



**THE RT. REV. OLUBUNMI A. AKINLADE, B.Sc., Dip. Th.  
Diocesan Bishop**

## **2023 PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS**

### **GREETINGS**

Here we are gathered at the opening ceremonies of the 2023 synod. We thank God for His mercies toward us since the last synod. The fact that we can gather is reason enough to give thanks. The Bible says it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed because his compassions fail not (Lamentation 3:22).

Fathers in God, here present: Mama Ife, Mrs. Nkechi Akinlade, our distinguished legal officers presided over by the Chancellor, Justice Olayinka Afolabi, royal fathers, synod delegates, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the 2023 Synod of our great diocese.

This year's synod comes with mixed feelings as we remember some of us whom the Lord has called since the last synod. We remember our diocesan financial adviser, Prince Dokun Adeyemo, and the former bursar, Mr. Shina Ejiyode, among others. These people worked tirelessly for the growth of the diocese. Can we all rise for a moment of silence in honour of all the faithful departed? May their souls rest in peace.

### **RESOURCE PERSONS**

Let me express my sincere gratitude to our resource persons chosen for this year's synod: The Rt. Revd. Festus Oyetola Sobanke, Diocesan Bishop of Omu-Aran Diocese, will preach at the closing Thanksgiving service tomorrow.

The Very Rev. Samson Awoyode, the Dean of this Cathedral and Synod Secretary, preached this morning at the opening service. (He will be retiring after this synod, precisely May 6, 2023).

The Ven. Olabode Osunniyi, Director of Administration and Vicar of St. Peter's Anglican Church, Iremo, led the bible study this morning.

We are very grateful to have you minister to us at this year's synod, and we pray that God will replenish you. The detailed curriculum vitae of each of them is provided in the appendix.

## **SINCE LAST SYNOD**

### **Bishop's Car**

It was during the synod Thanksgiving last year that a motion was moved to raise N10,000,000.00 (ten million Naira only) to buy the diocesan a bus. We were able to raise the money during the year, and a Toyota Tacoma double-cab pickup truck was bought for the mission work of the diocesan. As you are aware, this diocese has over one hundred churches in rural and remote farm settlements across the diocese. This is the reason why we switched from buying a bus to buying an utility truck that can withstand the terrain. Let me use this opportunity to thank you all, especially our churches, for your generous contribution towards this purchase. I must also commend the efforts put forth by the clergy of the diocese in raising the money.

Also, during the year under review, Ife Sons and Daughters in Lagos took it upon themselves to raise money to the tune of N32,500,000.00 (Thirty-two million, five hundred thousand Naira), and they purchased a Toyota 4Runner (2021) model for the use of the Bishop.

We are most grateful to all who contributed this money towards the purchase of the two befitting vehicles for the office of the Bishop of Ife. God will multiply the source of the funds many times over.

## **BUILDING PROJECTS**

### **Asipa Toilet**

We completed this toilet complex meant for the use of those who rent the hall at Asipa Camp. It was completed and dedicated in December 2022.

### **Asipa New Hostel Block – Olayinka Hostel**

This project has been ongoing for a while now, and we are happy to report that it has now been completed and dedicated in April 2023. Currently, it is being furnished. When the furnishing is complete, it will accommodate an additional 100 people.

### **Arode Church Building**

This was another ongoing project we reported on during the last synod. It was completed and dedicated in December 2022.

## **Yekemi Church Project**

This was a project I inherited when I assumed office over seven years ago. It was sponsored by Prof. Wale Olawoyin, SAN. It has now been completed and dedicated in April 2023. We have now named the church **Gabriel Olawoyin Memorial Anglican Church, Yekemi**, in memory of the late Prof. Gabriel Olawoyin, SAN, former Chancellor of our Diocese.

## **Aye Obafemi Church**

This church building project has been on for a long time. It was built by members of the church, and we were invited to dedicate it in January 2023

## **Joseph of Nazareth Moro**

This is another project that I inherited when I assumed office over seven years ago. We encouraged the members to work harder at finishing the church project, and we were able to dedicate the church building in January 2023.

## **Elerin Church**

When we first visited this church many years ago, we met an incomplete project that was more or less abandoned. We encouraged this remote community and provided them with some funds, which they were able to use in completing the project. It was dedicated in February 2023.

