

**THE NIGERIAN CHURCH IN AN AGE OF
INSECURITY:
THEOLOGICAL RESPONSES TO TERRORISM,
KIDNAPPING, BANDITRY, AND COMMUNAL
VIOLENCE**

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Abstract

Nigeria's prolonged experience of insecurity has altered the social, economic and religious life of many communities. Terrorism, kidnapping, banditry, communal violence, cult-related violence and other forms of armed insecurity have produced deaths, displacement, fear, disrupted livelihoods and deep psychological wounds. Churches are not outside this crisis. Congregations have lost members, clergy have been abducted or killed, worship centers have been attacked, and communities in which churches serve have been displaced. This article examines theological responses available to the Nigerian Church in an age of insecurity. It adopts a qualitative documentary approach, drawing on biblical texts, theological literature and recent studies of insecurity and Christian responses in Nigeria. The article argues that the Church's response must be broader than prayer alone and must avoid the opposite error of reducing the Christian response to

political activism. A faithful response requires a theology of lament that takes victims seriously, a theology of hope that refuses despair, pastoral accompaniment of traumatized communities, prophetic witness against injustice and corruption, peace building and interfaith engagement, responsible civic advocacy, humanitarian assistance, and practical safeguarding of congregations. Biblical resources from the Psalms, the ministry of Jesus, Romans 12, Matthew 5, Matthew 18, Acts 6 and Acts 15 provide a foundation for truth, reconciliation, and justice and community responsibility. The article also addresses difficult questions concerning forgiveness, retaliation, security, justice and the reintegration of former perpetrators. It concludes that the Nigerian Church can contribute significantly to national resilience when it combines spiritual care with public responsibility, rejects revenge and scapegoating, protects vulnerable people, works with legitimate institutions and becomes a credible voice for justice, peace and human dignity.

Keywords: Nigerian Church; insecurity; terrorism; kidnapping; banditry; communal violence; theology; peace building; reconciliation; prophetic witness

Introduction

Insecurity has become one of the defining social realities of contemporary Nigeria. The problem is not confined to one region or one category of violence. Terrorist attacks have affected communities in the North-East and other parts of the country; kidnapping has become a serious threat in many states; banditry has displaced rural populations and disrupted agriculture; communal

violence has damaged relationships between neighboring groups; and cultism, armed robbery and other forms of criminal violence have affected urban and rural communities. Churches experience these realities directly because they are embedded in the communities in which Nigerians live.

Recent scholarship confirms that churches themselves have become vulnerable spaces. Nche et al. (2019), in a study of churches in Rivers State, found that church leaders described experiences of helplessness and despair arising from kidnapping, cultism and armed robbery. More recent research has examined attacks on Christian clergy in north-central and southern Nigeria, including kidnapping and killing by terrorist and criminal groups (Uroko, 2024). In northern Nigeria, Boko Haram insurgency has produced deaths, displacement and destruction of livelihoods and property, requiring churches to reconsider their mission in contexts of prolonged insecurity (Alawode, 2025).

The question facing the Nigerian Church is therefore not whether insecurity matters to Christian theology. It clearly does. The deeper question is how the Church should respond faithfully when ordinary religious life is interrupted by fear and violence. Should the Church concentrate on prayer and spiritual warfare? Should it become a political advocacy organization? Should it focus on humanitarian relief? Should it engage perpetrators in dialogue? How should it speak about forgiveness when victims have lost family members? How should Christians respond to communities where

suspicion between religious groups has become deeply entrenched?

These questions demand a theology that is both faithful to Scripture and attentive to the realities of Nigerian life. A theological response that ignores suffering becomes abstract. A response that abandons Christian convictions in the pursuit of political power loses its distinctive identity. The Church needs an approach that brings together lament, hope, justice, mercy, reconciliation, pastoral care, public witness and practical action.

Recent Nigerian theological scholarship points in this direction. Olajide (2026) argues for an integrated response to insurgency that includes lament, accompaniment, prophetic advocacy, accountability, reconciliation, interfaith cooperation, education and peace building. Alawode (2025) similarly calls for a missiological response that recognizes pastoral care, community reconstruction and youth engagement as dimensions of mission. Nwashili (2025), studying the Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion, shows how the Church has had to combine humanitarian intervention, institutional adaptation and collaborative peace building under conditions of vulnerability.

