

A PAPER PRESENTED TO THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS
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TOPIC: THE CLERGY SPOUSES' EDUCATION AND MINISTRY

THEME: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EDUCATION TO THE CLERGY SPOUSES
FOR EFFECTIVE CHURCH MINISTRY

Education has been defined variously by different scholars and practitioners as:

1. Encouraging thinking, teaching values of a loving community, and to help individuals develop their own potentials as valuable human beings (By S. E. Atkinson in the New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology).
2. The systematic schooling or training given to the young and, by extension, to adults. (By Wesley Carr in the New Dictionary of Pastoral studies).
3. Development in knowledge or skill by teaching, training, or study. It is a study of the methods, principles and problems. (By E. L. Thorndike and Clarence L. Barnhart).
4. Giving us knowledge of the world around us and changes it into something better. It develops in us a perspective of looking at life. It helps us build opinions and have points of view on things in life. It provides individual freedom and empowerment, and yields important benefits. It is a powerful tool of enlightenment by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and participate fully as citizens. It is the foundation of our society. (From the Slide share website), www.slideshare.net

This paper is intended to address ministry shortfalls among clergy spouses in the church ministry due to lack of adequate education and training to facilitate their full participation. In this presentation the term “spouse” will be used to refer to a female partner and the “church” to mean Church of Uganda.

Why the clergy spouses need education?

According to Ellen White in her book, *Testimonies to the church* published 1948, she says; “The wife of the minister of the Gospel can be a most successful helper and a great blessing to her husband and she can rise to influence or fall depending on her level of educational character. Therefore this brings to us the urgency of educating a clergy’s spouse to gain knowledge on how to handle ministerial issues and give support to her husband to avoid ministering by chance.

Clergy spouses' education is a lifeline to development because education is one of the most critical areas for women empowerment. Whereas clergy spouses are both male and female, on average the spouses who are male are relatively educated unlike their female counterparts. So the concentration of this paper will be on the spouses who are females. It should be noted that whereas spouses of the judges, teachers, medical doctors, drivers and sweepers do not need to train in the areas of their husbands' occupations, it is different and a must do for the clergy spouses to train for ministry because their roles in ministry are so significant and demanding because they are called together with their husbands.

World Bank research (2013) found out that women and girl's education is one of the equipping tools empowering them in their every day's life engagements. In May 2013, it was reported that offering quality education and universal education to girls and women promotes societal (social) progress. In most cases the spouse of the clergy is seen as the head of all the women, where she is their counselor, role model and leader, besides being the administrator of the clergy's family. The spouse of the clergy is a leader in all aspects of the church's activities and programs, and more so the leader for women's ministries. Women issues are discussed with her and she is a role model for the church members on practical matters just as Josiah B. Andor affirms in his book, *The Role of the Pastor's wife in Ministry* (2013). This asserts the saying that when you educate a woman you will have educated the whole nation. It can be true because we know that great men (like most of you) have found the steps of their successes in their wives' involvement. However, a woman whose mental capacities have not been developed cannot have the capacity to develop her husband's personal future life and ministry (as in def.4). Josiah Andor points out that; "every woman should help her husband arguing that this is particularly true with the clergy spouse just as she can help him to be successful, she can also be the cause of his failure. She can help her husband to succeed in his ministry or cause his ministry to fail. From the Biblical point of view, it is right to say that every spouse is supposed to be her husband's helper in the ministry, because she is a mentor of other women and the church in general. However, she cannot do it if she is not fully equipped with the skills on how to handle ministry issues. Education is a primary human right which is important for our abilities to exercise all our other human rights.

One day, Mahatma Gandhi the man who led Indian to her independence, at his death bed, he was asked what he thought would develop India to become a powerful Nation of the World. He replied; there are three things that India must do.

One is education; He paused.

Two is education; He gave a long sigh.

Three is education; He kept silent.

Many years later, evidence has shown that India took Gandhi's word and is now one of the academically advanced countries of the East in the areas of: Medicine, Electronics and Engineering which are some of the examples of India's educational success stories.

Borrowing from that example, permit me to say that Uganda's success story however much it is below that of India, it reflects its roots in education. Many men and women have accessed good education to help them fit in the environment of their work. However, the story with the church leaders is different because most of them have taken education lightly and when it comes to their spouses it becomes a disease seeking healing. Spouses have not had that education to enable them walk the same journey like other women or their husbands as a ministry tool. That does not mean that it is too late and they cannot attain it, because we know that education is a lifelong engagement that ends at one's grave. Most of the clergy spouses especially women have remained with minimum academic qualification and little ministry resources to support their husbands because of seemingly denied opportunities.