## **Lagaba church**

A few years ago, we were informed that members of this new remote farming community wanted to build a church and

needed assistance. They contributed money and bought a plot of land; the diocese assisted in buying another plot. The building project started in 2021, and with their contributions and some help from the diocese, we were able to build the church. We dedicated it in April 2023.

### **Apamu church**

Members of this rural community had started this project a while ago, but they encountered some problems along the way, which they have now surmounted. We are planning to dedicate this church by May 2023.

### **Heritage Chapel**

We have reached the roofing stage of this project, but we lack funds for the roofing. Your kind support in achieving this goal will be appreciated.

### **Divine Royal College project**

As reported in the Bishop's Charge of last year on the efforts being made by the diocese towards providing a hall that can sit WAEC candidates in the school as well as the provision of science laboratories for the school, I am happy to report that work on the building project has reached the roofing stage, which should have been completed by the time you read this address. We are equally working on a motorable road to access the school directly from the main road. The curve on the said road has already been constructed. It is our prayer that the project will have been completed by this time next year. A new

recruitment strategy has also been looked at to boost the number of students at the school.

## **MISSION**

We held our annual mission week in March 2023. During the week, all priests serving within the cities of Ife, Origbo, and Ifetedo were sent for a week to rural communities for evangelism. They sleep, teach, counsel, and conduct revival services in our rural churches for the week. I was able to visit forty rural churches within that period. The testimonies received were encouraging.

Our members in those rural communities always look forward to our coming every year.

Some of our church buildings in these rural communities have fallen apart and require urgent reconstruction. We use this medium to ask for your partnership in rebuilding these churches. No amount is too big or small.

Another major challenge faced in these rural communities is water. Many still rely on streams for water, which dry up at certain times of the year. You can partner with us to sink a borehole for such communities.

More missionaries are required because each Evangelist covers two or three rural churches, some of which are quite far apart. We pay N20,000.00 per month per Evangelist and provide motorcycles for them. We appeal to you to please sponsor an evangelist on the field by paying the monthly stipend

(N20,000.00) and, or, buy a motorcycle for them, which now costs N480,000.00.

When I became Diocesan, I raised some money towards buying more motorcycles. We were able to buy about ten then. Those who got motorcycles pay them back gradually, monthly, and the money is set aside for buying additional motorcycles. Through this method, we have bought several other motorcycles over the years. The funds we have for purchasing new motorcycles have been depleted due to inflation. When we first raised the funds, motorcycles cost around N150,000.00, as opposed to the N480,000 we paid for the last set in January. This is why we are making this fresh appeal for help.

### **Church Planting**

We have just purchased two plots of land for the church we planted at Awolumate last year. We look forward to the building project starting as soon as possible.

### **3-Day Crusade**

The diocese held a 3-day Crusade and Ministers Conference in November 2022. It was tagged “In the Name of Jesus.” The Rt. Rev. Foreman Nedison of the Diocese of Jalingo (Taraba State) led the crusade. It was an opportunity to cry to the Lord over Ile-Ife and our country, Nigeria. We enjoyed the fellowship of other notable men of God in the land during the period. We are planning to make it an annual event to round up activities for the year.



## **Media Evangelism**

We have intensified our media efforts by purchasing more equipment that will allow them to function better. Also, we now have more volunteers who work with the core media team. The result is that we can cover more events. Our weekly Bible study series continues in Yoruba and English on both Crown FM and Orisun FM. This series is also published on our various social media platforms. Also, the weekly Sunday message published on our social media platforms is getting stronger.

We introduced beginning-of-month prophetic blessings on the 1st day of each month on our social media platforms. It usually lasts about two to three minutes. It has become very popular among those who follow us on social media. Some of our churches rebroadcast it to their members during services.

We thank the family of the late Prince Dokun Adeyemo and another friend in Lagos who assisted in sponsoring this department.

## **Crowd Funding**

This initiative, which is a laudable project within the diocese, is no longer generating enough money. Every member of the diocese is expected to contribute N500.00 every month to this fund. I want to encourage us to please be part of this fund.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES**

### **OUR MEN**

Monthly fellowships and other occasional activities of the Christian Men's Fellowship (CMF) were held across parishes and archdeaconries in the Diocese throughout the year. Reports from members in the Diocese suggested that the fellowship has been quite impactful in the lives of men and in the church as a whole.

