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**THE ROLE OF P.C.E.A CHURCH IN ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION: A CASE STUDY OF LIMURU SUB-COUNTY
IN KIAMBU COUNTY**

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THE ROLE OF P.C.E.A CHURCH IN ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION: A CASE STUDY OF LIMURU SUB-COUNTY IN KIAMBU COUNTY

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ABSTRACT

The corpus and the subject matter of this dissertation was to critically analyze the role of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Africa (P.C.E.A) in environmental stewardship and conservation, with special focus on Limuru Sub-County in Kiambu County. The methodology employed in this research was a case study design. Respondents were drawn from the top and local leadership of the P.C.E.A church and ordinary church members/congregants who were all interviewed. The target population from which the sample was drawn consisted of twenty (20) churches which were domiciled within Limuru Sub-County in Kiambu County. Out of a target population of 620 units, a sample population of 186 units was drawn from the three respondent categories was selected. From the findings of the study, it was revealed that though there appears commitment by the P.C.E.A church to environmental stewardship and conservation, most of these activities were still concentrated at the policy and strategy development level. They had not effectively been cascaded down to the local levels in order that concrete and tangible results were realized. There lacked clear action plans and a monitoring and evaluation mechanism for the realization of tangible impacts at the local levels. Some of the challenges identified included lack of a clear, structured and coordinated way to execute environmental stewardship and conservation activities; Lack of sufficient financial resources for the program; Lack of appreciation of the connection existing between theology and environmental stewardship and the lack of education and awareness on the subject by some clergy members. Drawing from the findings, the study recommended a plethora of actions be taken by the P.C.E.A church in order to cascade environmental stewardship activities to the local levels, as envisaged at the policy and strategy development level. It further recommended that future studies be undertaken in order to foster the P.C.E.A church's role in environmental stewardship and conservation, especially as regards the realm of clean and renewable energy technologies.

Key Words: Environmental Stewardship, Church Policies, P.C.E.A Church

INTRODUCTION

The natural environment is the dominant source of livelihood and a habitat for all human and non-human things. It is from the environment that we get the fundamental prerequisites and essentials of life such as air, water, food supplies, shelter, and clothing. Again, it is within the boundaries of the natural environment that we obtain medicinal supplies to treat multifarious diseases that have afflicted and plagued humankind over the years. The environment is also a source of employment in the sectors such as agriculture, forestry, mining, quarrying and fishing. The extent of proper attention given to the environment will determine its sustainability. Air quality, clean water for both domestic and industrial uses, proper afforestation and general practice of environmental ethics are to the large extent dependent on individual and community lifestyles and the effectiveness of enforcing government legislation. Throughout history, the religions that have existed have shown through tradition some great concerns and care towards the environment. Greed and destructiveness to creation are condemned by most religious traditions. This has been reflected in their historical teachings even if they are not put into practice. Traditionally, there have been various cultures that highlight environmental conservation and sustainability. There are proverbs, folktales, myths, legends, taboos and ritual practices in Africa and Kenya in particular all of which focus on the preservation and conservation of the natural environment. There are rules and regulations on farming, fishing, hunting, felling of trees and sanitation. The stringent adherence to these traditional rules goes a long way into preserving some rivers, lagoons, trees, fishes and many others. Those who have abused them have been sanctioned. However, with the growth of modern society, these practices are fast fading. With the influx and the changes caused by science, political and economic institutions have replaced the duties

of religion. This has made many people to neglect their responsibility of taking care of the environment. Yet in other sectors, some leaders in different religions have slowly recovered the pre-modern teachings and now they are relying on them as they steward the environment. According to Anderson (1999) "...the 21st-century environmental crises are vastly different from any other in human history".

