

# Effects of Funeral Celebration on Church Activities: A Study of Selected Branches of The Church of Pentecost Among the Birifor Ethnic Group of Ghana

Emmanuel Foster Asamoah<sup>1</sup>, Jones Dwomoh Amankwah<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Religious Studies*

<sup>2</sup>*Pentecost University, School of Theology, Mission and Leadership (STML), Department of Theology Student*

**Abstract:** The study assessed the effects of funeral celebrations on church activities with reference to The Church of Pentecost. Data was sourced through key informant interviews and focus group discussions. The study focused on the Birifor ethnic group in the Savanna Region of Ghana. The findings underscore the likelihood that people belonging to the Birifor ethnic group over rate funerals. For instance, they would put everything on hold if a family member, distant or nuclear, kicks the bucket. This tends to impact negatively on church activities; church attendance is always low during funerals. Members do not participate fully in church activities; they tend to have divided attention even at church. The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study: there is the need for the church to piggy-back on funerals to engage in active evangelism. There is the need for the church to accept the culture of the people and tailor their programmes to suit it by adopting and contextualizing their funeral celebrations to eliminate inherent practices that contradict Christian values. In addition, the church might want to intensify education on cultural issues in such a way that members become aware of where they ought to stand as Christians.

**Keywords:** Funeral Celebration, Culture, The Church of Pentecost, Birifor Ethnic Group

## I. INTRODUCTION

According to Wolfelt (2007), rituals are “symbolic activities that help us, together with our families and friends, express our deepest thoughts and feelings about life’s most important events.” These help families and loved ones to share fellowship. One of these rituals is funeral which comes from the Latin word *funus* (dead body) and has a variety of meanings, including the corpse and the funerary rites themselves which are performed to take care of the dead body.

A funeral “is a public, traditional and symbolic means of expressing our beliefs, thoughts, and feelings about the death of someone loved” (Wolfelt, 2007). Building on Wolfelt’s definition, a funeral can be defined as a traditional ceremony organised publicly by families of a deceased person as a means of expressing their beliefs, thoughts, and feelings about the death of a member(s). Thus, funerals are usually performed publicly and serve as a traditional and cultural means of expressing our beliefs, thoughts, and feelings about the demise of loved ones. As a symbolic ceremony, families organised funerals to bid their lost member(s) farewell to the

land of no return. Funeral includes the activities performed for a dead person usually before burial or cremation. This ceremony or service is held shortly after a person’s death. It usually includes the person’s burial or cremation. Such occasions offer the opportunity for families and friends to express their deepest thoughts and feelings about their loss.

According to Wolfelt (2007), history and culture are rife with symbolism which helps us to appreciate the realities of life, and in like manner, a funeral ceremony helps us acknowledge the reality of death. In addition, a funeral also offers an opportunity for loved ones to testify to the life of the deceased, allows the bereaved families to express their grief acceptably as custom demands, and serves as a medium where others can offer support to the bereaved family. It also presents the opportunity for people to make life choices bearing in mind the reality of death. Again, it also allows people to embrace faith and beliefs about life and death. Ironically, death also affords the living an opportunity to reflect on their lives so they can make meaningful changes.

Nketia (2010) describes a funeral as a tragic incident that requires the support of everyone. To him, every effort is required to make the event a memorable one. The demise of a loved one or a family member results in soberness, anxiety, sadness, and sometimes increased anguish because death brings separation and an eternal gap between the dead and the living as a medium of transition between these two “worlds”—that of the living and the dead.

