



SETTING THE AGENDA FOR ENGAGEMENT

THE ROLE OF THE **CHURCH** IN POLITICS

STUDY GUIDE



FOREWORD BY REV. DR. DAVID OGINDE

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Foreword

Throughout the history of the church, there has existed among some Christians the belief that there is a need to separate ourselves from all affairs of the world. In an obvious misinterpretation of Paul's advice to Timothy, they have advocated for believers to dissociate themselves from all civilian affairs of this world. Politicians have equally used this line to urge the church to stay out of public affairs and restrict themselves to faith issues within the confines of the places of worship.

This concept of separation stems from the sharp dichotomy that some have placed between the secular and the sacred. It is a belief that there is a secular space where the sacred cannot and should not enter, and a sacred realm from which the secular is outlawed. To buttress this belief, many have argued that Jesus never involved Himself in politics, so why should we?

It is indeed true that in the narrow understanding of politics, Jesus never formed a political party, adopted a political program, or organised a political protest. Yet in the broader sense, Jesus' whole ministry was political. His birth stirred a serious political storm in Herod's leadership that resulted in the massacre of many children. His ministry inaugurated a new social order whose values and standards challenged the very systems and structures of the time.

This often landed Him on the collision path with the ruling class. In proclaiming the onset of a new Kingdom, Jesus' teaching offered a strong alternative to the Roman and Jewish status quo. His was a Kingdom whose principles and practice were set to alter the politics and governance of nations. To this end He commissioned His followers to be the transformative agents in nations as salt and light. For this reason, if the church is committed to the cause of Christ, we cannot afford to ignore political involvement.

To this end we deeply appreciate the effort that has gone into preparing this unique Study Guide on Church and Politics. The studies are developed from talks and panel discussions by 33 speakers at the *Church and Politics Summit*, which was held in mid- 2021 with participants from more than 52 countries and six continents. With robust biblical exposition, this Study Guide is a worthy companion for all who are desirous of bringing Kingdom impact into the political and governance arena. It sets out a clear agenda and practical lessons on how to engage politics, with the eternal hope that ultimately the kingdoms of this world will become the Kingdom of our God and His Christ. While we await that manifestation, may the lessons of this study stir our hearts to arise and stand for our God and our country.

David Oginde (Rev) PhD

Chairman

Church and Politics Steering Committee

Endorsements

The engagement of the church with politics is a spectrum that swings all the way from the position that some traditional churches took that politics is worldly in nature to the other extreme where church leaders like Dietrich Bonhoeffer even planned the overthrow of a government. Sometimes we have confused the politics of man with the politics of God and in the process offered theological or prophetic mandate to politicians of our preference only to swallow the bitter pills later on when it turns out God had a different idea. This is why a Study like this is so useful so that we can engage both with the contextual political realities which are facing us and examine how the Bible speaks to those situations at the same time. As the Lausanne Congress on world evangelization put it,

"Although reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless, we affirm that evangelism and social-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty."

Indeed, by discussing and engaging, we are doing our duty. It is part of the mission of the church. We highly recommend this Study Guide that will help us to fulfil this mandate knowledgeably.



Calisto Odede (Rev.)
Presiding Bishop
Christ Is The Answer Ministries (CITAM)

This Study Guide material on, "Church and Politics," has come at a very opportune moment. As the Body of Christ, corporately or individually, the issues covered in this Guide are such a great reminder of our missional role, as salt and light, in the society and particularly on matters of governance. Like any other mission field, God is interested and concerned about the affairs of His people and as such, He is calling believers to actively participate in the political life of their society as a missional responsibility. When we do this, then we will be able to impact the society for God's glory. This is the concern of this Study Guide and it is creatively put together to trigger discussion and reflections on the same. Because of this, it is fit for Small Group Bible study at individual and group (Church, family or workplace) level and I highly recommend it to all who desire to make a difference as faithful ambassadors of Christ and agents of transformation.



Simon Kande,
National Director
Fellowship of Christian Unions (FOCUS) Kenya

Church and Politics Study Guide is catalytic, overwhelmingly convincing about the inseparableness of Church and Politics, compelling on the urgency to act now leaving no room for procrastination. It employs historical records, comparative analysis and biblical narratives for its argument and affirms the church as both individual believers and the Institution, consequently asks the reader, where are you in today's politics? It unapologetically reminds us when, how and why the church in Kenya failed, commends its positive roles and clarifies its irreplaceable roles which if not played will be catastrophic. It states that the church is the moral conscience, compass and advocate for justice; hence cannot "sit out" of politics.

This masterpiece pushes the global church to rethink on its participatory roles in politics, redirects it to intentionally, strategically, prayerfully and actively engage in politics citing great men and women who stepped into politics with one common agenda- to respond to the why question. It suggests practical ways in which Kenyan politics can be reshaped towards building the Kenya God wants. The Kenyan politics requires an urgent reengineering through the church vehicle.

I highly recommend this timely, well researched, informative, practical and inspiring study guide to all those who genuinely and urgently desire to see the new Kenya after God's heart and ultimately God's rule here on the earth.



Esther Obasi-ike (PhD)
Pastor In charge- Redeemed Christian Church of God Solution Centre Nairobi
Founder & President, Queen Esthers' Generation

The debate as to whether the Church should make its voice heard in the political arena has abounded for long. Over time, however, Church history and the evolving theological discourses have almost resolved that. By calling believers the salt and light of the world, Christ was no doubt calling upon believers to play an active role in aligning the world. Politics cannot be an exemption to this call. How then should the Church go about in executing this role?

For the Church to occupy its place well in the political space, it must first do an introspection. It must be salt with taste and light that is not dim. The Church must therefore do proper house keeping in an effort to be like Caesar's wife, lacking in suspicion. In order for the Church to look the politicians straight in the eye and correct wrongs in their stable, it must ensure it is also seen to be clean in its dealings. That is why the Church must sanitize from within. In the same way it is said that justice must not only be done but seen to be done, the transparency and accountability in the Church must not only be done but be seen to be done. The doctrine in law that he who comes into equity must come with clean hands may also apply in this case. If the Church intends to align politics, it must be seen to be walking the straight and narrow path it dictates for others.



Rt. Rev. Thegu Mutahi
Moderator,
PCEA General Assembly

Acknowledgements

After the successful *Church and Politics Summit 2021*, the production of this Study Guide provides an important bridge for accessing the rich content shared by the resourceful speakers at the event. We deeply appreciate all the voices represented here. We especially wish to appreciate our partners, Tearfund Kenya, who have generously supported the production of this Study Guide, in pursuit of their commitment to encourage the church in fulfilling its mission of transforming society as “salt of the earth” and “light of the world.”

This Study Guide would not have been possible in the first place, without the plenary speakers and panel discussants at *Church and Politics Summit 2021*, whose wealth of wisdom and reflections provided the rich content from which this tool draws, particularly in the *Perspective* articles of the twelve (12) studies.

Thirdly, we acknowledge the dedicated work of the technical team of writers, led by Rev. Lucas Owako and Wilson Kiuna, all who worked tirelessly within very tight timelines to convert the content of the *Church and Politics Summit 2021* into the Study Guide. The team of contributors, who adapted the Summit talks into the twelve (12) corresponding *Perspective* articles and Bible Studies, included, Dr. Mary Thamari, Daniel Karanu, Florah Kidula, Fredrick Abuya, and Kepha Nyandega.

Last, and by no means least, we appreciate the invaluable input of the Church and Politics Steering Committee, who provided the vision and oversight for the *Church and Politics Summit 2021*, and in the production of the *Church and Politics Study Guide*, through its various task committees. We acknowledge the following members:

- Bishop Dr. David Oginde – Chairman
- Dr. Joshua Wathanga – Secretary
- Bishop Kepha Nyamweya Omae – Redeemed Gospel Church, Inc.
- Bishop Dr. Geoffrey Njuguna – Deliverance Church International, Langata
- Bishop Calisto Odede – Christ Is The Answer Ministries (CITAM)
- Prof. Margaret Muthwii – Pan Africa Christian (PAC) University
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- Flavia Murugi – Consultant

With our prayers that God would ignite a renewal in our nation as the church rediscovers its role in politics, we commend this Study Guide to you.

STUDY #1

Introduction to the Study

A. Perspective

"But where is the voice of the church?"

This question has been heard fairly frequently in recent years, whenever our country has found itself grappling with challenging socio-political issues. It is heard not only in private conversations and social media but even over the mainstream media. It is a question that tells at least four things:

1. That society is in need of guidance;
2. That from their knowledge of either the Bible or our history or both, people know that the church should offer some guidance concerning the issues that confound society;
3. That they are not hearing this voice of the church in a satisfactory manner;
4. When it is asked by Christians, as is often the case, the question reflects a view that influencing the politics of the land is a preserve and duty of the top church leadership, and not the individual Christian on the ground.

The term "church", as used in the *Church and Politics Summit 2021* and in this study guide, has a comprehensive meaning. It begins with the individual Christians who collectively make up the church; it also encompasses specific local congregations, circles of believers in particular localities or regions such as the church in Nairobi or Kenya, and even the universal church, the body of believers in all places throughout history.¹

Politics has always played a key role in shaping the destiny of nations. On one hand, great nations have been built through constructive politics that promotes justice and the common good of the citizenry. On the other hand, negative politics characterised by vices such as injustice, corruption and conflicts has often resulted into the breakdown of society socially,

¹ Stanley Grenz. *Theology for the Community of God*. (Grand Rapids, Mich. : W.B. Eerdmans, 2000).

economically, politically, morally, religiously and spiritually. If believers are to shape society positively as God's stewards, it follows that influencing its politics is an integral part of the process. It is our God given missional mandate, and failing at it would mean we have failed our Master.

Abraham was called and blessed by God to be a blessing to the nations (Genesis 12:1-3). The people of Israel, however, continually struggled to appreciate that the privileges of being God's covenant people came hand in hand with the mandate of propagating God's rule and extending the blessings of his kingdom to all nations. An inward-looking practice of faith that overlooked God's plans for the nations proved to be a hindrance to this God given missional mandate.²

At certain key moments, the church in Kenya has a history of exerting positive influence on the politics of the land. More often than not, however, she has struggled to properly discern and fulfil her calling in this area of mission. The *Church and Politics Summit 2021* was inspired by the concern about this struggle and this informs the development of this study guide. It seeks to answer two key questions:

1. What would God want us to do about our politics?
2. How, exactly, do we ensure we act obediently and do this that God has called us to do?

