

# PROBLEM OF ABORTION AND COVID-19 IN NIGERIA AND THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH OF NIGERIA ANGLICAN COMMUNION

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## Abstract

*Abortion is the termination of a pregnancy. There are two types of abortion: spontaneous (miscarriage) and criminal (induced). Spontaneous abortion occurs naturally due to fetal malformations or chromosomal abnormalities while criminal abortion is the unlawful expulsion of the fetus by artificial means which when done to save the life of the mother is therapeutic abortion. In Nigeria abortion is not legal and attracts a fine, yet it is carried out clandestinely by women and girls for convenience through use of pills or surgical procedures. High risk behaviours of adolescents make them go into untimely and unhealthy sexual activities thereby getting pregnant and subsequent abortion. Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is defined as illness caused by a novel coronavirus called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV). During the lock down due to covid-19 in 2020/2021 some women and girls got pregnant and a number of them committed abortion. The research will adopt phenomenological approach primarily. The Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion is Bible based, believes the foetus is God's creation, sacred and a living human being that should not be aborted under any guise except if the mother's life is gravely at risk. The Church teaches fear of God and his word, holiness, chastity and is against promiscuity which leads to abortions. She encourages wearing of face masks, social distancing and washing of hands as ways to curb the spread of covid-19 virus.*

**Keywords:** Abortion, Nigeria, COVID-19, Church, Anglican Communion

## Introduction

In Nigeria abortion is a topic most people would not want to discuss but it is quietly being carried out clandestinely. There are two extreme points of view to the issue of abortion; one believes that in no circumstance must any pregnancy be aborted, while the other maintains that legal termination of pregnancy is no more than a minor surgical interlude to be regarded as a natural and legitimate extension of contraception. The size of this minority may be overestimated due to the decibel recording of its protestations (Stallworthy, 1975). The debate about abortion gave rise to the pro-life movement which opposes abortion and its legality and pro-choice movements which gives individuals the ability to choose *abortion* as an option for an unplanned pregnancy. Value for life has been so terribly bastardized that girls and women can carry out several abortions with impunity at the detriment of their lives aided by their boyfriends and husbands respectively. Abortion in Nigeria is a public health concern and an issue of social inequity. It is a problem because it is rampant and results in the loss of lives of both the

unborn and the mother sometimes. In the olden days they had a chaste society and Potts and Campbell (2009) opine that “the earliest insight into fertility regulation at the personal level dates back to the 13th century... only one in 200 unplanned pregnancies was to girls aged 17 or younger.” In the present day the number of singles doing abortion is alarming. In a survey by Lamina (2015) in Western Nigeria he stated that “of those seeking repeat induced abortion, 47.9% were singles and 51.6% were married.” It is consequent to the pervasiveness and magnitude of the reported incidence of pregnancy among the singles and married and subsequent induced abortions in Nigeria that this study is carried out to examine the role of the Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion in curbing abortion.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a serious loss of human life worldwide and presents an overwhelming challenge to public health, food systems and the world of work. For most, no income means at best, less food and less nutritious food. Confinement measures have been preventing farmers from accessing markets, including for buying inputs and selling their produce, and agricultural workers from harvesting crops, thus disrupting domestic and international food supply chains and reducing access to healthy, safe and diverse diets. The pandemic has decimated jobs and placed millions of livelihoods at risk. The lock down due to the Covid19 has led to more pregnancies and child birth and in some cases abortions mostly carried out clandestinely because in Nigeria, abortion goes with a jail term according to law (Criminal Code Act Chapter C39, 2004). Nigeria, with an area of 924,000 sq. km, is a country located in West Africa along the Gulf of Guinea on the Atlantic Ocean. It is a federal constitutional republic comprised of 36 states and its Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and culturally diverse federation and is considered Africa's most populous country with a population of over 200 million. It has a diverse geography, with climates ranging from arid to humid equatorial, the currency used is the Naira. World Health Organization (2021) estimates that nearly 20% of all global maternal deaths happen in Nigeria.

The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) (CON) is the Anglican Church in Nigeria. The Church is Bible based, spiritually dynamic, united, disciplined, self-supporting, committed to pragmatic evangelism, social welfare and a Church that epitomises the genuine love of Christ. She belongs to the Global Anglican Future Conference (Gafcon) movement, a global family of authentic Anglicans standing together to retain and restore the Bible to the heart of the Anglican Communion. Our mission is to guard the unchanging, transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ and to proclaim Him to the world. Nigeria was first evangelized by Anglican missionaries of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1842. Church of Nigeria has a membership of over 18 million as measured by baptized members (Eze F.C., 2017:301) **The Metropolitan & Primate of all Nigeria & Bishop of Abuja, is [the Most Revd Henry ChukwudumNdukuba](#)**