This article builds on these contributions while widening the discussion to terrorism, kidnapping, banditry and communal violence. It argues that the Church should not attempt to replace the state's responsibility for security. Rather, it should exercise the distinctive responsibilities of a Christian community: caring for victims, forming resilient communities, speaking truth to power,

promoting reconciliation, challenging the roots of violence, strengthening social trust and helping citizens pursue justice without revenge.

Statement of the Problem

The persistence of insecurity presents the Nigerian Church with a theological and practical dilemma. Christianity teaches love of neighbor, forgiveness, reconciliation and peace, yet Christians also have legitimate concerns about protection, justice and the defense of vulnerable people. The Church must therefore resist simplistic responses.

One problem is spiritual reductionism. When insecurity is interpreted only as a spiritual battle, the Church may overlook social, economic, political and institutional causes. Prayer is indispensable to Christian faith, but prayer should not become an excuse for ignoring victims, demanding government accountability or developing practical systems of protection.

A second problem is the danger of revenge. Communities exposed to repeated violence can develop collective anger and suspicion. When violence is interpreted exclusively through ethnic or religious categories, victims may begin to see entire communities as enemies. Such thinking can reproduce the very violence the Church should help to end.

A third problem is inadequate pastoral attention to trauma. Survivors of kidnapping, displacement, sexual violence, murder and prolonged fear may experience grief, anxiety, depression, distrust and spiritual crisis. A

church that tells victims simply to “have faith” may unintentionally silence their pain.

A fourth problem is inconsistent prophetic witness. Churches may condemn violence when their own members are victims but remain quiet when similar violence affects others. Such selectivity damages moral credibility.

A fifth problem is the relationship between Church and state. The government has the primary responsibility to protect citizens, but churches possess moral influence and community networks. The challenge is to cooperate with legitimate institutions without becoming politically captured.

The problem addressed by this study is therefore how the Nigerian Church can develop a coherent theological response to insecurity that is biblically grounded, pastorally sensitive, socially responsible, prophetic and practically useful.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this article is to examine theological responses of the Nigerian Church to terrorism, kidnapping, banditry and communal violence. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the theological meaning of insecurity, violence, suffering and peace;
2. Analyses biblical resources for responding to violence and fear;
3. Assess the pastoral responsibilities of churches towards victims and traumatized communities;

4. Examine the prophetic role of the Church in confronting injustice, corruption and failures of governance;
5. Evaluate the Church's contribution to peace building, reconciliation and interfaith relations;
6. Discuss Christian perspectives on justice, security, forgiveness and the reintegration of perpetrators; and
7. Propose a practical theological framework for the Nigerian Church in an age of insecurity.

Research Questions

1. What theological challenges does insecurity present to the Nigerian Church?
2. What biblical principles can guide Christian responses to terrorism, kidnapping, banditry and communal violence?
3. What pastoral responsibilities does the Church have towards victims and traumatized communities?
4. How should the Church exercise prophetic witness in relation to insecurity and governance?
5. What role can the Church play in peace building, reconciliation and interfaith cooperation?
6. How should Christian forgiveness be understood alongside justice and accountability?
7. What practical framework can guide the Nigerian Church in responding to insecurity?

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative documentary research design. It draws upon biblical texts, theological literature, peer-reviewed research and recent studies

concerning insecurity and the Nigerian Church. The method is descriptive, interpretive and critical. Biblical passages are examined in their theological context, while contemporary scholarship is used to identify practical realities confronting Nigerian churches.

The study does not claim that every Nigerian church experiences insecurity in the same way. Regional, denominational, ethnic and socio-economic differences are significant. Examples from particular churches or regions are therefore treated as contextual evidence rather than universal descriptions. The objective is to develop theological principles that can be adapted to different Nigerian contexts.

Understanding Insecurity in the Nigerian Context

Insecurity is more than the presence of armed attacks. It is a condition in which individuals and communities experience persistent uncertainty about their safety, livelihood and future. Terrorism seeks to create fear beyond the immediate victims. Kidnapping attacks personal security and often imposes financial and psychological burdens on families. Banditry disrupts rural economies and can force communities away from farms and homes. Communal violence damages social relationships and creates memories of grievance that may last for generations.