This Study Guide, following the outline of discussions at the Summit, makes the following arguments in the subsequent chapters:

1. **Kenyan Scenario: How are We Faring?** Although the church in Kenya has a history of some positive influence on the politics of the land, reality points to major weaknesses in her engagement with and influence on politics. This calls for renewed reflection and commitment to a life of witness and influence in the political arena.
2. **Global Scenario: Lessons from the American Church-** while the USA church has its fair share of shortcomings, the 'good, the bad and the ugly' of its experience teaches the global church that effective Christian political witness requires a framework of engagement built on biblical norms and values, and a political philosophy expressed in a balanced agenda and program of action.
3. **The Rock on Which We Stand: Rethinking Our Theology About Politics** – for the church to bring godly influence on politics, we need a well-defined political theology which is firmly rooted in scripture. How can we sharpen our theological edge, and what are the answers to some few specific theological questions from our present context?
4. **Church as Citizen: Balancing Our Twin Identities** - the Christian is called to engage with the society in all its spheres, dimensions, and life, for such is the responsibility of a citizen, of whom all Christians are, whether as individuals or a community of faith.
5. **The Church as a Peacemaker: Promoting Peace and Cohesion in the Nation** – the church has a central and privileged responsibility for modelling and promoting a holistic view and understanding of peace, which they model as a people who have been reconciled to God.

² Christopher Wright. *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*. (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2006), 462-465.

6. **Church as Participant: Entering the Political Arena**– despite the challenges in the elective politics of the land, the church has a duty to participate and influence the prevailing political culture, driven by the higher calling of serving and meeting the needs of the people.
7. **Church as Advocate: Speaking and Acting for the Powerless** – whether as an institution or individual believers, the church has a biblical advocacy mandate rooted in the very character of God, to ensure that society upholds God-honouring practices and policies that respect justice, human dignity for all, and especially the vulnerable.
8. **Church as Mediator: Building Bridges to Common Good** – acknowledging that conflicts and divisions are a reality in all communities, Christians are called to be builders of bridges to a common good, for people who live in estrangement and hostility. In doing this, believers obey and follow in the footsteps of their Saviour Jesus Christ, the perfect mediator.
9. **Church as Custodian: Safeguarding Society’s Moral Fabric** – in a context of persistent concerns about moral decadence in Kenyan society, the church must first acknowledge this as a sad consequence of the failed responsibility as the moral compass of the nation, and then renew its commitment to modelling and safeguarding godly values and morality in all spheres of life.
10. **The Responsibility We Carry: A Call to Service and Sacrifice**– cognizant of the temptations of the perks and power of political office, the church should be careful not to be merely driven by self-interest, as is the prevailing norm, but rather by an affirmed and distinct call by God, driven by a genuine motivation to serve people.
11. **Way Forward: Translating Concern Into Action** – having understood our mandate, and realized our shortcomings, we must move beyond contemplation to action. Beginning with repentance of the sin of neglect of its God-given mandate, the church needs to recover its lost identity as God’s holy people, reclaim its neglected spaces of influencing the political narrative in Kenya, and lastly, renew its prophetic and transformative mandate as salt of the earth and light of the world.

Reflection:

Share some specific ways in which you have been part of or have witnessed failure by the church in the area of political engagement. What were the causes and what are the consequences of this failure?

B. Bible Study - Psalm 96

- 1. Read through the Psalm. Take note of the Psalmist’s calls for the worship of God by His people, and his proclamation of God’s rule over all.

- 2. In what way does the Psalm rebuke or encourage you?

C. Application Challenge

The rest of this study is meant to help you learn how to practically influence politics within your circles of influence, whether nationally, regionally or locally.

- a. Name the specific circle of influence in which you will be seeking to apply what you learn through this study.*

- b. Get a few other people in a small group to study together with.*
- c. Identify at least one social media platform where you can share what God will be teaching you in this study series, and start with a reflection or insight from today's study.*

STUDY #2

The Kenyan Scenario: How Are We Faring?

A. Perspective

There is a widespread view that politics is dirty, dangerous and has its owners. Many believers have stayed out of it because of either indifference or fear of the sharp criticism that follows those who dare to venture into it. This is the spirit of a presentation on the Kenyan scenario, made by Bishop Dr. David Oginde at the *Church and Politics Summit 2021*. Whereas there may be some truths in the fears expressed, believers have no excuse whatsoever to disengage from political and national activities in their communities. Our faith must be lived out in every aspect of our daily lives if we are to remain obedient stewards of God's creation. John Stott, in his book, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, argues that "No single word captures more accurately, or expresses more eloquently, the modern sense of impotence than the word 'alienation.'"³ He says that when the affairs of the nation are left unguided by the principles of the kingdom of God, then ordinary men and women shall inevitably suffer alienation, whereby the powerful oppress the weak, the rich exploit the poor, and the majority overrun the minority. Suffering people are waiting for a man or woman of God to speak and act on their behalf so that they are relieved from their suffering. Therefore, Christians cannot afford to give in to the spirit of alienation. They are God's instruments that must engage politics and influence it for the good of all.

It is encouraging that throughout history, men and women of God have been at the forefront of spearheading significant change. The likes of Moses, Jeremiah, Elijah, John the Baptist, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr were at the forefront of influencing their nations in their days. We have seen the Church and individual believers in our time speaking and acting on national issues in a manner that amplified the church's prophetic voice in the nation. For instance, past church leaders like Bishop Alexander Muge, Bishop Henry Okullu, Bishop David Gitari, Bishop Ndingi Mwana-a-Nzeki, among others, played an inspiring role in calling the government leaders toward justice and good governance. Others, like Rev. Timothy Njoya, were part of that generation, and still continue to raise that prophetic voice. Today's Christians, both church leaders as well as ordinary members, are also doing their bit to exert positive influence on the politics of the land at various levels.

We must, however, be honest that today, the influence of the Church in politics and governance is a far cry from what is expected of it. It is a paradox that Kenya which is said to be 85%⁴ Christian can also experience the levels of corruption that have become so prevalent in our national discourse. The faith we possess seems not to be impacting our politics as it ought to.

Why is this so? Many factors have contributed to this status, four of which will be mentioned here. Firstly, the Church has spoken with a discordant voice, and a divided house cannot stand. During heightened political seasons, the nation has often been confronted with the spectre of diverse prophecies, all of which purport to speak on behalf of God, yet their messages contradict each other. Similarly, different tribes seem to hear God differently: all hear God favouring candidates from their own tribes. This inconsistency only tells the world that the Church is confused, and the confusion further breeds distrust even against the authentic voice of God.

Secondly, the impact of the church has been stunted by a tribal bondage. Allegiance to one's tribe has superseded allegiance to the Cross and to the heavenly citizenship. It is saddening that some in favour of tribal preferences throw biblical values out of the window. Although our heavenly citizenship should be superior to our earthly citizenship, the tribal bondages have reversed the expected norm for believers.

Thirdly, the love of money has interfered with the church's witness. The Bible says that the love of money is the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10). When believers accept favours from those in power, they become incapacitated to call out evils committed by the same people. Money has the power to silence the voice of reason and, unfortunately, it has silenced the Church's voice.

Fourthly, the Church has not explored the wisdom of influencing the politics of the nation. Jesus called his disciples to be shrewd as well as gentle in their witness (Matthew 10:16). For instance, influencing society is not all about calling for press conferences to express what the church feels. Effective change may come through establishing the right relationships with the players and engaging them from the point of love. Aggressive efforts of change that lack wisdom may only lead to hostility and alienation. Sadly, influence from the Church oftentimes comes as a reaction to offence. The Church has not considered a wider view of effecting change in the political arena.

These are just but a few highlights of what is stunting our influence in politics and governance. But all is not lost. It is said that the first step in solving a problem is recognizing that there is one. Despite the current weaknesses of the Church in impacting its political environment, it is possible for believers to pray, reflect and act on the problem areas, with God's help, and seek to deal with our weak links so that our witness and political influence is renewed.

³ John R. W. Stott and John Wyatt, *Issues Facing Christians Today: 4th Edition*, ed. Roy McCloyhry, Fourth edition. (Zondervan, 2011).

⁴ 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census, (Vol. IV): Distribution of Population by Socio-Economic Characteristics, pg.12, 422

Reflection

Share a practical example where you have witnessed any of the four failures mentioned in the article above play out. In what way did it impact the rest of society?

B. Bible Study- Matthew 5:13-16; Romans 2:17-23

1. Jesus implies in Matthew 5:13-16 that the world needs believers. How are believers a solution to the world?

2. Share one significant event where the Church institution or individual believers have had a significant positive impact in the politics of our nation, and one event where the Church has failed.

3. Reflecting on the state of politics and governance in Kenya, share some of the ways that the Church, as individuals and institutionally, can be a positive influence.

4. Read Matthew 5:13b and Romans 2:17-23. These Scriptures give the consequences of believers not living up to their task.
 - a. *What are these consequences mentioned?*

b. *What are some of the results and outcomes of the Church's silence or negative involvement in politics?*

C. Application Challenge

Identify one specific challenge or weakness that hinders you as an individual, and one that hinders you as a church, from positively impacting the politics around you? What action will you take in order to change the situation in each case?

STUDY #3

The Global Scenario: Lessons from the American Church

A. Perspective

As a case in the global scenario, the American church with its good and bad experiences in the political arena has many valuable insights and lessons for the church in Kenya, and Africa at large. In light of a presentation and follow-up discussions at the *Church and Politics Summit 2021*, Ron Sider, Adam Taylor and Bob Inglis point out that the global church can be inspired both by the successes and failures of the American church in its political engagement.⁵ On the one hand, the church in the USA has made significant *contributions to democracy and universal human equality, promotion of global health and flourishing, and faith-driven advocacy for justice in the world*. On the other hand, its political witness has been undermined by *failure to listen across the spectrum of political differences, reluctance to confront racism, and lack of a biblically balanced agenda*. In this regard, the 'good, the bad and the ugly' of American experience teaches the global church that effective Christian political witness requires a *framework of engagement built on biblical norms, and a political philosophy that is expressed in a balanced agenda and program of action*.

As Sider asserts, the foundations of American democracy provide a crucial insight into the role of Christian faith in shaping the nation's political culture and public policy. At the heart of this is the Christian heritage of the *Declaration of Independence*, a crucial founding document that affirms the "inalienable rights" of all human beings, created in the image of God. This has been a key motivation for Christian influence in the pursuit of public good, through historical initiatives of civic engagement that changed American history. Such include the "great abolitionist movement to end slavery," the "civil rights movement" and the support given by the Catholics in establishing unions that "brought much greater economic justice to millions of people."⁶ Besides contributions in expanding the democratic space,

⁵ Dr. Ron Sider is the former president of Christians for Social Action, while Rev. Adam Taylor is the president of Sojourners, a Christian non-profit that works with Christians across the spectrum to engage with a variety of issues in the public square in the USA. Bob Inglis, a former congressman of South Carolina, is Executive Director of Republic-EN.org, notable for their advocacy for environmental justice, climate change work in ways that also engage with values for free market enterprise.

