

Theologies for the Welfare of the Church Ministers: Insights from Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe



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ABSTRACT

Issues concerning the welfare of the church ministers should go beyond denominational levels and focus on treating ministerial work as both a call from God and a profession. Revisiting the Biblical concept of remunerations is critical in the 21st century, where contextual generosity must be considered. Church leaders should not be left only to rely on biblical principles or the guidance of the Spirit but employ economic justice when renumeration church ministers. The failing economy of Zimbabwe provides an opportunity for church ministers to manipulate scripture to survive, or their disputes spill over to secular courts, often with regrettable outcomes. Developing standardised theological benchmarks can provide some semblances of uniformity across the broad spectrum of various denominations or at least reference points that can be used to guard against exploitation of and or by the Church Ministers and other excesses that occur. This study explores the nature of the appropriate ecumenical theologies(s) for the welfare of the church ministers in Zimbabwe. The study used a qualitative approach, and questionnaires were used to gather data from selected church ministers of the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe. The findings show that Church Ministers' remunerations reflect complex, broader theological, financial and governance issues within Christian churches. The study concludes that the socio-economic and emotional challenges affecting the church ministers require theologically grounded solutions embedded with contextual generosity. This study contributes to scholarship by showing the welfare and well-being challenges of Church Ministers in church communities.

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INTRODUCTION

The growth of Christianity in Zimbabwe has continued to rise since its inception by missionaries in the 15th century.¹ Zimbabwe is regarded as a multi-religious nation. Besides other religions like Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and African Indigenous religions, Christianity has the highest market share.² In

¹ Munetsi Ruzivo, "Ecumenical Initiatives in Southern Rhodesia: A History of the Southern Rhodesia Missionary Conference 1903-1945," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 43, no. 1 (2017): 1–17.

² Nomatter Sande, *African Churches Ministering 'to and with' persons with Disabilities: Perspectives from Zimbabwe* (Routledge, 2022).

Zimbabwe, theologically, diverse Christian ecumenical bodies were formed to cement Christian beliefs, practices, and rituals. Also, the ecumenical bodies function as points of administration and outlets to combine voices from churches addressing diverse social ills. For instance, there is the Union for the Development of Apostolic Churches in Zimbabwe Africa (UDACZA), the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe, and the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference (ZCBC). Of interest to this study is the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe, which turned 60 years old in 2022. The Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe's website gives an extensive history and key result areas of the organisation.³ Numerically, the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe is growing, with over 5 million from its member denominations.

While several stakeholders are responsible for this phenomenal numerical growth, the church ministers are one of the pillars of this status quo. Scholars in Zimbabwe have concentrated on how the church ministers abuse their spiritual positions to syphon financial gains from the people, but not much has been done about how churches underpay and devalue church ministers through modern-day slavery.⁴ The problem is that, in most cases, Church Ministers are only celebrated when doing ministerial work; however, they are demonised when they complain about their living standards. Stories are told of the Church Minister's victimisations and unfair dismissals. Further, the improper handling of grievances causes bold Church Ministers to seek recourse from secular courts of law. While the secular has representations of most professional bodies and 'Trade Unions' to monitor benchmarks for wages and salaries, Church Ministers' welfare is decided by a few within their church denominations. Against this backdrop, besides asking what appropriate ecumenical theologies(s) for the welfare of the church ministers are, the study further explores the lived socio-economic experiences of church ministers within selected Evangelical-Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe. The findings are presented in subsequent sections.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Bible and Theologies of Church Ministers' Welfare

The literature review of this study is framed on the discourse of the Bible and theologies of church ministers' welfare. Both theology and denominational ethos influence the church's responsibilities to the Church Ministers. It is critical, therefore, to examine the theologies for the welfare of the Church Ministers in the Bible. The question enshrined in the quest for the welfare of the Church Ministers is whether there is a biblical obligation for the denomination to meet the needs of the Church Ministers. The challenge of following this line of questioning is definition(s). For instance, to what extent can one classify whether ministering is a job or a calling? One quick response is that church ministry is a divine calling that one receives from the Lord; hence, it is the duty of the Lord to open way(s) or his responsibility to support the Church Ministers. However, since it is not the Lord who is benefiting from the labour of the Church Ministers but the church, is it not befitting for the church to be responsible for the Church Ministers? To avoid taking these propositions out of context, it helps to exegete a few New Testament passages and the early church practices about the welfare of the Church Ministers. In this study, selecting and exegeting a few New Testament passages to establish theologies for the welfare issues of the Church Ministers is essential. The reason for using the New Testament and not the Hebrew Bible is that there is not much room to exegete the whole Bible in this study. Therefore, this study is biased towards the idea that the New Testament provides an adequate framework for the early church approach to the subject, which is more applicable to the modern contemporary church.