There is the problem of changes in climate, for example, the ongoing heating of the earth as a result of the changes of the atmosphere increasing the intensity cyclones, storms, and heat waves. As a result of the above changes some patterns have emerged that have affected the oceans, the rising of sea levels, affecting the agricultural systems and impacting negatively on the natural resources and ecosystems. Climate change has resulted into erratic rainfall patterns, affects the growth of crops which eventually leads to a shortage of food due to high demand. When there is food insecurity, then people are compelled by circumstances to scramble over the few available resources which engender violence. Humans have been principally responsible for the acceleration of climate change e.g. through greenhouse gas emissions from electric plants and fuel combustion from automobiles which emanates from inefficient energy consumption. India for instance, has lost 85 percent of her original forest, and deforestation has been a major cause of modern mass extinction of plants and animal species (Austin 1988). Depleting energy sources, fouling the air with pollution causing global warming and poisoning the land with radioactive substances jeopardizes the health and wellbeing of lives on planet earth. Human activities in the pursuit of socio-economic advancement and infrastructural development have also resulted in environmental crises (Eckberg, 2000). So the current environmental crises that ravages planet earth and threatens its capacity to be a home for all living

creatures (eco-system) and non-living elements of nature needs to be addressed radically and with urgency at all levels from the local to the international level. Poor agricultural practices are also detrimental to environmental sustainability. Many farmers work for high yields. As a result, they work very hard for profit by using modern ways that negatively impacts the environment and affects the general health of the public.

The term environment refers to the complete range of physical and biological conditions that surrounds human beings. The environment is the condition in which all human beings and every other living organisms e.g. trees, plants, animals and many others cannot live without. It is the term that is used to refer to nature and it can be used synonymously with creation. Another term which is used synonymously with environment is ecology. Ecology is concerned with the study of animals and plants, their interrelationships and environments. The term is used to refer to balance harmony and inter-relatedness within a given environment. In today's context, ecology and environmental studies deals with almost every area of life and society. (Gnanakan 1999)

The P.C.E.A church has not very much been involved in environmental activities as envisaged. According to Rev. Eustace Kabue, a Presbyterian Minister incharge of the Nendeni Board where issues to do with the environment are handled, the church as an institution previously has not been very active in matters to do with the environment. Members of the church have been involved in the state campaigns, NGOs and other initiatives on environmental stewardship individually. The church only held environmental activities occasionally, for example when a church was dedicated afterward they planted trees; during burial ceremonies they planted trees.

The P.C.E.A church in particular, has played a low profile on fully involving herself in environment stewardship, The 18th General Assembly held on April 2007 noted with concern the environmental issues that were affecting the country and further instructed each member to be encouraged to plant at least 20 trees each year. This culminated with the P.C.E.A 19th General Assembly (G.A.) Business Committee setting up a sub-committee on environmental stewardship to address environmental concerns in the country and to provide guidelines on how the church can participate in solving the deteriorating state of environmental degradation. (P.C.E.A 17th & 18th General Assembly Resolutions, 2007)

The church has developed a strategy through the survey that the sub-committee which has led to the formulation of a Strategic Plan (2012-2019) with the theme of empowering the church for mission to all creation. The team which consists of four member teams which was mandated to inform the church on the direction it should take came up with some strategies on involving the church. The report noted that there was a great need to halt the very alarming rates of forest destruction in the entire country. There was a need to regulate the disposal of waste products which were directed to the water bodies which caused alot of harm. The team notified the church that there was need to stop the destruction of the water towers in the Aberdares ranges, Mt. Kenya, Cherangani and Mt. Elgon. The team advised the church to come up with polices that were to be used to enhance environmental conservation.

Problem statement

Environmental degradation is a global challenge oft with grave implications. In a span of two decades, there has been an increase of care and attention from Christians towards the environment. Although this was noted, the church has been seen previously

just to be a social institution with fewer concerns on the ecological changes. As a result, there has been lack of clear prioritization of environmental programs due to assumption, lack of policies and short-sightedness of some church leaders who reduce the importance of environment stewardship. Infact, according to scholars, Christianity has played a major role in the environmental crises as the evidence can purely be traced from the environmental, cultural, biblical hermeneutics and theology (White, 1967).