## Abortion: A Conceptual Clarification

Abortion, legally defined, is the premature expulsion of the fetus before the term of gestation is complete (Jetter, 1950:344-345). It is the termination of pregnancy or deliberate interruption of pregnancy from the time of fertilization. Harvard Medical School, (2019) defines abortion as “the removal of pregnancy tissue, products of conception or the fetus and placenta (afterbirth) from the uterus. In general, the terms fetus and placenta are used after eight weeks of pregnancy. Pregnancy tissue and products of conception refer to tissue produced by the union of an egg and sperm before eight weeks.” Abortion is the termination of a pregnancy through the destruction and/ or removal of the embryo or fetus from the time of conception or fertilization. There are two types of abortion: spontaneous (natural) and induced (criminal). Saddler (1995:3) opines that “The development of a human being begins with fertilization, a process by which two highly specialized cells, the *spermatozoon* from the male and the oocyte from the female, unite to give rise to a new organism, the *zygote*.” Adam (2019) said “abortion is expulsion of a fetus from the uterus before it has reached the stage of viability in human beings, usually about the 20<sup>th</sup> week of gestation or six months as stipulated by Ellis & Hartely, 2001.

There are two types of abortion: spontaneous or natural and Criminal (Induced). Spontaneous abortion is one that occurs naturally and is also called miscarriage. It is the “loss of pregnancy before the fetus is viable outside the uterus; miscarriage,” (Olds *et al.*, 2004). It happens when a fertilized egg fails to implant in a woman's womb and passes out of her body in her monthly period. Most occur in the first two weeks after conception, and in many cases the mother is not aware of the pregnancy. Britannica (2019) posits that “early spontaneous abortion is referred to as miscarriage or natural abortion in which abortion occurs on its own (the most prevalent) is usually due to fetal malformations or chromosomal abnormalities in the unborn baby most often before the twentieth week of pregnancy. Other reasons for spontaneous abortions or miscarriages include disease, trauma, genetic defect, or biochemical incompatibility.”

Spontaneous abortion during the last two thirds of pregnancy is more likely to be due to maternal factors, for example abnormalities of the cervix or uterus, insufficient [progesterone](#), [sexually transmitted diseases](#) that affect the genital tract, endocrine dysfunction (as in hypothyroidism and [diabetes](#) mellitus), or severe emotional trauma. Immunological reactions, in which maternal antibodies mistake the fetus for foreign tissue, have been implicated in recurrent, or habitual spontaneous abortions. It is estimated that at least 20% of all pregnancies end in miscarriage (estimates range from 15% to 75%).

Induced (Criminal) abortion is the deliberate termination of a pregnancy through the destruction and/ or removal of the embryo or foetus. Feinberg (1993) defines it as a “deliberate action intended to terminate a pregnancy and kill a developing foetus by removing it from its mother's womb.” *It is the unlawful expulsion of the fetus by artificial means. It is a felony when any person advises, assists in or performs an abortion. Some states place self-induced abortion in a similar category. Death of the mother upon whom an abortion has been performed is homicide* (Jetter, 1950: 344-345). Therapeutic abortion is an induced abortion done to end pregnancy in order to preserve the mother's physical or mental health while eugenic abortion is to end a pregnancy that tests have shown would result in a child with severe abnormalities (Woods, 2018). In a case where the life of the pregnant mother is gravely at risk, like in ectopic pregnancy, and preeclampsia and eclampsia when all measures have been taken to save the life of the mother and the foetus and no positive response is seen in the condition of the woman, then the mother's life must be saved.

Some doctors and nurses carry out abortions in spite of the fact that it is against the law. They do it clandestinely mostly in private clinics, while the quacks carry them out in chemists and herbal homes. Abortion cases are brought to General or Teaching Hospitals only when it is now life threatening. The rate of abortion is on the increase in Nigeria and most of them are carried out clandestinely especially among students who would not want their parents to know and since it is an offence punishable by law in Nigeria (Criminal Code Act Chapter C39, 2004). Onyemelukwe (2020:34) summarized Nigerian laws against abortion, “In Nigeria, abortion is illegal and carries a stiff jail sentence, up to 14 years, unless done to save the life of the pregnant woman. Abortion is governed by the Criminal Code in the southern states, and the Penal Code in the northern states.” In spite of the laws many abortions are still being carried out clandestinely. Sedghet *al.*, (2006:175-184) posits that “about 760,000 abortions occur on a yearly basis in Nigeria regardless of the restrictive abortion laws of the country.” While another survey by Bankoleet *al.*, (2015:170-181) said “an estimated 1.25 million induced abortions occurred in Nigeria in 2012, equivalent to a rate of 33 abortions per 1,000 women aged 15–49.” World Health Organization (2021) estimates that over 600, 000 maternal deaths occurred between 2005 and 2015 in Nigeria. Abortion contributes 13.5% of all maternal deaths in Nigeria (Oloyede&Shorunmu, 2007:58-60).