'Apostleship Rights' as a Theology for the Church Ministers' Welfare

The apostles' rights and liberty issues are discussed extensively in 1 Corinthians, particularly chapters 8-12. Contextually, these chapters discuss diverse problems related to personal rights. For instance, there are rights issues when eating food offered to idols. While Paul agrees that idols are nothing, he

³ <http://efzimbabwe.org/23-about/background>

⁴ Lovemore Togarasei, "Churches for the Rich? Pentecostalism and Elitism," *Faith in the City: The Role and Place of Religion in Harare*, 2010, 19-40.

advocates the need to consider those brethren “who have not been emancipated from such belief, [they should] refrain from sitting at a table in an idol temple” (Gilmour, n.d, 690).⁵ Here, Paul considers others necessary for maintaining one’s rights. In this line of thought, in I Corinthians 8, Paul “undertook to abstain from eating meat for the rest of his life if eating meat would prove prejudicial to the interests of his Christian brother.”⁶ Thus, if this assertion is anything to go by, then there is a need to willingly give up one’s rights for the sake of others. Personal rights in this study context may include the Church Ministers should be able to forgo their right to warfare for the sake of a weak church that does not understand their duty.

On the contrary, Paul shows the need to defend his personal rights in Chapter 9. Paul’s defence of his apostolic rights was to correct the church’s thinking about others. Paul’s apostolic defence was correcting the Corinthian church “who overstressed their rights to the detriment of others, he told them that this was selfish on their part.”⁷ Thus, Paul argues that it is his right to receive payment for his apostolic work, but he was willing to give up that right for the sake of other Christians. In Paul’s time, his enemies attacked him for not letting his churches support and maintain him. Surprised by these acts of Paul, his enemies felt that Paul “did not feel himself to be equal to be the apostles.”⁸ Paul further argues that expecting anyone who “give themselves up to any way of the world expect to live out of it” is humane.⁹ In Paul’s time, soldiers were given money that would help them cover their food and upkeep.¹⁰ In the Church Ministers’ welfare context, the apostolic rights still hold water today. Church Ministers today deserve payment unless they willingly deny it for reasons best known to them.

Using the analogy of the farmer who is a wine-dresser and a shepherd, he plants and tends to flock and eat from the produce of his labour. In summarising Paul’s analogues, the labourer must be sustained by their work. So, the Church Ministers who labour in the ministry. Simply put, Paul makes “the point that he has the right to their material support.”¹¹ In other words, it is okay for the church to support the Church Ministers who labour in their vineyards. It can be argued that the Corinthians church should “look no further than the Jewish temple to see the same principle in daily operation.”¹² In the temple, the ministers would receive food and supplies from the altar (Numbers 18:8ff). Similarly, those in the Christian church must receive their living from the gospel.

Further, the teachings of Jesus in the gospel support Pauline’s theology of supporting the gospel. In both Mathew 10:10 and Luke 10:7, Jesus instructs the disciples not to take anything as they go around preaching. The command is for the favour of the believers who would gladly receive the disciples as partaking the gift of them. In 1 Timothy 5:18, Paul supports Jesus’s principle by arguing that the labourer is worth his wages. It is correct to say that:

While complete devotion is required for the ministers and servants of God, it is wrong to take for granted that all their services to God must be voluntary and unrewarded. It must be remembered that the most dedicated ministers are still human. They must eat; be clothed; they need good housing and things that will make life comfortable for them and they need support, encouragement and backing in their efforts. It is wrong, neither fair nor charitable to underpay ministers on the pretext that they must not be interested in earthly things and because their reward is in heaven. A church of avaricious, ungrateful members can never be a source of inspiration to its minister. Rather than ‘spoiling the market’, Paul strongly defends those who are supported by the Church. Christians owe their spiritual leaders who sow among them the spiritual seed part of their material wealth.¹³

⁵ Gilmore, S.M. (n.d) "Corinthians", /BDI :684-692, 690.

⁶ Charles Kingsley Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1968), 199.