Objectives of the study

The general objective of the study was to evaluate the role of P.C.E.A church in environmental stewardship, with focus on Limuru Sub-County within Kiambu County. The **specific objectives were:-**

- To investigate the environmental stewardship activities that P.C.E.A church has undertaken in Limuru sub-County.
- To evaluate the existing church policies and their effect on environmental stewardship by P.C.E.A churches based in Limuru sub-County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between God and creation

According to the Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann (1992), God created the universe by the process of communication which he called speaking and listening, and as a result the responsibility of creation is to listen and answer. He further notes that creation has an intimate and valuable partner with its creator and not just an object constructed or put together for pleasure purposes (Brueggemann 1992). God doesn't lose his distance from his creation. He remains both transcendent and immanent. The closeness of God to his creation signifies that he cares for that creation. According to Brueggemann (1992), in this closeness, God the creator caused the creation 'to

be' giving it freedom to act, create, recreate and doing all that would please the creator. All the creation that God created qualified as good. Goodness has several implications. First it implies the ultimate goodness of God. It is only him who is good who can create something which is good. God's goodness cannot be compared to human goodness. Secondly it implies that evil is not an integral part of creation but only intrudes. Thirdly, goodness implies that there is an inherent value in creation and not just value for the sake of human utility. He argues that the creation that has a relationship to God has worth in itself. These has led to ecologists and other environmentalists to maintain that there is a calling for the recognition of intrinsic value through bio-centric or even eco-centric ideas rather than anthropocentric theology. Fourthly, goodness elaborates the mighty grace and beauty of God's creation.

Theological and ethical foundations of stewardship

Theology always is able to get to the real roots whether ecological or environmental. Theology does not deal with how to get involved or even what to do, but theology helps to understand why man should do what is expected of him. Theology of the environment, i.e. the study of the environmental and ecological issues with reference to the almighty God who is the creator. It tries to interlink two levels of relationships that are of human kind and its world in their relationship to the creator. God who is the creator of all the universe, who rules and reigns requires that every human being to worship and adore Him (Ps. 103:19-22). All what is seen on earth, and with it, reflects his wisdom and goodness (Ps. 19:1-6) and it is kept and governed by his almighty power and loving kindness (Ps. 102:25-27; Heb. 1:3, 10-12). Both men and women were created in His very own image, and they were commissioned to and mandated to live with other created creatures but with a special calling to be the overall steward as it is clearly

depicted in Genesis 1:26-28 and Psalm. 8:5. Fundamental to Christian environmental ethic, then there is the doctrine of humankind being created in the image of God. Although there have been debates from some environmentalists, who argue and insist that there are equal rights and value of all forms of life, ideally it negates the biblical commission of human beings the special and unique assignment as a steward and is seen to eliminate the very rationale for human present care for the entire creation. The image of the almighty God is characterized in knowledge and righteousness, and expresses itself in the expected creative human stewardship and dominion over the earth. Human stewardship under the command of the almighty God clearly implies that we have a moral obligation of being accountable to what He has bestowed to us as he expects us to do for the glory of the kingdom of God which depends on our actions from the freedom given to us for choosing. Human beings are called to play their role of stewardship in a free way that is guided by the scriptures and the spirit of God. The calling to be stewards is not affected by the fact that man fell into sin which caused him to be judged and as a result being subjected to separation from the almighty God and even death as it is written in Genesis 2:17. Indeed, Jesus Christ involves the sinful fallen humans beings in the work of being good stewards of restoring the very creation (Rom. 8:21). Francis Bacon in his New Method of Science notes that the fall of man from his state of innocence and from his dominion over creation which makes it difficult for human beings to demonstrate godly stewardship, but through the work of Christ in, on, and through his people and creation makes it possible nonetheless. When the creation was taking place God prepared a very unique place in the name of the Garden of Eden, and placed in it the first man, Adam (Gen. 2:8-15). God, after placing Adam in the garden instructed him to cultivate and guard the Garden (Gen. 2:15) and to enjoy the fruitfulness that came from it and

that both man and woman to multiply, spread even beyond the Garden of Eden to fill and subdue the entire earth (Gen. 1:26, 28). They were given superiority and priority to exercise control over all the creatures that God had created. This clearly shows that man was right placed in proper environmental stewardship which he ensured that there was harmony between him and the creatures.

Human beings have a unique character that is not in any other creatures. They have both the rational and moral capacity to demonstrate real stewardship, by being accountable for the choices that they take and the responsibility for caring not only for their own self but also for other creatures that they have been entrusted with. This then summarizes that if human beings reject stewardship, then they reject the very calling of being accountable.