### **Origin and reasons for Abortion**

Pandia Health medical team (2019) wrote on birth control through the ages:

The [earliest forms of birth control](#), as well as abortion, were found in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia as far back as 1850 BC. Papyrus scrolls were found to contain directions on how to make birth control, using honey, acacia leaves, and also lint as a form of cervical cap to prevent sperm from entering the womb. In the Kahun Gynecological Papyrus from 1850, it contains descriptions of pessaries of acacia gum as a contraceptive.

Extended breastfeeding for up to three years was also used as a form of birth control in Ancient Egypt. Perhaps one of the most famous ancient forms of birth control was the silphium plant, native to North Africa. This plant was used as a contraceptive and was incredibly popular in ancient Greece and Rome.

People who do abortions have several reasons for carrying them out. Here are some of the reasons: Girls who do abortion have the following reasons: High risk behaviours of adolescents make them go into untimely and unhealthy sexual activities thereby getting pregnant. They don't want their parents to know. They want to retain their boyfriends. They don't want to be drop-outs from school. They are not ready for motherhood. They do not have the where withal to cater for a baby etcetera. They abort when it is a rape or incest case. Women who do abortions have the following reasons: According to the report of the Guttmacher Institute (2015), unwanted pregnancy is the leading cause for abortion in Nigeria. Economic recession in Nigeria has made cost of items very high and women have joined the work force in order to support their husbands to cater for their families therefore the determination to have small family. Women want to space out their children because they are tired. They don't want to lose their jobs. For health reasons. For sex selection For convenience

Some nations, Planned Parenthood and Family Planning associations use abortion as population control mechanism. The world population explosion has caused political leaders to look upon national and regional birth control projects as vital. Fetal tissue has been used [since the 1930s](#) for vaccine development, and more recently to help advance stem cell research and treatments for degenerative diseases such as Parkinson's disease. Researchers typically take tissue samples from a fetus that has been aborted ([under conditions permitted by law](#)) and grow cells from the tissue in Petri dishes. Family Planning, 2013 posits that “contraception is every body's right under the United Nations declaration of human rights.” In 2015 they also introduced the year of sexual pleasure and well being. Everybody includes children, adolescents and adults. The FPA and the United Nations is exposing children and adolescents to the use contraceptives and sexual pleasure. This is detrimental and unhealthy for the society Here in Nigeria they distribute condoms and contraceptives to corp members thereby exposing and entrenching them to immorality which results to pregnancy and abortion.

### **ABORTION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

Every abortion goes with casualty and no abortion procedure is free of risk. Hahn, (2001:133) quoted a sticker, “Two victims in every abortion- one dead one wounded.” The foetus dies and the mother is wounded. A large number of clandestine abortions continue to be carried out regularly, often with dire consequences for the lives and health of the women involved (Okagbue, 1990:197). Complications arising from unsafe abortion especially those considered least safe by World Health Organization (using

traditional invasive methods and provided by persons who are not trained), are numerous and may affect women's quality of life and well-being.

They are sometimes life-threatening, resulting in incomplete abortion, hemorrhage, infection, uterine perforation, damage to the genital tract and internal organs and even death. The following are some of the consequences: High maternal mortality, Chronic ill-health due to the aftermath of pelvic infection. Sterility, An incomplete procedure, Hemorrhage, Sepsis, Cramps, Injury to the cervix or other organs, Reaction to anesthesia, Intense pain, One can have nausea and diarrhea, Subsequent miscarriages, Foul smelling vaginal discharge, Feelings of guilt, anger, Sadness and depression, Feelings of regret. The contemporary world is more interested in distributing contraceptives and pushing for government to officially pass the abortion bill rather than encouraging girls to control themselves and wait till marriage before exposing themselves to sex. The Church of Nigeria Book of Common Prayer (BCP) (2010:515) posits that “sex is meant for a man and woman who are married.” Therefore, the question of abortion among singles should not be mentioned.