⁷ Samuel Oyinloye Abogunrin, *The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians* (Uzima Publishing House, 1988), 96.

⁸ F. L. Godet, *Commentary on First Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1977), 424.

⁹ M. Henry. *An Exposition with Practical Observations of the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, Matthew Henry. (Commentary USA: Fleming Revell Company, n.d), 549.

¹⁰ Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, “A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians,” 1963.

¹¹ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 409.

¹² David Prior, *The Message of 1 Corinthians* (InterVarsity Press, 2020).

¹³ Abogunrin, *The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians*, 98.

The Early Church's Theology of the Church Minister's Welfare

The early church's theology of the Church Ministers is built more on the experiences of the early church and the ministry of Jesus. In the times of Jesus, women supported immensely the ministry of Jesus as they followed him (Lk 8:2-3). Both Matthean and Markan accounts show that women followed Jesus from Galilee, taking care of his needs (Mk 15:40-41; Mt 27:55). In the early church, the Apostles did not only preach or do ministry but also taught the church to be responsible and support those with them.

The preceding discussion can be supported by teaching coming from Gal 6:6. In this passage, Paul urges believers to share good things. The early church shared material things in exchange for the spiritual instruction they received.¹⁴ There may be a connection between the material and the spiritual exchange. There are challenges in accepting the connection of Gal 6:6 with other verses within the chapter.¹⁵ This position can be disagreed because Paul in Gal 6:7 urges believers to financially support the gospel's spreading. The way believers sow in the ministry affects how they will harvest. Paul even explained that the Galatians should keep sowing seeds well even if their harvest could be delayed, but eventually, they would reap even if it meant in the next life. In other words, the Galatian church cared for their teachers' needs. One must share all good things with the teacher if one receives spiritual instructions.

The Theology of Good Workmanship with the Church Ministers

The Apostles were not only concerned with the financial support of the Church Ministers, but they also put a strong emphasis on a good working relationship. It is possible to accept that 1 Thess 5:12, 13 advocates for the church to demonstrate the right attitude towards the ministers. In a way, the New Testament theology of honour and respect was not done on the personality or status of individuals but based on the spiritual task to which they are called. The Thessalonica church seems to be lacking an understanding of respecting authority. Paul was hard on the Thessalonians, so they must respect leaders. Further, respect includes giving leadership their rightful position in the church.¹⁶ Paul gave the reason that the church leaders toil until they become weary in the church's service. Other ministers' duties are leadership and admonition. Acts of love are another way to show good workmanship in the church.¹⁷ The church must love ministers and "not think of simply as the cold voice of authority."¹⁸ In 1 Thess 5:13, Paul believes that church ministers deserve to be esteemed. When people are respected, they are likely to perform better at what they do.

METHODOLOGY

This study conducted biblical exegesis to understand the theologies used by church denominations to remunerate Church Ministers. Questionnaires were used to explore the socioeconomic and welfare challenges of Church Ministers. A sample size of twenty-six participants were Church Ministers from the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe members' denominations. The sample for this study focused on the Evangelical Pentecostal churches, a group within the broader Evangelical Fellowship in Zimbabwe. The idea was not to spread thinly among the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe, a group with diverse denominational theological backgrounds. The church ministers from the following denominations responded, namely the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe, Transcended Revival Ministries, Heartfelt International Ministries; Christ Church of Glory; Tabernacle of Worship Family Ministries International, Restoration Ministries International, Divine Touch International Church; Triumphant Life International Church; World Impact Ministries; Word-Faith and Divine Healing Church; Baptist; Heart of Healing; Triumphant Life International Ministries and Grace Church in Zimbabwe.

¹⁴ W. Hendriksen. *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957).

¹⁵ Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 14 (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 145.

¹⁶ Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958), 145.

¹⁷ D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Thessalonian Epistles: A Call to Readiness; a Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971).

¹⁸ Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, 176.

The questionnaires were distributed via WhatsApp groups. The advantage of using social in research is that it is faster and “a free tool, rich and with diverse voices expressing their political concerns freely”. Social media theory argues that people are likely to read messages and tend to express their views freely.¹⁹ The overarching aim of this study was to explore appropriate ecumenical theologies(s) for the welfare of church ministers and their lived socio-economic experiences within selected Evangelical-Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe. Research questions were developed to achieve this goal. Thematic strategy was employed to analyse the data, identifying recurring patterns and synthesising emerging themes from the dataset. Detailed and comprehensive ‘thick descriptions’ of the material supported the data's robustness, authenticity, and reliability. The discursive viewpoints of Zimbabwe's economic and religious context shape the emerging themes.