Human and environmental concerns for the present and future

Human beings who belong to the earth always rejoice in the beauty and wonder of what the earth beholds i.e. the skies, land, water and life in all diversity, therefore making the earth home to human beings and all living creatures. Though the earth has been so good, human beings have rendered the earth uninhabitable for many species of life. The lands as a result are becoming barren, water reservoirs poisoned and skies fouled. There are many concerns and observations on the environment. Despite these observations, many people have continued to fear that serious threats to the well-being of humans and to the environment as a whole are expected.

God seemed to have had an intention for human attitudes towards creation. He chose humans to create and recreate order out of chaos. There are concerns and observations that rapid population growth, land conversion and habitat destruction, land degradation, resource conversion, waste and

hazards production, global toxification and warming, and rampant species' extinction are presently affecting the environment and thus the earth is seemingly calling on humans to awaken.

Environment and the Old Testament

The Old Testament clearly shows the blessing of the land that was associated with the people of God. From the time of the promise to Abraham all through to the time of Kings David and Solomon, there is dominance of the theme of land in the life and affairs of the Israelites. All the life of the Israelites was characterized by involvement with the land which the almighty God the creator had promised them. The patriarchs who received the promise of the land were always reminded of God's blessings as seen in the fertility of land and livestock. Further, Genesis 26:12 states that God blessed the crops in the land Isaac planted. God continued to bless his land because he is the owner of the land. The land was a major factor of God's promises. Essential gifts of nature, wine, oil and water are all attributed to Yahweh as the Lord of history. Canaan as it was promised to Abraham was Israel's inheritance which they received as a gift through the grace of God. Israel enjoyed God's blessings through the rain, sun and gifts of fertile soils. These blessings were ascribed to Yahweh. Israel got the land as it's possession for responsible use. They were instructed to live in a responsible lifestyle to see that they kept the land in a pure way. So that they continue to inherit the land, the Israelites were assigned some responsibilities. First, they were directed to offer the first fruits of their harvest and even observe the sabbatical year in the families. No single person was to make commercial transactions of the land since it was the responsibility of the family. They were directed not to cause any damage to the animals or to any property, observe the integrity of the set boundaries and share the resources equally. The land rules in Israel were very strict they called for

the care of neighbors and especially the poor (Exodus 23:6, the stranger (Exodus 21:4, 23:9) and the Levite (Deut. 14:27) the above people were the variable in the society.

New Testament theology and environment

The New Testament doesn't have many direct references that show human responsibility towards creation. It has been noted that Christians have been slow in reclaiming a concern for creation and has left stewardship to secular control. The Christian's involvement in creation was not imperative but it was for the glory of God. The idea that God ultimately takes care of the creation has made the church not to have compulsion to get involved in any environmental issues. There are many stands that are held by Christian. Some believe that the world is under Satan's rule and so Christians must stay away. Others base their ideas on Peter's reference to destruction that this world will be totally annihilated and so they await a new creation. Such spiritual attitudes that many Christians have held have continued to widen the distance between human beings and the creation of God. As a result, Christians have failed to be responsible in taking care of the earth or even to protect its resources. There is a greater hindrance that has been seen with evangelicals who have continued to narrow the Christians' life to preaching the gospel according to Matthew Chapter 28. And they emphasize it as being the only obligation to the Christians. It is important to note that the so called 'Great commission' doesn't at any given time negate any involvement in God's plan. Throughout the new testament , there is relatively little to describe as a theology of the environment. A clear conclusion could be made that there is a glaring neglect of any concern for an ecological interpretation of God's plans laid for the world. The New Testament has been seen as emphasizing on human salvation. The New Testament doesn't show high priority on whatever was said in the Old

Testament on God and creation, nor the world and the new creation to come. The biblical theological aspects demonstrate God's great plan for the inter-relatedness with nature that has a relationship with Christ. Apostle Paul in his letter to the Colossians insist that creation is of paramount importance to God and that it has the connection alongside Christ's authority over the entire church (Colossians 1:16-17). Christ's mission to human beings was that of reconciliation in line with God's redemptive plans. The redemption plan is strongly linked with creation as Colin Gunton (1992) states. In the entire life of Jesus Christ i.e. birth, baptism and temptation, he is seen as being part of creation to fulfill Gods total plans which are directed to the future perfection of creation and the entire human race.

