




The Roles of a Pastor's Wife in the Post-COVID 19 Pandemic Era in Reference to Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) and the Salvation Army, Nigeria

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Abstract

The status of a pastor's wife is an honourable position with huge responsibility. She holds a unique role in advising, encouraging, and cautioning the man who bears the responsibility of leading the church. Yet, the pastor's wife is an often neglected discourse both in the academic and ministerial spaces. Churches like the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) adumbrate the role of the pastor's wife both in liturgy and operations. There is a paucity of literature on the personality and role of a pastor's wife. Nevertheless, the COVID-19 pandemic has made the role of the pastor's wife more cumbersome. Church life has not remained the same since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the eventual lockdown laws on social, public, and religious convergence. This study sought to determine the role that a pastor's wife plays alongside her husband in the ministry. A descriptive approach was adopted as the basic methodology for this study with the research tool of structured interviews. The role of women in the early church is also briefly reconnoitred in order to demonstrate that women have a very important in a church, including the wives of ministers and preachers. The study recommended that churches like ECWA should give due attention to the status and role of pastors' wives in their traditions and liturgy. Also, ECWA, like Salvation Army, should prepare and organize ongoing educational programmes to equip and empower pastors' wives for optimum performance and fruitful results in church ministries. Likewise, pastors' wives are enjoined to rise to their calling by giving necessary support to their spouses at home, church, and community spaces.

Keywords: COVID-19, church, ECWA, Pastor's wife, Salvation Army, women,

Introduction

The Pastor's wife has a significant role to play in ensuring or enhancing the goals and objectives of shepherding God's flock. In spite of the fact that shepherd (Pastor) is the direct individual hired or tasked to watch over the affairs of the flock, his wife has a lot to do in order to succeed as an efficient helper. The Pastor's wife is a life-partner and the soul-mate of the shepherd. Whatever affects the Pastor invariably also affects his wife as well. Therefore, it is pertinent and purposeful to discuss the roles and qualities of the Pastor's wife and her role in a church.



Pastors are interviewed and consequently employed if found suitable by the district leadership and ratified by the ECWA headquarters. The Executive of the District Church Council (DCC) is saddled with the responsibility of pastors' transfers and endorsed by the ECWA headquarters. In ECWA, one of the traditions is that a church pastor must live together with his wife, irrespective of the nature of her job. Likewise, it is not allowed for a pastor to divorce his wife. In the event that the pastor divorces his wife, he must vacate the ministry.

The only fellowship groups recognized by ECWA are the men, women, and youth fellowships. There has not been any statutory forum for pastors' wives in ECWA since its inception. As such, in most ECWA documents (such as the as the ECWA Constitution, ECWA Bye-Laws, and ECWA Minister's Handbook), there is no column allotted to the pastor's wife. The only instance where the pastor's wife is mentioned is in the criteria for licensing and ordination, where it states that "the consent of the wife of the candidate is required in writing, which shall be submitted to the DCC Executive" (ECWA Ministers' Handbook, 2022:32).

However, on June 21, 2021, a three-day conference for all ECWA pastors' wives tagged "ECWA Spiritual Mothers in Ministry" was held at ECWA Tundun Wada, Jos, Plateau State. At the conference, the wife of the former ECWA President noted that "their husbands' ministries would not be complete without the support of their wives, hence the need to create a platform where they could meet and encourage one another on the best ways to assist their husbands" (Today's Challenge, 2021). Since that historic conference of all ECWA pastors' wives in Jos in 2021, it has become known throughout ECWA that ECWA pastors' wives are ESMIM, that is, "ECWA Spiritual Mothers in Ministry."

In 1865, Salvation Army was founded by William Booth along with his Catherine Mumford. Initially, the Salvation Army was named "The Christian Mission" before it was renamed in 1878. The church started as a response to preach to and helping the poor in the local area in east London. It is stated that "If William Booth is the father of the Salvation Army, his wife Catherine is seen as the Army mother" (The Story of Salvation Army, 2017). The doctrines of the Salvation Army "...derives from the teaching of John Wesley and the evangelical awakening of the 18th and 19th centuries" (The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine, 2010: xviii). The importance of the role of women in the Salvation army is mirrored in its leadership. Evangeline Booth was the first female leader, elected the fourth General in 1934, and other women have followed. Catherine Booth believed "that women and men share equally the right to preach the word of God and the message of Jesus" (Booth, 1862). Pastors are called "officers" while their spouses are "female officers." They are mandated to attend theological education together. Major Lawal said that the Salvation Army approves of copular ministry like Aquila and Priscila (Acts 18:2-3; Romans 16:3-5). Minister's wife serves as the assistant and she in charge of the women of the congregation while minister focuses on the men. Pastor Rotimi Isaiah commented that there is in essence no ministerial duty that the minister of the church could conduct that the wife cannot accomplish. The day the minister retires from service that is also the time when his when the wife would need to retire. Therefore, the objective of this study is a humble one, which is that ECWA like the Salvation Army, would recognize the role of the pastor's wife. Recognition involves acknowledgment and appreciation of the efforts that the pastor's wife is making towards the advancement and progress of her husband's church ministries.