On how to handle the dead, Wolfelt (2007) thinks that the bereaved family has to pay their last respect to the departed soul, which is done through a funeral celebration. Adding on, the only obligation owed to the dead body according to custom and tradition is the performance of a befitting burial which is to help the dead return to the realm of their ancestors. For this to be organized in a befitting manner, Nketia (1969) outlines the stages that bereaved families from Akan, (and by extension Ghanaians and Africans) go through to pay last respect to the departed soul: “Preparation,” “Pre-burial sorrow” (including wake sometimes), “Internment,” “After-burial mourning,” and “Periodic mourning” (Yearly, etc). These processes when followed enable family members of the deceased to give a befitting burial to their relation. These

stages come along with challenges such as tiredness, financial burdens, and time constraints. However, bereaved families owe an obligation to the dead and this explains why they regard funerals as sacred rituals. They often sacrifice their time (taking time off work and church) and resources (offering money and physical labour) to mourn a departed family member. Others also come from far and near to commiserate with the bereaved family.

Family members of a bereaved home become reluctant to engage in activities that is often not related to the funeral. They are even willing to put church attendance on hold because they feel the need to their last respect to the dead. There are even times when they leave the church unceremoniously when they get wind the death of a family member.

This article, therefore, looks into how funeral rites are performed among the Birifor ethnic group in Ghana and their effects on church activities with a clear emphasis on those living in and around some selected communities in the Savanna Region.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The purposive Sampling (PS) method of Maximum Variation Sampling (VMS) was adopted for this work. According to Etikan *et al.*, (2016), this involves selecting candidates across a broad spectrum relating to the topic of study. The sampled population who provided relevant data for this research were sourced from 3 ingrained in the Birifor tradition, and thirteen pastors from The Church of Pentecost (CoP). These pastors are staying and pastoring churches in fifteen different Birifor communities like Bale, Tabieri, Gonsi, Sawla, Kalba, Jinavore, Nakwabi, Kawie, Gindabour, etc. for periods not less than 3 years. They were selected from the churches in the said communities. The respondents were grouped into a focus group.

Snowball sampling technique was employed in the selection of the communities for this work. These samples were selected because about 98% of the indigenes were Birifors and the churches in these selected communities provided the researcher with the needed data which was analysed through Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Creswell (2013) notes that different interpretative stances are inevitable when different data are to be analysed, and IPA uses both empathetic hermeneutics and questioning hermeneutics in getting to the root cause of the development.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analytical purposes. In addition, the researchers sought the permission of respondents to take helpful notes during the course of the interview. Also, Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were held with indigenes who are members of the church in fourteen different Birifor communities in and around Sawla, Tuna Kalba, and Bole districts, and its environs using an interview guide. The survey spanned a period of five months from October 2021 to February 2022.

### *Funeral As a Rite of Passage*

Anthropologists label funeral as a rite of passage, affecting everyone involved, including the deceased. Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines a funeral as “the observances held for a dead person usually before burial or cremation”. Funeral, therefore, is a traditional ceremony organised publicly by families of a deceased person as a means of expressing their beliefs, thoughts, and feelings about the death of a member(s).

According to Ofori (2014), the Asantes regard death as a journey from this land (of the living) to *asamando* (the land of the dead or ghosts). He asserts that the Asantes believe the journey is a difficult one, which involves climbing steep hills and crossing rivers. It is for this reason that the living needs to assist the dead in every way possible to help them reach that land peacefully.

Nyamadi *et al* (2015) opines that the performance of funeral rites otherwise referred to as mourning varies from one tribe to the other and involves various elements, such as the number of days set aside for it, abstention from certain engagements, self-abasement, the dirge, burial or cremation among others. Nonetheless, the celebration of the funeral also serves as a way of preserving the long-held cultural heritage of the people, socially. To Ofori (2014), the demise of a person is seen as a moment of separation in Ghana, and by extension Africa. Occasions of death becomes times of grieving and immense truth. It calls for an enactment of other rites of passage and can safely be classified as a rite of transition. It is therefore not surprising that death is mourned with varied activities.