### **Human life**

God is the creator of human life and author of marriage and while joining the husband and wife in the closest intimacy, also renders them capable of generating new life. Human life is sacred in spite of the age of the embryo/ foetus and meant to be preserved and protected. According to Shields (2008:240) “the foetus is an actual human being in the early stage of its development. Words like 'embryo' and 'foetus' depersonalize and dehumanize the unborn child enable those who favour abortion to excuse it more easily than if 'unborn child ' was used. There must be regard for the sanctity of life. Human life starts at fertilization. Irving (1999: 22-46) asserts that “the product of fertilization (zygote) is a living human being with 46 chromosomes.” Tracing the concept of the **sacredness of human life** from Scripture through Church history to the present day, Gushee (2013), argues that “viewing **human life** as **sacred** is one of the most precious legacies of Biblical faith. Although life is a continuous process, fertilization is a critical landmark because, under ordinary circumstances, a new, genetically distinct human organism is thereby formed.... The combination of 23 chromosomes present in each pronucleus results in 46 chromosomes in the *zygote*. Thus the diploid number is restored and the embryonic genome is formed. The embryo now exists as a genetic unity (O'Rahilly & Miller, 1996). Regardless of his or her level of development, a preborn child is still a precious creation of God. (Clowes 2001:332)

**Pontiff Paul VI (1968) in his Encyclical, *Humanae Vitae* upheld the Holy Scriptures on the issue of procreation and condemned abortion and said,** “The interruption of the generative process already begun and above all, directly willed and procured abortion, even if for therapeutic reasons, are to be absolutely excluded as licit means of

regulating birth.” **Humanae Vitae** calls for governments and public authorities to create laws that uphold the natural moral law and to refute those that oppose it, specifically rejecting population control policies and forced sterilization or **abortion** programs. Among the consequences listed are claims that practicing artificial contraception lowers moral standards and allows men to view women simply as a means of satisfying their own personal sexual desires (Brind'Amour, 2007).

### Discussions about Sexual Reproduction

Sexual reproduction should be among the first teachings given to adolescents both at home and in school, because they are ignorant. Obiekwe (2020) posits that “the biggest challenge today for a great number of parents with the best intentions for their children, is the lack of knowledge, skill and best approach that can be safely adopted in providing children with sound and quality sexuality education. A preserved childhood is better than a repaired adulthood.” The type of sexual education given to adolescents should not lead them into promiscuity but such that will help them to be chaste and pure. Therefore, adolescents should not be introduced to premarital sex, the use of contraceptives or condoms and abortion as an alternative in case of unwanted pregnancy. Unfortunately, the latter is the norm in some schools today and some parents even help their daughters to carry out abortion. The American Academy of Pediatrics (2020) recommends “parents talk to their adolescents about how *not* having sexual intercourse is the best way to prevent STIs, HIV infection and pregnancy.” Christian and cultural values of femininity see abortion as sin and use of contraceptives among adolescents as promiscuity. According to Kunhiyop (2008:331), “in traditional African Societies pregnancies outside of marriage were unlikely because most girls and boys were married young... When a man and woman had illegal sexual intercourse they were punished not the unborn child.” Abortion is the unjust punishment of the unborn. Those who committed incest were severely punished.

### Religion and Abortion in Nigeria

Religiously, the Church Council of Ancyra in 314 A.D. stated that women found to have committed or attempted an abortion on themselves or others were to be exiled from the Church for 10 years, revising earlier suggestions that they be exiled for life. Christianity, Judaism and Islam view procreation as an integral part of marriage. In the book of Genesis 1:28, God blessed both Adam and Eve and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, replenish the earth and subdue it.” In the Old Testament Bible it is shown by the law that if a person causes a miscarriage they must pay a fine to the husband of the woman, but if they also cause the woman to die then they are liable to be killed. **Masci D., (2016)** posits that “abortion is still a difficult, contentious and even unresolved issue for some religious groups around the world.” Religious leaders are pivotal in their faith communities and may be influential in shaping attitudes towards sexual and reproductive health (SRH), norms, and behaviors at the individual, family and community levels (Dozier *et al*, 2020). Abortion is legal in Nigeria only to save the life of a mother, and in all

cases, taboo. Religious groups consistently lobby the government to keep the restrictions in place. But despite the restrictions, at least 760,000 abortions happen every year. Religious beliefs influence women and providers to be discrete about abortion. Religion also influences the policies around abortion. Many of the leaders of both Nigeria's Christian and Muslim faiths take a parallel stance against abortion. The country is nearly [evenly divided between Christians and Muslims](#), according to Pew Research, and over 90 percent of followers of both faiths believe abortion is wrong. In 2013 a law passed in Imo state allowing women to have an abortion in the case of rape, incest and for physical and mental health. But the Catholic Medical Practitioners Association waged a public battle against the policy, and under the weight of the pressure, the law was overturned. The view is that a child is God's gift and you don't get to decide when God gives you a gift.

In a personal communication at Enugu with the Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of all Nigeria, Most Rev Henry ChukwudumNdukuba, while speaking on abortion said “you cannot take a life that you cannot give; abortion is against the word of God. There is no argument about whether abortion is good or bad, abortion is evil. The Anglican Church does not allow it.” This was during his visit to Enugu for the Joshua Generation Youth Conference. The Anglican Church allows abortion only if the woman's life is gravely at risk as in the rare case of ectopic pregnancy which if not removed can lead to severe bleeding and death of the woman. An Anglican Archbishop's wife and a retired nurse, Mrs Priscilla Akanya said induced abortion is widely known as criminal abortion in the medical sphere because induced abortion is murder, except when done to save the life of the mother. Also Mrs Nkasiobi Okoh the wife of the Primate emeritus commenting on abortion said “one should not deliberately kill the unborn. It is sin against God.”