Methodology

The study employed a qualitative method in this research tool of structured interviews designed by the researcher. This approach took into consideration the lived experiences of the people from their perspectives. Interviews were conducted with ECWA and the Salvation Army ministers,



pastors' wives, and other church members of ECWA, taking into consideration their opinions about the role of the pastor's wife in ministry, and analysing the data in narrative form. A purposive sampling was employed whereby 10 interviewees were selected, ECWA (6) and the Salvation Army (4). Coupled with that, the study employed a documentation literature review method for data gathering as they were sourced from published literary works on ECWA. Relevant biblical texts were interpreted and applied with the aid of exegetical tools such as word study.

Conceptual descriptions and clarification of terms

Pastor's Wife. A pastor's wife is the legitimate partner and who should be a helper, and supporter of the pastor, both in life and ministry, in order to ensure and enhance the successful shepherding of God's flock. She sees and accepts her role as God's calling and ministry with the consciousness that she will give account to God for her stewardship in the body, whether for good or bad (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:10). She believes both her husband and herself are in the ministry together (cf. Ecclesiastes 4:9–11; Amos 3:3). She should be ready (whether convenient or not) to support her husband in the right cause. A "woman is usually called after her husband's job. The pastor's wife also adopts the husband's title after marriage (Hung-Whan, 2002:15).

Corona virus (COVID-19). The COVID-19 disease is caused by the virus known as SARS-CoV-2, which stands for "Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2." The latter causes the former. The origin of Coronavirus is uncertain. According to Gates (2020:7) "This virus probably originally emerged from an animal source but now seems to be spreading from person to person, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It is also unclear whether this novel virus is seasonal or longer-lasting. Because this is a rapidly changing event, only time will tell." The 2019 Novel Coronavirus, or 2019-nCoV, is a new respiratory virus first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in late 2019. This virus is deadly, highly contagious, and spreading rapidly. It is also considered a novel virus, meaning that it has not been previously identified and is not the same as other coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans and cause mild illnesses, like the common cold. According to Gates (2020:5) "On December 31, 2019, Chinese health officials reported a cluster of cases of acute respiratory illness in persons associated with the Hunan seafood and animal market in the city of Wuhan, Hubei Province, in central China." On January 21, 2020, the first person in the United States with diagnosed 2019-nCoV infection was reported.

ECWA. ECWA stemmed from the SIM (Sudan Interior Mission). Sudan is an Aramaic word that means "black", literally, it means "Land of the Blacks, while it can be used as an explanatory term as mission in the interior parts of the Land of the Blacks" (Turaki, 1999). The early beginnings of the SIM originated from the evangelical mission movements of European and North American societies, especially the Toronto area of Canada in the 18th and 19th centuries. After the great revivals in Europe and North America in the 18th and 19th centuries, many evangelical mission movements, which formed the roots of the SIM and many other mission societies, were established. These mission societies afforded the SIM both spiritual and social factors from which to erect a faith mission that would have a non-denominational and international outlook (Tumak & Gaiya, 2006). ECWA was founded on May 18, 1954, as the Association of Evangelical Church West Africa, but later changed to "Evangelical Church Winning All" (ECWA).

The Salvation Army. The Salvation Army is an evangelical part of the universal church. It was established in 1865 by William Booth alongside his wife Catherine Booth (nee Mumford). It is headquartered in London, England. It is a charitable movement organized and operated on a military pattern. The officers are the equivalent ministers of other Protestant churches (Britannica, 2024).



A Pastor's Wife in the Context of the Old Testament

In Genesis 2:18, God said, "It is not good that man should be alone." This underlies the essence and pivotal role of women in God's world. She is a necessity in God's creation. Women have played vital roles in the public sphere and even more at home. However, the role of a pastor's wife is specified in the Old Testament, yet there is no mention of any pastor's wife. The concept of a pastor's wife appears to be from the New Testament and post-New Testament eras. Nevertheless, certain constructs can be gleaned from the Old Testament texts regarding the role of a pastor's wife.