⁶ Sider, "Global Scenario" in *Church and Politics Summit 2021*, 16-18 June, 2021, Nairobi.

the American church has also made generous investments in global health and promoting human flourishing, through medical aid to save “millions of people in Africa, and elsewhere.”⁷ This is in addition to faith-driven advocacy for justice in the world.

Notwithstanding the positives, Sider notes on the other hand that the American church, and particularly the evangelicals, have over the last five years had the following challenges:

1. Failure to listen to black, Latino, and Asian American Evangelicals, and to create necessary platforms to “talk about their political differences on the basis of what the Bible tells us.”
2. Failure to confront racism and “idolatrous nationalism by politicians,”⁸ a thorny problem especially during Donald Trump’s regime and in the transition to the Biden administration.
3. Adoption by the Evangelicals and catholics of “one-issue politics,” rather than a more encompassing, “biblically-balanced agenda,”⁹ which goes beyond the traditional issues of personal morality, to include a range of pressing social problems and global concerns.¹⁰
4. Lack of a well-thought out biblical framework for “sustained, theologically grounded reflection on social and political issues that shapes some other Christian traditions.”¹¹ Unlike Catholics, who have a rich heritage of papal communication and reflections that guide political discourse and action, evangelicals have resorted to a knee-jerk approach to issues, which one commentator has derided as a “ready, fire, aim” approach!¹²

Despite the inherent challenges revealed by the American experience, Sider maintains that the Church cannot afford to abandon politics as a “dirty game,” for two reasons.

- a) **Pragmatic reason** - practically speaking, since politics shapes billions of lives of people in the world, for better or for worse, Christians need to leverage politics for common good.¹³
- b) **Theological reason** - the church has a compelling discipleship duty to bring every sphere of life, including politics, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, for His honour. Failure to do so then amounts to disobedience to the Master!

In this regard, what can the Kenyan Church learn from the American experience? There are four lessons that can be drawn from the successes and struggles of the American church in politics.

1. Developing a biblical framework for Christian political involvement, which entails:
 - Bible-based and Christ-centred view of the whole of life, including politics.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Sider, Ronald J. and Knippers, eds., *Toward An Evangelical Public Policy: Political Strategies for the Health of the Nation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 11.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Sider & Knippers, pp. 25, 26.

¹¹ Ibid, p.9.

¹² Ibid

¹³ Sider, “Global Scenario”

- A careful study of the contemporary world – in order to understand the issues facing society and realities of human experience that the church should address.
 - A holistic, balanced political agenda that espouses, among others, the dignity and sanctity of human beings, freedom of belief and practice, concern for the poor etc.
 - Application through concrete political decisions, proposals and programs of action.
2. Maintaining integrity of the church by avoiding partisan endorsement of a particular party, politicians or political affiliations.
 3. Creating platforms for honest dialogue - to ensure we listen to one another more closely and to understand our differences, so that we can rally together as the church.
 4. Courageously confronting the issues that bring divisions in our context - that is, negative ethnicity, which in the past has been manipulated for political advantage during elections.

Reflection

After reading through the *Perspective* article, what stands out for you about the 'good, the bad and the ugly' of the American church's experience? *To what extent would you say the struggles of the Kenyan church in its political involvement mirror those of the American experience discussed?*

B. Bible Study – Joshua 22:10-34; Philippians 1:27-28

1. Read Joshua 22:10-34, and make your observations about the unfolding events of the passage, the conflict that arises and how the parties involved resolve it:

What insights or lessons can you draw from the misunderstandings of the people involved?

2. Consider the central issues of the struggle of the American church in its political engagement as highlighted in the article, and from personal knowledge. In what ways would you say Israel’s conflict in Joshua 22: 10-34 (and its potential consequences) illuminates the political differences that have divided American Christians?

3. Read Philippians 1:27-30. What is the gist of Paul’s exhortation in this passage? In light of his exhortation, how can the Church/ individual Christians “stand firm in one spirit” in their political witness in our current context?

C. Application Challenge

In light of the summary of lessons from American experience shared in the article, and insights from the Bible Study, come up with an action plan to address an identified issue of concern/ passion. Share what you intend to do with your small group for prayer support and accountability.

STUDY #4

The Rock on Which We Stand: Rethinking Our Theology About Politics

A. Perspective

Discussions during preparations for the *Church and Politics Summit 2021*, and even during the Summit itself, revealed one disturbing fact: the average church member and church leader in Kenya today would, at best, struggle to give a clear and comprehensive answer to the question of what exactly God wants the church in Kenya to do about the politics of the land. To put it more technically, the church is in dire need of a clear theology of political engagement.

In Matthew 7:24-27, Jesus spoke about the two builders who put up houses – one on the rock and the other on the sand. When the rains came, each house was tested, and one stood firm while the other was swept by the floods. Jesus likened the one building his house on the rock to the person who “hears these words of mine and puts them into practice.” Thus if the church is to engage politically, then such engagement must have a solid theological and biblical foundation, for it to have positive and lasting impact.

The Summit session on “The Rock on Which We Stand” explored the reality that a faulty or unclear theology of political engagement has been a major hindrance to the efforts of believers to positively influence politics. To overcome this, we should be careful to avoid borrowing and adopting theologies that do not emerge from faithful interpretation of the whole bible, and are borrowed from contexts whose issues do not relate to our present context. Our political engagement ought to be informed by an exhaustive interaction with scripture, and relating closely to our unique context.

A number of specific theological issues of particular relevance to our context were highlighted:

1. **The Temptation Towards Apathy:** The creation narrative calls us to a pursuit of Biblical justice, that is giving people their God-given rights, both economic and political. The two are intertwined, and should not be viewed as being exclusive of one another. Both are central in respecting and upholding the dignity of human beings created in the image of God. Mankind's stewardship responsibility over creation, therefore, inevitably has political implications. Apathy, an attempt to ignore or run away from politics altogether, therefore, amounts to stewardship failure, and is not an option for believers.
2. **Relationship Between the Government and the Church:** We need to appreciate the fact that having different responsibilities and expectations for different institutions, also known as 'separation of powers,' is rooted in scripture. God specified roles for judges, kings, priests and prophets (Deuteronomy 16:18 – 18:22). The state is just one institution among many others e.g. family, church etc. Each individual and each institution is called by God to play distinct roles in the public life of the nation. While the government plays the kingly role of dispensing justice and protecting the vulnerable, the church plays the prophetic role of being the conscience of the nation, proclaiming God's expectations and calling people back when they fall short of the same. While this should not be misunderstood to mean the church cannot seek to influence politics directly, it implies that breakdown in the society does not only reflect failure by the government. It also reflects a failure in the other institutions, and in the moral formation of the citizenry. Each individual or institution must, therefore, ensure that they play their part effectively.
3. **Clergy and Laity in Politics:** The role of the clergy (church leaders) is to equip God's people for works of public service in the various institutions in which God places them. The church's engagement in politics is, therefore, not about clergy getting into elective politics. It is, rather, about ordinary Christians bringing the kingdom of God; his rule, by doing his will wherever they are. This is the gospel, that Jesus is Lord, and is bringing people under his rule, creating a new community of people with a new primary identity. Believers should thus view themselves first as Christians before their ethnic and national identities or political affiliations. The result of this is that they would pursue and work for the interests of the Kingdom of God before any other interests.
4. **Politics and the Concept of Divinely Ordained Authority:** A lot of error in political theology has been occasioned by a misinterpretation and misapplication of Paul's teaching in Romans 13:1-7. It has been used to manipulate the church into an uncritical support of governments and leadership regimes. In this passage, the apostle Paul does not claim that all those in authority have been individually placed there by God, and so ought to be obeyed at all times. He, rather, teaches that authority has been instituted by God, who delegates divine authority to human governing authorities. The purpose is to restrain wrongdoing and protect the weak and vulnerable. Paul's call to submission to rulers is premised on the fact that they "hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong", and are in fact "God's servant to do you good" (vs.3-4). The basic duty of government is to render justice. If they don't, then there is no government. It should thus be called to account and resisted when it fails to fulfill this mandate.

Reflection

- a. How have you seen any of the four theological issues discussed above manifested in your context?

- a. Are there any of them in which you have a different perspective? If so, why?

- b. Are there any other theological issues in which you see gaps the church needs to fill in order to engage more productively?

B. Bible Study - Romans 13:1-7; Acts 4:13-20; Esther 4:9-14

1. In what ways do the governing/political authorities around you reflect or distort God's design for leadership as presented in Romans 13:1-7?

2. Read Acts 4:13-20. Is there any specific area in which, like the apostles, it may be necessary for you to disagree with, and even resist, those in authority in your context?

3. Read Esther 4:9-14. Are there ways in which you have been tempted towards apathy and inaction in light of the political challenges around you? What specific actions would God have you do instead?

C. Application Challenge

Which of the following steps will you take in order to grow your theological grounding for political engagement? *Share with your study group and keep one another accountable through the coming weeks and months.*

Tick the one you pick (you can pick more than one):

☐ I commit to read/study the bible more consistently this year (Specify your target)

☐ I commit to read a particular book on the subject.

Title:

☐ I commit to study about a particular theological issue and find biblical and contextual answers.

Name the issue :

STUDY #5

The Church as Citizen: *Balancing our Twin Identities*

A. Perspective

Questions abound why a country that has 85.5%¹⁴ of its population as Christians struggles with political balkanisation, ethnic animosity and cleansing, corruption, greed, economic disempowerment, amongst others. The heart of this question is the concern about the participation of God's people in the affairs of the nation. How has the church guided its members to undertake their civic responsibilities as citizens? How can the church participate fully in the affairs of the state as a corporate citizen? By citizen, we mean two things: an individual in a country or state and the church as an institution.

In sharing on 'The Church as Citizen' during the *Church and Politics Summit 2021*, Dr. Oliver Kisaka identified three dynamics that affect a Christian's participation as a citizen in the affairs of the society. The first one is the call to separate. "Come out of the world" (2 Cor.6:17), for the world and its systems are passing away (1 John 2:17). The second is the invitation to integrate. "As the Father sent me, so I am sending you." (John 20:21) The mission field here is the same world from which the Christian had been called. The mandate is to return to the world and engage it, influence it and transform it (Matt.5:13-16). These two augment the dual-citizenship of the Christian (and by extension the Church). The Christian is "in this world but not of this world." (John 17:11,14-15) The third factor is biblical interpretation and application, especially on how well we relate the meaning of Scriptures to our contextual issues.

