

Ayete-Nyampong, S., (2014). *A Study of pastoral care of the elderly in Africa: An interdisciplinary approach with focus on Ghana*. Bloomington, IN: Author House, 279pp. ISBN: 978-1-4969-8909-3

Reviewed by Emem Omokaro¹

The focus of *A Study of Pastoral care of the elderly in Africa: An interdisciplinary approach with focus on Ghana* is on the development of pastoral care models as alternative support systems to enhance the status and wellbeing of the elderly in Africa and Ghana in particular. Written by Samuel Ayete-Nyampong, the book examines the implications of demographic trends, the converging issues of industrialization, urbanization, massive rural urban migration in Africa and their demands and burdens which make traditional family care for the elderly not adequate and sustainable. Reverend Dr. Samuel Ayete- Nyampong (PhD) is a Minister of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana where he served as the Chairman of Presbyterian National Committee on Ageing in Ghana and Pastoral Counselling. He also served as Adjunct lecturer of Pastoral Care and Counselling at the Central University College in Ghana. He is the President of African Association of Pastoral Studies and Counselling (AAPSC).

The book promotes the integration of the academic discipline of practical theology with pastoral care as a vocation for the community of Christians within the context of cross-cultural inter-church exchanges of resources, for the mutual benefits of the elderly. With increasing age and longevity, the risk of chronic diseases rises along with age related disabilities and dependency, clearly making the need for long-term care an increasingly vital psycho-social, economic, and health concern as the African population ages. The hope is to create awareness at both statutory and non-statutory levels of the need to develop alternative support systems to enhance the status and wellbeing of the elderly on the African continent.

The author's comprehensive interrogation of the cross-cultural applicability of theoretical perspectives on ageing and care models, accounts for the realistic evaluation of peculiar local and cultural challenges of ageing in Africa in contrast to situations in developed countries with Britain as case study. The elaborate review of literature widens the scope of

¹ Emem Omokaro Ph.D, Executive Director Dave Omokaro Foundation. (firstdavem@yahoo.com)
LEADS Scholar, Ageing Programme Development, National Universities Commission, Abuja, Nigeria.

discussion for cross-cultural benefits enabling the development of care models which emphasise community as the context within which pastoral care can be effectively practiced in Africa. With interdisciplinary and multi-sectoral approach, each chapter builds a precept for the development of pastoral care models within the context of community as an alternate support system.

The book's procedural construction of appropriate models for pastoral care and the context within which to apply appropriate pastoral methodology is guided by the synthesis of theoretical insights from John Pattons' communal contextual paradigm and John Fowler's faith development theory. 'Older persons' are defined by the chronological age of 65 years and pastoral care as a holistic helping relationship between Christians and their recipients. The target benefactors of pastoral care are the so called Mainline Churches excluding Pentecostal and Independent African Churches.

The book presents 11 chapters. Every chapter title is preceded by a definition of objectives and review of theoretical perspective with in-depth examination of cross-cultural contextual relevance. The introductory chapter sketches the subject of ageing, its process and socio-economic health, cultural and spiritual implications. It sets out the statement of problem, limitation of study, definition of terms, methodology and objectives, relating the content as the culmination of an original research on a comparative study of the general situation of the elderly in Britain and Ghana.

The first four chapters namely, 'Pastoral care of the ageing population in Africa'; 'A sociological profile of the elderly in Africa'; 'Social change and its effects on the elderly in Africa', and 'Health and medical problems of elderly people in Ghana', discuss the situation of the African elderly; the socio-cultural changes which have rendered family caring tradition vulnerable. They convey the inability of the traditional system of extended families to sustain a continuous provision of care to the elderly, thereby serving the contextual framework for the design of 'pastoral care modules'. The implication of increasing absolute number of the elderly in Africa, the challenges faced by the elderly and the inadequacies of the family system raise the crucial questions about what can be done to support the elderly people in Africa society and to engage them in continuing production? ; what insight can be gleaned from other countries to enrich the African traditional model? and can churches initiate solutions to the problem of ageing?. Answers to these questions preoccupy the author as he searches for a conceptual and theoretical framework. The analysis of a conceptual framework of 'Pastoral Care' is contained within the presentation of a brief history of 'Pastoral Care' variations and their suggestions of care model in Chapter one. Jesus Christ is posited as a model of care with Christology tradition and the evolution of tradition of pastoral care is traced from reformation penitential discipline and public penance to genuine pastoral care of the individual need and his community. It incorporates the general view of 'Pastoral Care' with the 'Shepherd Model'; a form of proclamation of the gospel aimed at conversion and spiritual discipline and the ethical model of the good person. The chapters relate a multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral perspective of pastoral care which integrates psychological, spiritual, sociological and political dimension to seeking solution to human problems. They relate the contribution of social change in the formation

of the new image of the elderly. The pastoral care model recognises the whole dimension of human living - social, environment, economic, biological and psychological utilising the holistic approach of World Health Organization (WHO). The role of the church is highlighted in collaboration with other statutory or non-statutory institution in providing pastoral care.

Chapters five to eight on 'Contemporary care of the elderly in Ghana', 'A general survey of older persons in British Society: A study of western institution', 'A comparative structure of pastoral care paradigm: Western and African', and 'A theoretical framework for contextualization of pastoral care of the elderly in Ghana', examine the provision of pastoral care in some Protestant and Catholic churches and the tension between Christian theology, African traditional healing and biomedical practice. While medical practice is accepted and trusted, African traditional healing is deemed unchristian. Also related are limitations of pastoral care programmes and services both from the Presbyterian and the Catholic Churches. A comparative analysis of the socio-cultural milieu in Britain and Ghana which unearth similarities and differences provide the insights from the caring models of Britain. New approaches draw from these insights for the construction of a pastoral care model for Ghana within the framework of Patton's and Fowler's theories of Communal Contextualization and development of Faith. The former expressed analogically to reflect care as reciprocity of God's kindness within community and the latter as a people's way of finding coherence in and giving meaning to the multiple forces and relations that make up our lives.

The final chapters on 'Pastoral ministry and the elderly in Ghana: A new paradigm of care for Africa', 'Gerontological education as preparation for Ministry with the elderly in Africa', and 'The way forward for African pastoral care of the elderly', aim to look at the way forward for appropriate and contextual African pastoral care which will provide sustainable and comprehensive community care for the elderly with particular emphasis on Ghana. The chapters discuss the benefits of integrating multi-sectoral engagements, including faith based and formal long-term care provisions, and the implications of these for the church. Specific types of community care services and systems are examined as well as the challenges of leadership and skilled personnel for long term-care assessment and care provisions. Capacity building focusing on gerontological education is endorsed as a major agenda towards creating directions, principles, and holistic and sustainable systems and care services.

A study of pastoral care of the elderly in Africa: An interdisciplinary approach with focus on Ghana is multidisciplinary and therefore intended for readers from multiple backgrounds including clergies, parishioners, policy makers, practitioners in the field of ageing and students of sociology, development, gerontology and theology. It is also hopefully for use for social workers, care givers and general interest readers.