First, she is God's image (Genesis 1:26-28). Based on the creation account in the book of Genesis, God's creation activities were brought to a close on the sixth day with the note that "male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27). Sailhamer (1994:13) noted that "the creation of humankind is specifically noted as a creation of 'male and female,' stressing the fact that God created 'man' as 'male and female.'" Both males and females bear the image of God. Fitzpatrick (2003:30) identifies six key aspects in which men and women image God, namely, in calling humankind to rule, relate, reproduce, reflect, rejoice, and rest like Him. Being created in God's image inspires the idea of humanity's purpose in life, which is to resemble and represent God both in being and in actions. A pastor's wife is first and foremost a woman who is created to mirror God both in character (being) and conduct (deeds).

Second, she is a helper (Genesis 2:18). The word "ēzer" essentially refers to a "helper, assistant, i.e., one who assists and serves another with what is needed (Rebuli & Smith, 2009:105). The occurrence of the word "ēzer" is used in connection with God helping humans (Zodhiates & Baker, 1993). Given that God can be a "helper," it follows that the idea does not imply "inferiority." Rather, it does imply that the "helper" plays a supportive role instead of bearing primary responsibility of an endeavour.

The Hebrew text of Genesis 2:18 states that the "helper" is modified by the "kenegdo" (suitable for him) which carries the notion of "complementarity rather than identity. ...The help looked for is not just assistance in his daily work or in the procreation of children, though these aspects may be included, but the mutual support companionship provides (Wenham, 1998:68). Similarly, Patterson argues that the word conveys function, "Designed as the perfect counterpart for the man, the woman was neither inferior nor superior, but she was alike and equal to the man in her personhood while different and unique in her function." Piper and Grudem (1991:408-409) claim that God has created woman as man's loyal and suitable assistant to help tend the Garden and for procreation. The function of Eve is not less valuable to the maintenance of the Garden or to the furthering of humankind, but the shared responsibilities involve each accomplishing complimentary tasks. Rebuli and Smith (2009:105) opine that "A woman joined to a man is called to be his *ēzer*, 'a helper suitable for him', one to provide help or relief, one who surrounds, one who comes alongside, and who comforts her husband, an indispensable companion." Fitzpatrick has beautifully put the wife's calling in this way:

A wife who is reflecting God's helping character desires to sustain or uphold her husband; she strengthens, comforts, and seeks to protect him. Because of her love for the Lord and for her husband, she endeavours to dispel his fears by being trustworthy and gracious. She leans for strength upon the Lord so that she might share that strength with her husband. In her heart he finds shelter and protection from the world; he finds a companion who offers him what he really needs: help in his God-given calling.



From the foregoing, it is obvious that the wife's role is enormous which requires dependence on God to be able to accomplish it. She needs God's help in terms of strength, wisdom and resources to be able to accomplish her goals. For this herculean task, she needs God's help.

Third, she serves God and family (Proverbs 31:10-31). Proverbs 31:10-31 is a popular pericope that catalogues the roles of a noble (or virtuous) wife. This is a text that presents an aesthetic description of a noble wife's duties. The word "ḥayil" is rendered as "noble" by the NIV, a word whose root derives from "strength" (Harris, Archer & Waltke, 1980:624a). In the context of Proverbs 31:10, the word indicates a woman who is strong in character, hence virtuous (Gesenius & Tregelles, 2003: 3) yet retains the notion of an individual who is able and capable (Koehler et al 1999:2). Hence, the woman in Proverbs 31 is both virtuous and strong, a woman renowned for her "superior achievement in every area of life" (Hawkins, 1996:19).

According to Shelley (1994:910) this poetic passage identifies a godly woman who is able to find fulfilment in her home, community, and career. Rebuli and Smith (2009:107) added that the noble woman focused on the good of her husband and family (verses 12, 15, 21, 27-28); she is godly, wise, and caring (verses 10, 20, 25-26, 29-30); she is industrious, diligent, and productive (vv. 13-14, 17, 19, 22, 27); she is an entrepreneur and an efficient leader (verses 15-16, 18, 24, 26); her character and that of her husband is praiseworthy (verses 23, 30-31). Many more adjectives could be used to describe the noble wife; however, the crux of the matter lies in her character and her relationship to her God—she is one who "fears the Lord" (v. 30). Her accomplishments were not possible because of her strength; her strength derives from the Lord, for whom she has great reverence (Proverbs 31:31). She has resolved to "anchor her life on the 'fear of Yahweh'" (Hawkins, 1996:22).

