

GHANA ASSOCIATION OF PASTORAL CARE & COUNSELLING (GAPCC)



Theme:

**“Spirituality, Superstition &
Culture in Pastoral Care Delivery”**

KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY:

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Pastoral Care Defined



- “Pastoral Care consists of helping acts done by representative Christian persons, directed towards the healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling of troubled persons whose troubles arise in the context of ultimate meanings and concerns.”
(Clebsch and Jaekle)
- ‘Pastor’ is a Latin word meaning a ‘Shepherd’; related to *pastus* meaning ‘Feeding’. A Shepherd sees to the feeding, wellbeing and growth of the flock. Pastoral Care is to be concerned for and give watchful attention (feeding, wellbeing, and growth) for the flock.

General Introduction to Care and Counselling



- There are a number of challenges that confront many individuals and families.
- Some of these challenges are so powerful that, pastoral care givers are required to put together all the spiritual, mental and material resources needed to deal with such issues.
- It is worthy to note that, Pastoral care givers do not only provide care for people who are in crisis and despair, but they also empower people to live life to its fullest.

“Spirituality, Superstition & Culture in Pastoral Care Delivery”



- The theme for this maiden anniversary; **“Spirituality, Superstition & Culture in Pastoral Care Delivery”** is an important topic for this 21st century.
- This topic seeks to explore how **spiritual, religious, and relevant cultural issues** can be integrated into **pastoral care delivery**.

“Spirituality, Superstition & Culture in Pastoral Care Delivery”

- I will briefly touch on the theme by considering the following key words; “**Spirituality**”, “**Superstition**” and “**Culture**” in relation to **pastoral care delivery**.
- Today, the world has become religiously pluralistic. Many people subscribe to various objects of worship for physical, emotional and spiritual healing in times of crisis. This is a clear indication that, spirituality and religion have a lot to offer in the area of pastoral care.

Spirituality



- Howard Clinebell defines *Spirituality* as the human need for meaning and value in life and the desire for relationship with a transcendent power.
- Many studies that have been carried out in the area of pastoral care suggest that religion/spirituality has been very helpful for persons with physical disorders. Patients who are spiritual have utilized their beliefs in coping with illness, pain, and life stresses. Some of the studies indicate that those who are spiritual tend to have a more positive outlook and a better quality of life.

Spirituality (cont.)



- For example, patients with advanced cancer who found comfort from their religious and spiritual beliefs were more satisfied with their lives, were happier, and had less pain.
- Results of a pain questionnaire distributed by the American Pain Society to hospitalized patients showed that personal prayer was the most commonly used non-drug method of controlling pain: 76% of the patients made use of it. In the study, prayer as a method of pain management was used more frequently than intravenous pain medication (66%), pain injections (62%), relaxation (33%), touch (19%), and massage (9%).

Spirituality (cont.)



- Bereavement is one of life's greatest stresses. A study of 145 parents whose children had died of cancer found that 80% received comfort from their religious beliefs 1 year after their child's death. Those parents had better physiological and emotional adjustment.
- In addition, 40% of those parents reported a strengthening of their own religious commitment over the course of the year prior to their child's death.

Spirituality (cont.)



- Africans have been known to be notoriously religious. Africans do not know how to exist without religion.
- The traditional African worldview is infused into the African traditional religion. There is only a superficial line between what is secular and what is religious and there is really no difference.

Spirituality (cont.)



- All events or happenings in a person's life are viewed to have a spiritual explanation. Nothing happens out of nothing, everything has a reason behind it and the reason must be investigated and figured out if a solution is to be found.

Spirituality (cont.)



We find a phenomenon where church members are moving up and down to various church programs within the week in various places beyond whatever church programs their own churches are able to organize. Perhaps church members are not having enough, perhaps they think they need more than is being offered, perhaps they feel, aspects of their needs are not being tackled wholly by one church.

Spirituality (cont.)



