

Utilizing Administration of Church Resources for Fulfilling the Mission and Vision of the Church and Its Moral Implications for Gospel Ministers in Nigeria

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Abstract

The administration of church resources has become a critical and contentious issue in contemporary Christianity. There is growing concern about the disconnect between resource abundance and the fulfilment of the church's mission and vision. Faithful administration, therefore, involves planning, organising, mobilising, supervising, accounting for, and evaluating the use of resources in a manner that advances God's purposes. The paper identifies the church's mission and vision as ministry to God, ministry to believers, and ministry to the world. It explains that church resources are not only financial but also human, material, and spiritual. The paper submits that church resources can be best administered through intentional recruitment and deployment according to gifts and callings, and through the alignment of church expenses with mission priorities. The paper argues that responsible utilisation means using resources efficiently and effectively, and for the purposes for which they were given or allocated. Waste, extravagance, personal enrichment, and the diversion of designated funds are serious breaches of stewardship. Churches that model integrity in resource management strengthen their moral authority and their capacity to mobilise further support for mission. It emphasises the moral implications for gospel ministers, including aligning church resources with mission and vision, strategic planning and budgeting for ministry priorities, and the mobilisation and development of human resources.

Keywords: Administration, Church Resources, Gospel Ministers, Moral Implications.

Introduction

The church exists primarily to fulfil God's purpose in the world. Its mission involves proclaiming the gospel, making disciples, nurturing believers, demonstrating Christian love, caring for people in need, and advancing the kingdom of God. The vision of a church provides a clear picture of what that congregation believes God is calling it to become and accomplish. However, fulfilling the mission and vision requires more than spiritual enthusiasm and good intentions. God has entrusted the church with resources that must be administered responsibly. These resources include human resources such as pastors, church workers, teachers, deacons, and members; financial resources such as tithes, offerings, donations, and investments; material resources such as land, buildings, vehicles, equipment, and other properties; as well as spiritual gifts, time, knowledge, and opportunities. The central text to establish the foundation for this paper is 1 Corinthians 4:2 (NIV): "Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful." Paul presents Christian leadership and ministry in terms of stewardship. A steward is not the ultimate owner of the resources under their care, but a person entrusted with the responsibility of administering them on behalf of the owner. Therefore, church leaders and members must recognise that the church's resources ultimately belong to God. Psalm 24:1

declares, “The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it” (NIV). This means that the administration of church resources is fundamentally a spiritual responsibility before it is an administrative or financial exercise. Faithful administration, therefore, involves planning, organising, mobilising, supervising, accounting for, and evaluating the use of resources in a manner that advances God's purposes. Recent scholarship similarly emphasises that church resource administration must combine theological stewardship with transparency, accountability, and sound governance. For example, Amoako and Eshun (2025) observe that contemporary African churches face significant challenges where weak reporting structures and inadequate ethical oversight undermine public trust. Similarly, Ribeiro et al. (2025) demonstrate that strategic planning and financial governance can strengthen organisational sustainability when resources are deliberately aligned with a church's mission and long-term vision. Thus, effective administration is not opposed to spirituality; rather, when properly understood, it is one of the means through which the church demonstrates faithfulness to God.

Mission and Vision of the Church

The mission and vision of the church are rooted in the word of God, and Grudem (1995:853) categorises it into three, which the paper adopts. Understanding the vision and mission of the church rests on its purposes, which include:

Ministry to God – Worship (Col. 3:16 & Ephesians 1:2; 5:16-19). This is the highest and primary purpose of the church. God establishes the church to exalt Him. The worship of God by the church transcends singing on Sundays and involves the response of God's people in adoration, praise, thanksgiving, prayer, and the offering of their lives to the worthiness of God. **Ministry to Believers – Nurture** (Col. 1:28 and Eph 4:12-13). The church exists to nurture believers, so they grow to become Christlike. The church therefore nurtures believers through discipleship, teaching sound doctrine, fellowship, care and service.

Ministry to the World – Missions and Evangelism (Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 6:35 – 36, Acts 11:29; I John 3:17 & II Cor. 8:4). The third dimension of the church's purpose is mission and evangelism. This is the communication of gospel truth in word and deed to the unbelievers and to lead them to repentance. The church exists for missions, church planting, social responsibility and Christian witness.