A Pastor's Wife in the Context of the New Testament

The New Testament does not specify or catalogue the role of a pastor's wife. In fact, no pastor's wife is mentioned in the New Testament. However, as alluded to by Nicolaides (2021) women indeed played a great role in the early church. The apostle Peter (who could be referred to as a pastor) was married (Mark 1:30). Some of Jesus's brothers who were evangelists had wives that accompanied them during their ministerial journeys (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:5). Based on the New Testament texts, there is no pastor's wife that has her name mentioned. Albeit, other women's names were mentioned, but they were not pastor's wives. Dorcas (or Tabitha, Acts 9: 36-42), Mary, mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12), Rhoda (Acts 12:13-15), Eunice and Lois (2 Timothy 1:5), Lydia (Acts 16:11-15, 40), Damaris (Acts 17:34), Priscila (Acts 18:2-3, 18-20, 24-26; Romans 16: 3-5; 1 Corinthians 16: 19; 2 Timothy 4:9), Phoebe (Romans 16: 1-2), Mary in Rome (Romans 16:6), Junia or Junias (Romans 16:7), Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis (Romans 16:12), mother of Rufus (Rom. 16:13), Julia and sister of Nereus (Romans 16:15), Chloe (1 Corinthians 1:11), Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:1-2), Claudia (2 Timothy 4:21), Apphia (Philemon 1:2) and Nympha (Colossians 4:15). These notable individuals epitomize certain virtues and leadership, such as godliness, hospitality, generosity, maturity, an exemplary lifestyle, sacrificial services and the like. Pastor's wife is equally expected to showcase these virtuous character exhibitions as she supports her husband in ministry. There is a tendency to draw inference from 1 Timothy 3:11 regarding a deacon's wife, where it was demanded from them to be "dignified, not slanderers but sober-minded, faithful in all things."

The pastor's wife is an elder stateswoman in the church; it is imperative for her to imbibe Paul's injunction in Titus 2:3-5 "the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things--that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good,



obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed” (NKJ). In spite of the age of a pastor’s wife, it is required that she be an example of godly character-a role model-and teach younger women the nitty-gritty of being godly wives and mothers. Given this phenomenon, two issues need to be pressed further regarding the identity and service of a pastor’s wife.

First, the identity of a pastor’s wife is in the notion that she is a child of God (John 1:12-13). Dobson (2004:37) rightly observed that women often find their identity in their husbands or in a prominent figure within their sphere, sometimes even in their children. Conversely, men tend to find their identity in their vocation (Eggerichs, 2004:196). There is a tendency to consider women to be relationship-driven creatures and therefore find it natural to establish their identity primarily in their husbands ((Culver, 1987:46-47). From a different perspective, if a woman understands her relationship with Christ, her identity is fixed and secure in him (Eggerichs, 2004:126) and this builds more confidence in her as a better woman, wife (widow), and a steward of Christ.

There is a plethora of scripture passages that describe the identity of a female believer, such as: as a child of God (John 1:12-13), a joint-heir with Christ (Romans 8:16-17; Galatians 3:26-29), a vessel where the Holy Spirit dwells (1 Corinthians 3:17), she is part of the body of Christ and bestowed with the spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7; Romans 12: 4-5; 1 Peter 4:9). A worthy self-image is pivotal to understanding one’s self-worth. Shelley (1994:1566) reiterates that true self-worth derives from understanding one’s identity in Christ and accepting how God created and gifted each believer.

Given that the role of a pastor’s wife is not specified in the Bible, and ECWA too does not define her office or role, there is a tendency to “embrace” a catalogue of “undefined” expectations from her congregation and community. To be able to cope with this phenomenon, she would have to find a sense of her identity in Christ as a believer and a regenerated individual, and the area(s) of exhibiting her spiritual gifts in the body of Christ.

Second, the ministry of the pastor’s wife is rooted in the notion of her God-given gifts. 1 Peter 2:9 states that every believer is called to priesthood in the new covenant with the church (Acts 2). In this ecclesiastical space, the priesthood consists of all believers in Christ living in submission to his Lordship, thus offering their bodies as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1-2). These members of the priesthood are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and are gifted accordingly so that they minister and serve others (1 Peter 4:7-11). The essence of the distribution of gifts is that they complement one another and edify the body of Christ. There is a sense of “unity in diversity” as the gifts are bestowed on each member in accordance with her area of personality and calling. In view of this, Schreiner (1991:215) states that women may possess and exercise any spiritual gift. Spiritual gifts are stewardship gifts from God. The gifts she receives give the pastor’s wife “a special function to perform as a member of the Bod of Christ” (MacDonald, 1995; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; Romans 12:6-8). The notion that each believer including the pastor’s wife, is equipped with spiritual gifts from God, endowed and sustained by the Holy Spirit, should be the basis for discovering her God-intended role in the body of Christ (Rebuli & Smith, 2009:111).