Creation and redemption

Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans, deals with the concept of redemption in an exhaustive manner, he notes that instead of human beings worshipping the creator, they worship creation. Though as a result they deserve to die, they are justified freely by the sufficient grace of God through redemption from Christ Jesus (Rom 3:24). The Bible opens by describing the account of creation and it similarly widens up with God's very hand on creation whereby in the book revelation, John is seeing anticipating the new heaven's and the new earth. This is a clear indication that creation will be completely redeemed.

Paul treats the idea of redemption using universal terms. He emphasizes this when he writes to the church at Ephesus. He notes that in Christ we have redemption which is in God's grace to bring all things that are in heaven or on earth. (Weoley Granberg Michelson, 1988)

Israel's leadership and land

In the leadership of the Israelites, the Kings were given specific guidelines towards their attitude to

land. The Kings were required to be from the Israelites (Deut. 17:15) so that he could not be like other Kings who exploited the land by acquiring wealth from the resources of the land for selfish gain. The King was seen as a representative of God who was appointed to manage the resources of the land for the entire welfare of all the people. Some of the Kings who led the Israelites messed up with the set guidelines of the land. For example, King Solomon who amassed wealth and also Jeroboam and Ahab; the quality of life and their attitude towards land deteriorated.

Philosophers and the environment

Over the past centuries, the church has been maintaining contrasting attitudes toward the environment. These varieties of attitudes have primarily been influenced by the prevailing philosophical or religious currents e.g. when there was a relationship between God and the world, it was seen to be positive but when there was a negative relationship of the world, there was subsequently little room for any real concern for the material world. Plato had a great influence on theologians of his time. He concluded that nature was the place to see God's creativity. He further notes that God brings order from disorder; harmony to the discordant and as a result of that, human beings should adhere to the will of God to be involved in ensuring that there is order in the world. Plato maintained that humans who are expected to get involved had not involved themselves in the love or respect for nature.

Theoretical framework

Economic and Institutional Theorists view

The discussion of environmental stewardship within the church compounds started with the analysis of community's attitude from the perspective of economic, game theory and "rational theory model", where the individual decision-making or choice making capabilities in relation to the benefits

achieved from using the Church in environmental issues was analyzed. From this point of view, communities view towards environmental issues in the Church compound and outside became a subject of study. These theories mainly focused on human action and attitude towards environmental issues and the causes for such action.

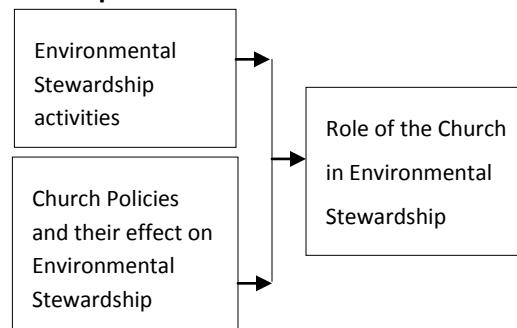
Sean (1986) inferred that in most cases individual interests are placed first and eventually they overrule the collective ones. Therefore, the management model of privatization of government was emphasized. This initiated discussion on the conservation and management of commonly-owned environmental issues. According to Tirosh (2002), environmental conservation activities and increasing net economic benefits are accompanied unless all means remain fruitless. Besides, Martinez (2002) underlined that market and government failure are not the only factors for environmental destruction. Rather, the bad functioning of "micro-institutions" like the households are also contributory factors as well.

Cultural Theorists' view

Unlike the "rational choice approach" which concentrated on the rational decision in the conservation of environmental owned in common, the findings of many anthropologists and sociologists showed that commonly owned environmental are conserved not only by rational institutions created for a purpose of utilizing the economic resources but also by various cultural elements like kinship, religion and social organization, which is a key element in environmental stewardship. They highlighted that the decline in environmental of commonly owned natural resources was not only due to institutional failure, but it is also because of external factors like colonialization, modernization (changes in culture) and market forces. The analysis of Mathaai (2010) regarding the relationship between humans and the

environment from the perspectives of bio-cultural diversity implied that the relationships of human culture with the environment acknowledge the existence of an "inextricable link" between biological and cultural diversity. Moreover, the balance of environment, society and economy is believed to be necessary for sustainable development, which is a paradigm that emerged in the 1980s.