Ofori (2014) posits that every Asante desire to reach *asamando* peacefully, which is similar to the belief of the Birifor people. According to Akan belief, the living has to assist the dead in that regard. The Asantes further believe that the dead person who does not reach *asamando* peacefully becomes an evil spirit that can foment trouble to the living. However, when the dead gets to their destinations peacefully, they become good spirits that bring a good omen to the living in the family. Such a spirit is capable of freeing family members from the clutches of evil. It is for this reason that a funeral rite or celebration is held in high esteem by Ghanaians and Africans.

According to Parker (2000), the funeral rite usually begins with the performance of this perceived befitting rite of passage which marks the unique transition for the dead from life here on earth into the next life. The belief, therefore, among Africans that death is a transition is no surprise for is the route between two worlds as indicated earlier; the “land of the living” and the next world or “land of the dead”.

### *Funeral Celebration and Culture*

According to Asamoah (2020), The word “culture” is the most significant concept in the study of all aspects of human life. Lebron (2013) opines that culture is an important and notoriously difficult term to define in sociology, psychology,

political sciences, anthropology, international business, and cross-cultural studies. Kluckkohn (1951), however, defines culture as “consisting in patterned ways of thinking, feeling, and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts: the essential core of culture consists traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values.” Adding on, Heibert (1985) defines culture as “more or less integrated systems of ideas, feelings, and values and their associated patterns of behaviour and products shared by a group of people who organize and regulate what they think, feel and do”. Therefore, the culture of the Birifor people includes their ideas, feelings, and values as well as their associated patterns of behaviour and products they share by themselves as a group. One of the ways the Birifors express their ideas, feelings, and values is through celebration of funerals.

From Heibert’s definition, it can be deduced that the observance of funeral celebration among Africans which has been shared by themselves has formed their makeup to the extent that they think, feel and engage in it anytime one passes on. That is to say, it will be very difficult for any group of people, say the Birifor people, to gloss over what they have shared for a long. These practices, including transition rites and mourning the dead, have become engrained in their very psych.

Ademiluka (2009) reveals that the celebration of a funeral in the African society is paramount and revered as pertains in Ghana. “Funeral mourning is an essential rite of passage in many societies. While there are differences among those aspects peculiar to each culture, there are certain motifs common to mourning in all cultures.”

#### *Brief Profile of The Birifor Ethnic Group in Ghana*

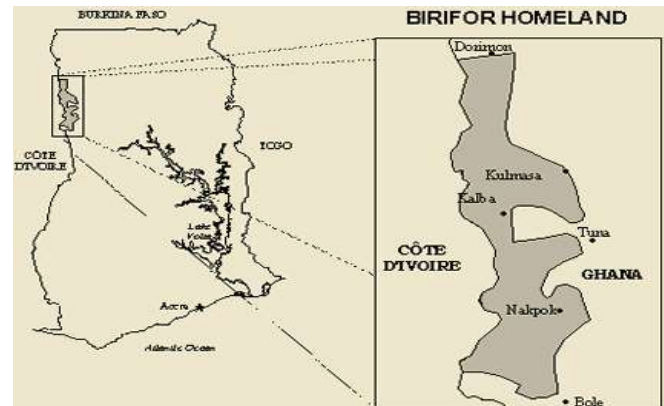
According to the Joshua Project (2022), Birifor is an ethnic group found south of West Burkina Faso, and in the North-western part of Ghana specifically, the Upper West region (Wa) and its environs. They are estimated to be a population of about 201,000. They speak the Birifor language, spoken in the Malba and Batié areas. It is a Voltaic language that shares vocabulary with the Dagara language. In Ghana, they are around the border into Burkina Faso, and can also be found in a few communities in Ivory Coast where they are scattered. It is believed that the Birifor in Burkina Faso migrated from Ghana many years ago. Culturally, they are very close to the Lobi and, like them, speak a Gur language. The Birifor language is examined and exists in writing in Ghana.