This 'separate-integrate' portrait of a citizen-Christian feeds into the third factor, that is, how we interpret and apply Scriptures in day to day living. Biblical interpretation can inspire or undermine a theology of engagement with the society and the world at large. Engagement in a society's life is natural for its citizens, regardless of their faith or creed. It follows then, that, the natural spheres that a community engages in, are the spaces that spell out the natural responsibilities of a citizen, where a citizen is understood to be "a member of a political community or state, has rights and responsibilities and participates in determining how it is

¹⁴ 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census, (Vol. IV): Distribution of Population by Socio-Economic Characteristics, pg.12, 422

¹⁵ Dr. Kisaka remarks that the church as an institution would of necessity require that it is legally registered by the government, operates within certain legal parameters and systems in a context of society, and is called upon to give an account of its activities from time to time.

¹⁶ The people are citizens of particular nations or states and exercise their civic responsibilities voluntarily and responsibly.

governed.” In this sense, the church then, is a citizen, both as a corporate institution¹⁵ but also as an Assembly of God’s people¹⁶.

The Israelites were asked to engage actively in society while in exile in Babylon (Jeremiah 29:4-19). They were to participate fully in the affairs of the Babylonian empire until the appointed time. We can easily spot aspects of family and kinship (v.5-6), civic responsibility (v.7), religion and worship (8-15), leadership and governance (v.16), war, peace and security (v.17,18), health wellness and diseases (v.17,18), among others. Similar language is recognisable in Deuteronomy 8:6-13 underscoring the fact that God’s people were and still are to engage in the life of the society as active participants. It is the duty and responsibility of the citizen to render support to the state by paying taxes (Matthew 17:24-27; 22:15-22; Romans 13:6-7), obeying the laws and leaders of the land (Romans 13:1-5), praying for the leaders and rulers (1 Timothy 2:1-4), among other responsibilities. This is citizenship!

Engaging in the life of a society is (and ought to be) the natural outflow of belonging to a particular political community. But citizenship goes beyond participation. Therefore, in playing its citizenship role, both corporately and as individuals, the church is seen as one that:

1. Champions and encourages population growth in line with Genesis 1:26-28. It is the will of God that mankind is fruitful, increases in number, fills the earth and subdues it. More and more citizens are required on earth. This is how human capital is guaranteed. It is part of the dual-citizenship responsibility. The question of where each citizen should stay or be located is addressed by Acts 17:25-27. God determines the boundaries and exact location of people.
2. Models and propagates responsible citizenship across generations (2 Tim.2:2; Psalm 78:1-7) By responsible citizenship, we mean being actively involved and engaged in the life of a society in all its dimensions. We have already noted that marriage and procreation, production and labour, paying taxes, involvement in leadership and governance matters (politics included) are all civic responsibilities of a citizen. Citizenship then becomes a heritage of God’s people. It is neither to be seen as an intruder or foreign concept, nor a contradiction to the Christian identity.
3. Pursues the heavenly citizenship without being held back by the inadequacies of the earthly citizenship (Heb.11:13-16).

It follows, then, that a Christian in Kenya, as would be in any other nation or state, is expected to be engaged in all affairs of the country as a citizen. This engagement includes but is not limited to marrying and getting married, production and labour, commerce and industry, paying taxes, demanding accountability of how taxes are used by government, pursuing justice, participation in elective leadership, voting in leaders of their choice, offering oneself to be a leader, among others. Involvement in the political arrangements of a country is an intrinsic right and responsibility of a citizen, of which a Christian is. A prevalent fallacy is that politics is a dirty game, which implies that Christians should not get involved in terms of offering themselves for elective politics. Their duty ends by casting a ballot (and actually, some do not even see the need to cast their ballots). But to argue this way is to abdicate the citizenship responsibility and to fail in one’s Christian duty. Christ sends us as salt of the earth and light of the world. This saltiness is to be experienced in the context of staleness that characterises Kenya today. Similarly, light is to be seen and experienced in the context

of darkness that has engulfed Kenya in particular, and the world in general. If politics is dirty, it is because it has been left to people who have no salt and bear no light. Yet, it is this space that the Christian, as a citizen, is called to step into and bring a change.

Let the church engage society in all its dimensions; for Christ's light is required in all the spheres of the society, for which the carrier is the Christian.

Reflection:

Which key issues about citizenship has the author brought out in this article? How does this challenge your current perspective on citizenship or what is prevailing in the church in your context?

B. Bible Study – Genesis 1:26-28; Exodus 20:1-17

1. Read Genesis 1:26-28 and Exodus 20:1-17. Which aspects of citizenship can be derived from the passages? Fill in other aspects that have not been captured by the passages you have read.

2. The article alludes to the dual-citizenship of a Christian (2 Cor.6:17, 1 John 2:17, John 20:21 and John 17:11, 14-15). How can this inform our theology of engagement (how we think and approach our social involvement) with the world today by the citizens?

3. What are some of the practical challenges that you or other believers has faced in balancing our “twin-identity” as citizens of heaven and citizens of our country (the present world)? What can you as a member of the Church do to be remain more faithful in striking this balance?

C. Application Challenge

In light of the points raised in this study, how should the church equip its members to consciously engage in their citizenship responsibility? What specific role will you play to actualise this?

STUDY #6:**The Church as a Peacemaker:
Promoting Peace and Cohesion in the Nation****A. Perspective**

In his sharing at the *Church and Politics Summit 2021*, the Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia highlighted the fact that peace and cohesion is central to the call and ministry of the church. The truth that the Church of Jesus Christ is the church of the Prince of Peace implies it is the church of peace, mandated by God to bear his offer of reconciliation to a world alienated from him (2 Corinthians 5:19-20). The entire gospel narrative is characterised by God's offer and proclamation of peace. Indeed, the birth of Christ was announced with the angelic choir's proclamation of "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests" (Luke 2:14). In sending his disciples out, he instructed that "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house'" (Luke 10:5). His post resurrection appearances to his disciples are distinctly characterised with the proclamation that "Peace be with you" (Luke 24:36; John 20:19, 21). In our day and age, we must continually defeat the enemies of peace so that we can deliver peace to all Kenyans.¹⁷

An ideal picture of peace and cohesion is seen in the creation order before the fall of mankind (Genesis 1-3). As seen in the story of Cain and Abel, a breakdown of relationship with God results in various evils which ultimately undermine peace and cohesion in human society. The church's mandate as peacemaker, therefore, leads it to first address the restoration of people's relationship with God and secondly, the restoration of relationships with one another in multilingual, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-faith contexts.

Historically, state and non-state actors have pursued peace through various initiatives, but which hardly ever address people's relationship with God. The church has a unique space in providing a holistic view and understanding of peace. For when peace initiatives are devoid of the component that addresses how people relate with God – as an integral and intentional part – such efforts become humanistic in their approach, and they achieve little and the little that is achieved is not sustainable. One does not need to look far. The history of Kenya is replete with land ownership conflicts, electoral injustices, historical injustices, cattle rustling, dwindling pasture land and water resources, negative ethnic identities, zoning of natural resources and minerals for self-interest, all which undermine inter-ethnic and inter-

clan coexistence in Kenya. These are perennial issues that the state actors try to deal with year in year out, but have never been able to eradicate them. The contrary is true. When people who are reconciled to God, reflecting and pursuing his kingdom undertake the affairs of a nation, then there is peace and prosperity (see Prov.28:28 and 29:2).

The underlying discipleship issues notwithstanding, the increasing population of Christians in Kenya is testament to the church's commitment to call people into a restored relationship with God. This is important for establishing peace with God. The engagement of the church with the factors that promote or undermine peace, however, requires a more thorough investigation.

In many instances, the church, especially through some of its leaders, has called out individuals and institutions that promote injustice, undermine peace and champion conflicts¹⁸. In many instances, the church has by its own initiative, provided economic opportunities within communities that it serves^{19, 20, 21, 22}. There are many instances where the church has been involved in peace building, reconciliation and healing among conflict-laden communities and instances. For example, during the 2007 post-election violence (PEV), a consortium of churches formed the 'wheels/caravan of hope' (*msafara*), a peace initiative that coordinated prayers for the nation and food distribution to internally displaced persons (IDPs). The *Amani Mashinani Initiative*²³ championed by (the late) Bishop Cornelius Korir made great strides in bringing together warring communities in the North Rift Region. The National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) has, over the years, mobilised grassroots community forums to engage the youth towards reducing acts of violence. There has also been intentional capacity building for church leaders to engage in mediation and peace building across the country.

However, there are instances in which the church has been complicit in undermining peace. The 2007 General Elections was one instance when a cross-section of church leaders publicly apologised to the nation for complicity²⁴. Although some church leaders had cautioned against heightened political polarisation in the period leading to the elections, these divisions found their way into the church and compromised the effectiveness of its reconciliation and peacebuilding initiatives. In this regard, Dr. Kobia pointed out at least four strategies through which the church can effectively engage in building peace and cohesion:

1. **Act as a Whistle-blower Against Oppression and Injustice:** There are three key lessons we can learn from reading the stories of the prophets in the bible. First is that the church cannot keep quiet when the political class is mistreating the masses. Secondly, the church cannot keep quiet when the masses are misbehaving. Thirdly is the reality that the best leadership results when leaders follow the biblical instructions on how to administer and provide just rule. It follows, then, that the church should be the loudest whistle blower when the leaders and the people are wrong.

¹⁸ Religious leaders like Bishops Henry Okullu, Alexander Muge, David Gitari Ndingi Mwan'a Nzeki (all late), Rev. Timothy Njoya and institutions such as NCCK and KCCB cannot go unmentioned.