The distinction between these forms of violence matters because they require different responses. Terrorism involves ideological and political dimensions; kidnapping may be linked to organized criminal economies; banditry can be connected to local

grievances, criminal networks and weak security systems; communal violence may involve land, identity, political competition and historical grievances.

The Church should therefore avoid treating every form of insecurity as identical. A theology that speaks only in general terms about “evil” may fail to identify the particular mechanisms that produce suffering. Christian discernment requires moral clarity and social understanding.

Insecurity also has indirect consequences. Schools may close, farmers may abandon fields, markets may become inaccessible and displaced people may lose community support. Churches may become temporary shelters or providers of food and clothing. In such conditions, mission becomes inseparable from the practical needs of people.

A Biblical Theology of Suffering and Lament

A credible Christian response to insecurity must begin by taking suffering seriously. Scripture does not require believers to pretend that tragedy is not painful. The Psalms contain cries of fear, grief, injustice and apparent divine silence. Lament is therefore not a failure of faith; it is a form of faith that brings pain honestly before God.

This has important implications for Nigerian churches. Victims of kidnapping or communal violence may need permission to grieve. Families who have lost loved ones may ask questions that do not have easy answers. A church that immediately turns every tragedy into a

testimony may unintentionally prevent people from mourning.

The ministry of Jesus also demonstrates compassion towards suffering people. Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus (John 11:35). His response to suffering was not emotional detachment. Christian pastoral care should therefore include presence, listening and compassionate accompaniment.

Lament also has a public dimension. It names what is wrong. A church that laments violence is refusing to normalize it. Public lament can help communities acknowledge victims and resist the temptation to forget. It can also challenge leaders who become accustomed to reporting deaths as statistics.

Olajide (2026) identifies lament as an important theological response to insurgency because it confronts denial and honors the grief of victims. This is particularly important in Nigeria, where repeated violence can produce fatigue and silence. The Church must help society remember that every victim is a person with a family, dignity and future.

Theology of Hope in a Violent Society

Lament must be accompanied by hope. Christian hope is not the denial of suffering; it is confidence that violence does not have the final word. Romans 8 presents creation as groaning while anticipating redemption. Revelation 21 portrays the ultimate Christian hope as a world in which death and mourning are overcome.

In an insecure society, hope has practical value. People who believe that the future is completely hopeless may withdraw from community life or become vulnerable to violent ideologies. Churches can nurture resilience by helping people imagine a future beyond present insecurity.

Christian hope should not become escapism. It should motivate responsible action. The hope of God's kingdom encourages believers to seek signs of justice and peace in the present. Prayer, education, humanitarian service, advocacy and reconciliation can all become expressions of hope.

Hope also matters for displaced communities. People who have lost homes and livelihoods need more than temporary relief. They need pathways towards rebuilding lives. The Church can help sustain hope by accompanying displaced people, supporting education and livelihoods, and helping communities recover social relationships.

Jesus Christ and the Christian Response to Violence

Jesus' teaching provides a difficult but essential framework for Christian responses to violence. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus calls his followers to love their enemies, pray for persecutors and pursue reconciliation (Matt. 5:9, 44). These teachings reject hatred and revenge as Christian virtues.

However, loving enemies does not mean denying evil. Jesus confronted hypocrisy, challenged exploitative religious practices and defended vulnerable people.

Christian peacemaking is therefore not passive acceptance of injustice.

Romans 12:17–21 similarly rejects personal vengeance while calling believers to overcome evil with good. The passage places vengeance in God's hands and encourages practical concern even for an enemy. This does not eliminate the responsibility of lawful authorities to restrain violence; rather, it prevents private revenge from becoming a Christian ethic.

Matthew 5:9 describes peacemakers as blessed. Peacemaking is more demanding than simply wishing for peace. It requires entering situations of hostility, listening to competing claims, addressing injustice and creating conditions in which relationships can be rebuilt.

The Nigerian Church should therefore reject two extremes: revenge on the one hand and passive indifference on the other. Christian non-retaliation is not moral weakness. It is a disciplined refusal to allow hatred to determine the future.