The Birifor ethnic group lives in the extended family system, in large mud houses formerly built with clay and roofed with bamboo and grass (Joshua Project, 2022). However, houses are made from cement blocks and aluminium sheet roofing in recent times. When their sons come of age, they leave their father’s house to begin their family. They are usually farmers who engage in some crop and animal farming on a subsistence basis to cater for themselves and their families. This serves as

a source of income through the sale and exchange of surplus food on their market which takes every fifth day, with the use of cowries as a medium of exchange even in this contemporary times.

Missionary activities among the Birifor and some parts of the north commenced around 1961, with the Protestant Evangelical denomination (Joshua Project, 2022). In 1993, the New Testament was translated into the northern Birifor dialect which is still in use. It is estimated that twenty percent of this group are Christians and are located around Tuna, Bole, Nakpole, Kalba, Kulmasa, and other places within the Savanna region.

The Birifor people are predominantly farmers. Mostly, their harvests are unable to feed the people all year since farming activities only last for six months during which there is rain. Though they are geographically dispersed in Ghana, the Birifor ethnic group share strong socio-cultural bonds. This explains why their rituals, like funerals and mourning patterns, remain the same.



Source: Joshua Project ([https://joshuaproject.net/people\\_groups/10869/GH](https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/10869/GH))

#### *The Concept of Funeral Among the Birifor Ethnic Group*

Nukunya (2003) postulates, that saying a proper goodbye to the Birifor is as important as losing your breath. Thus, attending a funeral to say how sorry they are for the loss of a loved one, family member or friend is critical. Therefore, to them, funerals are very effective at bringing people together. According to Atinga (2006), the demise and burial of a family member in times past were usually preceded by an announcement, where messengers were sent to deliver the news to all family members. This is because they were not living together within one geographical place. This is attributable to their extended family concept of living. Due to prevalent economic hardships in these contemporary times, in addition to the search for greener pastures, depletion of soil nutrients, scarcity of fertile and arable land for farming, the once held value of communal living has paved the way for isolated independent living. This is borne out of the need to survive on one’s own terms. This however has not affected the premium they place on funerals. With the advent of mass media such as the internet, television, and specifically radio,

information dissemination is much easier when one wants to announce the demise of a family member or loved one.

Therefore, the announcement of the demise of a Birifor on the radio is accorded all seriousness and immediacy. This implies that irrespective of one's location, activity, or engagement, they will automatically respond to it, prepare and set off for the funeral irrespective of the distance, and impromptu. Mostly, people walk long distances on foot when their pocket does not support the journey by transport and are prepared to spend more than a week at the funeral grounds even at the expense of their work.

Osei-Bonsu (2005) in analysing funeral celebration and the dynamics among ethnic groups agreed that in contemporary times, funeral celebrations have assumed a different tandem and there have been constant modifications to it during the last 50 years. Pobe (1996), agreeing with this assertion further notes that the mode and period within which a "body" is buried, usually is dictated by "cultural, religious, economic, political, and social differences or factors. One's affinity to a particular cult or social group, clan association, degree of initiation into a secret or ritual society, rank or status such as chief, sex, age, achievements, ethno-social status like criminal, hero, villain, and the circumstance leading to the demise, such as suicide, murder, and accident" all determine the funeral proceedings. This is not different from what the Birifor do. To them, dead bodies are usually buried within a few hours of their demise in most cases, except on a few occasions when custom demands otherwise due to lack of mortuary and other factors. There is a general belief among the Birifor on how a dead person is handled which goes a long way to affect the living. The obvious question then is, how are funerals performed among the Birifor, and to what extent does it affect church activities?

#### *Funeral Celebration by The Birifor Ethnic Group*

Mulago (1991) asserts that funeral rituals are categorized as the last stage of rites of passage. Funeral rites include burial which serves as a gateway between the world of the living and the dead. Thus, funeral rites are meant to process a human being, upon his death, into a supernatural entity. They serve as a conduit between the two orders of being, the living being and the dead.

