



PASTORAL LETTER

From Archbishop of Church of Uganda

On

“Keeping the faith: Ending Teenage Pregnancy”

1 Thessalonians 4:5. Each one of you should control your own body and live in holiness not on lustful passion like pagan who do not know God.

1 Corinthian 6:19-20 do you not know that your bodies are temple of the Holy Spirit. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

Vision

A Faster Growing Sustainable Christ-centred Church'

Mission

To proclaim the Gospel in accordance with Christ's commission to make disciples of all nations

CORE VALUES

- **Godliness**
- **Faithfulness to Holy Scriptures**
- **Integrity**
- **Selfless Service**
- **Unconditional love**
- **Unity in Christ**
- **Upholding Biblical family values**

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Preamble

Brothers and Sisters,

I bring you greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Brethren, by our traditional standards and norms, it is considered failed parenting on our part for our daughters to become pregnant before marriage or while still teenagers. We must acknowledge that the resulting shame and difficulty are not easily forgotten in the community. Consequently, the education of a pregnant girl-child quickly comes to a painful end, rendering the future prospects of such a child very dim. In addition, these pregnant teenage girls face a higher risk of long-term health consequences during pregnancy and childbirth, including high rates of maternal death and obstetric fistula.

While we the adults continue arguing over issues of sexuality, the Teens are getting pregnant. Our continued silence and complacency coupled with moral decadency is responsible for this unbecoming trend of increased teenage pregnancies. Additionally, child marriage, lower educational levels, higher rates of poverty, inadequate basic education in the fundamentals of sexual and reproductive health has also compounded the challenge.

On a daily basis, we come face to face with the challenge of trying to guide and protect our youth as they deal with sex and related issues. We acknowledge that our young people must learn to navigate peer pressure and other societal influences that too often lead to early sexual activity and result in too-early pregnancy and parenthood.

Brethren, today, we also have teenage mothers, who often live in a poverty-stricken household, who contribute to having babies they are incapable of raising responsibly. This cycle of hardship and poverty is perpetuated because a large percentage of the daughters of teen moms end up becoming teen moms themselves. The world has tried so many different solutions to remedy this situation one of which is the roll out of sexuality education framework in Uganda.

Fellow Ugandans and people of God, this is not any one's problem but ours. We reap the consequences with our inaction and complacency. These young people especially the girls pay too high a price when we do nothing about their challenges. But most importantly, these teen mothers are our fellow human beings.

Therefore, when we the faith leaders and parents fail to communicate with teens about their sexuality and pregnancy prevention-related topics, we create a spiritual and cultural void. This gap allows other

influences such as movies, soap operas, talk and reality shows, music videos, and sexually explicit songs to guide our teens' sexual conduct. These outside and often uncensored sources bombard our youth with conflicting messages about their sexuality.

Let us therefore not love with words or tongues but with actions and in truth. As people of God, one way we can "love with actions" is by protecting our vulnerable young girls. Teens want to hear from us, so now is the time for us to break the silence and begin talking about issues related to pregnancy prevention with them.

As your spiritual leaders, we call upon all leaders, parents and guardians to educate, mentor, and guide our children so that they develop healthy relationships, preserve their sexual purity, and prevent both unplanned pregnancies and the spread of sexually transmitted infections.

We also acknowledge that when the expectant teen mother's situation becomes physically obvious, it often becomes a

center of gossip even in our faith institutions. We have stigmatized these young people without any intention of becoming a part of the solution. Many times young women drop out of houses of worship as their bodies change shape so that they can avoid the stigma and guilt. They don't want to be the focus of gossip and scorn. Thus gossip has destroyed our ability to minister to these young people. We therefore call upon all of us to undertake the following actions:

- **To the young people:** We ask you to abstain from sex and focus on staying in school. This option will help you and your families realize your dreams by preventing you from risks that come with early pregnancy and its related complications including dropping out of school
- Be open and involve us including your parents/Guardians and other family members in your decisions about relationships and sexuality and the challenges you face
- **To parents/Guardians:** Let us openly and honestly engage these young people in conversations or dialogues on spiritual values, dating, relationships and sexuality including issues related to teen pregnancy prevention.
- **To faith leaders:** As your leader, I call upon all of you to oppose and denounce any act of forced and early marriage that involves teenage girls. Let's commit to engage our congregations and communities to discourage this practice. Never shall any one of us preside over such unlawful and unGodly acts.
- **We call upon all faith institutions to provide** a safe environment where sexuality, intimacy, and relationships can be discussed openly and honestly using our youth leaders
- Let's take the spiritual and sexual development of every young male and female in our congregations our daily responsibility.

Thank you

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stanley Ntagali', written in a cursive style.

The Most Rev. Stanley Ntagali
ARCHBISHOP OF CHURCH OF UGANDA