Conceptual framework



Independent Variable Dependent Variables

Figure 1: The Conceptual framework

Source: Researcher, 2016

METHODOLOGY

This study used descriptive design for it was not only restricted to fact findings but also in developing quality principles of knowledge and solutions to the significant problems. This design involved measuring, classifying, analyzing, comparing and interpreting data (Orodho, 2003). Since the focus was on the church's effort in environmental stewardship, all P.C.E.A parishes in Limuru sub-County within Kiambu County were targeted. The target population from which the sample was drawn consisted of Twenty (20) churches within Limuru sub-County. However, each presbytery was approached based on its top-level leadership, local-level leadership and ordinary church members (i.e. the congregants).

In order to ensure that there are no biases in the collection of the data and to ensure representation

across all cadres, proportionate stratified random sampling was used for the study.

RESULTS

Environmental stewardship activities the church has undertaken

Table 1: Analysis of responses on any environmental stewardship activities undertaken by the church

Population categories	Yes		No		Not sure		TOTAL
	Units	%	Units	%	Units	%	
Top-level leadership	9	41	9	24	0	0	18
Local-level leadership	18	32	11	29	7	7	36
Ordinary members/Congregants	6	27	18	47	89	93	102
TOTALS	33	100	38	100	96	100	156

Source: Researcher, 2017

Table 1 was an analysis of responses on whether the P.C.E.A church had undertaken any environmental stewardship activities. Out of a total sample population size comprising 156 respondents, 33 responded to the affirmative, while 38 responded to the negative. 96 of the total respondents were not sure. The results in general indicated that the church had minimally undertaken environmental stewardship activities, and if so, very few congregants had been directly involved. This

may also be attributed to the fact that despite the existence of policies and plans on environmental stewardship at the top level, the church had not done enough to publicize its role through available means of mass media communication. It was also a pointer to the fact that the theological underpinnings of environmental stewardship and conservation were not being well communicated to the congregants so that there is community ownership of the process.

Existing church policies and their effect on environmental stewardship

Table 2: Analysis of responses on existing church policies and their effect on environmental stewardship

Population categories	Yes		No		Not sure		TOTAL
	Units	%	Units	%	Units	%	
Top-level leadership	18	30	0	0	0	0	18
Local-level leadership	36	60	0	0	0	0	36
Ordinary members/Congregants	6	10	26	100	70	100	102
TOTALS	60	100	26	100	70	100	156

Source: Researcher, 2017

Table 2 above consisted of an analysis of responses on whether the respondents had any knowledge about the existence of church policies regarding environmental stewardship or not. From the findings, out of the total sample population of 156 respondents, 60 responded to the affirmative, while

26 responded to the negative. 70 respondents were not sure of their existence and effects on environmental stewardship. The results indicated that all church leaders were aware of their existence and effects. But a large proportion of the ordinary members/congregants were blatantly

unaware of the existence of such policies and their effects. These results can be attributed to the fact that the resolutions of the 19th General assembly of 2012 and the tenets of the strategic plan had been well communicated as a matter of protocol to all church leaders. However, despite their knowledge of the strategic direction taken by the P.C.E.A church nationally on this matter, the same had not been disseminated to the ordinary church members who saliently demonstrated their lack of knowledge of their existence and effects. It appeared that there was a weak link in terms of implementation of those policies at the local level, and that a monitoring and evaluation framework was non-existent to ensure the implementation of the same.

Qualitative analysis

By qualitative analysis is meant the technique of measuring data that does not produce discrete figures (Mugenda, 2003). The data is in the form of text rather than in numbers. Qualitative analysis was used to analyze the structured, open-ended questionnaires that were used for the study. The researcher applied content analysis methodology. This technique involved gathering the common themes, grouping them according to their commonality and analyzing them in those groups.