Protection of Life, Justice and Legitimate Authority

Christian teaching on peace must also take seriously the protection of life. The state has a legitimate responsibility to protect citizens and maintain public order. The epistle to the Romans 13 presents governing authority as having responsibility for restraining wrongdoing. Whatever debates exist about the passage's interpretation, the broader principle that public authority has responsibility for justice remains relevant.

The Church should therefore advocate for effective and accountable security institutions. Calling for justice is not inconsistent with Christian forgiveness. A victim can forgive personally while still seeking lawful accountability.

This distinction is particularly important in cases of terrorism, kidnapping and murder. If forgiveness is presented as a reason to avoid investigation or prosecution, Christian theology can unintentionally protect perpetrators and expose future victims to harm.

The Church should support lawful processes and condemn extrajudicial violence. Security forces themselves must operate within ethical and legal limits. A society cannot defeat violence by normalizing unlawful violence.

Christian theology therefore supports a balanced position: individuals should reject revenge, communities should resist collective punishment, governments should protect citizens, and perpetrators should be held accountable through just processes.

Pastoral Care for Victims of Insecurity

Pastoral care is one of the most immediate responsibilities of the Church. Victims may need food, shelter, medical assistance, financial support, spiritual guidance and psychological care. The Church should develop systems that respond to these needs rather than relying only on spontaneous charity.

Trauma-informed ministry is especially important. People who have experienced violence may struggle

with fear, nightmares, anger, guilt and distrust. Pastors should recognize the limits of pastoral counseling and develop referral relationships with qualified mental-health professionals where necessary.

Church services can also provide communal spaces for mourning. Memorial services, prayer gatherings and pastoral visits can help families process loss. However, leaders should avoid using victims' stories for publicity without consent.

The Church should also pay attention to children. Children exposed to violence may experience interrupted education and long-term emotional consequences. Sunday schools, youth ministries and Christian schools can create safe environments where children regain routine and social connection.

Nwashili (2025) demonstrates that the Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion has had to combine humanitarian intervention with institutional adaptation in contexts of insecurity. This illustrates an important principle: pastoral care in a violent environment requires organisational preparedness, not only individual compassion.

The Church and Internally Displaced Persons

Displacement is one of the most serious consequences of prolonged insecurity. People who leave their communities often lose homes, farms, businesses, social networks and sources of identity. Churches can provide shelter, food, clothing, education and spiritual care.

Yet the Church should avoid treating displaced people as permanent recipients of charity. Whenever conditions permit, programmes should help them regain livelihoods, education and community connections.

Churches can also advocate for displaced people by drawing public attention to their needs. They can document concerns, cooperate with humanitarian agencies and encourage government institutions to fulfill their responsibilities.

The biblical concern for strangers and displaced persons provides a theological basis for such ministry. Hospitality is not simply an optional act of kindness; it is part of Christian moral identity. Hebrews 13:2 encourages hospitality, while Matthew 25 connects service to vulnerable people with service to Christ.

The Church can therefore become a bridge between displaced communities, government agencies and civil society. Such work should be transparent and should avoid partisan exploitation of humanitarian suffering.

Kidnapping and the Vulnerability of Christian Clergy

The kidnapping of clergy creates a distinctive pastoral challenge. Clergy are often community leaders, counselors and trusted intermediaries. Their abduction can therefore have consequences beyond the individual victim.

Uroko (2024) documents attacks on Christian clergy in north-central and southern Nigeria and argues that kidnapping can be used by violent groups to generate

fear and demonstrate power. Such attacks can also disrupt worship and pastoral services.

Churches should therefore develop realistic security and emergency protocols. Clergy should receive training in risk awareness, communication and emergency response. Churches should establish clear procedures for contacting authorities and families when incidents occur.

Security planning does not mean abandoning trust in God. Responsible preparation is compatible with Christian faith. Nehemiah 4 provides an example of prayer combined with practical security measures during a period of threat.

Church leaders should also avoid unnecessary exposure to predictable danger. The Church's mission requires courage, but courage is not the same as recklessness.