Unlike the Akans and in other jurisdictions where the corpse can be preserved for months or even years at the morgue depending on the family, and the circumstances at hand, the Birifor usually bury within hours after the demise of a person, mainly due to the absence of a morgue and cost implications.

The absence or non-preservation of the corpse in the Birifor tradition and by extension other tribes in the Savanna Region, compels them to perform burial services a few hours after the demise of a person, and this makes their funeral service time-bound, which presupposes the reason why church member can leave the church house to attend a funeral. This is affirmed by Kawuro (2022) in an interview. To him, the situation is so because of cost implications concerning the preservation at

the morgue, and they believe that the money can be used for other purposes. For instance, some families bury their deceased loved ones by wrapping them in clothes which is acceptable where there are no funds to purchase a coffin or when the family thinks there is an equally important use for the money.

#### *Pre-Burial Rites and Processes in the Birifor Tradition*

##### *The Mourners*

On a typical sad day when someone "kicks the bucket", the mourners on reaching the house of the deceased, enter the house in a tearful procession. They immediately connect on an emotional level with the bereaved by hugging them. This way they also commiserate with the fellow. One key aspect of the Birifor with regards to their funeral is for a mourner to physically see the dead person before burial. This helps satisfy their curiosity and to confirm the bad news themselves, for anything short of this means they have been left out of the funeral. This part of the funeral celebration, according to Kawuro (2022), is critical to a Birifor and has become part of their custom. He notes further that the love and support one gives to a bereaved Birifor is more appreciated than any other support on any day since their culture places a premium on helping the bereaved family mourn their dead ones.

##### *Family Members*

In some instances, family members hold the corpse close to themselves to show and demonstrate to the mourners how they dearly loved the deceased before the corpse is brought outside to be laid in state. To the Birifor, only people who lived well in society are laid in state under a shade for public viewing. Children and people who led questionable lifestyles are not laid in state.

##### *Pre-Burial Activities*

The pre-burial events also include laying in a state the body of the deceased at the events ground of the community. This, to the Birifor tradition, is key and confers an honorary position on the dead. It again proves that the deceased was valued in society. Usually, the corpse is laid on a mat (formerly the traditional lazy chair was used for this purpose), with close relatives sitting by, then mourners are allowed to go view and pay their last respect. According to Borbala (2022), this is done amidst drumming with their xylophone (*dwomoro*), dancing, and singing of local dirges to entertain the mourners. Their dance requires one to flap their hands like a bird in flight, jump, and shake the whole body. This aspect of the pre-burial mostly can last for a whole night and the burial is done the next morning.

As said earlier, a funeral to the Birifor is a destined right that needs to be accorded to the dead by the living. However, unlike other jurisdictions where mourners attending a funeral are well-taken care of with regards to where they sleep, the food they eat, the support they provide to the bereaved family both in-kind and cash, etc., the deceased family of the Birifors

do not take care of any mourner attending at their funeral. Mourners at Birifor funerals fend for themselves and sleep in open places, sometimes on the bare ground. They are not given any official recognition or meal at the funeral just to show one's commitment to the dead and the burial ceremony (Num, 2022).

Another interesting aspect of the pre-burial activities is the opening of a book for collecting money from all mourners (in the community and indigenes within and without) to defray the cost. This book, according to their tradition, is brought out anytime someone dies to verify the fellow's contribution to funerals and that of their relations before a decision is made by the elders as to whether they will perform the burial for the deceased or otherwise.

The pre-burial also has the acceptance and use of cowries which has great significance in their funeral rites. The cowry in Birifor tradition is a symbol of a family's worth, and it is required for the official announcement and commencement of befitting funeral rites of a deceased family member or loved one. According to an interviewee, upon the demise of a family member or loved one, the cowries are what are used to officially announce the death before the elders. The cowries are what is also used to pay the people who play the xylophone (*dwomoro*). Therefore, if a family does not have cowries and a member dies, they have to go and borrow, which becomes a disgrace. The tradition, however, demands that the cowries<sup>1</sup> given to the "*dwomoro*" players are exchanged for money, and the family then keeps the cowries as a symbol of pride and dignity.