### **Biblical Perspectives of Abortion**

Life begins at fertilization or conception, therefore any effort to interrupt pregnancy is murder. *Exod. 20:13* “You shall not commit murder” and *Rom. 12:21* “Overcome evil with good.” Other passages of Scriptures that spoke about miscarriage non about deliberate abortion include: *Exodus 21:22–23: If people are fighting and hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the court allows. But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life.* The fine is for causing a miscarriage and the death penalty is for causing the death of the *pregnant woman*. This is an evidence for a biblical ban on abortion. The Talmud permits abortion under certain circumstances, if the woman's life is at stake.

Numbers 5:11-31 describes the test of the unfaithful wife. If a man is suspicious of his wife's fidelity, he would take her to the high priest. The priest would make a substance for the woman to drink made from water and “dust from the tabernacle floor.” If she had been unfaithful “her abdomen will swell and her womb will miscarry, and she will become a curse.” If she was innocent the drink had no effect. This shows that God is against unfaithfulness to the marriage vow. *Ex 23: 25-26* said “And ye shall serve the Lord your God and he shall bless thy bread and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the

midst of thee. There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfill." Casting of young is actually what is termed miscarriage or spontaneous abortion. God so cared for his people that he promised them that as they serve him, he will bless them and protect them through the wilderness and none shall miscarry of both man and beast. Why then should we deliberately destroy God's creation. Deuteronomy 30: 19 said, "This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, Listen to his voice and hold fast to him." We are called to choose life. Where else do we start in choosing life if not from the womb. Why should we deliberately destroy God's creation? Ps 139:13-14 said "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful I know that fully well." Right from the womb God created us fearfully and wonderfully. The fetus is God's direct creation and should not be tampered with.

### **The Role of the Church of Nigeria Anglican communion on Abortion**

The write up below shows the role of the Church of Nigeria on the issue of abortion and a study done by the researcher on the same topic in 2018. The Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion is Bible Based therefore the Bible is her compass. The Church believes God created the world and all that is in it and is still creating (The Church of Nigeria Book of Common Prayer, 2010:10) The Church supports God's creation and believes the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the revealed word of God which contains all things necessary to salvation and is the rule and ultimate standard of faith (The Church of Nigeria Book of Common Prayer (BCP), 2010:512-513). God so cared for his people that he promised them that as they serve him, he will bless and protect them and none shall miscarry of both man and beast (Ex23:25) Miscarry is the same as spontaneous abortion.

In line with Scriptures in Ps 139:13-14 "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful I know that fully well," the zygote, embryo or foetus is God's creation and a living human being and should not be tampered with. Right from the womb God created us fearfully and wonderfully. Human life begins when the woman's egg is fertilized by a male sperm and so a unique life begins. The features that distinguish us from our parents - the colour of our eyes, the shape of our face, even our finger nails - are all laid down in the genetic code that comes into existence then. God said in Gen 1:26 "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." Carrying out induced abortion is going against God's word because life is meant to be preserved and not destroyed. The Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion believes abortion is bloodshed

and blood pollutes the land. Lev17:11 said “For the *life* of the flesh is in the *blood*” Numbers 35:33 “Do not defile the land where you live, for *bloodshed defiles the land*, and there can be no atonement for the land because of the blood that is shed on it.” The Church of Nigeria believes criminal abortion is murder' and the breaking of the sixth commandment in Ex 20:13 which says, “Thou shalt not kill.” Criminal abortion is severely contrary to God's word and the moral law. Man often lives as if God does not exist and attacks the family through abortion putting himself in the place of God. He claims for himself the Creator's right to interfere in the enigma of human life by rejecting divine law and moral principles. The Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion believes every child should be given the chance to live. In the light of the Church's conviction that the zygote, embryo or foetus has the right to live and develop as a member of the human family, the Church sees criminal abortion, the expiration of that life by the act of man, as immoral. In a personal communication at Enugu with the Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of all Nigeria, Most Rev Henry ChukwudumNdukuba, (2021), while speaking on abortion said “you cannot take a life that you cannot give; abortion is against the word of God. There is no argument about whether abortion is good or bad, abortion is evil. The Anglican Church does not allow it.”