Prophetic Witness and Accountability

The Church has a prophetic responsibility to speak about conditions that produce insecurity. Prophetic witness involves more than condemning individual attacks. It asks difficult questions about governance, corruption, poverty, impunity, weak institutions, political manipulation and social exclusion.

Olajide (2026) argues that the Nigerian Church should hold leaders accountable and advocate for systemic changes. This is an important development in theological thinking about insecurity. Violence does not emerge in a vacuum. Where institutions fail consistently, insecurity can become entrenched.

Prophetic witness must be consistent. The Church should condemn violence regardless of the religious, ethnic or political identity of the perpetrator. It should defend victims regardless of whether they belong to the Church.

Political independence is crucial. A church that receives benefits from political leaders may find it difficult to criticize those leaders. Prophetic witness therefore requires moral distance from political patronage.

The prophetic Church should also speak against misinformation and inflammatory rhetoric. Religious leaders can either calm communities or intensify fear. Responsible public speech is itself a peace building responsibility.

The Church, Corruption and Structural Insecurity

Corruption is not the sole cause of insecurity, but corruption can weaken institutions that should protect citizens. When public resources intended for security, education or infrastructure are diverted, communities become more vulnerable.

Christian theology has long treated corruption as a moral problem because it involves dishonesty, exploitation and injustice. Churches should therefore address corruption not only through sermons but through institutional example.

Financial transparency within churches is particularly important. A church that condemns corruption in government while refusing to account for its own finances weakens its credibility.

The Church can promote integrity through leadership training, youth education and public advocacy. Christian professionals in government and business should be encouraged to understand their occupations as areas of moral vocation.

This is part of the wider public theology of insecurity: peace depends not only on stopping armed attackers but also on building institutions that reduce the conditions in which violence flourishes.

Peace building and Reconciliation

Peace building goes beyond the absence of fighting. It involves rebuilding relationships, addressing grievances and creating institutions capable of managing disagreement without violence.

The Church has important resources for peace building. Matthew 18:15–17 provides a process for addressing conflict directly. Acts 6 shows the importance of listening to grievances and reforming structures when people experience unfairness. Acts 15 demonstrates communal discernment in the face of serious disagreement.

These principles can be adapted to community peace building. Churches can create dialogue spaces where community leaders, youth, women, traditional authorities and religious leaders discuss grievances before they become violent.

Reconciliation is especially difficult after atrocities. It cannot be imposed quickly. Victims need recognition, truth and justice. Perpetrators need accountability and,

where appropriate, opportunities for genuine transformation.

Recent research on local peace building in Northern Nigeria shows the importance of culturally grounded reconciliation practices. The study of sulhu highlights the potential of locally meaningful religious and cultural norms for mediation and reintegration (Sulhu as local peace building, 2025). Christian churches can learn from such contextual resources while remaining faithful to Christian convictions.

Interfaith Cooperation

Nigeria's religious diversity makes interfaith cooperation essential. Christian-Muslim relationships have sometimes been damaged by violence, political rhetoric and mutual suspicion. Yet many ordinary Christians and Muslims continue to live together peacefully.

The Church should therefore resist language that treats an entire religion as the enemy. Terrorist organizations may use religious language, but their actions should not automatically be attributed to all members of the religion they claim to represent.

Research on Christian experiences of insecurity shows how repeated violence can reinforce perceptions of victimization and an oppositional Christian identity (2022). If such perceptions are not carefully addressed, fear can harden into social hostility.

Interfaith cooperation should be practical rather than ceremonial alone. Christian and Muslim leaders can cooperate on community security, youth education,

humanitarian assistance, anti-drug campaigns, peace education and public advocacy.

Such cooperation does not require theological agreement. It requires recognition that shared communities have shared responsibilities. Peace building becomes stronger when religious leaders jointly reject violence and protect the dignity of all citizens.

The Church and Youth Radicalization

Young people are often affected by insecurity both as victims and as potential recruits into violent groups. Unemployment, exclusion, lack of educational opportunity, identity crises and exposure to extremist narratives can increase vulnerability.

Church youth ministries can contribute to prevention by providing belonging, mentorship, skills and meaningful service. Young people need opportunities to see a future in which their abilities have value.

Christian formation should also teach critical thinking. Young people should learn to question propaganda, recognize manipulation and distinguish genuine religious teaching from extremist ideology.