Concept of Church Resources Administration

Church resources administration refers to the systematic process of identifying, mobilising, organising, and utilising the scarce human, material, financial, and spiritual resources of the church to achieve its specific goals efficiently and effectively (Ogunode and Ojo, 2024:3). It encompasses planning, coordinating, controlling, and policy formulation aimed at realising the mission and vision of the church. It is described as the systematic arrangement of the church's human and material resources to implement programmes aimed at building the church. Thus, some pastors receive theological training but do not place emphasis on the administrative and managerial aspects of their theological education. Warren (1995:153) submits that a healthy church should be the priority of church leaders, and this is not measured solely by numerical growth. He describes church administration as the intentional organisation of people and resources to fulfil the five biblical purposes: worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism. Another leading voice in the Church Growth Movement, Wagner (1981:287), defines church administration as the strategic management of resources to achieve evangelistic and discipleship goals. He emphasises that administration is a ministry tool that enables churches to plan, organise, and evaluate their mission effectively. For Powers (2008:182),

church administration is the process of managing and organising church resources to achieve the church's mission and goals. He views administration as a servant ministry that ensures efficiency, accountability, and alignment with the church's spiritual objectives. Church administration is therefore not carnal in any way, as the church is presented with several resources that need to be administered in different areas and proportions to achieve the mission and vision of the church.

Church resources can be classified into four interrelated categories:

- (a) Financial resources** - Tithes, offerings, donations, investments, and income from church-owned enterprises;
- (b) Human resources** - clergy, staff, volunteers, and the spiritual gifts of the laity;
- (c) Material resources** - buildings, land, equipment, and literature; and
- (d) Spiritual resources** - prayer, the Word of God, spiritual gifts, and the presence of the Holy Spirit (Welch, 2011:86).

These resources are understood theologically as belonging to God and entrusted to the church as stewards. In Nigeria, church resources administration operates within a dual framework of spiritual accountability and civil regulation. Churches are typically registered as Incorporated Trustees under the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA) 2020 and must comply with property, financial, and governance requirements (Akinloye, 2021:741). Effective administration, therefore, includes transparent accounting, records management, diversified income streams, clear governance structures (Board of Trustees, Finance Committees), and professional capacity building. Challenges such as inadequate funding, weak accountability, poor records, and limited managerial training underscore the practical importance of the concept (Adeniran, 2023:222). The emphasis on church resources administration, therefore, becomes both a ministerial requirement and a civil responsibility; furthermore, the church as the light of the world cannot afford to mismanage God's resources as well as human resources.

Utilising the Resources to Fulfil the Vision and Mission of the Church

The effective administration of church resources is essential to the fulfilment of the Church's mission and vision. In the Nigerian context marked by rapid church growth, socio-economic challenges, and increasing regulatory demands, the responsible stewardship of resources has become both a ministerial imperative and a practical necessity. This section provides a concise discourse on the various church resources and their administration.

Human Resources

Human resources constitute the most critical asset of any church. They include ordained clergy (pastors, priests, bishops), full-time and part-time staff, volunteer workers, departmental leaders, and the entire membership whose gifts, time, and energy are offered in service. Scripture presents the Church as a body with many members, each possessing distinct gifts for the common good (Romans 12:4–8; 1 Corinthians 12). Human resources range from highly educated professionals serving as pastors or administrators to grassroots members who contribute practical skills, local knowledge, and sacrificial service (Evans-Osabuohien, 2024:1-2). The quality of leadership, the level of training, the degree of commitment, and the effectiveness of team dynamics largely determine the health and growth of the congregation.

Challenges in Human Resources Administration

Several challenges hinder effective human resource management. Many pastors receive primarily theological training and preparation for leadership, conflict resolution, human resource management and organizational administration. However, some of these trained individuals place less emphasis on the need for human resource management and organisational administration, believing that they are spiritual leaders and hence, only need

spiritual gifts to lead the people of God. Research indicates that a significant percentage of seminary graduates feel inadequately prepared for the managerial aspects of ministry (Irwin, 2000:25). Other problems include unclear job descriptions, inadequate remuneration, lack of succession planning, power struggles between clergy and laity, under-utilisation of lay gifts, and insufficient investment in continuous professional development.

Best Practices in Church Human Resources Administration

Effective administration of human resources requires intentional recruitment and deployment according to gifts and calling, clear role definitions, fair and transparent compensation systems consistent with current economic realities, ongoing training (both spiritual and managerial), performance evaluation, and the creation of pathways for youth, women, and professionals to contribute meaningfully. In addition to their theological training, pastors are also encouraged to seek professional competence in church administration. Some professional bodies, such as CASON and the Institute of Church Administration and Management (ICAM, 2026:55), offer certification and capacity-building programmes that can help bridge the gap between theological and administrative competence.