- Whatever their reasons, what is obvious is that, people in Ghana always seem to be looking for more or different spiritual experiences to deal with their problems in life.
- Some Mainline churches have supposedly not been able to respond to the spiritual needs of their African members but have imported (foreign) liturgies which Africans cannot relate to very much.

Spirituality (cont.)



- Pentecostalism, though it appears to be in conflict with the African Traditional Religion and world view actually is more at par with it as it adopts some of its style and responds to the spirituality of Africans, example are in faith healings, exorcisms, vibrant worship, wellbeing based on holiness etc
- Pentecostalism and African Traditional Rituals have similar ends, that is, to seek the wellbeing of the people in the here and now.

Spirituality (cont.)



Asamoah–Gyadu has said that Pentecostalism is experiential and expressive which is why it holds appeal to Ghanaians because that is the very nature of our predominantly oral culture.

And now we see that Pentecostalism is seeping more and more into mainline churches.

Spirituality (cont.)



It is interesting to note that the church in Ethiopia which survived from early African Christianity of the seventh century has elements of pentecostalism; the pre-occupation with evil spirits, exorcisms and the use of amulets (pieces of prayers written by clergy) to ward off evil spirits.

What is the import of these developments for the practice of Pastoral care and counseling?

Superstition



- **Superstition** is a widely held but irrational belief in supernatural influences, especially as leading to good or bad luck, or a practice based on such a belief. It is also a belief that is not based on human reason or scientific knowledge, but is connected with old idea about magic, etc.
- The Merriam–Webster Dictionary defines it as "*a practice resulting from ignorance, fear of the unknown, trust in magic, or a false conception of causation, it is an irrational abject attitude of mind toward the supernatural, nature of God, a notion maintained despite evidence to the contrary*".

Superstition (cont.)



- When **unpredictable** and **accidental happenings** occur like lightning striking somebody, a car accident, sudden death, sudden sickness, failure of a clever child at school or at an exam etc., many Ghanaians and Africans believe that nothing happens to people by chance. Hence, there is a cause to every misfortune.
- Thus, death, disease and some mishaps that occur to people are supernaturally caused and they need supernatural diagnosis to bring assurance and healing to such persons.

Superstition (cont.)



- Cultural values in Ghana have depended much on superstition to keep the norm.
- In depending on superstition the spirituality of Ghanaians has sometimes been exploited in various ways. A culture of fear has been created to keep people conforming to socially accepted norms and standards, for examples: do no whistle while bathing, do not sweep at night, do not pound fufu at night, do not go out in the night when palace rituals are being performed, if you do any of these something bad will happen to you etc.

Culture



- ***Culture*** is the shared beliefs, values, behaviors, language, and ways of communicating and making meaning among a particular social group.
- Culture also incorporates ways of making meaning and ways of communicating among groups of people.
- People are guided by their culture consciously or subconsciously and begin to see the relativity of their own culture only in contrast to others.

Culture (cont.)



- In many developing countries, there is a different approach to the understanding of life challenges, sicknesses, and losses as compared to that found in developed areas. Compared with Western societies, people in developing countries seem to attach more importance to the symbolic and spiritual side of crises.
- A study conducted by McCabe and Priebe (published in the British Journal of Social Psychiatry, 2004), exploring explanatory models of disease in four different cultural frameworks highlighted the finding that:

Culture (cont.)



- White people are more likely to have a biological explanatory model, as compared to African-Caribbean, West Africans, and Bangladeshis, who are more likely to have a social or supernatural explanatory model.
- Having a biological explanatory model, especially compared with a social explanatory model, is linked with greater treatment satisfaction and better therapeutic relationships. People who cited supernatural causes for their disease were less open and therefore less compliant with orthodox treatment

Culture (cont.)



- It is important that Pastoral care givers develop a consciousness of people's culture if care is to have relevance for them. In doing this it is desirable to appreciate that cultures are social constructs which help to keep community order and usually one is not more right than the other, there are just different ways of doing things in different social groups.
- It is also important to unlearn previous prejudices against certain cultures and cultural practices which the pastoral care giver had held.