PRESENTATION OF STUDY FINDINGS

The Church Minister's Voices About Welfare

The Church Ministers were asked to indicate who was responsible for their remuneration and the welfare in general. About 80 percent of participants noted that the Church Minister's remunerations are determined by church councils (supreme leadership bodies) within the denomination. One of the clergies mentioned that their denomination uses the members of the ministry and some outside partners for the remuneration and the welfare of the Church Ministers. However, only a small number, less than 5 percent of the participants, indicated that they do not have an organised structure for their remunerations. One exciting finding was from a church minister who argued that “*I am responsible for my welfare and remuneration*”. A similar response from the Church Ministers mentioned that “*we are allowed to do tent making (working/business, and once in a year, the congregation appreciates with what they can*”. A shocking finding was from one Church Ministers who mentioned that there is no one responsible in their denomination.

When the Church Ministers were asked their opinion that they do not deserve formal remuneration (s), almost all the Church Ministers agreed. The Church Ministers explained that “*the Church Ministers are family people with financial obligations like any other person as such they indeed deserve formal remunerations for them to live normal lives*”. However, the view that the Church Ministers do not deserve formal remuneration also had support. Using the Bible as a starting point, one Church Minister mentioned that the remuneration must be “*biblical remuneration*”. Although the meaning of ‘biblical remuneration’ was not clear, *the Church Ministers may be* suggesting that the Church Ministers must not be salaried like everyone else but should find solutions for substance from the Bible. Without using many words to explain, one Church Minister said, “*God is my employer*”.

There are various perspectives about the position that the Church Ministers should be the highest paid. Two divergent and often conflicting discourses emerged. On the one hand, the Church Ministers, the remuneration should be reasonable enough for the Church Ministers to live a decent life. An interesting finding showed that most church members think the Church Ministers do not need material things but should focus on the spiritual mandate. The reality is that “*the Church Ministers, like anyone else, should be able to plan for their future*”. The remuneration of the Church Ministers should not be an afterthought by the church, but it should be formal, getting the salaries on time. It was suggested that founders of ministries should have “*a fixed salary that will help the Founder live a stable life and have time to pray and take care of God's business while his or her family is stable*”.

On the other hand, caution is given to the Church Ministers to be the highest paid, as it causes them to abuse church funds. In the same line of thought, it was argued that no biblical position supports the idea that Church Ministers should be the highest-paid person. Succinctly, one Church Minister explained that “*I do not expect the Church Ministers to be highest paid, from which coffers*”. Another argument showed that the Church Ministers should not expect to be paid highly because they serve in the kingdom of God. One cited Apostle Paul saying, “*I do not think they should be paid much as we*

¹⁹ Nomatter Sande, “Contested Interpretations: The Case of Zimbabweans in the Diaspora in the United Kingdom Responding to the New Dispensation,” in Chitando, E., Togarasei, L., and Tarusarira, J. (Eds), *Religion-Regime Relations in Zimbabwe: Cooperation and Resistance* (Routledge, 2023), 206.

have examples of early apostles like Paul who did some jobs and congregation would appreciate here and there”.

Further, paying the Church Ministers high is “*putting pressure on laity and defeat purpose of preaching gospel becoming an employee*”. The calling and providence of God were cited as a means of paying the Church Ministers. One Church Ministers succinctly explained that the “‘One’ who called the Church Ministers to ministry should be able to take care of them. The issue of paying the Church Ministers made some Church Ministers revise the real purpose of ministry. Accordingly, this was explained by the Church Ministers who emphasised that the mandate of the Church Ministers is to evangelise and win souls; therefore, the Lord will reward appropriately in due time. Further, the support for the Church Ministers being the highest paid is described as “an ancient model, though it is biblical since it is not good, *especially when the ministry or church is not in any capacity to pay the Church Ministers*”. Also, “the Church Ministers is the conscience of any society, yes they must earn more to have a big voice”.