¹⁹ <http://www.christianimpactmission.org/omo-counter.html>

²⁰ <https://www.icfem-mission.org/>

²¹ <https://adskenya.org/>

²² <http://strategicjournals.com/index.php/journal/article/view/856>

²³ <https://www.mreza-mira.net/wp-content/uploads/Amani-Mashinani-Experience-of-Community-Peacebuilding-in-the-North-Rift-Region-of-Kenya.pdf>

²⁴ <https://www.ncck.org/executive-committee-tribute-to-canon-karanja/>

2. **Set and Model the Standards of Right and Wrong:** The church has a God given mandate to provide the moral compass from which the nation is led. While telling the state and individual citizens what they can't do is part of the job of the church, it is not the whole job. Like the apostle Paul, the church has a job to show the nation "the most excellent way," the way of love (1 Corinthians 12:31). The law of love enables believers to be guided by the higher values, exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit in love, joy, peace, patience, temperance even forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, self-control, restraint. Although chapter six of Kenya's 2010 Constitution attempted to capture some of these values, our politics continues to largely operate in the opposite direction, characterised by rough talk and actions. As believers, we need to model and propagate a standard where people will not be restrained from violence, conflict and harming others only by the law, but where "it is the inner voice that tells us to love one another even as we ourselves have been loved, to forgive as we have been forgiven, and do unto others as we would have done to us."
3. **Promote Equality and Access to Opportunities:** Peace and cohesion is only possible when there is equal access to opportunities and services all over the republic. This builds a sense of common identity, and inspires people to trust one another and treat one another fairly. Fears, mistrust, perceived inequalities and anxieties prevent us from achieving cohesion in our diverse communities. A lot of the unrest that has been experienced in Kenya has been because the people have been deprived, whether materially, socially or even spiritually. The church should, therefore, wage war against these threats to peace, and proactively advocate for a better society that nurtures and guarantees peace and cohesion.
4. **Build Human Capacity for Peaceful Coexistence:** The capacity to relate better can be strengthened when our knowledge of the other is deepened through our personal interactions. The church of Christ, as the salt of the earth, ought to oppose hate speech, promote healing of those who are aggrieved and wounded, and disciple its members to relate with others cohesively.

Reflection:

What are the two dimensions of peace-building brought out in this article? Identify at least one real life example from your context which illustrates this reality.

B. Study:

- 1. Read Genesis 3:8-17. Which relationships are broken and destroyed in this passage? In your view, how is such brokenness evident today in Kenya?

- 2. Where conflicts and hostilities exist, people erect barriers that undermine peace and reconciliation initiatives. What factors contribute to such barriers? What can we learn about this from Eph.2:12-14?

- 3. From the article and from your own experience, what are some of the successes and failures by the church on matters of peace building? What can you, as an individual or congregation, do to build on the successes and remedy the failures?

C. Application Challenge

Reflect on the centrality of the church in promoting a holistic understanding of peace. How should this inform and shape pastoral training, pulpit ministry and Christian discipleship across the churches? Come up with specific recommendations that you can share with another person in your group.



STUDY #7:**The Church as a Participant:
*Entering the Political Arena*****A. Perspective**

From a social science perspective, community participation is considered a key factor in realizing sustainable development. This is based on the fact that individuals in a community have a better understanding of their context than anyone else and consequently, must play a key role in developing the interventions for their challenges. Church, body corporate or individuals, therefore is a critical mass that must participate in the political life of the society. Participation in politics has been understood variably by different people. This may mean being a candidate for a political office, holding a party or public office, being involved in political caucus or dialogue groups, being a member of a political party or participating in the life a political party, and taking part in elective politics as a voter. In all these, the broader understanding of political participation entails voluntary action by people, who are not necessarily professionals, in governance and the general affairs of the state with an aim of ensuring a good and just life for all and good governance of the state. For Christians, the voluntary actions must be informed by the tenets of faith.

In discussing church and involvement in the political processes, the focus should be in helping the communities of believers understand that participation in politics, in any form, is part of fulfilling God's missional purpose²⁵. This is because of the fact that God's missional purpose is all encompassing as far as the affairs of human beings is concerned. It is on this basis that Jesus, in Matthew 5: 13-16, refers to his followers as salt of the earth and light of the world. From this text, it is clear that our salt must be felt and our light be seen for the realization of social transformation through political participation. As we do this, either as the body corporate or individuals, our participation must be in such a manner that promotes Christian witness.

From an experiential perspective, Prof. Hellen Sambili, a Christian, a former university lecturer and a two-term member of parliament for Mogotio Constituency in Baringo County (Kenya), notes that the Church cannot be a spectator on the periphery of the field in the game of politics. This is because of the centrality of politics in nation state's ideological positioning, laws and policies formulation, and resource allocation.²⁶ On this basis, she notes that it is

irresponsible for the Church, either as a body corporate or individuals, to 'sit out' of politics. But, in seeking an elective office at any level, one must respond to the why question. To this end, Prof. Sambili said, *"In my case, getting into politics, I did not have any conscience problems as to whether or not it was right to join politics..., I observed how communities were being adversely affected by the poor management of resources by leaders characterized by low levels of accountability and transparency in the use of public funds; I also noted biases and unfairness in allocation of resources, such as where a school should be built, or which child gets bursary besides corrupt practices in governance, abuse of power and entrenched political divides that push people into different camps."* And as such, she continued, *"Like Nehemiah of old, I was moved by the plight of the people and decided to do something about it."*²⁷

In a response to Prof. Sambili's presentation, in a panel discussion, Prof. Margaret Jepkirui Muthwii, Hon. Dr. Lina Jebii Kilimo and Suzanne Silantoi Lengewa show a convergence of reason with Prof. Sambili on the why question of participation in elective politics. Hon. Dr. Lina Jebii Kilimo on this issue indicates, *"It was not easy for me getting into politics, but mine was a call. I sincerely felt that it was a call because of the infighting or cross border fighting between Pokot and Marakwet. People were dying all the time and I couldn't hear a voice talk about the challenges happening in the Kerio Valley."* In her response, Suzanne Silantoi Lengewa notes, *"First of all, the reason why I even got into politics in the first place was out of frustration and I think a lot of young people can relate with that frustration feeling...My frustrations stemmed from the health sector. I work in the health and development space. At the time, there were doctor strikes on and off, there was lots of corruption cases and so I was really frustrated."* In a particular way, Prof. Muthwii observes, *"I actually saw an opportunity in the nation for women to join in."* These are real life stories of individual Christians who saw the political gap in their society and responded. What is the political need in your context and how can you participate as an individual Christian or a body corporate?

But in considering political participation, the church must be alive to the unique contextual challenges to participation in politics in Kenya. Some of these challenges include but not limited to:

1. **The polarizing nature of politics** - in this reality, the church as a corporate body and individual believers must not lose her responsibility and credibility as the ambassadors of peace.
2. **Political parties and the challenge of corruption during political parties' primaries** – at times, political parties also demand very high nomination fees. For Christians facing this kind of challenge, the route of independent candidates is available especially where one has good grassroots support.
3. **Campaign financing** – politics in Kenya is a very expensive affair and one's success is almost linked to a good financial resource base. Campaign financing regulations have made it worse.
4. **The gender question**- acceptability of women as equally potential political leaders in comparison to men. This is to a large extent because of societal stereotypes and bias that regard the political activity as a masculine arena.

²⁵ Tyra, Gary. A Missional Orthodoxy: Theology and Ministry in a Post-Christian Context. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2013. Pg. 30.

²⁶ "The Church as a Participant [Prof. Hellen Sambili] – Church and Politics." Accessed January 12, 2022. <https://churchandpolitics.co.ke/the-rock-on-which-we-stand/the-church-as-a-participant/>.

²⁷ Ibid

Looking at some of challenges as mentioned herein, it is clear that direct participation in elective politics comes with a cost that one has to consider before plunging in. However, the call of Christian social responsibility, and the real need for Christian presence in politics outweighs the challenges.

Reflection

After reading through the perspective article, share the key insights about Christian political participation that you draw from it. In what way(s) does it challenge your current perspectives?

B. Bible Study - Jeremiah 29: 1-14

1. Read Jeremiah 29: 1-14 and outline the instructions that the LORD gave to the people of Israel.

2. In the context of Jeremiah 29, what is your understanding of Jeremiah 29:7, *"Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."*

3. Considering the church’s history of political involvement, how does God’s message to the exiles in Babylon challenge the Kenyan church in the current context of our politics?

4. From this study passage, in what practical way(s) can you as an individual and at your level participate in the in seeking “the peace and prosperity” of our society?

C. Application Challenge

Drawing from the instructions given to the people of Israel in their Babylonian exile, come up with specific commitments or initiatives you will undertake to more intentionally participate in making a positive contribution to the country’s political situation.

STUDY #8:

The Church as an Advocate: Speaking and Acting for the Powerless

A. Perspective

The role of the church as the moral compass and advocate for justice has been highlighted in previous chapters in various ways. This was the central theme of a presentation made by Rev. Dr. Sammy Wainaina,²⁸ at the *Church and Politics Summit 2021*. Yet, controversies on church's or individual Christian's participation, nature of the participation and the mandate of the church in regard to its advocacy role is still rife. This article explores the church's mandate as an advocate in politics and other social worlds around and within the community where church is situated and where individual Christians interact. It aims to answer the question: *What is the basis of church as an advocate and how can it effectively advocate to ensure the entrenchment of practices and policies that respect values of justice, human dignity and honour God?*

To understand the role of the church in advocacy, it is important to review the scope of our definition of 'church.' Who/what is the church? Church has often been equated with the clergy partly because the voice of the church has often been that of the clergy. This misconception has led to an apathetic stance by individual Christians who think their voices and their influence does not matter in public spaces. During the *Church and Politics Summit 2021* there was a resounding correction to this attitude. Rev. Wainaina stated that "Church is not clergy but first it is the believer, the individual Christian. The Church is also the institution, the body corporate composed of believers with a unified purpose of propagating the good news of Jesus Christ." Church as advocate in the society therefore refers to the church as the institution and the individual Christians taking on the role of advocacy. Emphasising the individual Christian's responsibility, Rev. Wainaina draws attention to individual rights as taxpayers and as voters:

When you ask yourself, should I be involved in politics? It is yes, you have a godly mandate. You are a taxpayer. We have a right to participate in politics, and politicians are not our bosses. They are actually our servants. We elect them. And so, if you are an individual Christian who doesn't question how the country is managed, then you are failing this country. (Rev. Wainaina)

To advocate is to represent the interests, the voice, or the point of view of another. An advocate speaks in support of some cause or supports others to make their voice heard. For there to be advocacy, there is always an issue worth representing or speaking up about. Historically, both in biblical examples and in the contemporary world, we see that individual characters who instigated change and transformation always had a burning issue at stake. Joseph in Genesis was concerned with impending drought and famine in Egypt; Moses in Exodus was concerned with the slavery that rendered his people socially, politically, economically and spiritually oppressed; Nehemiah saw the broken walls and the down-trodden position of his people who had returned from exile; Esther couldn't stand the thought of a planned genocide of her people; Nathan called out King David for his deviation from moral standards of a king. In our context, individuals such as the late Prof. Wangari Mathai advocated for climate action and environmental restoration; Governor Kivutha Kibwana saw the potential of a functional and transformative devolution and demonstrated it in Makueni county; Caren Wakoli, the CEO of Emerging Leaders Foundation (ELF) has seen the gap in well-informed and bold political engagement and is influencing that gap through transformative mentorship; Martin Luther King Jr was alarmed by racial injustice in America, and so was Nelson Mandela's unrelenting passion to end apartheid in South Africa among others. In all these examples, these individuals acted with others by mobilising ideas, then organising communities or existing institutions to succeed.