Opinion of the respondents on environmental stewardship activities the P.C.E.A church in Limuru sub-County had undertaken

At the top leadership echelons of the P.C.E.A church, it was averred that environmental stewardship activities had been undertaken. But a closer analysis revealed that the activities so described only oscillated around policy-making and strategy formulation. The local level leadership acknowledged that despite their existence thereof, this had not been adequately translated into concrete broad-based environmental stewardship and conservation activities at the local levels, citing various challenges. From the opinions obtained from various respondents, the church had not

hitherto succeeded in implementing far-reaching programs that would have an impact on rain water harvesting, embrace of clean energy sources, promotion of proper waste management, recycling of wastes, etc. However, local level leaders intimated that they were involved in tree planting during ceremonies e.g. burials and weddings.

Further, local level church leaders confirmed that they had not pervasively articulated environmental stewardship and conservation activities through available local mass media mediums. This was partially blamed on inadequate funding. But what also became clear from their responses was that the intricate relationship that subsists betwixt theology and the role of the human being in environmental stewardship was not being articulated at the local levels. As such, messages that would implore the local communities to perceive of environmental stewardship and conservation activities as divine had not been adequately articulated to the congregants. This contributed to their low involvement.

Opinion of the respondents on existing church policies and their effect on environmental stewardship activities in Limuru sub-County

From the responses obtained both from the top-level and local-level church leaders, there was agreement and consensus that policies and plans on how the P.C.E.A church would be involved in environmental stewardship and conservation activities were there at the national level. But what became apparent from their responses was that these had not been properly cascaded as to translate into concrete implementation action at the local levels. Most ordinary church members/congregants even averred they had no idea about their existence. As such, both these policies and plans were seen not to have had a positive impact on environmental stewardship and conservation activities, especially at these local

levels. More knowledgeable church leaders cited the lack of a performance management system with clear action plans, performance indicators, methods of benchmarking and reporting that would translate these ideals into concrete action at the local levels.

Summary

There is no doubt that the subject of the church's involvement in environmental stewardship and conservation is topical and relevant in the modern world. It was established that there is a divine responsibility that has been bestowed upon humanity to conserve the environment we live in. This is because failure to do so would lead to the mass degradation of the natural environment and a destruction of the natural habitat that God has given us.

From the findings, it was clear that the P.C.E.A church in Limuru sub-County was minimally involved in environmental stewardship and conservation activities. It became clear that though policies and plans had been developed at the national level to promote the same, rarely were they being implemented at the local levels. Their formulation had not been coupled with their alignment with the local church administrative structures for them to become effective. Further, that the correlation between theological teachings and the subject of environmental stewardship and conservation had not been well understood at the local levels in a way that would promote mass community responsibility and ownership of the process. The church has not done enough to cajole these drums of truth through available mass media forums i.e. television and radio, that mainly use local dialects for this message to be widely embraced. As such, existing church policies and plans have had a very minimal impact on the manner in which environmental stewardship and conservation activities should be carried out at the local level.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On the findings on environmental stewardship activities undertaken by the P.C.E.A churches in Limuru sub –County, it was clear that the churches within Limuru sub-County were minimally involved in environmental stewardship activities. The only salient activity was tree planting which was considered *ad hoc* e.g. in burials and wedding ceremonies, and not aligned to the existing structures of the church. The church has also not succeeded in integrating environmental stewardship and conservation to theological teachings so that the local community would thereon take it upon themselves to conserve the environment. It is also evident that the local churches have failed to tap into the potential that mass media levers in promoting issues related to environmental conservation in the area. This is despite the existence of a multiplicity of local, vernacular radio and television stations that could be utilized for this purpose.

On how the existing policies affect environmental stewardship in P.C.E.A churches in Limuru sub-County, Stewardship of the environment refers to protecting the environment through recycling, conservation, regeneration, and restoration. It means taking responsibility for our choices. The responsibility for environmental quality should be shared by all those whose actions affect the environment. It involves putting systems in place that will enable them to use resources efficiently, reduce waste and minimize on the negative impacts on the environment, translate reduced consumption and waste into financial savings and to provide a healthy, more efficient and effective working environment. However, the findings indicated that though at the Head Office policies and Strategic Plans of how the P.C.E.A church can get much more involved in environmental stewardship activities were available, the same were not being implemented at the local level. There was gross apathy in their implementation. There lacked mass awareness creation about

environmental degradation and conservation matters, on reduction of waste and on disposal and recycling of wastes at the local level. The church has also not been effective in promoting income-generation activities from the “business” of environmental conservation at these local levels. As such, the existing policies and plans have only had a minimal impact on the church’s role in environmental stewardship at the local levels.