Vocational and entrepreneurship programmes can complement spiritual formation. A young person who has skills, supportive relationships and meaningful responsibilities may be less vulnerable to recruitment into destructive networks.

The Church should not assume that every radicalized young person can be reached simply through preaching.

Prevention requires cooperation with families, schools, community organizations and appropriate government agencies.

Security, Wisdom and Church Preparedness

Churches need practical preparedness. Security should not be understood only as a government concern. Congregations can conduct risk assessments, improve emergency communication, establish evacuation procedures and train volunteers in first aid.

Large gatherings require special attention. Churches can develop clear entrance procedures, emergency exits and communication plans without creating an atmosphere of fear.

Theological teaching should accompany preparedness. Christians should understand that prudent action is not a rejection of faith. Proverbs 22:3 commends prudence in the presence of danger.

Churches should also protect sensitive information. Details concerning vulnerable members, clergy movements and humanitarian operations should be handled carefully.

Preparedness should be proportionate and lawful. Churches should not become armed militias. Their role is to protect life, cooperate with legitimate authorities and provide pastoral and humanitarian support.

Forgiveness, Justice and Reintegration

One of the most difficult theological questions is whether perpetrators can be forgiven. Christianity

answers that forgiveness is possible, but forgiveness does not mean denial of wrongdoing.

Forgiveness is not the same as forgetting. Nor does it mean that victims must immediately trust perpetrators or restore relationships without safeguards. In cases of serious violence, accountability and protection remain necessary.

Reintegration of former combatants is particularly sensitive. Olajide (2026) argues that reintegration should involve theological commitments to forgiveness, accountability and communal healing rather than relying only on state rehabilitation.

The Church can contribute by supporting genuine repentance, truth telling and restorative processes. Former perpetrators should not be romanticized, but neither should permanent exclusion be assumed to be the only possible future.

Christian reconciliation requires transformation. A person who claims repentance while continuing to threaten others has not demonstrated the fruit of reconciliation. Safety and justice remain necessary.

Theological Response to Communal Violence

Communal violence often has complex causes involving land, ethnicity, politics, religion, competition for resources and historical grievances. The Church should resist simplistic narratives that attribute every conflict to religion.

Local churches are often well placed to identify early warning signs. Pastors and community leaders can notice rising tensions, inflammatory speech and emerging rumors. They can intervene through dialogue before violence becomes widespread.

The Church can also challenge collective blame. When an individual commits violence, blaming every member of that person's ethnic or religious group is unjust and dangerous.

Christian teaching about human dignity provides a strong basis for rejecting collective punishment. Every person remains morally responsible for his or her own actions.

Churches can help communities preserve relationships during crisis by organizing joint prayer, community dialogue, youth activities and humanitarian assistance. These actions can prevent fear from destroying social ties completely.

A Framework for a Nigerian Church Response: Lament–Care–Justice–Peace

This study proposes the L-C-J-P framework as a practical theological model.

L — Lament and truth. The Church should acknowledge suffering honestly, remember victims and reject denial. Public lament gives communities language for grief and moral clarity.

C — Care and accompaniment. Churches should provide pastoral care, humanitarian assistance, trauma-

informed support and practical accompaniment for victims, displaced people and vulnerable communities.

J — Justice and prophetic witness. The Church should challenge corruption, impunity, injustice and failures of governance while supporting lawful accountability. It should speak consistently regardless of political or religious identity.

P — Peace and reconciliation. Churches should promote dialogue, interfaith cooperation, mediation, forgiveness and community rebuilding. Peace building should address both immediate conflict and the relationships that sustain long-term peace.

The framework is intentionally integrated. Lament without care can become symbolic; care without justice may treat symptoms; justice without peace can become punitive; and peace without truth can become superficial. Together, the four dimensions offer a balanced Christian response.

Discussion

The Nigerian Church faces an extraordinary challenge in responding to insecurity because it is simultaneously a victim, a pastoral institution, a moral community and a public actor. It cannot withdraw from society, yet it must avoid assuming responsibilities that belong primarily to government.