Financial Resources

Financial resources form the lifeblood of institutional church life. They comprise tithes, offerings, freewill donations, special project contributions, investment income, and revenue from church-owned enterprises such as schools, hospitals, bookshops, agricultural projects, and property rentals. Biblical teaching on giving, stewardship, and accountability provides the foundation for financial administration (Malachi 3:8–10; and 2 Corinthians 8–9). In Nigeria, many local congregations still depend heavily on weekly offerings and tithes, which cannot sustain the church amid current economic realities and insecurity. There are churches and denominations that have developed different sources of income to sustain the church, which include schools, land facilities, house investments and Agricultural firms.

Challenges in Church Financial Resources Administration

Key challenges include inadequate funding for many local churches, weak internal controls, occasional diversion of funds, lack of financial literacy among some leaders, resistance to transparency, and the pressure to fund both spiritual programmes and extensive social services. Cases of mismanagement have damaged trust and hindered mission effectiveness in some settings (Ukeyima, 2024:25).

Best Practices in Church Financial Resources Administration

Sound practice demands transparency, accountability, and alignment of expenditure with mission priorities. Churches should practise programme-based or zero-based budgeting, maintain clear financial policies, publish summary reports to members, and subject accounts to independent audit. Diversification of income, while remaining faithful to the church's non-profit and missional character, is increasingly recognised as essential for long-term sustainability. Effective financial management requires separate accounts for different purposes (operations, building, missions, welfare), proper receipting and documentation, regular budgeting, internal controls, and independent annual audits.

Material and Physical Resources

Material and physical resources include land, church buildings, parsonages or pastor's quarters, vehicles, equipment (sound systems, musical instruments, computers, generators), furniture, literature, and other tangible assets. These resources provide the physical infrastructure for worship, education, administration, and missional activities. Under Nigerian law, churches

registered as Incorporated Trustees under the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA) 2020 must acquire, manage, and dispose of property in accordance with civil requirements. Failure to observe due diligence, secure proper title documents, or maintain clear records has led to costly legal disputes (Akinloye, 2021:741). Effective administration involves maintaining an up-to-date asset register, implementing preventive maintenance schedules, ensuring adequate insurance, and maximising the use of facilities for both ministry and, where appropriate, community benefit or revenue generation.

Challenges of Church Physical and Material Resources Administration

Challenges include incomplete or disputed land titles, high construction and maintenance costs, vandalism or destruction of property in areas affected by insecurity, under-utilisation of existing facilities, and the tendency to prioritise monumental buildings over functional and sustainable infrastructure.

Time and Technological Resources

Time is a finite and non-renewable resource. The administration of time involves careful scheduling of services, meetings, programmes, pastoral care, and administrative tasks so that the church's priorities are reflected in its calendar. Poor time management leads to burnout among leaders, superficial programmes, and the neglect of essential spiritual and relational ministries. Technological resources have become increasingly important. These include church management software, digital accounting systems, online giving platforms, social media and live-streaming tools, databases for membership and attendance tracking, and communication systems (Adeyemi, 2026:62-63). Technology offers opportunities to improve efficiency, transparency, coordination across branches, and outreach, especially among younger generations. However, challenges of cost, electricity supply, internet reliability, digital literacy, and data security must be addressed thoughtfully.

Spiritual Gifts and Other Ministry Resources

Spiritual gifts are special abilities given by the Holy Spirit for the building up of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12; Ephesians 4). They include both more visible gifts (prophecy, teaching, leadership, healing) and less conspicuous ones (helps, administration, mercy, giving). Other ministry resources include prayer, the ministry of the Word, the ordinances/sacraments, worship, and the collective spiritual vitality of the congregation. Effective administration of spiritual gifts requires discernment, affirmation, equipping, and deployment (Grudem, 1995:125). Churches that neglect the identification and utilisation of members' gifts waste God-given potential and place excessive burdens on a few leaders. Conversely, intentional gift-based ministry multiplies effectiveness and fosters ownership among the laity. Spiritual resources cannot be managed in a purely bureaucratic manner; they require a climate of prayer, dependence on the Holy Spirit, and pastoral sensitivity.