Culture (cont.)



- Fukuyama and Sevig have proposed a number of steps by which people in the helping ministry may help within culturally divergent situations. These are:
 - (a) having a deep understanding of one's own personal biases/stereotypes/preconceptions before working with another person;
 - (b) having a general sense/ understanding of the cultural influences that may be affecting the person you are working with;

Culture (cont.)



- (c) engaging in some sense of assessment of how cultural factors may be influencing the person you are working with;
- (d) knowing your own cultural influences and how they have impacted your practice as a chaplain (or any of the helping professions), and
- (e) being able to attach language and behaviors that are consistent with points a-d.

Culture (cont.)



- Pastoral care cannot really be care without responding to the felt needs of the Ghanaian in his or her context. The Pastoral caregiver's goal is to promote the wellbeing of and the good life for those he cares for.
- Gordon Lynch has stated that in pastoral care, 'to ignore the social context of human suffering, however, runs the risk of failing to address some of the most significant causes of that distress'. It cannot be care if it is superficial to the people; the pastoral care giver must learn about the culture especially in relation to spiritual values of the people to whom care has to be given.

Culture (cont.)



- The care giver must himself be certain of his theology to be able to present care to the people cared for in ways that remains true to his faith but that equally responds meaningfully to those cared for.
- This means the care giver must be interested in the culture of the people not just for the sake of knowing and communicating but also to question the reasons behind why the people will act or respond in ways that they do; to understand the reasons behind their stories to be able to offer meaningful help.

SOME CHALLENGES FACING PASTORAL CARE DELIVERY IN GHANA



- **The Shepherds neglecting the flock:** Shepherds feeding themselves and milking the cows (the Carer becomes the Cared for). Ezekiel 34.
- **Over emphasis on spiritual causes** of all problems thereby leading to all manner of prescribed spiritual antidotes, some of which bother on occultism.

SOME CHALLENGES FACING PASTORAL CARE DELIVERY IN GHANA (cont.)

- **Personal and Psychological problems of the Shepherds (Pastors):** The Barna Research Group reports- 50% of Pastors marriages end in divorce, and 70% are depressed; 90% of ministers work 55-75 hours per week and are fatigued; 70% of ministers constantly fight depression. 70% of ministers do not have a close friend. 52% experience signs of stress on a weekly basis.

SOME CHALLENGES FACING PASTORAL CARE DELIVERY IN GHANA (cont.)



- **Ignorance of the Theories and Principles of Pastoral care and Counselling Practice:** Many practitioners in the care and counseling business lack formal education in that area. Even if they have, they are not abreast with the latest care and counseling techniques. The result is that some counselors would accuse poor and innocent old.
- **Exploitations:** Some Counsellors take advantage of the vulnerability of their clients and charge them or extort money from them. Some end up having sex with their clients.

SOME CHALLENGES FACING PASTORAL CARE DELIVERY IN GHANA (Cont.)



- **Burnout in ministry:** When the pastor has to visit every sick person, do every wedding, funeral and make regular house calls, he or she becomes incapable of doing other things. That Shepherd model just doesn't scale. You will just burn out. It creates false expectations and so many people get hurt in the process.

WAY FORWARD:



I propose an annual refresher Training and Capacity-building programmes in Pastoral care and counseling for all registered practitioners of this Association. This National Association can also serve as a monitoring and supervisory body that would also advocate for justice, fairness, equity and the exercise of the highest ethical standards in the practice of pastoral care and counseling in Ghana.

CONCLUSION



Having shared some light on the theme; “Spirituality, Superstition & Culture in Pastoral Care Delivery”, you will agree with me that the theme for the conference is very much appropriate since it looks at a more holistic treatment to the delivery of pastoral care. It is a topic that is worth delving deep into.



THANK YOU