The evidence reviewed suggests that the Church's most effective response is likely to be integrated. Prayer remains fundamental because Christian theology understands security and peace within a relationship with

God. But prayer should produce courage, compassion and action. Humanitarian assistance is necessary, but it should be combined with advocacy and long-term community rebuilding. Prophetic criticism is necessary, but it should be expressed with fairness and evidence. Reconciliation is necessary, but it should not be imposed without truth and accountability.

The Church also needs to strengthen its internal capacity. Some congregations lack trained counselors, emergency plans or systems for managing trauma. Denominational bodies can provide shared resources and training.

Another major issue is credibility. The public will listen to the Church's message about peace only when the Church demonstrates peace within its own institutions. Denominational rivalry, ethnic factionalism, political partisanship and financial secrecy weaken public witness.

The Church's response to insecurity should therefore begin at home. Congregations should model conflict resolution, leadership that is accountable, responsible communication and care for vulnerable members. From that foundation, the Church can speak more convincingly to society.

Recommendations

1. Nigerian churches should establish structured pastoral and humanitarian response teams for communities affected by violence.
2. Denominations should train clergy in trauma-informed pastoral care, mediation, emergency response and peace

building.

3. Churches should develop basic security and emergency preparedness plans appropriate to their local contexts.

4. The Church should strengthen its prophetic witness by consistently condemning violence, corruption and impunity regardless of the identity of perpetrators or political allies.

5. Churches should cooperate with legitimate government security institutions while maintaining appropriate moral and institutional independence.

6. Christian leaders should expand interfaith peace building with Muslim and traditional community leaders.

7. Churches should establish programmes for displaced persons that move beyond relief towards education, livelihood recovery and sustainable reintegration.

8. Theological institutions should include peace studies, conflict transformation, trauma care and public theology in ministerial training.

9. Churches should provide safe spaces for victims to lament, grieve and seek counselling without being pressured into premature public testimony.

10. Christian leaders should teach that forgiveness does not eliminate justice, accountability or reasonable protection.

11. Churches should discourage collective blame and inflammatory language directed at ethnic or religious groups.

12. Youth ministries should combine spiritual formation with vocational skills, civic education, mentoring and peace education.

13. Churches should develop clear policies for the

protection of clergy and vulnerable congregants.

14. Christian organizations should support research and documentation on the effects of insecurity on families, churches and communities.

15. National Christian bodies should coordinate advocacy for accountable security, justice for victims and long-term peace building.

16. Churches should model financial and institutional accountability so that their public criticism of corruption is credible.

17. Pastors should receive training in responsible communication during crises and should avoid spreading unverified information.

18. Churches should support community-based early-warning and early-response mechanisms where appropriate.

19. The Church should participate in lawful advocacy for policies addressing poverty, unemployment, education and social exclusion, recognizing these as part of long-term peace building.

20. Christian responses to insecurity should remain centered on the dignity of every human being, including victims, displaced persons, security personnel and repentant former perpetrators.

Conclusion

Nigeria's insecurity presents the Church with one of the most serious theological and practical challenges of the contemporary period. Terrorism, kidnapping, banditry and communal violence have affected families, churches, clergy, livelihoods and relationships across the country. The Church cannot respond adequately by treating

insecurity as either a purely spiritual problem or a purely political problem.

A faithful Christian response must hold together lament and hope, compassion and justice, prayer and practical action, forgiveness and accountability, pastoral care and prophetic witness. The Church must listen to victims, accompany traumatized communities, provide humanitarian assistance and speak truthfully about the causes and consequences of violence.

The Nigerian Church also has a significant peace building role. Through interfaith dialogue, youth formation, community development, mediation and public advocacy, churches can help rebuild trust. Yet this contribution will be credible only when the Church itself models the values it preaches.

The challenge is immense, but the Church possesses resources that can be mobilized: theological convictions, community networks, educational institutions, humanitarian capacity, moral authority and pastoral relationships. These resources should be directed towards protecting human dignity and building a society in which violence no longer determines the future.

The central theological claim of this article is therefore simple: Christian peace is not silence in the face of violence. It is active commitment to truth, justice, mercy, reconciliation and human flourishing. In an age of insecurity, the Nigerian Church is called not merely to survive the crisis but to become an agent of healing, courage and peace.

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