The issue of controlling ministry resources brought about denominational administrative structures. One participant opined that Church Ministers have a mandate to control the resources within the ministry because all significant elements of the church need money to function. When controlling the ministry resources, the best thing to do is to co-manage them. Another suggestion was that the Church Ministers should oversee the church’s resources. In the same vein, it was noted that the Church Ministers must be administrators of the church resources. Furthermore, the role of the Church Ministers in controlling resources is that “*he or she must have executive powers, but this should be done by exercising accountability and responsibility*”. Offering advice to founders of ministries, it was advised that “*on starting ministry, one can, until there are chosen leadership as a general rule consecrating on spiritual matters leaving the administration to leadership is best*”. Since the Church Ministers are part of the church and significant players in that matter.

Apart from the popular notion for the Church Ministers to control church resources, few regulatory pointers were suggested. It was advised that the Church Ministers need people with discipline and God fearing so that they do not manipulate the people but serve. One participant echoed the same sentiment and explained that the Church Ministers should not be involved in controlling resources; instead, “*they should focus on spiritual matters, devote themselves to teaching*”. In other words, other Church Ministers opined that the Church Ministers should concentrate on feeding the flock.

Expecting the church to be a player in the lives of the Church Ministers, the interviewer asked whether the employer contributes in part or full towards the family’s medical aid benefits. Most Church Ministers mentioned that their denominations do not contribute to their medical aid bills. Referring to the providence of God, one noted that “*even if the church does not provide the medical aid, I feel that God needs by other means, it hard for the Church Ministers to work for yourself and then preach*”. Other Church Ministers felt that depending on the availability of the funds, the Church Ministers must be given medical aid assistance. In cases where the Church Minister is the ministry's founder, he deserves to enjoy all the benefits. Only one Church minister mentioned that the church pays 50 % towards medical aid.

Unlike the foregoing expectation of the church to do something noble for the Church Ministers, the follow-up question explored from a denominational perspective how the Church Ministers deal with unfair dismissals, underpayment, and workplace grievances. The findings were mixed. A quarter of the participants explained that no procedure exists to anticipate these challenges. It was reported as common practice that when grievances and conflict happen, the Church Ministers are encouraged to report to the immediate supervisor. In some cases, existing structures (the province- or a leadership responsible for running grouped churches) deal with unfair dismissals, underpayment, and workplace grievances.

Turning now to what avenues are available to promote mental well-being, emotional and social support, and counselling for members of the Church Ministers in the church organisation. Several strategies were cited. One Church Minister explained that ‘pastor’s fellowship’ platforms open room for the Church Ministers to vent their challenges. A notable example of Church Ministers fellowship

is when a denomination yearly conducts Church Ministers seminars and fellowship in Zimbabwe and outside to help support the mental well-being, emotional and social support, and counselling of pastors. Similarly, other denominations use “*workshops, sports and business training to deal with Church Ministers issues*”. The other functions of the strategies mentioned above bring the leadership together to reflect on challenges and suggest solutions. Another striking strategy from another denomination showed that the church had appointed a chaplain who counsels the Church Ministers. Also, one Church Minister mentioned that “*we have a health department which deals with issues of health and wellbeing*”.

The question of whether the Church Ministers find victimisation as a scare or control tactic against voicing grievances in your organisation did not generate much information from the Church Ministers. About a third of the Church Ministers mentioned that victimisation is rampant among those who voice their grievances. The single most striking observation to emerge from the question was that the impact of victimisation has made the Church Ministers approach secular courts. Further, it was reported that in some denominations, the elders and deacons are involved in dealing with pastoral disputes and are the primary source of victimisation, blaming Church Ministers for not voicing their grievances but praying to God for solutions.

When thoughts were turned to establishing a Christian minister’s council that functions as a professional regulatory body in the same way as nurses or doctors’ councils, to a greater extent, the Church Ministers felt this is a noble idea. For instance, the Church Ministers mentioned that establishing a Christian minister’s council is overdue and needs urgency. Overall, this statement indicates that Church ministers somewhat appreciate the existence of external regulators. A common reason mentioned by the participants is that the Christian council helps treat the overlooked problems of the Church Ministers. As an established Christian minister’s council, not only do the experienced practitioners with experience with pastoral ministry preside over issues but there is also the possibility of qualified professionals to guide the Church Ministers. It was also suggested that the idea of a Christian minister’s council is expressed in the Bible, where issues of the churches should be dealt with in-house. It was summarised that “*the church should follow biblical principles and not the secular to deal with its issues*”. A forward-looking perspective was echoed, saying that “*if used wisely, the Minister’s Council can be effective, and the best way to deal with the challenges is to deal with the clergies*”. Without departing from the Scriptures, one Church Ministers included, “*theologically God should remain in control, and we should allow Him to be the Supreme ruler. So, it is essential to be prayerful and hear from God in any situation that may need decision-making for the Church Ministers*”.