In Feb, 2013 it was again observed through World Bank research that in order for a woman to excel, she needs to be backed by quality education. Unfortunately, it is sad to say that in many countries including Uganda and especially in the Church of Uganda's clergy's spouses, it is not so. We all know that the Missionary Church here pioneered education and this education has been the very ladder to success of many men and women, but the church that started it has had most of her leaders remain at the bottom of the ladder of success especially the clergy spouses. To Ellen White, the success or failure of the clergy depends on the spouse because the spouse has a very important role to play in her husband's ministry. Why? Because there is a feeling that ministry is for the men who were called and trained for full time ministry. This sentiment was also observed by Tracy Wells Miller in his book; "*Unique position of the clergy spouses*" (2012) that the clergy take pains to stress that they are the ones hired by the church, not their spouses. This kind of view implies that even when women might be having the willingness to study, their husbands stand in their way. Yet we cannot deny the fact that women have also been called because it is important to note that if the Lord calls a man into ministry, he calls the whole man that means his wife and his family. This means that the clergy spouse must share her husband's understanding of ministry but if she is not educated then that means the ministry is in danger as Arrais, Jonas in his publication; *Wanted: a good Pastor* (2011) says. There is need for the clergy to understand that the spouse is part of his ministry and that the two are responsible for developing the ministry strategies together. In that case, spouses together with their husbands are active and key players in the ministry with the capacity to transform church ministry. According to Ruth Tucker in her book; *Private lives of Pastors' wives* (1998), the clergy spouse has unique roles to perform and at the same time can face frustrations that are unique to her relationship and career. The fact that the pastoral ministry is more demanding, stressful and sometimes lonely, the clergy needs a helper who is knowledgeable. Musvosvi, N. Joel in 2001 writing in his book, *Being mirror in the Personage, in Ministry* is of the same view that if the above is not done, the clergy will find himself in isolation. Sometimes this isolation is carried over to the spouse and if she lacks the skills, the ministry will fail, and this will bring trouble to her, the entire family and the church. This same view was held by Fowler John in 1990 in his book; *The Adventist Pastoral Ministry*.

The church has continued to seek clergy spouses' participation even when she knows that they lack ministry training to be able to support their husbands in ministry. There is need to have the spouses' ministerial training breakthrough in order to improve church performance and development. The church must admit that ministry demands are many and most of them are better managed internally by the clergy spouses.

My recent findings have been affected a little by the existing facts caused by the frequent developments in many of the dioceses where new parishes are being created and some sub-parishes are manned by clergy. But I do imagine that on average the Province of the Church of Uganda is not less than 2000 parishes manned by 2000 parish priests, with administrative force of about 300 clergies and about 500 chaplains giving an approximate total of 2800 (This is just intended to give us a working statement to address the argument). Assuming that out of these, 2000 are married men, the question that we can ask ourselves is: how many of their spouses are trained in matters of ministry and or other disciplines of human life's engagements compared to the level of their husbands' education and sometimes of the congregations they minister to?

The growth, development and competitiveness of the church in the ministry market place are determined by the level of education of her ministers based on individual performance. When we talk of education, our focus should not only be on education for jobs, but rather education for enlightenment, understanding and utilization of God given resources. In this case, the principle idea drawn from the definitions at the beginning makes education becoming the process of acquiring the body of knowledge and skills that people are expected to have in any given area in a society for improving life and services. A good education develops a critical thinking process in addition to learning acceptable facts of life.

A scholarly observation made by Tracy Wells Miller (2013) showed that in order for a spouse to excel in all other spheres, she needed to be backed by quality education which can only be tasted by performance and service delivery both in and outside the church because there are already women who can be trained and later evaluated for their contributions to their husbands' ministries. Unfortunately, it is sad to say that the Church of Uganda has not been thinking in that direction.

We all know the contribution of the church to education in most of the African countries including Uganda has been remarkable and this education had been the very ladder to the success of many, but the church that started education has remained at the bottom of that ladder for real success because the clergy spouses who are key players in ministry, have not been initiated and equipped properly for the ministry through this education, and yet the church owns schools and skills based institutions capable of equipping clergy spouses.