Effects of Corona Virus on Pastoral Ministry vis-à-vis the Pastor’s Wife

The novel Corona virus has impacted the entire world. On the one hand, in terms of economic loss, social restrictions and movement, and health risks and deaths. On the other hand, personal and corporate hygiene and online activities. Generally, many congregations have learned to cope with the challenge of the lockdown policy in 2020. Most churches were forced to embrace online services and other activities via the internet. Lockdown restrictions brought many congregants to terms with the idea that the “church” is not limited to the church buildings but to people. Three



major ways in which the Corona virus has impacted pastoral ministry vis-à-vis the pastor's wife are discussed below:

Health impact. Since the advent of the pandemic, several preventive measures have been put in place by the government in different countries with recommendations from health organizations, including the World Health Organization, to curb the community spread of the virus. Some of these preventive measures include: social and physical distancing, hand-washing and hygiene practices, the wearing of face masks, and lockdown (Owojaiye, 2020). These practices have shaped our lifestyles in Nigeria. Even after the lockdown, some of these practices, especially hand-washing, have become part of our daily hygiene habits. Pastors are always needed to attend to the needs of their congregants in terms of prayers, visitation, and counselling sessions. Often times, pastors were required to counsel and pray for their congregants who were being quarantined. And because of poor health facilities and the brain drain of health workers, most Nigerians resorted to spiritual help. Because of these growing demands, often times pastors are absent from their homes and their wives have to cope with the tragic situations. Despite the lockdown rule, some congregants had to secretly come to the pastorium for various purposes. The pastor's wife had to cope with those exponential demands (Ogunkunle, 2022).

Economic impact. Nigeria's economy has radically changed due to the Corona virus pandemic. Today, Nigeria is grappling with the economic pangs of the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has taken its toll on global demand for oil, and the logjam between Russia and the OPEC cartel over the decision to cut down on output, Nigeria's economy has been in dangerous jeopardy (Akanni & Gabriel, 2020). Some years ago, economic analysts argued that Nigeria's economy is likely to head for a recession by the end of 2020 due to the massive decline in crude oil prices caused by the coronavirus pandemic, and this would lead to further devaluation with its attendant consequences, including a high rate of unemployment (Akindami, 2020). Similarly, many families have been negatively affected economically. There is hunger in Nigeria, and many Nigerians concede that the "hunger virus" is more deadly than the coronavirus. Many of the congregants live from hand to mouth because their daily income has been truncated due to inflation, unemployment, and their inability to run their businesses.

Social Life. People display antisocial behaviour when they behave differently from the acceptable standard that guides the daily conduct of members of a society. Antisocial conduct is any action or disposition that violates the social and cultural norms of a particular group of people in society (Otumala, 2013:112). During the lockdown, many young people tried to take advantage of the situation to indulge in antisocial behaviour such as burglary, sexual abuse, internet fraud, prostitution, assault, rape, and suicide.

Types of Pastor's Wife

Pastor's wife can be classified into three major categories according to Marilyn Brown Oden (1966:40-42) which have been highlighted below:

The Detached Pastor's Wife. The detached pastor's wife does not perceive or define herself as an integral part of her husband's ministry. She sees herself as only being married to the man and not his job. This implies she is not interested in her husband's profession. Rachel Oshagbemi and Rev. Fatimehin, two of the interviewees, remarked that a pastor's wife once said to her husband, "God called you but not me, so I am not concerned about your pastoral calling." She added that the pastor's wife refused to join her husband at their new station because of its remoteness and village set-up. Such a pastor's wife is not interested in the expectations of the congregation and community where her husband is serving. She sees herself as a typical woman and not a pastor's



wife. Her entire focus is on her domestic responsibilities and career. She does not want to be associated with her husband's work in any way. She does not provide any moral or spiritual support for her husband (Proverbs 21:19). She does not perceive her role to be exceptional compared to other women. This phenomenon poses a great danger to the pastor's performance in the ministry. Such a pastor is bound to suffer from loneliness, depression, and low performance. Sooner or later, this attitude of the pastor's wife may impact their marital relationship negatively.