#### *Funeral Celebration and Church Activities Among The Birifor Ethnic Group*

The Greek word in the New Testament for our English word church is *ekklesia*. It is derived from the verb *ekkaleo*. The compound *ek* means "out", and *kaleo* means "to call or summon." Thus, the literal meaning is "to call out." However, Ryrie (1999) argues for "called together" instead of "called out". Both explanations complement each other in the sense that once Christians have been called out from the world, they have been called together as a family. Anyone who is called out from the lot belongs to a family with shared values, principles, and culture. Once they accept Christ, they don't drop their culture, for they would cease to live (Asamoah, 2020). The "called out" people or the church while holding on to their culture welcome that of the new faith. Hence, living in two cultures—the family and church. That is to say, a Birifor person who has accepted Jesus Christ lives in the cultures of the family and that of the church. This makes them attend the activities of their family as well as the church, for they are found in them. But it becomes very difficult for them to perform activities when they happen concurrently in each culture, for they choose one ahead of the other. And their choice is influenced by the one with less disgrace, which is

the activities of the family. For example, when there is a funeral celebration in the family and a Christmas convention by the church, the Birifor Christian will choose a funeral celebration ahead of the Christmas convention. The Birifor people perceive Christians who chose funeral celebration over Christmas convention as not spiritual, and likewise, those who chose Christmas convention over that of the funeral celebration as people who have severed relations with the family. So, in other not to be seen as the odd one in the family, Birifor Christians choose the celebration of funeral ahead of church activities, leaving the church to suffer. This is affirmed by Kawuro (2022) who orates that the Birifors who are now Christians like himself, find themselves in a dilemma anytime funeral celebration coincides with church activities. Birifor Christians are compelled to attend a funeral for the fear of the people labelling one as wicked and heartless for attending church service at the expense of a funeral. They are of the belief that they [Birifor Christians] can go back to church after the funeral. "Those who defy the odds and attend church service at the expense of funeral bear the consequence and sometimes are insulted and branded as insensitive to the plight of the bereaved family."

#### *Effects Of Funeral Celebration on Church Activities In The Church Of Pentecost*

The Church of Pentecost (CoP) is a vibrant Pentecostal church that is aggressive in gospel evangelism and church planting with a presence in 136 countries around the world, and headquartered worldwide in Accra, the capital of Ghana, West Africa (The Church of Pentecost, 2022). The CoP is firmly established in the area under study and its environs with over 80 churches planted in communities within the study area.

From the discussions so far, we have gotten to know that funeral celebrations among the Birifors are demanding and have a severe consequence on church activities. The next section of this paper will discuss in detail some of the effects of funeral activities on the church:

First, funeral celebrations among the Birifors make it difficult for Birifor Christians to attend church services. The activities before and during the funeral celebration require the family relations of the deceased person to be around. For example, the laying in state of the dead person with close relatives sitting by makes it difficult for a Birifor Christian who is mourning a family member to leave the corpse behind for church meetings. At best, what they could do is to attend church meetings when the laying in state of the corpse is over. This is because the quest to fulfill their family and social responsibilities makes it difficult for most of them to attend programmes organized by the church. They do so to affirm Nketia's (2010) assertion that every effort is required to make a funeral event a memorable one. However, this is affecting church attendance, for members who will participate in the church programmes finds it difficult to sever their family relations at the expense of the church's programme.