However, less than a third of the Church Ministers had reservations about establishing a Christian minister’s council. For example, one Church minister mentioned that establishing the Minister’s council is impractical. Although the Church Ministers did not elaborate on why it is not practical, it is possible that he or she was looking at the logistics. Accordingly, other Church Ministers echoed this, citing the potential flop of establishing the Christian minister’s council as “*denominations may see it as undermining their control of church ministers who are their employees*”. Related to this view it was noted that “*I support it, if there going not be segregation*”. The role of the Holy Spirit versus human councils was expressed by Church Ministers who felt that “*the idea of a Christian minister’s council is not bad, but it should not banish the chief administrator from his role. The Holy Spirit is the chief administrator and must be given flexibility, not impeded by human councils. The Holy Spirit must regulate the goings on of the church*”.

DISCUSSION

The study findings show that the power to determine Church Ministers' compensation lies with top leadership bodies resonated with existing research on church governance. This is consistent with concerns raised in the broader church that transparency and accountability are subject to debate.²⁰ Hierarchical leadership structures typically set ministerial compensation in many Christian

²⁰ R. Smith and P. Taylor, “Corruption and Accountability in Church Finances,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical Studies* 21, no. 4 (2019): 344–58.

denominations.²¹ While this approach is plausible, in the context of this study, where Church Ministers face socioeconomic challenges, there are notable discrepancies in the funding priorities. Therefore, the funding priorities are affected by church size, financial stability, and well-wishers' generosity. Allowing the church congregation to control Church Ministers' salaries increases variability and uncertainty.²² In the same thought, this study showed no unanimous theology governing the Ministers' welfare. As such, believers have differing priorities towards the Church Ministers' compensation. This reflects the literature on religious organisation management, which shows a continuous debate between authority and accountability.²³

This study showed that the precise meaning of biblical remuneration could be more specific. The ambiguity of biblical remuneration and theological conflicts reflects a more profound tension with Christian communities. The pendulum swings on whether the Church Minister's remunerations should align with the contemporary employment system or be guided according to spiritual ideas. For instance, the affirmation said by one Minister in this study that "God is my employer" captures an illustrious complication suggesting that the material compensation submits to the spiritual vocation. To appreciate that Church Ministers should believe that God is their employer is splendid; however, Longenecker contends that the idea is not mutually exclusive and does not include fair compensation.²⁴ Schneider asserts that early church history preferred modesty and simplicity, pointing out that material wealth potentially corrupts spiritual leaders.²⁵ Church Ministers have a task to keep both the material and the spiritual in equilibrium simultaneously.²⁶ Church Ministers suffer from mental health due to exacerbated financial stress and emotional burdens.²⁷

A particularly noteworthy discovery in this study was the reaction of certain Church Ministers who take matters into their own hands. Their justification is that they perceive themselves as personally accountable for their compensation and well-being. Such an approach implies several things: first, a certain degree of independence within the ministry; second, the absence of well-established support of the Church Minister; or third, a rebellion against the unjust systems of the church. There should be a balance between the spiritual service and the material realities of life, and the church should shift to a more pragmatic approach to remunerating Church Ministers.²⁸ Wilson points out that church organisations should reconcile spiritual direction with practical implementation; and this study focuses on the need for the church to prioritise financial administration towards Church Ministers.²⁹

The reference to the concept of 'tent-making', where Church Ministers participate in secular employment to support their welfare and gain income, surfaced in this study where Church Ministers are doing it to achieve financial independence. The tent-making model is becoming more popular, especially in smaller churches that do not have adequate financial income.³⁰ The challenge of the 'tent-making' model is that it only focuses on the church's failure but does less to the burnout of the Church Ministers as they attempt to balance secular work and their pastoral responsibilities. To a greater extent, it makes Church Ministers distracted. More considerable theological challenges are inevitable, mainly who to serve earnestly. Pohly notes a conflict between secular vocation and spiritual vocation.³¹ Accordingly, this reflects on the inherent need of the church to support the Church Minister holistically. Even though the Church Minister may feel called to a higher purpose, without intentional adequate support, it is possible to divert energy from the ministry to meet their needs. The church

²¹ Dean Hoge, Patrick McNamara, and Charles Zech, *Plain Talk about Churches and Money* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1998).