Biblical Foundation of Church Resource Administration

Church resource administration is not merely a pragmatic or managerial activity borrowed from secular organisational theory. At its core, it is a theological practice rooted in the character of God, the nature of creation, the reality of human stewardship, and the mission of the Church. Every decision concerning people, finances, property, time, technology, and spiritual gifts ultimately rests upon biblical revelation concerning who God is, what belongs to Him, and how His people are called to manage what He has entrusted to them (Frame, 2008:40-41). Theological and Biblical foundations of Church resources administration centres on the doctrines of divine ownership, human stewardship, accountability, spiritual gifts, and the ordered life of the Christian community.

The Doctrine of Divine Ownership

The starting point of all Christian thinking about resources is the confession that God is the absolute owner of everything that exists. Scripture repeatedly affirms this truth. “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it” (Psalm 24:1). In the creation narrative, God speaks the universe into being and assigns humanity a representative role within His creation. This doctrine has profound implications for church administration. Buildings, land, money, equipment, and even the time and abilities of members do not ultimately belong to the pastor, the board, the denomination, or the local congregation. They belong to God. Leaders and members are therefore trustees rather than proprietors. Any attitude of absolute ownership, entitlement, or private control over church resources is at odds with the biblical confession of divine sovereignty (Erickson, 2013:22). Theologically, divine ownership is grounded in God’s identity as Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. Because God created all things, He retains sovereign rights over them. Because He sustains all things, every resource continues to exist by His will. Because He redeems His people, even their redeemed lives and capacities are held in trust for His purposes.

The Biblical Concept of Stewardship

Closely related to divine ownership is the concept of stewardship. In the creation mandate, humanity is given dominion over the earth and charged to “work it and take care of it” (Genesis 2:15). This dominion is not autonomous mastery but responsible representation of the Creator’s will. Jesus develops the theme of stewardship most clearly in the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14–30) and the related Parable of the Minas (Luke 19:11–27). In these narratives, a master entrusts resources to servants, departs, and later returns to require an account. The servants are judged according to their faithfulness in managing what was never their own. Faithfulness is rewarded; unfaithfulness and fear-driven inactivity are condemned. The New Testament applies this concept directly to Christian ministry. Believers are described as “stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10) and as “servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Corinthians 4:1). The essential requirement of stewards is that they be found faithful (1 Corinthians 4:2, Erickson, 2013: 24). Theologically, stewardship implies several realities: (1) the steward does not own the resources; (2) the steward has genuine responsibility and freedom within the master’s purposes; (3) the steward is accountable for the use of the resources; and (4) the ultimate evaluation belongs to the master, not to the steward’s self-assessment or to human opinion alone. Church resource administration is therefore an exercise of stewardship under the lordship of Christ.

Accountability before God and the Community

Biblical stewardship is inseparable from accountability. The parables of Jesus make clear that a day of reckoning is certain. Beyond the final judgment, Scripture also establishes patterns of accountability within the life of the covenant community. In the early church, the appointment of the Seven in Acts 6 was a response to a practical administrative problem (the fair distribution of food) that had spiritual implications. The apostles recognised the need for trustworthy, Spirit-filled administrators so that the ministry of the Word would not be neglected.

This episode demonstrates that good administration serves the spiritual mission of the church and that the administrative role requires character and spiritual qualification. Financial accountability is also modelled in the New Testament. Paul takes deliberate steps to ensure transparency in the collection for the Jerusalem saints, involving representatives from the churches and emphasising integrity “in the sight of God and man” (2 Corinthians 8:20–21). The principle is clear: those who handle the resources of God’s people must do so in ways that are above reproach.

Moral Implications for Gospel Ministers

The mission and vision of the Church constitute the foundational compass for all its activities, including the administration of resources. In biblical terms, the mission of the Church is rooted in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20) and the call to be witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). It encompasses evangelism, discipleship, worship, fellowship, and holistic service to society. Vision statements articulate the preferred future that a particular church or denomination seeks to realise under God's guidance (Strauss, 2010:23). Understanding mission and vision is not merely a matter of possessing written statements. It requires that leaders and members internalise the church's God-given purpose so that it shapes priorities, culture, and the allocation of every resource category. Without this clarity, administration easily becomes reactive, personality-driven, or focused on institutional maintenance rather than kingdom advance.