As illustrated by these examples, the call for advocacy comes from a compelling issue and for Christians, it is based on God's mission to restore beauty, justice and shalom (holistic peace). As a representative of God's interests on earth, we can therefore suggest that the church's role in advocacy is to argue for, to support, to voice up, and to represent the interests of God using various strategies. So, advocacy presumes that there are people who need to be spoken for, because there is a need and there is someone who has that capacity and opportunity. In Kenya today, there are many such issues: injustices of poverty, corruption and misuse of public resources; slow attention to climate action; and poor service delivery in health and education. All indicate that there are many opportunities for the church's advocacy. Advocacy is a means of bringing good news.

Rev. Wainaina offers a reflection on God's character that lays the basis for effective advocacy, in three aspects, namely the justice of God, his initiative in self-revelation, and his sovereignty as King.

Firstly, God is just. Justice finds its definition for the Christian in the very being of the divine and most fully known in the person of Jesus Christ. God demonstrates a perfect balance of mercy and wrath, justice and forgiveness. And Jesus demonstrated this action within the given socio-historical reality in which he lived. In response to the evil and issues of that context, Jesus articulated a message of God's boundless love. Jesus' mission statement in Luke 4:18 reveals issues of advocacy that he came to bolster and to empower his followers to advance. As Rev. Wainaina points out, Jesus is the best model of political engagement through advocacy as he creates a standard by which humanity connects with the redeemed nature. So, the church has a mandate while still immersed in a fallen, broken and persecuted

²⁸ Rev. Canon Dr. Sammy Wainaina is the Provost of All Saints Cathedral Church, Nairobi

world to advance the ultimate justice which is the restoration of the world to the state God intended. This restoration is needed in political, social, economic, environmental and spiritual realms. Advocacy is a tool to achieve that aim. Micah shows that we are expected to: Act justly, to be right, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8).

Secondly, God is a communicating God. God speaks throughout the entire biblical narrative – revealing himself, instructing, teaching, and encouraging. He shows affection in conversation and interaction with people. Thus, the act of translating this love remains the Christian strategy of advocacy – to present the wisdom of God in a language that the world and especially those with power can understand. So, if God is a communicating God, the church is a communicating body who speaks out not only with words but by way of life.

Thirdly, God is the sovereign King. This is an indisputable political image and portrait that consistently arises throughout the redemptive history. God's sovereign rule holds the universe in place and has dominion over all the powers in the world. The reign of God therefore then extends over all the areas of life, seen and unseen, including people's hearts, relationships, social systems, political process and power structures. When Christians say Jesus is Lord, this carries heavy moral and ethical implications which includes political values. In other words, He does not only change hearts, but also He changes the minds, and He changes how we view the problems around us and how we respond to them. He also directs on issues we should be concerned about and acting on. The world around us is all under the reign of God and therefore a space of influence for the church.

So then how can the church best engage as advocates to influence politics and power structures?

- a. As voters, as candidates, election observers, election managers, mobilizers, or funders of political aspirants;
- b. Speak up on justice and condemn evil through social media, broadcast media, print media, through conferences, and local community barazas;
- c. Educate the people through civic awareness;
- d. Empathise with those who are suffering the consequences of poor governance and injustice and support them;
- e. Pray for those in power (1 Tim 2:1-2);
- f. Question and hold those in power accountable;
- g. Be involved in research and publication – to be informed and well equipped for action.

Reflection

What do you think are the main barriers that slow or prevent fulfilment of our advocacy responsibility as Christians? How can we move towards a more effective role as advocates?

B. Bible Study – Luke 4:16-21; Micah 6:8

1. Read Luke 4:16-21 and observe the issues Jesus highlights about his earthly mission. In light of this, what would you say was Jesus’ understanding of the essence of mission? Why do you think Jesus pointed out these issues highlighted in the passage as key to his ministry?

2. Read Nehemiah 5:1-13 and observe the prevailing situation and Nehemiah’s response
a) What was the problem that Nehemiah had to deal with in this passage?

b) What strategies of advocacy does Nehemiah apply in dealing with the problem facing the disadvantaged people of Jerusalem in this story? (cf. 1:2; 1:4; 2:5; 2:17).

3. In light of Nehemiah’s example above, Micah’s emphasis of ‘acting justly, being right, loving mercy and walking humbly with God’ (Micah 6:8), and the wisdom of King Lemuel in Proverbs 31:1-9, what would you highlight as the characteristics of a good advocate?

C. Application Challenge

Going by the reflection of the article and the passages of scripture, identify an issue of social concern in your context and consider what you can do about it. What initiative(s) will you take as an individual, family or church community to obey the call to be a biblical advocate?



STUDY #9:

The Church as a Mediator: *Building Bridges to a Common Good*

A. Perspective

Conflict is part of life. But unhealthy and unresolved conflict can lead to adverse consequences including loss of life. Christians are not exempt from conflict. We witness it and are part of it at all times. For example, we see it when people at the workplace fight over positions, siblings disagree over inheritance. We see it in couple fights, in inter-ethnic clashes, with political parties over seats in parliament, and even with nations fighting over disputed borders. Unfortunately, sometimes, believers have preferred to run away from conflict and to keep their own peace. But what should our rightful response be?

Matthew 5:9 says, 'Blessed are the peace-makers, for they will be called sons of God.' Believers are to be the mediators of peace in times of conflict, and the Bible accords a blessedness to those who pursue peace. Mediation means building a bridge between two conflicting parties so that there can be a peaceful exchange between them. When two land areas are inaccessible to each other for some reason such as the presence of a water body or a ditch in between them, a bridge is built so that there can be a common path where the inhabitants of the two areas can meet or cross over to each other's lands. A mediator facilitates the building of a metaphorical bridge between people who are conflicted, by bringing them together and facilitating the charting of a common course that will result in peace and a common good.

The Mediator par excellence, Jesus Christ, accomplished the greatest mediation event in history. The Bible tells of the wrath of God that flared against a sinful world, and a people, on the other hand, who were sinful and hostile to God their Creator. There was no peace between man and God. Jesus Christ came on earth to provide a common path, a bridge, that is the Cross, where the two parties could mingle. There is no Mediator between God and man except Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:5). Any man who accepts the mediating work of Christ now has access to God and, similarly, God now admits any man who comes to him in the name of his son Jesus Christ. This was the most significant mediation event, and it is our model and inspiration.

We have a role as believers to prevent our 'neighbour' and our communities from getting to moments where mediation is necessary. We do this by being at the cradle to nurture values that enhance cohesiveness. However, when conflict arises, we also have the mandate to follow the example of Christ and stand in the gap, building bridges to reunite people.

What is the goal of our mediation? Ultimately, we mediate as co-workers of the Chief-Mediator, Jesus Christ, to show people the Cross and the holiness that God desires. We plead that people be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:20). Guided by this greater goal, we also mediate between individuals or people groups in our communities so that there may be peaceful coexistence and so that they may embrace paths that lead to the greater good.

One of the key areas that calls for mediation is the political arenas of our nations. In times of heated political activity, for instance during election campaigns and elections, there are always rivalries and unhealthy competitions between political parties, tribes, political aspirants and between individuals who have conflicting opinions. We, believers, have the responsibility to position ourselves strategically as peace-makers in our homes, among our friends, tribes and in every political conversation and affair that we are part of.

One example of a celebrated mediator in the Kenyan church is the late Bishop Cornelius Korir who took part in risky peace missions to neutralise tribal clashes. It is said that *"He was always available when called to mediate, and for meetings that would ensure that there is a peaceful co-existence in the communities and in the country. He bravely went to war zones to quell violence perpetuated by tribal clashes."*²⁹ Bishop Korir was eulogised as a peace-loving person, and the Bible calls such 'the blessed ones.' The faith values of believers have the capacity to recover the lost ethics of politics and to bring sobriety and peace to our nations.³⁰

The mandate of mediation places a huge responsibility upon believers. Not anyone can rise up and claim to be a mediator. The character, conduct and skill of a mediator play a big role in ensuring effectiveness of the role. A mediator needs to be trusted! Think of the character of Jesus Christ! Or even of the values of courage accorded to the Bishop mentioned above. Respect and credibility are necessary, because the rival parties have to be confident in him or her. The position demands humility, patience to listen, negotiating skills to sell greater goals, and good relationships with the people. It also requires that one must never be part of the problem. For example, if we are involved in negative ethnicity, then we can never be effective mediators in tribal differences.

Do you see how important believers are in times of conflict? We must acknowledge the need, explore the capacity of our faith, position ourselves strategically and be well prepared for mediation. We must not run away in times of conflict, but seek to always have people at heart, enunciate to them the values of peace, and maintain a broad view of mediation that seeks not just agreement but a realignment of community values.

²⁹ Diocese of Kitui, "The Late Bishop Cornelius Korir Eulogized as a Peace Loving Person – Catholic Diocese of Kitui," n.d., accessed January 26, 2022, <https://dioceseofkitui.org/the-late-bishop-cornelius-korir-eulogized-as-a-peace-loving-person/>.

³⁰ *Church and Politics Summit 2021*, The Church as a Mediator by Archbishop Anthony Muheria | The Responsibility We Carry, 2021, accessed January 26, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lev-IX8PDuA>.

Reflection

What conflicts have you recently experienced or witnessed within your circles? What was your reaction to them?

B. Bible Study - Philemon 1:8-20 and Philippians 2:1-9

1. Read Philemon 1:8-20

How does Paul negotiate for Philemon's acceptance of his estranged servant Onesimus?

2. Read Philippians 2: 1-4

What qualities does Paul require of believers here? How would such qualities aid the mediation process?

3. Read Philippians 2:5-8

What attributes of Christ mentioned here positioned him as a good mediator between God and man?

4. In which of the qualities and attributes discussed in 2 & 3 above do you need to grow in, if you are to be a good mediator? What can you do to facilitate this growth?

C. Application Challenge

Think of a scenario in your personal circles that may require you as an individual to be a mediator. Plan and take action and steps to mediate for peace and the common good in the situation.

STUDY #10:

The Church as a Custodian: Safeguarding Society's Moral Fabric

A. Perspective

The persistent concerns about the moral decadence in Kenyan society is a consequence of the failure of the Church in her responsibilities. This was the overarching argument of Rev. Thegu Mutahi's presentation made at the *Church and Politics Summit 2021*, from which this article is adapted.³¹ Jesus's sermon on the mountain shows that the Church is the salt and light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16). A truly committed and engaging Church is thus the antidote of the rottenness in the society. Indeed, the Church ought to be at the forefront of ensuring that 'the moral, the ethical, the societal values that are expected in a nation are observed', as argued by Rev. Thegu Mutahi.