²² Hoge, McNamara, and Zech, *Plain Talk about Churches and Money*.

²³ P. Brown, *Organizational Leadership and Accountability in Religious Institutions* (Routledge, 2020).

²⁴ J. Longenecker, *The Theology of Clergy Compensation* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2020).

²⁵ J. Schneider, *Wealth and the Church: An Historical Overview* (Yale University Press, 2019).

²⁶ S. Jones, "Financial Transparency in the Church: Lessons from Recent Scandals," *Christian Ethics Review* 19, no.3 (2022): 85–102.

²⁷ J. Clark, *Mental Health and the Clergy: Challenges and Solutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

²⁸ Brown, *Organizational Leadership and Accountability in Religious Institutions*.

²⁹ H. Wilson, *Church Administration: Practical Considerations and Theological Foundations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2020).

³⁰ D. Jackson and M. Park, "Tent-Making in Ministry: Challenges and Opportunities," *Journal of Pastoral Studies* 27, no. 2 (2018): 122–35.

³¹ K. Pohly, *The Minister as Tentmaker: Balancing Vocation and Secular Work* (Abingdon Press, 2015).

should invest holistically into the life of Church Ministers, offering psychological, emotional, counselling and structured working policies.³²

RECOMMENDATIONS

First, the established ecclesiastical bodies like the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe should be the first contact point for mitigating the challenges of church ministers. Ecumenical bodies in Zimbabwe must not only focus on the missiological dimension, but its social justice must provide ethical, legal, and professional frameworks within which their respective members operate and are guided accordingly. Most churches, especially in Africa and Zimbabwe, do not have an adequate and intentional approach to the welfare of Church Ministers.

Second, the disparities amongst the remunerations and support of Church ministers need the proper formation of Christian Ministers' justice. While the participants mentioned the Ministers Council, which is equivalent to modern 'Trade Unions', has the potential to achieve the agenda of helping Church Ministers' welfare, proper planning and management are required to support the initiative. Subscriptions from Church Ministers can do a lot to provide professionalism and understanding of how the ministerial profession works. This situation could be mitigated by establishing an interdenominational trade union for the Church Ministers. Such establishments can be alternative appropriate places where competent persons can hear grievances before proceeding to secular courts. The EFZ can learn from secular professions that use regulated bodies or councils that provide ethical, legal, and professional frameworks to guide employees accordingly.

Third, proper biblical theology and teaching help to teach Church Minister support. By clearly understanding the theologies of the welfare of the Church Ministers, the EFZ can refine and inspire their members' denomination that "the labourer is worthy of his wages." Besides financial help, the Church Ministers need support, which boosts their morale and makes them feel loved. Respect and esteem are immaterial ways of supporting the Church Ministers. Also, the above findings showed that not all Evangelical Pentecostal church denominations give their Church Ministers sufficient salaries and other critical support that helps their well-being. While the study did not probe the challenge brought by insufficient support of the Church Ministers, this may lead to the negligence of pastoral work as the Church Ministers seek to support their families. To solve the challenges of the Church Ministers doing 'tent-making' in areas like farming, lecturing, etc., it was suggested by most Church Ministers that they must be paid adequate salaries. Therefore, the Church Ministers must have privileges to receive sufficient support from the church. However, if one decides to give up those privileges, let it be because of one's choice and not the selfishness of one's denominations.

CONCLUSION

In the 21st century, the welfare of the Church Ministers must be prioritised like that of other professionals in nursing, teaching, and engineering. While the Bible has varied approaches to what should be done for ministers, rereading with contextual generosity helps provide adequate remuneration for Church Ministers. The overall benchmarks for remunerating Church Ministers should not be left to be decided by respective denominations, but consultation should be done with broader ecumenical standardised theological benchmarks. There should be uniformity across the wide spectrum of various denominations or at least reference points that can be used to guard against exploitation of and or by the Church Ministers and other excesses that occur. The Church Ministers, as caregivers of the church, need convenient places where they may receive care as well in the form of counselling and overall social and emotional support to curb incidents of suicide, marital strife and, in some cases, marital breakdown. Such regulatory function(s) appear conspicuously absent even within established ecumenical bodies, even the EFZ, who turned 60 in 2022.

³² K. Meek et al., *Resilient Ministry: How Caring for Pastors Benefits Churches* (InterVarsity Press, 2020).

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