The Supportive Pastor's Wife. This category of pastor's wife may be seen as a "background supporter" because of her choice to work in the background. She provides the needed support, but she would not front any activity. As a spectator, this kind of pastor's wife would like to provide counsel or advice as part of her role to support her husband in life and ministry. She silently communicates with her husband in public without anyone noticing. She considers her role in terms of complimenting her husband as a companion, not a competitor. She observes the congregants' responses and reports her observations, and expresses her opinions on how her husband should handle some issues in the church and community. This disposition of a pastor's wife may engender romantic and affectionate love from her husband.

The Incorporated Participant. This last category of pastor's wife is spectacular in the sense that she "is actively involved in the ministry. Such a wife has in fact found her particular niche—a ministry of her own that complements that of her husband. She does not hesitate to take on a leading role (Machamire, 1999: 23). This type of pastor's wife is not afraid to stand in for her husband when he is not around. She would defend the interests and rights of her husband to any extent. At times, a lack of effective communication may trigger a sense of competition between the pastor's wife and her husband.

In ECWA, the type of pastor's wife that can be accommodated or integrated is the "supportive pastor's wife." Both the detached and incorporated participants may be considered extremities in the ECWA system. Woodbury (2024) stated that "The role of women in England, where the Salvation Army commenced during the 19th century, was that of support, rather than leadership." On the one hand, the "detached pastor's wife" is not encouraged, as some of the congregants may complain about their non-participatory disposition and, often times, may attract insults and opposition to the pastor himself. On the other hand, the "incorporated participant" may be considered to be self-imposing and could find herself at loggerheads with some of the congregants. Two of the interviewees, Mrs. Ogunrinde and Rev. Famejo, mentioned that a pastor who was to assume a new church station was rejected because the congregants perceived the incoming pastor's wife as too assertive and aggressive. The "supportive pastor's wife" fits adequately with the structure and liturgy of ECWA.

Biblical Images of a Pastor's Wife

Based on the available biblical data the following are proposed for possible images of a pastor's wife:

First, a pastor's wife can be viewed as a spiritual mother. Just as the shepherd is the spiritual father or leader, so is the pastor's wife the spiritual mother. What makes the pastor's wife a spiritual mother does not depend on her age and experience but on her calling and status. As a spiritual mother, she is like Sarah, who was blessed to be the mother of nations (Genesis 17:15–16). The pastor's wife is a spiritual mother, with all the rights and privileges therein. Former ECWA President, Rev. (Dr.) Steven Panya Baba, lamented that "...some pastors were drifting from the faith by allowing the devil to control their lives because they're no longer connected with their wives" (Today's Challenge, 2022).



Second, a pastor's wife is a helper of her Husband. The primary assignment of Eve in Adam's life and ministry was to help him accomplish God's mandate (Genesis 2: 18), even though she eventually gave him the forbidden fruit that led to their "fall". Likewise, the pastor's wife is meant to help and support her husband. The pastor's wife may be helpful to people around her, but her primary responsibility is to be a helper to her own husband. In the process of helping her husband, her character disposition should be that of obedient submission (Ephesians 5: 22-24). She can communicate with her husband in public without distraction. During her address to the pastors' wives, Mrs. Alice D. Nmadu stressed, "where husbands plant seeds, your role is to water it and allow God to cause the growth" (Today's Challenge, 2022).

Third, a pastor's wife is a role model. As the wife of the spiritual leader, she is expected to be a role model, mentor, and pace-setter for other women. She is to function as a role model in character, appearance, and faith. Other women should be attracted to her good example. Her emphasis should be on inner beauty that glows from within. She is not lousy and rumpus, but moderate and respectful. Mrs Naomi Baba appealed to the ECWA spiritual mothers that "they were pace-setters who are expected to walk and talk spirituality as they serve God and humanity (Today's Challenge, 2022).

Fourth, a pastor's wife is a counsellor. The pastor's wife is seen as a counsellor, comforter, and motivator (Proverbs 11:14; 15:22; 24:6). Pastors are vulnerable to burnout, explosion or depression but their wives' encouragement and consolation can be of great help. The pastor's wife can be a counsellor to other depressed and frustrated individuals in the church, especially women. The major fallout of the Corona virus lockdown restrictions has grossly affected women hence; a pastor's wife is a resource person to encourage the depressed in the congregation.

Lastly, a pastor's wife is a peace-maker. Naturally, women possess the power to bring about disorderliness or peace. The pastor's wife should emulate the role of Abigail in pacifying David when he wanted to kill Nabal, her husband (1Samuel 25). Peace is expensive, but possible and beneficial. The pastor's wife should ensure peaceful atmosphere in the local church where they are serving. Even when her husband is maltreated or molested, she has the power to bring about peace through her words and actions.