Conclusions

From the findings of this study, the P.C.E.A church in Limuru sub-County had not succeeded towards achieving its goal of educating and creating mass awareness about the role of the church in environmental conservation. In particular, they had failed in demonstrating the strong linkage that subsists between modern-day theological teachings and issues related to environmental conservation. Most church members were unable to demonstrate this linkage.

Further, while the P.C.E.A churches in Limuru sub-County had at least made initiatives at tree planting, the effort still seemed ad hoc and not well coordinated from the top. There still lacked an organized structure through which the activity of tree planting could be entrenched into its day-to-day activities. Despite the growing number of both radio and television stations that broadcast in the local languages e.g. *Kameme FM*, *Inooro FM*, *Gukena FM*, *Inooro TV*, *Mahiga Matatu TV*, *Njata TV* and *Gikuyu TV*, the P.C.E.A church in Limuru sub-County had also not effectively tapped into the potential of mass media, where it would preponderantly communicate to its members about issues relating to the environment and initiatives on environmental conservation. If they did so, they would have effectively taken advantage of the provisions of the New Kenyan Constitution (2010) where the aim is to achieve 10% forest cover. It has not been fully vibrant in promoting community

participation in environmental conservation through existing mass media sources.

Recommendations

The church should intensify efforts towards mass education and awareness creation about environmental conservation amongst its members/congregants. In particular, they should aim at integrating theological teachings and environmental matters into the training and practice within the churches. For instance, the church should develop liturgies for Holy Communion that are sensitive to environmental concerns and promote Harvest and First Fruits celebrations and Thanksgiving services as well as mainstream environmental education and research into its theology. They should make it mandatory for all new clergy joining the ministry to complete a seminary level course on Biblical approaches to creation stewardship.

The church should aim at promoting tree planting, organic farming, environmental clean-ups, embrace of clean energy sources and recycling through the presbyteries, parishes, congregations, elder districts, schools, church groups and individuals. Every presbytery and Presbyterian group should for instance institute an annual tree planting day. The church should sensitize members on the protection and taking care of trees planted. The P.C.E.A church should benchmark its activities and emulate examples in other parishes where trees are planted during burials, wedding ceremonies and other church activities.

The church should also maximize the use of regional local language radio stations to disseminate relevant information to local communities through radio awareness programmes and debates on environmental stewardship and conservation.

The church should take advantage of the provision in the new constitution where the people of Kenya are all working towards achieving a 10% forest

cover and the provision in the Agriculture Act specifying that 10% of the land should be planted with trees. The church should therefore promote community participation in forest protection and conservation by encouraging church members to join community forest associations in their areas.

The church should encourage environmentally friendly income-generating projects such as bee keeping, use of wild fruits, woodlots development, planting of medicinal trees for food e.g. muringa.

The church should also encourage proper water apportionment to avoid conflicts and should discourage direct discharge of biochemical and sewer waste into the water bodies available in their locales.

Areas for further study

The researcher acknowledged that this study was not conclusive about the role that the P.C.E.A churches in Limuru sub-County should play in environmental stewardship. It was notable that

environmental challenges kept mutating in complexity and new, formidable solutions were thus perpetually required. Conspicuously, this study was limited geographically in terms of scope to within Limuru sub-County in Kiambu County. Considering that environmental challenges were fast emerging and spawn throughout the country, further research was recommended, but this time with a wider scope and perspective that would cover all areas where the P.C.E.A church was established in Kenya. Other researchers should try to establish the similitude and differences in the challenges faced in other areas in Kenya.

In conclusion, any other studies that may be related to how the role of the P.C.E.A church in Kenya in environmental stewardship and conservation can be enhanced are welcome in future as we seek to actualize our cherished national development blueprint i.e. "Vision 2030", in order to provide more detailed insights than already exists.

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