philosophy, and adopted a descriptive survey research design, qualitative approach. Questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions and documentary analysis were used to collect data. The quality of data was ensured by checking content, construct, criterion, bracketing, and testimonial validities. Data was analyzed thematically using themes categories.

3.0 Results and Discussion

The study achieved 100% response rate for interviews, 100% for FGDs and 71% for questionnaires, translating to 93% response rate, which was adequate and representative of the target sample.

Background Information of Respondents

Among the demographic information sought was gender, level of education and occupation. Out of eight superintendent

ministers sampled, three (37.5%) were male, and five (62.5%) were female. All ministers had excellent educational backgrounds, with four (50%) of them being bachelor's degree holders, three (37.5%) with master's degrees and one (12.5%) with a doctorate degree. All ministers worked on full-time basis. The church member's demographics details were also investigated. It was found that 110(52%) were male and 133(78%) were female. Most church members 201 (75%) had secondary education and above, 27(7%) were certificate holders, 17(4.5%) diploma, 49(13%) under graduate degree; and 1(0.3%) master's degree. Marital status was also put into consideration in this study. 200(53%) of respondents were married, 71(18%) were single, while 40(11%) were divorced.

Results on the implementation of the Programs for Integrating Christian Faith

The study aimed at assessing the implementation of church programs in integrating Christian faith into daily living in MCK Kaaga synod. The study examined Sunday school programs, group fellowships programs (for men, women, and youth), morning devotions in MCK-sponsored schools, and mission and evangelism programs. Interviews, FGDs and questionnaires were used to gather data on the state of these programs, their execution, and their influence.

Three subordinate themes emerged from the study. First, respondents agreed that the church programs were well-prepared and organized, and were suitable to the needs of the participants. Second, there was a call for greater commitment to implementation and recognition of the importance of these programs by all churches in Kaaga Synod. Third, respondents highlighted lack of

consistency in program implementation, as well as inadequate monitoring and evaluation, which hindered reliability of the programs in fostering the integration of Christian faith into daily living.

The study found that Sunday school programs were available in all sampled churches. Ministers acknowledged that the curricula and organization of Sunday school classes were well-prepared and relevant to children. However, some churches lacked dedicated teachers for Sunday school classes, resulting to children attending adult worship services. This research also revealed that various parents and guardians do not impress on their children the importance of Sunday school classes mainly because some of them do not even attend their adult Sunday and midweek worship services, nor do they belong to bible study groups, prayer groups, evangelism groups and various other spiritual formation programs.

October (2015) noted that church programs often fail when leaders do not allocate enough time for successful implementation. Leaders may abandon programs that do not yield immediate results, leading to lack of passion and motivation among church members. Overall, the study revealed that while church programs were well-organized and available, lack of commitment in their implementation, as well as inadequate monitoring and evaluation rendered them inconsistent and unreliable in fostering the integration of Christian faith into daily living.

Though the arguments were supported by many respondents, some stated that group fellowship programs were set, but many of them were inactive as marked by 60% of the respondents. Various causes of group fellowship inactiveness were noted both in

questionnaires and FGDs was the inconsistent attendance of the group fellowship members (men, women and youth). It was noted that this posed a significant problem because low attendance of their meetings demoralized both the participants and the leaders. Due to this, those who attended felt wasted and skipped the event that followed without a solid reason. This problem was majorly in churches in the rural areas. One of the rural based ministers that the study reached out to explained the scenario, indicating that the nature of jobs that members do during the weekdays makes it hard for them to observe fellowship timelines despite their willingness to attend. *Minister P explained:*

“Consider a person who lives a few kilometers from their farm. When these people go to the farm, they typically labor until five, particularly if they are on hire. It would be too late by the time that person arrives at home and begins to get ready for the meeting. We attempt to encourage them so that if anyone is nearby, at least they can show up and fellowship with people who are there. We don't condemn them because we understand the circumstance.”

The situation was different for the churches in urban areas. The group fellowships were active and effective. In the attempt to find out the motivating factors behind their effectiveness, various answers were given. During FGD, participants said that *“the urban areas Christian believers have very active WhatsApp groups which forms forums for easy, faster and reliable communication and successful mobilizations”*. The respondents noted that through the WhatsApp forums, people were able to track others and encourage them to show up in fellowships and other church programs

regardless of their geographical and residential circumstances.

Readily available and affordable means of transport in town was also listed as a major factor in the effective fellowships as noted from the FGDs. People would travel from their place of work conveniently to the church or any such place of their meeting without much difficulty. From the minister's interview, the notion of the place of residence of the members was given to be a contributing factor to good or bad turnout in the bible study groups. In urban areas, people from the same residential area would meet easily because they live too close to another compared to rural areas where they are widely spread out. This was the angle of view and understanding of some of the circuit stewards FGD.

The other program that was investigated for its implementation was the mission and evangelism program. Like other programs discussed, the question of evangelism and mission was posed to all participants through all data collection tools that were used. Most participants seemed to understand very well the importance of mission and evangelism as a tool of expressing the core business of the Church. One of the respondents, Q4, in the questionnaire expressed his understanding of mission and evangelism program as *“that God's word is expected to be shared by all Christian believers in all places”*. Minister L stated *“that during the Old Testament times, the Jews were supposed to tell people about their one and True God, Yahweh. Running through the Old Testament, the prophecies of the coming of messiah were widely spread throughout to set people ready, and in the New Testament where the apostles' missionary journeys were clearly recorded as they went preaching, teaching, evangelizing*

and transforming peoples' lives and behaviors into godliness in all their practices”.

According to one of the ministers, R, missions and evangelism were done once in every quarter of the every year. He explained that those who took part in the missions and evangelism did so voluntarily. However, all the ministers who revealed that budget for missions and evangelism programs have suffered deficiency all the time.

4.0 Conclusions

The study sought to examine the implementations of programs put in place by the Church to foster integration of Christian faith into daily life in MCK Kaaga synod. This was done by analyzing programs such as the Sunday school, the group fellowship programs (Men, women and youth), MCK-sponsored schools' morning devotions, Bible studies, and mission and evangelism programs. The study revealed inconsistencies in participation in groups programs/fellowships, and bible studies which have rendered the programs inactive.

Kaaga synod has made an excellent effort to improve church programs and make them meaningful to the churchgoers. This was evidenced in the evaluated children's programs, like Sunday school, and morning devotions at MCK Primary schools. They were reasonably dependable though not consistent in providing youngsters with knowledge and skills they need to advance holistically in their daily lives. However, the study realized some areas of improvement in attendance, as well as lack of monitoring and evaluation. Parental guidance as well as mentorship by the adults were also found wanting. Children were reluctant to attend their program because it was optional given

that some parents/guardians failed to model them. Due to these setbacks in the implementation of these programs, the integration of Christian teachings into daily living has been negatively affected.

5.0 Recommendations

From the analysis of the results of this study, the researcher recommended modification and improvement of existing Christian integration programs, and documentation roles by the clergies and lay members. It also recommends that the Church leadership puts in place clear monitoring and evaluation methods and strategies for reliable implementation of church programs within and outside Church gatherings to foster holistic integration of Christian faith into

daily living. Further, the study recommends that the Church leadership initiates and oversees initiatives that will nurture a culture that supports application of Christian values in daily life through implementation of Church programs.

Implications of the study findings.

The findings of this study will provide insight into the implementation of Church programs that facilitate integration of Christian faith into daily living. The results can also be generalized to benefit other religious organizations grappling with challenges in the implementation of programs aimed to integrate Christian faith.

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