A reflection on the role of women in the Early Church

It is important to briefly reflect on what women did in the early church. Nicolaidis (2021) informs us that one often accepts that only men have a calling to serve the Church of God. However, we have numerous examples of women in the Early Church Serving in roles such as inter alia, ministries as deaconesses. The Byzantine (Eastern Orthodox) Church permitted women to serve as deaconesses and they performed a number of liturgical as well as some limited pastoral functions in the church Their roles were diverse in opportunity and encompassed teaching and instructing. Some were also very involved in missionary activities. Nicolaidis (2021) also states that Paul began the church in Philippi with a group of women who would assemble for prayer outside the city gate (Acts 16:13–15). Lydia was one leader of the group and her home was the concentration of early the Philippian church (Acts 16:14–15, 40).

This informs us that many women were allowed to serve as apostolic preachers but their roles were not specified as such. Even so women were involved in caring for the ill and those who had great need of spiritual support. Some women also tended to care for refugees, people who were victimised. Some cared for detainees. Paul advises us that four women mentioned by Paul were leaders of what were in essence house churches and these include Chloe (1 Corinthians 1:11), Nympha (Colossians 4:15) and Apphia (Philemon 2). "Lydia, also led a Pauline house church



(Acts 16). Paul also mentions in Romans (16: 6-12) that four women including Persis, Mary, Tryphena, and Tryphosa, had “worked very hard” in the Lord” (Nicolaides, 2021:5)

The Roles of a Pastor’s Wife

It is a bit difficult to draw a framework for a pastor’s wife given that their roles are not specified in the Scriptures. Nevertheless, Anna Droke (1914:110; 114) has made a remarkable sketch of what the role of a pastor’s wife ought to be in this manner:

Since there is no special office of ‘pastor’s wife’, it is easy for a pastor’s wife to inherit a set of (undefined) expectations from her congregation, and because she lacks the self-assurance that comes from having a clear sense of her identity in Christ, she feels duty bound to ‘just accept’ all the roles she thinks others expect her to play. As a result, she labours under a burden too heavy for her to bear, and forfeits the joy of serving Christ in the way He created her to serve. . . . If a pastor’s wife finds her identity in Christ, it will set her free from external pressures to serve Him as He created her to do, that is, in keeping with her God-given spiritual gifts. As she becomes aware and confident of her identity as a woman of God, she is free to use the unique personality and special gifting.

The ideal, from a biblical perspective, for the pastor’s wife is that of any woman who is specifically influential in her conduct, to function effectively as a woman of God, to support her husband, and be an active member of the local church. Older women would have much to offer the younger pastor’s wife in equipping her with the knowledge of homemaking. The older pastor’s wife would have much to offer younger women within the church as a mentor or advisor. This ministry is valuable and necessary.

But the following might be catalogued as the roles of a pastor’s wife in the post covid-19 pandemic era:

As the wife of the congregation’s shepherd, she is committed to spiritual activities. She does not allow pleasure and selfish ambition to take the place of God in her life and ministry. She has chosen to serve God and support her husband. She is committed to prayer and intercession for her husband, family, and the congregants. She is committed to knowing God’s will and following it to the letter. She demonstrates good character, which will promote and attract people to the church (1 Timothy 4:12). She does not engage in any illicit affair that can jeopardize and tarnish the ministry of her husband. Her moral life serves as a model for other women in the church. Other women in the church can emulate her godly qualities in their respective homes.

She has a balanced relationship with her husband, children, and church members (Titus 2:3-5). She can relate to different people. She is moderate in whatever she does and says. She knows how to navigate among several competing situations and make godly decisions in the interest of the kingdom of God. People desire to listen to her words of wisdom. She listens before speaking. She is not given to rash judgment.

She has a sense of attraction as she provides a peaceful environment for her husband and other congregants. She is hard-working and energetic. She tries to be available for her husband. Her presence is always sought by people around her (Matthew 5:14-16).

Psychologically, her reasoning capacity is normal. She can express her psychomotor (physical), affective (emotional), and cognitive (intelligence) abilities correctly. She is able



to make brilliant contributions to her husband's ministry. She does not provoke her husband's emotions.

In terms of conjugal duties, she satisfies her husband sexually (Ecclesiastes 4:11-12). She keeps her husband from falling. Many pastors have fallen because of sexual immorality and marital infidelity. She plays her conjugal role as expected. She is a good companion to her husband. She is friendly and gives herself to her husband sacrificially. She is her husband's confidant.