But then, who is the Church?

In addition to the conventional definitions, lawyer Charles Kanjama says that the Church can be understood in at least three perspectives: (1) Church as Individual: individual believer who has embraced Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and is committed to following Him; (2) Church as ideas, where 'ideas' here include the Christian message, values and teachings; and (3) Church as an Institution, that is, the organized and formal structures such as denomination, structure or other Church organisations.

Therefore, by its very nature as followers of Christ's teachings and ideals, the Church is a custodian of the values and moral fabric of a society. As a custodian, the Church has the responsibility of taking care of or protecting and propagating Christ's teachings and ethics in the society. In politics, therefore, the Church has the mandate of 'sanitizing' all institutions including politics of the country.

Drawing examples from the Bible and Church history, Rev. Mutahi explains that, *'Throughout history, God has been involved in politics and actively so, no wonder He is called the King of Kings. That's politics, the King of kings. Therefore, when the Church gets involved in commenting, making statements on the morality of the nation and the leaders, on the ethics and values of our leaders, it is not trespassing, it's doing what its calling is.'* Various people

of God got actively involved in the politics of their day, not 'necessarily to take positions of power, but to give guidance on the values that the leaders should have'. Moses sought for emancipation of Israelites from the tyrannical rule of Pharaohs of Egypt. Samuel served so well both as the prophet and the judge/leader and handed over power peacefully to the extent that in his 'exit interview', the people unanimously declared, "*You have not cheated or oppressed us.... You have not taken anything from anyone's hand.*" 1 Samuel 12:4. Prophets Nathan and Elijah confronted King David and Ahab respectively, whenever these leaders of their day went wrong. While King David repented, King Ahab did not.

It is not a wonder, then, that the Psalmist commended David for having '*shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them*' Psalm 78:72. John the Baptist challenged Herod over his adulterous conduct; Peter and John defied the authorities of their day and sought to obey God instead (Acts 4:19). Peter later advised the Church to '*Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*' 1Peter 2:12.

The Church in Kenya must also play its role as the custodian of godly values and morals if they are to remain faithful to Christ's expectation. How can the church remain on the cutting edge in this mandate? As Rev Mutahi argues, the competence of the Church in the public arena and as a custodian of godly values and morality is dependent on her credibility in living out those same values in life, deeds and words. In order to competently and effectively hold the country's leadership to account and faithfully discharge her role as custodian of the morals and the values of the society, it is imperative that the Church makes among other things the following commitments:

- Cleanse herself from sin – this was what Joshua did with the Israelites in the case of Achan (Joshua 7:10-26). The Apostles did the same in the case of Ananias and Saphira (Acts 5:1-11).
- Speak with one voice: if the church will be a custodian of society, Christians have to endeavour to speak in one voice rather than take unnecessarily divergent positions.
- Be courageous as Prophet Nathan was when he rebuked King David for his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah (2 Sam. 12:1-15).
- Avoid being unnecessarily partisan- the church cannot belong to one political formation.
- Remain in prayer always - as this is crucial for keeping vigilant as society's moral compass

³¹ The thoughts of this article also integrate reflections from a corresponding panel discussion on the topic, comprising Edward Buri with Charles Kanjama, Rev. Fr. Joseph Mutie and Dr Ezekiel Mutua at the *Church and Politics Summit 2021*.

Reflection

In your view, what are some of the areas or issues of social concern where the church in Kenya has struggled to safeguard the moral fabric of society? What would it take for the church in Kenya to transform the values and morality of this nation?

B. Bible Study - 2 Samuel 12:1-15

1. Read 2 Samuel 12:1-15. What leadership qualities does Samuel exhibit according to this text? *Is there one that stands out for you?*

2. Why do you think Samuel was able to live and lead in such an exemplary manner?

3. How important was Samuel's admonition to the assembly of Israelites in verses 12-15, in light of the history he reminded them of in verses. 6-11?

4. Take a moment and consider the political process and products in Kenya.
- a. *What qualities or values should Kenyans look for in leaders in view of this study?*

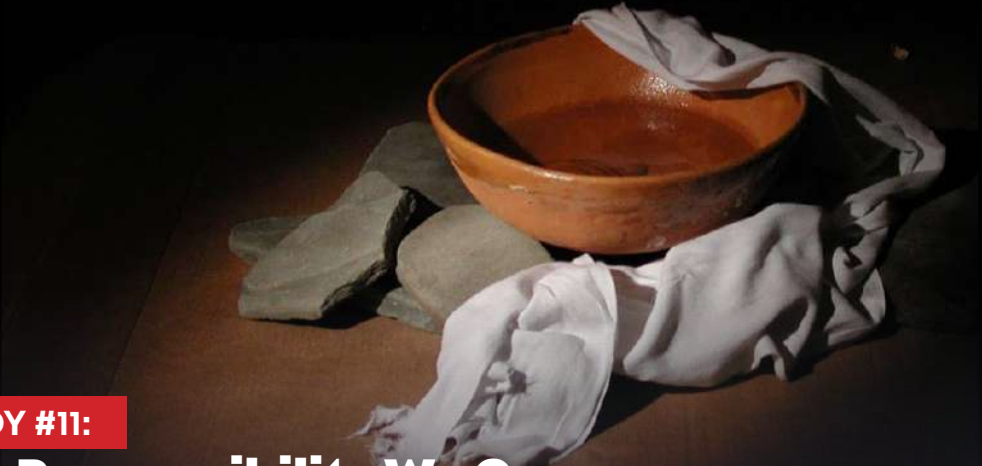
- b. *Share at least 2 specific actions you will play to 'sanitize' politics in your context.*

Application Challenge

1. Identify 3 top contenders of Member of County Assembly, Member of Parliament, Governor and President in the pending general elections (or current sitting leaders).

2. Analyse their character and manifestos or political 'promises' in light of the values or qualities in this study. In a scale of 1-10 (1 being the 'Poorest' and 10 being the "Best"), rank the leaders you have identified in Q.1 above.

3. Mobilize a friend or a member of your church group, discuss the candidates and agree on what you can do to have 'Samuel-like' leaders in your area. Share ideas on how you can hold to account your leaders after elections. (You can do the same with the sitting leaders).



STUDY #11:

The Responsibility We Carry: A Call to Service and Sacrifice

A. Perspective

In a general sense, the popular perception of civic responsibility is always characterized by aloofness and resignation. As such, people are always concerned of self and everything else about self. Be that as it may, the Bible has several places where the image of Christ (Isaiah 53) or God's people (Leviticus 25:42) is portrayed as servants of the LORD. For instance, the book of Isaiah 53 portrays Jesus as the suffering servant (see Isaiah 53:11). In Matthew 20:27-28, Jesus says, *"And whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* In this, he (Jesus) calls on his disciples to follow his example as a servant of the LORD. It is noteworthy that Jesus' perspective on this issue places emphasis on service to other people as a true maker of greatness. Contrary to this, it largely seems that a majority of people who go for political office in Kenya are driven by self interest rather than the need to serve. This notwithstanding, as God's servants, we must appreciate that the broader picture of the responsibility that we bear is that of ambassadors of the message of hope for the world; this responsibility spans all areas of life, politics included. This is our call and it can take different forms.

From a political perspective, God's call for his people to serve him as a missionary in the field of government exists because he hears the cries of people who are oppressed by bad and oppressive governments and sends his servants to rescue them.³² The event in the book of Exodus 3: 1-10 is a shining light on this matter. In calling Moses to lead the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt, God said (Exodus 3: 7), *"I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering."* The misery that the people of Israel were subjected to was a real physical suffering (see Exodus 1). They were enslaved by being put in forced labour as painted in Exodus 1: 14, *"They made their lives bitter with harsh labour in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their harsh labour the Egyptians worked them ruthlessly."* As such, the LORD noticed their suffering, heard their cry and showed concern for their suffering. How is this story a mirror image of your society?

Giving his reflections on this subject during the *Church and Politics Summit 2021*, H.E President Lazarus Chakwera, President of The Republic of Malawi, notes, “I had been leading the Malawi Assemblies of God for over two decades, preaching the gospel of Jesus, planting churches, supporting missions, training leaders and pastors for Kingdom impact.” In his mind, he says, *“The mission of work of the church was going to be the sole function of my life.”* But, *“One day,”* he says, *“A group of young people approached me, and informed me that they had done a survey amongst Malawians of the kind of leadership they aspired for their country... and my name, I was informed, was on that list.”* As such, his call to participate in elective politics came through an invitation. However, for him to take up the call, he had to wrestle with God on the question of whether politics was a mission field enough where he was calling his people to venture into. Because of this, he observes, *“I could not shake off the sense that the Lord was speaking to my spirit to regard the whole country of Malawi as a flock and I as a servant to shepherd the whole nation... I also sensed that the Lord was saying that there was one mission field that was devoid of missionaries, a mission field that I had wrongly assumed was one place, God would not want his servants to go. A mission field that was too dirty for God to enter and too evil for God to redeem. That mission field was politics.”* The result of this was God’s confirmation that politics is equally a mission field that requires active engagement by his people, and a motivation to serve the people. In this regard, he notes that:

1. The church should view government and politics as a mission field that God uses to release his people from oppressive governance.
2. The church’s call and mandate should not merely be driven by self-interest, but rather an affirmed and distinct call by God
3. The church’s posture should be that of service as a mission which ultimately reveals God’s faithfulness through his servants.
4. The church must be alive to the enormous costs and temptations that comes with this responsibility and that part of church’s responsibility is to support, encourage, love and counsel those called into politics to keep them spiritually strong.³³

The import of this study is therefore clear; an examination of our contextual realities with an aim of applying ourselves to bring God’s shalom to his people. What are you doing about the poor service delivery at your local clinic? What role can you play to mitigate the challenge of hate speech during electioneering period and election related violence? In what way can you employ the power of the vote to bring about change in your society? How can we change our contextual realities which is characterized by apathy, partisanship, corruption and negative ethnicity? As God’s servants, how then, can we reveal his character and glory in the darkness of our political situation?

³² “The Responsibility We Carry [H.E. Dr. Lazarus Chakwera] – Church and Politics.” Accessed January 13, 2022. <https://churchandpolitics.co.ke/the-responsibility-we-carry/the-responsibility-we-carry/>.

³³ Ibid

Reflection

From the perspective article, what would you say is the responsibility that we carry as a church, corporately and individually? How well do you think the contemporary Kenyan church has understood this responsibility?