Marriage was ordained for a remedy against sin and to avoid fornication. Religious expression and values continue to influence the family. The Church of Nigeria Book of Common Prayer (BCP), (2010:515) states that:

We acknowledge God's creation of humankind as male and female and the unchangeable standard of Christian Marriage between one man and one woman as the proper place for sexual intimacy and the basis for the family. We repent of our failures to maintain this standard and call for a renewed commitment to lifelong fidelity in marriage and abstinence for those who are not married.

The Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion reiterates her stand that the proper place for sexual intimacy is between one man and one woman within the marriage. The unmarried are meant to observe abstinence, self control and chastity. Lack of these virtues has led to untold sorrow, pain, hardship, chaos and destruction of lives. She teaches unity among couples for the total wellbeing of the children. She encourages parents to teach these virtues to their children and adolescents at home, Church and in school, because they are ignorant.

Holiness is the beauty of the Church and her members. The Church teaches her members to be chaste, pure and undefiled. Chastity is the holy and habitual self-control of sexual impulses. The Church stresses the value of virginity and continence. Starting from the Anglican Children Ministry, the Girls Guild, Boys' and Girls' Brigade, the Anglican Youth Fellowship, the children and youths are nurtured and taught in the way of the Lord. According to the Book of common Prayer (1662:196) the Catechism, teaches every

person to be confirmed to "...renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh...keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of my life." The Church teaches decency in dressing and does not tolerate immorality. The Church organizes marriage counseling and marriage school in some Dioceses where would be couples are taught the rudiments of marriage. In the Diocese of Enugu North, if a girl about to wed is found to be pregnant before her marriage, she will be encouraged to deliver the baby first, then the couple will come for marriage blessing after her delivery. The reason is to avoid joining three or more people in marriage. Many adolescents and single girls report feeling pressured by their peers, boyfriends and fiancés a times to have sex before they are ready for marriage or before their wedding, but the Church teaches the youths to say no to sin and the lusts of the flesh. The Church condemns [Planned Parenthood and family planning groups who encourage singles and adolescents to have sexual pleasure, use contraceptives, condoms and to carry out abortion thereby entrenching them into immorality.](#) The Church enjoins the government to enforce more stringent laws so that value for life is imbibed and the fear of God instilled in the heart of people for a better society. The Church of Nigeria asks that the mother should live if the continuation of her pregnancy places her life in grave danger. Situations where the continuance of a pregnancy threatens the life of the mother, a termination of pregnancy may be justified like in ectopic pregnancy.

Singles are always in a hurry to indulge in and enjoy sex before marriage, when they are ill prepared, without money and the where withal needed for the outcome of sex which is pregnancy. Therefore, when unmarried people toy with sex, pregnancy results and to cover up the pregnancy criminal abortion is committed. This is evil and sinful. The Church of Nigeria condemns out rightly the free distribution of condoms and pills to youth corpsers because it makes them more vulnerable to explore sexual activities thereby lowering their moral standard. [The Churches teaches adolescents to stand firm in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, live a holy life, not to walk around indiscriminately or aimlessly and avoid lonely places alone with the opposite sex in order to avoid rape.](#) When a girl lives in immorality or is raped (even a case of incest) which results in pregnancy that child should not be aborted but delivered. Also when a married woman (who has stopped having children) suddenly becomes pregnant, she should have that baby, because God allowed it for a purpose. (Eze A.C., 2006). The Church of Nigeria Anglican communion believes foetuses should not be aborted but the girl should deliver that baby. They should not be pressurized to abort. The Anglican Church is prolife and does not support criminal abortion and has lent its voice to challenge the legalization of abortion in Nigeria.

In a study by the researcher in 2018, 700 Questionnaires were distributed at the Standing Committee, (a leadership meeting of the Anglican Communion), which took place at Ilorin. Youths were few at that meeting, therefore the remaining forms for youths were distributed at a Youth forum in the Diocese of Enugu North. Total number of respondents

was 454 among whom were Bishops, Bishops Wives, Clergy men, Clergy Wives, Legal luminaries, Lay members and Youths. The figure given is total for Strongly Agreed and Agreed. Many people showed apathy to the subject and therefore did not respond because abortion is a taboo topic in Nigeria especially in the Church. 100 questionnaires were distributed to each group. This is the analysis of the question on abortion.

**Analysis of Respondents on Question 40: The Position of the Church of Nigeria on Induced abortion is “NO TO ABORTION”**

Groups	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed	Undecided	Problem with form	Total
Bishops	26	14	1	-	-	-	41
Bishops Wives	36	12	1	-	2	-	51
Legal Luminaries	30	15	4	-	2	-	51
Clergy Men	55	17	3	1	3	-	79
Clergy Wives	37	16	-	-	5	1	59
Lay Members	46	22	-	1	5	2	76
Youths	49	26	6	7	8	1	97
TOTAL	279	122	16	10	25	4	454

279+122=401 Of the 454 Respondents 401 (88.3%) said the Position of the Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion is 'No to Abortion,' while 16 +10 = 26 (5.7%) disagreed.