Aligning Church Resources with Mission and Vision

Alignment means ensuring that human, financial, material, technological, and spiritual resources are deliberately directed toward achieving the church's stated mission and vision. Resources that are not aligned become either wasted or counterproductive. In practice, alignment involves several steps. First, the mission and vision must be clearly articulated and regularly communicated. Second, all major programmes, projects, and budget lines should be tested against the question: "Does this advance our mission?" Third, resources should be concentrated on high-impact priorities rather than spread thinly across numerous low-impact activities. Fourth, periodic reviews should assess whether current resource deployment still matches the church's calling in changing circumstances (Bryson, 2018:55). Misalignment is common when churches prioritize impressive buildings over discipleship, maintain large staff structures that do not serve core mission, or allow personal interests of leaders to dictate expenditure. Faithful administration requires the courage to redirect or discontinue activities that no longer serve the mission, even when they are traditional or popular.

Strategic Planning and Budgeting for Ministry Priorities

Strategic planning translates mission and vision into concrete, time-bound objectives and action plans. Budgeting is the financial expression of those plans. Together, they form the primary instruments for aligning resources with purpose. Effective strategic planning typically includes: environmental analysis (opportunities, threats, internal strengths and weaknesses); clarification of core mission priorities; setting of measurable annual and multi-year goals; identification of required resources; assignment of responsibilities; and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation. The process should be participatory, involving key stakeholders, while remaining under the spiritual and strategic leadership of the church's governing authorities (Welch, 2011:33-34). Budgeting should be mission-driven rather than merely incremental. Programme-based or zero-based approaches help ensure that every naira is justified by its contribution to ministry priorities. Separate budget lines for evangelism, discipleship, pastoral care, social outreach, administration, and capital projects make priorities visible. Contingency provisions are wise, given the economic and security volatility of the Nigerian environment (Dondokambey, et. al., 2025:70). A budget is a theological document. It reveals what a church truly values. Churches that claim a passion for mission yet allocate most resources to maintenance and personnel, while starving outreach and discipleship, are living in contradiction. Strategic planning and budgeting are, therefore, spiritual as well as managerial disciplines.

Mobilisation and Development of Human Resources

People are the Church's primary resource. The New Testament presents the Church as a body in which every member has been given gifts for the common good. Effective administration, therefore, requires the intentional mobilisation and development of both clergy and laity (Adeyemi, 2026:62). Mobilisation begins with the recognition and affirmation of spiritual gifts, natural abilities, and vocational skills present in the congregation. It continues through clear role definitions, invitation into meaningful service, and the creation of team structures that allow people to contribute according to their capacities. Development involves systematic training (spiritual, theological, and practical) as well as mentoring, coaching, and opportunities for increasing responsibility (Adeyemi, 2026:63). In Nigeria, many churches operate with a clergy-dominated model that under-utilises the gifts of educated professionals, women, and youth. Capacity gaps among pastors in leadership, administration, and people management remain widespread. Sustainable mission fulfilment requires that human resource systems include fair remuneration, succession planning, performance feedback, and care for the well-being of those who serve.

Accountability, Transparency, and Responsible Resource Utilisation

Biblical stewardship demands accountability. Those who handle the resources of God's people must do so with integrity "in the sight of God and man." Transparency builds trust; opacity breeds suspicion and opens the door to misuse. Practical expressions of accountability and transparency include clear financial policies and procedures; separation of duties; proper documentation of all transactions; regular internal and independent external audits; periodic financial reporting to the congregation or relevant governing bodies; and open communication about major resource decisions. Responsible utilisation means that resources are used efficiently, effectively, and for the purposes for which they were given or allocated. Waste, extravagance, personal enrichment, and the diversion of designated funds are serious breaches of stewardship. Churches that model integrity in resource management strengthen their moral authority and their capacity to mobilise further support for mission.

Conclusion

The administration of church resources is neither a secular intrusion into spiritual life nor an optional managerial activity; it is a necessary expression of faithful stewardship that enables the Church to fulfil the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. Because the Church is both a spiritual organism and a physical organisation operating with scarce human, financial, material, and spiritual resources, prayer and faith must be accompanied by intentional planning, organisation, and accountability. The biblical record, from the creation mandate through the organised life of the early church, consistently affirms that God's people are called to manage what He has entrusted with wisdom, integrity, and purpose. This paper has therefore examined the concept of church resource administration, its biblical foundations, the nature of the various resources entrusted to the Church, and the practical strategies for aligning these resources with the Church's mission and vision. The goal is to demonstrate that effective administration is not a distraction from spiritual priorities but an indispensable means of advancing them.

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