<sup>1</sup> Hundred (100) cowries are now equivalent to Ten Ghana Cedis

In addition to the effect of low attendance, Mulago (1991) notes that the current modifications to funeral celebrations also contribute to the non-attendance of members to church services when it coincides with the demise of a loved one. This is corroborated by Nsia (2022) who reckons that funeral celebration among the Birifors keeps Birifor Christians from attending church activities or meetings. In explaining why a family member of a deceased person must be part of the funeral celebration, Nsia (2022) discloses that sometimes family members hold the corpse close to themselves to show and demonstrate to the mourners how they dearly loved the deceased before the corpse is brought outside to be laid in state. In this case, all Birifor Christians are expected to be present. Failure to attend would have meant that such a family member did not love the deceased which will paint a bad picture. This is because embedded in the culture of the people is the need to see the dead person before burial at all costs irrespective of distance, time, and cost (Olukpona *et al*, 1991). For this reason, showing one's love to a deceased person leads to one absenting themselves from church meetings.

Another effect funeral celebration has on church activities in the CoP is the challenge for members to participate fully in church activities; they tend to have divided attention even at church. Howell and Paris (2011), in 'the metaphor of culture' affirm that as a fish cannot stay in any place other than in water or river, in like manner, no person can live outside their culture, for they will cease to exist. This makes it difficult for Birifor Christians to be separated from the culture. Hence, when even at church, their attention seems to be on funeral celebration activities. This even makes it difficult for Birifor Christians to fully participate in church activities, for some wish church meetings had come to an end. This brings to the fore the question of reverence for God and one's understanding of Christian worship among the Birifor. And according to Sewornu (2022), it is a real challenge for the Birifor Christians who love to serve Jesus Christ as seen in the joy they exhibit in their dance and other art of worship. The attachment they [Birifor people] have for their culture and clan makes it obligatory for them to attend and this poses a threat to the church when the death toll increases. Such situations compel the Birifor people to travel long distances for more than four days due to their shared lineage with the deceased.

### III. CONCLUSION

We have known from the discussions so far that funeral celebrations have a great effect on church activities, especially when members of the church are family members of the deceased person. When such happens, church attendance drops, some members don't attend church at all, and others, even while at church they tend to have divided attention for church service and funerals. This puts the Birifor Christians in a dilemma. On one hand, they desire to give their total attention and commitment to their God, especially during worship hours, and on the other hand, their culture also occasionally demands same. What then should Birifor

Christians do? The study found out that there is the need for the church to be actively involved in the funerals of members or their loved ones. If this is effectively done, the people will come to see the church as extension of their families. Funerals should be incorporated, and adopted where practicable to help them get a fine balance between serving God and practicing their culture.

### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

To mitigate these effects, the study recommends that the church continues to attend the funeral celebration of all their members and use it to their advantage. Since members of the church are family members of the Birifor tribe who are sympathizing with their deceased, it will be expedient for the church to welcome all funeral and celebrate it within the confines of the church's activities to get the involvement of members in church activities as well as funeral celebrations. This will not make the church or its members to be recognized as people who don't cherish traditions. Sewornu (2022) and Nsia (2022) add that the church can also send the church service to the funeral grounds [say in the form of evangelistic activities], which the community members will gladly accept.

Finding themselves in the culture of the people and that of the church do not make Birifor Christians downplay the importance of culture at the expense of church activities and vice versa. Rather, they accept their culture and work along with the church's culture too. For this to be achieved, the church must accept the Birifor tribe's culture, especially those that do not contradict the Scriptures, to tailor their programmes for proper contextualization of funeral celebrations to eliminate the vices.

The church must also engage themselves in educating the church members on the need to respect the culture and serve the Lord at the same time. However, cultures that are not in tandem with the gospel or Scriptures must be reconsidered to avoid religious syncretism. This is supported by Nsia (2022) who opines that the church must intensify its education on the need to make a clear distinction between culture (funeral celebration) and church activities to help church leaders and members to know what to do at any given point in time. This will bring about a perfect balance between attending the funeral celebration and church activities.

Lastly, other churches like mainline churches and Pentecostals/Charismatics facing similar challenges should adopt this proposal for use to ensure that their church members, while remaining faithful to their culture in matters of funeral celebrations, engage in church activities.

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