Seeing that the entire strata of the Church was involved in the decision above, we can make bold to say that the Church of Nigeria says NO to induced abortion.

**The summary of the position of the Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion on induced abortion from the survey carried out by the researcher in 2018 is as follows:**

- i. Carrying out induced abortion is outright disobedience to God's word
- ii. Induced Abortion is murder
- iii. Sex is meant only for a man and woman who are joined together in Holy Matrimony
- iv. Abstinence the solution to abortion
- v. Stringent Laws must be put in place to stop Abortion
- vi. Lack of the Knowledge and fear of God are root causes of induced abortion
- vii. Induced abortion should not be mentioned or practiced among Christians
- viii. The Position of the Church of Nigeria on Induced abortion is “NO TO ABORTION”
- ix. The Position of the Church of Nigeria on Induced abortion is “NO TO

ABORTION” unless mother's life is gravely at stake

The above analysis shows that the Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion believes human life is sacred and the foetus is God's creation which should not be aborted. The word of God must be taught continuously in every strata of the Church to inculcate the knowledge and fear of God, that abortion is murder and the Church does not support it. It is only if there is grave risk of life of the mother that it can be considered. The Church teaches that singles and adolescents should neither indulge in sexual activities nor use contraceptives. The Bible is the answer to social ills and the alternative to abortion is self-control, chastity and abstinence until one is wedded.

### COVID-19

**Coronavirus** disease (**COVID-19**) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered **coronavirus**. It is currently a [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) declared **pandemic**. Most people infected with the **COVID-19** virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness. Due to the number of infections and death the Nigerian Government declared a lock down in 2020. Symptoms of covid-19 include [Fever](#) (85-90%); Cough (65-70%) with sputum in 30-35%; Smell and taste disturbances (50%); Fatigue (35-40%); Shortness of breath (15-20%); Blood clot; Causes allergic reaction-excessive mucous production that affects respiration; Causes inflammation. To curb the spread there is need to observe the following: Maintain physical distancing; **avoid crowded places; Wash your hands with soap under running water regularly; Use of alcohol based sanitizer; Wearing of face masks in Public places/meetings is compulsory;** The COVID-19 virus spreads primarily through respiratory droplets, droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes, so it's important that you also practice respiratory etiquette (for example, by coughing into a flexed elbow); wash your hands after touching surfaces and money; **If you do not have essential responsibilities outside stay at home and stay safe.** However, Dr Stella Emmanuel a General Practitioner in the U.S. said she has treated 350 COVID -19 patients successfully without any death by administering a combination of Hydrochloroquine, Zinc and Zithromax.

Due to the COVID-19 lockdown many women and girls could not access health care facilities. While a few became sick, some became pregnant and some died from sickness. Some of the singles and women who have had the number of children of their choice, but became pregnant during the lockdown may resort to unsafe abortion. Cases of rape of young girls which results in pregnancy may also result in abortion. The pandemic has decimated jobs and placed millions of livelihoods at risk. As breadwinners lose jobs, fall ill and die, the food security and nutrition of millions of women and men are under threat, with those in low-income countries, particularly the most marginalized populations, which include small-scale farmers and indigenous peoples, being hardest hit. While the

spread of COVID-19 is indiscriminate, mounting evidence has revealed that COVID-19 has further compounded existing inequalities putting already marginalised women and girls, often with weaker access to political and economic power, at greater risk, not only to the coronavirus but also to the direct and indirect consequences of lock-down. Millions of agricultural workers – waged and self-employed – while feeding the world, regularly face high levels of working poverty, malnutrition and poor health, and suffer from a lack of safety and labour protection as well as other types of abuse. With low and irregular incomes and a lack of social support, many of them are spurred to continue working, often in unsafe conditions, thus exposing themselves and their families to additional risks. Further, when experiencing income losses, they may resort to negative coping strategies, such as distress sale of assets, predatory loans or child labour. Migrant agricultural workers are particularly vulnerable, because they face risks in their transport, working and living conditions and struggle to access support measures put in place by governments. Guaranteeing the safety and health of all agri-food workers – from primary producers to those involved in food processing, transport and retail, including street food vendors – as well as better incomes and protection, will be critical to saving lives and protecting public health, people's livelihoods and food security. According to Kotlar, Gerson and Petrillo *et al.* (2021) during covid-19,

Prenatal care visits decreased, healthcare infrastructure was strained, and potentially harmful policies are implemented with little evidence in high and low/middle income countries. The social and economic impact of COVID-19 on maternal health is marked. A high frequency of maternal mental health problems, such as clinically relevant anxiety and depression, during the epidemic are reported in many countries. This likely reflects an increase in problems, but studies demonstrating a true change are lacking. Domestic violence appeared to spike. Women were more vulnerable to losing their income due to the pandemic than men, and working mothers struggled with increased childcare demands. We make several recommendations: more resources should be directed to epidemiological studies, health and social services for pregnant women and mothers should not be diminished, and more focus on maternal mental health during the epidemic is needed.