In the era of post COVID-19, she contributes to the financial growth of the family (Proverbs 31:13, 16). She is not a liability; rather, she works to add value to the economic stability of the family. She is creative and industrious. She is not a beggar or dependent on people around her. She explores legitimate opportunities to add value to her family. She supports her husband economically. She does not condone a wasteful lifestyle. She ensures nothing is wasted (cf. John 6:12-13). When there is a surplus, she means to save for future use. She knows how to coordinate both human and physical resources within her reach. She has foresight about the future and can plan ahead. She manages her home, especially the upbringing of her children, so that they do not bring dishonour to their father's ministry (Proverbs 23: 13-14; 29:17). She doles out discipline on her children whenever it is required. She is truly a mother who would want her children to appear neat and presentable.

Health wise, she ensures that her husband, other members of the family, and their guests observe personal hygiene (cf. Exodus 23:25). When the husband returns from an outing or social engagement, she reminds him to wash his hands before touching house items. She makes her wards do likewise. She encourages frequent use of hand sanitizer to prevent possible infections.

Insights for ECWA

ECWA should give due recognition to the status and role of the pastors' wives. By giving due credit to the pastors' wives, ECWA must be deliberate in acknowledging, repositioning, and integrating the pastors' wives into its administrative and ministerial structures. Pastors' wives are valuable assets in ecclesiastical ministries. Of importance, essential training should be put in place for the pastors' wives. In collaboration with ECWA Theological Seminaries, Bible Colleges, and Bible Training Institutes, pastors' wives should be trained in the basics of biblical and theological studies. Other areas include counselling, health education, leadership skills, and the like. Because the world has never remained the same since the emergence of the coronavirus, the church must re-strategize its ways of operations and ministries.

Many people, including women, are going through trauma and depression after the COVID-19 lockdown and many have done so for many years. Most women are left with no choice but to fend for their families through petty trading and other menial jobs. The following are suggested ways in which pastors' wives might help their husbands in their ministry.

First, a pastor's wife can be very useful in conducting or anchoring prayer meetings (1 Corinthians 11:5). Whether online or onsite, a pastor's wife can be of immense help in coordinating prayer sessions. Second, she may be of help in teaching or facilitating Sunday school classes, women's fellowship classes, baptismal classes, and the like. As a mother, a pastor's wife can help in the children and youth meetings. Among the women of the church, she might help facilitate group Bible studies. Third, older pastors' wives could help train other younger pastors' wives. Her



experience in the ministry is significant to the body of Christ (see Nicolaidis, 2021). She should attend seminars so as to garner some experience and skills to be able to teach others. Fourth, though depending on her interests and talents, the pastor's wife may be engaged in music-related units in the church. Fifth, many of the pastors' wives are passionate and skilled at ministering and addressing the needs of the youth and children. For example, Mrs Dada and Mrs. Oshatimehin, (called mother of children) who are wives of ECWA ministers and they are known for their dedication to children ministry. Sixth, counselling is pivotal to the pastoral ministry, especially in the post-pandemic era. She may be able to provide counselling services to church members who are in need, especially single ladies and newly married women. Seventh, she could help other women if she has knowledge of some crafts or skills such as knitting, sewing, soap-making, catering, and so on.

Very importantly, there may be some gender sensitive places that the pastor may not be able to visit, but the wife might help visit and counsel such members, especially women. Women understand themselves better than men, and they easily open up to one another. There are discussions that are gender-sensitive, so a pastor's wife might be in the best position to help. During the COVID-19 lockdown, women who had social restrictions because of a probable infection had to be attended to and prayed for. Pastors' wives were instrumental in helping victims during the lonely season. Likewise, she may engage in house-to-house evangelism, especially among women. During mission outreaches, she could join the team and provide support where possible. She could help write tracts for religious instruction support.

Conclusion

Being a pastor's wife is not an easy role; it is a serious business with needs, tasks and behaviours. It requires hard work to be a supportive and efficient pastor's wife. Being a pastor's wife is a calling and a divine mandate. The ideal pastor's wife should have at least some of the attributes described below. The pastor's wife should understand that she was created as an image of God, a helper, a mother, a believer in Christ and a gifted steward. The pastor's wife should understand her role as a ministry steward. She is a leader in her domain. She is a partner and supporter of her own husband. She intercedes for her husband in prayer. She would do her best so as not to bring shame and disrepute to her husband and the church at large. She is a godly mother who is aware of the needs of her children. She instils discipline in her children so that they do not stain the image of their father as a spiritual leader. ECWA, like the Salvation Army, should encourage pastors' wives as much as possible in terms of due recognition, ongoing educational programmes, incentives, and stipend.

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