B. Bible Study – Exodus 3: 1-10 (cf. Exodus 1); Mark 10: 35-45

1. Read through 3: 1-10 (cf. Exodus 1) and Mark 10: 35-45

a) What was the situation of the Israelites?

b) How did God respond to it?

c) What was the request by James and John and how did Jesus respond?

2. a) What do you think Exodus 3: 7-8 communicates about God and how does it inform your understanding on what God expects of you as a Christian?

- b) From Mark 10: 35-45, what attitude does James and John portray and in what ways does the same express itself in the Kenyan political context?

3. As an individual Christian or member of a local church, what can you do to emulate Christ's example of servanthood and sacrifice to influence political spaces for the common good?

C. Application Challenge

1. From the lessons learnt in this study, indicate specific convictions that you have developed about Christian social responsibility with regard to politics.

2. Based on the convictions, highlight the action points that you are committing to undertake to serve and influence your community. Take some minutes to pray about them.

STUDY #12:

Way Forward: Translating Concern Into Action

A. Perspective

Having gone through the last eleven studies, you have, hopefully, had an opportunity for candid conversations about the strengths and weaknesses as a church, on its successes and failures, and on its aspirations and disappointments. When we reflect on the wealth of wisdom shared through the study so far, and key lessons learned, we can affirm with Bishop David Oginde that the church is tasked with the role of a midwife, who must ensure the 'baby' is not left in the 'womb'!³⁴

In this regard, despite its past shortcomings, the church is called upon to deliver the 'baby' of its vision of political engagement, as we have conceived through the foregoing studies, and initially at the *Church and Politics Summit 2021* that inspired it. But how can the church proceed in this endeavour? This article proposes that the church can translate its concern into practical action by responding to a four-fold clarion call, that is to: *repent of the sin of neglect* of its God-given mandate; *recover its lost identity* as God's holy people; *reclaim its neglected spaces of influencing the political narrative* in Kenya, and lastly, *renew its prophetic and transformative mandate* as salt of the earth and light of the world.

1. **Firstly, a call to repentance-** acknowledging its failure to fulfil its calling as God's holy people, with a transformative presence and influence in the society, the church needs to confess its shortcomings and guilt of failure to get out of the salt-shaker into the world, and covering its lamp of truth under a basket (Matt. 5:13-16). Part of repentance should be seen in a renewed commitment for the church to embrace integral mission, and engage the political arena.
2. **Secondly, a call to remember and recover its lost identity** as God's covenant community - If the church remains ignorant about its true nature and potential, it will invariably continue to live in obscurity and alienation from its purpose. As John Stott argues, Christians are "God's new society,"³⁵ *called to glorify God through a distinctive life of holiness, and good works that win the world*. Standing in continuity with the Old and New Testament communities, the church is thus "*a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who*

called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pet 2:9; cf. Exo 19:3-6). Thus, revitalization of the church's political witness demands a recovery of its identity, with steadfast commitment to ethical living and God-honouring social engagement (1 Pet. 2:11, 12).

3. **Thirdly, a call to reclaim its space in shaping the nation's political narrative** and culture - As Bishop Oginde laments, it appears "clearly that the church has ceded space to the political class,"³⁶ and relegated to politicians the crucial role of setting "the agenda and narrative for national discourse in almost every sphere of life."³⁷ As a result, this abdication of responsibility has brought about "a society that is ever at war with itself," characterised, as it often is, by petty politically-motivated hostilities vented out on the social media and other platforms. If the church is going to reshape the negative narratives of our politics, and "speak the blessing of God into this nation," it needs to mobilise its members to enter all spaces of society, including politics. Building on this idea, Stearns argues that being Christian "requires much more than just having a personal and transforming relationship with God. It also entails a public and transforming relationship with the world."³⁸ In this regard, the vision of the gospel is that God's transformed people would be proactively engaged in "challenging and transforming the prevailing practices of our world," and bring a new order.³⁹ Such a perspective not only helps to deal with the obvious and the not-so-obvious 'holes' in our discipleship, but also liberates the Church to take strategic initiatives to reclaim its neglected spaces of influence in Kenya's politics.
4. **Lastly, the church is called upon to renew its prophetic and transformative mandate** as salt of the earth and light of the world. In a context where Christians have withdrawn from engagement in the politics of the country, we need to reaffirm that "politics is too dirty to be left to the politicians!"⁴⁰ But on what basis can we make such an audacious claim of the church's unique transformative presence and influence in society? As Stott helpfully points out, the church as a community of Christ's disciples can exert a "double influence on a secular community" by both "arresting its decay" and by "bringing light into its darkness."⁴¹ In pursuit of this mandate, the salt of kingdom values espoused by the Church must take effect by "deeds as well as words," through strategic socio-political action motivated by the love of God.

Some of the broad commitments the church can make to translate its concern into action include:

- 1) Review its *theology of politics and governance* to align with biblical teaching and framework.
- 2) Come up with initiatives to *foster unity within the church* in order to engage politics as a united force.
- 3) Carry out *civic education* in order to create awareness to church members on the place of politics and the importance of values-driven leaders in government.

³⁶ "Oginde, "Proposed Strategic Direction of the Church" in *Church and Politics Summit 2021*.

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Stearns, Richard, *The Hole in Our Gospel* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 2.

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Stott, John R.W., *Essential Living: The Sermon on the Mount* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978), 64.

- 4) Engage in *personal and corporate initiatives of public participation, and involvement in political activities and platforms* in order spread Christian influence as salt and the light of our nation.
- 5) Facilitate programs for training and supporting those who sense the calling of God to enter into elective politics, with the aim of saturating the national leadership with God-fearing individuals.
- 6) Position itself as a *credible mediator who can build true bridges* in times of political fallout.
- 7) Seek *partnership with the relevant organs of government* and support the fight against corruption, negative ethnicity, and toxic leadership at all levels.
- 8) *Champion social justice*, through wise advocacy and constructive engagement of government and other non-state actors, in the quest for a socio-economic transformation of Kenya.

Reflection

Consider each of the three key tasks of the church in translating concern into action, highlighted in the preceding article. What do you think are the manifestations of the church's neglect of its "midwifery" role in influencing the positive change needed in Kenyan politics?

B. Bible Study – 1 Peter 2:9-12

1. Read 1 Peter 2:9-11. What are your observations on how the author describes:
 - a) *The identity of followers of Christ?*

- b) *The essence of their calling/ mission in the world?*

c) *The potential outcomes of their faithfulness and/ unfaithfulness?*

2. As the preceding article illustrated, the church has been accused of abdicating its responsibility of setting the agenda in Kenya’s politics and influencing its narrative. In what ways do you think the teaching of Peter in this passage challenges the church today?

3. In 1 Peter 2:12, believers are urged to put on display “your good deeds before people” so that they may “glorify God.” In what ways can the church as a community or individual believers glorify God by influencing politics for the common good of our country?

C. Application Challenge

Over the next one week, consider the list of “broad commitments” proposed at the end of the Perspective Article and identify 1 or 2 key areas of shared interest with your prayer partner (or any other person, or as a small group in your church). *In light of what you have learned, and after prayerful reflection, come up with one practical initiative to translate your concerns into action.*

Contributors

The Church and Politics Study Guide was put together as a follow-up initiative of the Church and Politics Summit 2021. In order to develop the twelve (12) studies, the writing team developed the Perspective articles and Bible Studies, adapting from over nineteen documents transcribed by Judi Wahinya-Glover, from the recordings of the Summit talks and panel discussions. The following is the team of writers and the studies they contributed in this Study Guide:

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| 1. Rev. Lucas Owako | <i>Introduction to the Study</i>
<i>The Rock on Which We Stand</i> |
| 2. Florah Kidula | <i>The Kenyan Scenario</i>
<i>The Church as a Mediator</i> |
| 3. Wilson Kiuna | <i>The Global Scenario</i>
<i>Way Forward</i> |
| 4. Daniel Karanu | <i>The Church as Citizen</i>
<i>The Church as a Peacemaker</i> |
| 5. Fredrick Abuya | <i>The Church as a Participant</i>
<i>The Responsibility We Carry</i> |
| 6. Dr. Mary Thamari | <i>The Church as an Advocate</i> |
| 7. Kepha Nyandega | <i>The Church as a Custodian</i> |

All the recordings of the talks which informed the content of this Study Guide, including the profiles of the various speakers, may be accessed on <https://churchandpolitics.co.ke/>

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CHURCH & POLITICS

STUDY GUIDE

Church and Politics Study Guide is catalytic, overwhelmingly convincing about the inseparableness of Church and Politics, compelling on the urgency to act now leaving no room for procrastination. It unapologetically reminds us when, how and why the church in Kenya failed, commends its positive roles and clarifies its irreplaceable roles which if not played will be catastrophic. It states that the church is the moral conscience, compass, and advocate for justice; hence cannot “sit out” of politics.

Esther Obasi-ike (PhD)
Pastor In charge- Redeemed Christian Church of God Solution Centre Nairobi
Founder & President, Queen Esthers' Generation

For the Church to occupy its place well in the political space, it must first do an introspection. It must be salt with taste and light that is not dim. In order for the Church to look the politicians straight in the eye and correct wrongs in their stable, it must ensure it is also seen to be clean in its dealings. That is why the Church must sanitize from within. If the Church intends to align politics, it must not be seen as not walking the straight and narrow path it dictates for others.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Thegu Mutahi
Moderator, PCEA General Assembly

Sometimes we have confused the politics of man with the politics of God and in the process offered theological or prophetic mandate to politicians of our preference only to swallow the bitter pills later on when it turns out God had a different idea. This is why a Study like this is so useful so that we can engage both with the contextual political realities which are facing us and examine how the Bible speaks to those situations at the same time.

Rev. Calisto Odede
Presiding Bishop, Christ Is The Answer Ministries (CITAM)

Like any other mission field, God is interested and concerned about the affairs of His people and as such, He is calling believers to actively participate in the political life of their society as a missional responsibility. This is the concern of this Study Guide... and it is fit for Small Group Bible study at individual and group (Christian Union, Church, family or workplace) level and I highly recommend it to all who desire to make a difference as faithful ambassadors of Christ and agents of transformation.

Simon Kande
National Director: Fellowship of Christian Unions (FOCUS) Kenya

With robust biblical exposition, this Study Guide is a worthy companion for all who are desirous of bringing Kingdom impact into the political and governance arena. It sets out a clear agenda and practical lessons on how to engage politics, with the eternal hope that ultimately the kingdoms of this world will become the Kingdom of our God and His Christ.

Rev. Dr. David Oginde,
Chairman Church and Politics Steering Committee

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