World Health Organization (2021) said, “The UN Country Team in Nigeria reiterates its commitment to support the vaccination campaign in Nigeria and help contain the spread of the virus,” said Edward Kallon, UN Resident Coordinator in Nigeria. “Some people are concerned that vaccine safety may have been sacrificed in favor of speed.

### **Recommendations**

- a) Human life is sacred and starts at fertilization. Therefore, no one should deliberately destroy God's creation through abortion.
- b) The word 'unborn child' should be used instead of 'embryo' or 'foetus' in order to

- emphasize the personhood of the unborn.
- c) The purpose of the therapeutic abortion must be clearly defined and should be done only when the mother's life is at risk as in the case of ectopic pregnancy and not for convenience.
  - d) Christian religious studies should be taught seriously in schools while fear of God, holy living, chastity and value for life should be imbibed.
  - e) Teaching of the word of God continuously in every stratum of the Church and state to inculcate the knowledge and fear of God, that abortion is murder and the Church does not support it cannot be overemphasized.
  - f) Sexual reproduction should be taught to children and adolescents at home, Church and in school, from the upper primary to higher institutions where sex only within holy matrimony shall be emphasized because they are ignorant.
  - g) Churches should open up more Christian schools so that the truths of the Gospel shall be taught more aggressively and people live in the fear of God.
  - h) *Not* having sexual intercourse is the best way to prevent STIs, HIV infection and pregnancy and abortion. If you don't want a pregnancy, don't have sex.
  - i) Abortion should not be used as population control mechanism because abortion is bloodshed, direct disobedience to natural law and defiles the land.
  - j) Planned parenthood and Family Planning Associations that have greatly given impetus to the rise of abortion and immorality by introducing free contraceptives to schools and to National Youth Service Corp members should hither to desist from this evil work. Therefore, the researcher recommends that abortifacients should not be 'over the counter' drug and adolescents should not have access to them. The introduction of contraceptives to adolescents has made teenagers immoral, sexually active and a major cause of rise in abortion.
  - k) Efforts should be put at encouraging singles and adolescents to practice chastity and abstain from sex. Self-control and abstinence from sex is the solution to pregnancy and abortion.
  - l) Causes of the high rates of unwanted pregnancy in Nigeria, are lack of knowledge and fear of God and his principles, promiscuity, lack of self-control, rape and unwholesome sexual education which encourages adolescents to experience sexual life meant for married couples.
  - m) High risk behaviours of adolescents is the leading cause of abortion in Nigeria among adolescents. The general notion that abortion is caused by unintended pregnancy is unfounded. Why then do they get involved in illegal sexual activities?
  - n) Adolescents, singles and mothers who get pregnant, should have the baby and care for

him or her, however if she cannot, she may place the baby in a reputable orphanage or give up the baby for adoption since many women are looking for children to adopt.

- o) We recommend that the covid-19 immunization recently procured be well scrutinized to see if it is fit for human use before dispensation to the populace

### Conclusion

The researcher opines that no religion or culture wholly supports abortion except of course the New Age religion and culture. Teachings about contraceptives, condom and abortion to adolescents and single girls are new age teachings and the aim is birth control, sexual pleasure without responsibility. Higher levels of fertility have been associated with 'traditional', religious prohibitions on some forms of birth control, 'traditional' values about the importance of children and the priority of family, and 'traditional' family and gender roles reinforced by religion. Singles and adolescents who are pressured to abort by their boyfriends, peer group, parents should not succumb to the pressure. Gardner (1972:275) posits that “it is the right of every pregnant woman to give birth, and the right of every child to be born.” If [midwives](#) who performed abortions were accused of committing [witchcraft](#) in *Malleus Maleficarum* (1487) (*The Hammer of Witches*), a [witch-hunting](#) manual in Germany, what do we call those practicing abortion today?

The reasons given for abortion: economic recession, under age, rape, incest, increase in population, work, school, boyfriend, parents' reaction, shame, finance, or whatever reason is not enough to abort a baby! Have that baby! He may be the president of Nigeria tomorrow. If peradventure a mother gets pregnant, she should defy the shame and have the baby and if she cannot take care of him, she should put him in the orphanage or give him up for adoption, since several women are looking for babies to adopt. Married women should employ natural family planning so that they will only get pregnant when they choose and the singles and adolescents to practice abstinence, chastity and self-restraint. Each new life that begins at the point of fertilization is not a potential human being but a human being with potential.

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