It is a well-known fact that "Women and girls in the developing world are often denied opportunities for education. This could be due to cultural mind set against women education or financial setbacks that tend to eliminate females more than males. May be that is why the church

is up to now struggling to come to terms with the education of women in the ordained ministry basing either on one or both of the reasons above. Gwen Foss wife of Charlie Foss a clergy, in her book *“The church where people laugh”* (2003) observed that, “for the most part, it seems clergy spouses are on their own to find and implement the support networks they need. She lamented that spouse support programs had been cut when their dioceses sought to trim expenses”. This in one way or the other may reflect the true picture of what is happening in the dioceses and at the province when financial setbacks tend to drop women programs. But we must note and admit that lack of education limits prospects, decreases family income, reduces health, puts women and girls at risk of exploitation and limits the economic advancement of entire countries (in our case; it limits the advancement of the church)

This is very true of our church of Uganda. Prospects have been reduced, clergy families’ income has dwindled below average, health risks have threatened their lives and their spouses face many risks including isolation from the public engagements. The clergy are not ashamed to join in the common slogan; “behind a successful man is a successful woman.” What success are they bragging about when their spouses cannot compete with those in their parishes in the understanding of pertinent ministry issues of the Christian and church life? Is that saying true especially when it comes to church leaders? What does Paul say in 1Tim.4:12b? “Be an example to all believers in what you say, in what you live...” What does success mean to the clergy when behind them stand spouses who have not been equipped for ministry where they are supposed to play key roles? The only training these spouses get is during college retreats when their husbands are completing their courses, and the diocesan retreats for those just getting ordained. If someone got married after ordination, then the spouse is at a disadvantage because she will have no opportunity to attend any of such retreats. Even these retreats put together do not add up to one week’s training or any reasonable fraction of their husbands’ ministerial training. It is sad and a disadvantage to these spouses because they are front liners like their husbands in ministry and yet they have no capacity to perform ministerial roles. That is why very few of them get involved in their husbands’ ministry by default. When the ministry fails to move, the eyes are on the wife of the priest for not helping her husband. I am of the view that the mechanism for better ministry performance lies in equipping the whole couple.

What has partly been and is a setback in the ministry lies in lack of understanding the significance of educating and equipping spouses of church leaders. Some of us were here and are aware of one scholar (RIP) who said that whenever he sees a clergy, he sees a mass of ignorance. If what was said of our clergy who we know are well trained and equipped could have been true, what could have been the best description of their spouses in the same ministry?

The ministry of the church is shared between the clergy and his spouse. Unfortunately, the way the spouses are equipped for ministry is much wanting; two days retreat at the theological college with their husbands and another three days at the diocese in the week preceding ordination making a total of five days’ training, thus becoming the best training clergy spouses can get for the rest of their ministry lifetime.

The Missionaries who came here and started the church and clergy training were so keen at the clergy spouses' education/training. Some of us our spouses might have benefited for one complete year's training and preparation for ministry at the former BTTC. The Ordinands' Village (O.V) which was prepared and planned for that purpose is no more, which might imply that the church is no longer interested in the clergy spouses' education and training. Yes, one scholar had observed that when you want development you forget history and when you want to keep history you forget development. It could be true in some sense that the development of the University here destroyed the historical landmarks of ministerial training of the clergy spouses, but I do not believe that the church could have also done away with the program well knowing that it was very significant for the growth of the church and continuity of ministry. Besides BTTC, Ministry training could still be done elsewhere.

Unless this training is revived, we are running the risk of destroying the ministry of the clergy spouses spiritually, socially and even economically, for their contributions are highly missing. The church should not be contented with the retreats of these spouses for their life long ministry without evaluating the necessity of proper education and training for ministry. The church needs to rethink for a renewal and or new approaches to church ministry, and the way to go would be educating and equipping clergy spouses with modern and relevant ministry resources.

In conclusion, I would like to suggest some few options to the arguments presented here so that the education of the clergy spouses could be revived and the ministry of the church re-energized to enable the clergy and their spouses walk together the ministry journey. Ecclesiastes 4.9-10&12 could be the focus of our reinstatement of the program: "Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help...A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer." (NTL)

I therefore suggest the following:

1. Clergy's spouses training should be revived to improve church ministry and growth.
2. The Provincial Department of Education in collaboration with BTSĐT should be mandated to write a proposal and curriculum for the implementation of the program.
3. Since Clergy training is done at many different Colleges in the Province, training should be done at selected regional or diocesan centers where facilities can allow.
4. Funding from relevant partners should be sought for this program.

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