To the glory of God, the maiden edition of the CMF Conference was held on Saturday, January 14, 2023.

Also, efforts are being made to actualize the production of Vol. 2 of the CMF teaching manuals. To this effect, the draft committee has been inaugurated, and they have since commenced the exercise. The priests in the Diocese are also appreciated for their support of the fellowship thus far. As we all strive hard to bring our men back to the church, it is crucial for the priests to show more love and commitment to the growth and sustainability of the fellowship in the Diocese.

### **WOMEN AND GIRLS ORGANIZATION**

**Action & Outreach Unit** held visits to the prison, widows and widowers' seminars, essay competitions, visits to the school for the handicapped.

#### **Mothers' Union Christmas Party**

The 2022 M.U. Party was exceptional, as needy women were empowered with a token cash gift and raw food packs for the

Christmas season. This was consolidated with performances from various archdeaconries.

### **Prayer & Spirituality Unit**

The annual prayer conference was attended by women in the diocese as they came together to call on the name of the Lord in prayer. It was a refreshing time.

### **Girls'/Ladies' Guild Unit**

Their programmes during the year included the Rededication Services of the Girls and Ladies' Guild, the Ladies' Guild Valentine Programme, the annual Girls' Guild Retreat as well as the Ladies' Guild Retreat, the annual Girls' Guild Competition, and the annual Ladies Guild Competition.

### **The Publication Unit**

The latest edition of the Ile-Ayo Magazine was themed "A HOME BUILDER" (Prov. 14:1). The magazine was launched at the 2022 women's conference. The magazine is filled with inspiring and edifying messages that will serve as building blocks for the home.

### **Oyere Farm Project**

The Oyere farm project faces the challenge of tenants not paying their rent as and when due. Some of the tenants are paying their rent when it is due. We pray for wisdom to manage the situation.

## **Hadassah Conferences and Multipurpose Centre, Arubidi**

We thank God for our determined Mama Ife, who will not relent and give up on her taste for the best. Millions of Naira have been spent on ensuring that all necessary amenities are in place. A 80KVA generator has been installed; also, exclusive chairs and tables were purchased for the place. The place is now ready for use, and we implore you all to patronise the centre.

## **OUR YOUTHS**

Despite the prevailing hardship and unfavourable circumstances in our country, the diocesan youth were able to participate and engage in some notable activities as enumerated below:

### **Diocesan Youth Service**

There were two diocesan youth services last year in the months of March (St. Paul's Ayegbaju, Ile-Ife) and August 2022 (St. Jude's Moro). The services featured youth-friendly themes with special live interviews of key role models to encourage and empower the youths to live worthy lives for the Lord and develop properly in their career, mental, physical, and marital lives.

### **Mentorship Masterclass**

This was introduced to create a forum for intentional mentorship for the teeming young population of the Diocese. It is a monthly programme that started in March 2022, and it has also attracted some other youths of varying backgrounds.

## **Youths Participation in Diocesan Activities**

Our youth serve as choristers, ushers, etc. during the diocesan seminars, and they also feature as the Boys Brigade during special diocesan programmes. There are plans to continue to facilitate this so that our youths are encouraged to participate in all the diocesan activities.

## **Procurement of UTME Forms**

The diocese obtained a total of 44 UTME forms for some of the youths preparing for tertiary institution admission. The youth executives assisted and guided them through the registration processes.

## **Peter Akinola Foundation**

The Diocese is currently sponsoring two candidates at the Peter Akinola Foundation Youth Centre for Industrial Training, Abeokuta. In addition to the full school fees, the Diocese also procured some needed training tools (laptop) for the candidates.

## **Sponsorship for Talented Youths**

The Diocese has embarked on free production and promotion for talented youths within the Diocese using its studio in Bishop's Court, Parakin. This project covers youths who have original compositions of songs, playlets, spoken words, and other art works. Their talents are being developed and nurtured so that they have notable works to showcase.

## **Challenges**

The incessant closure of the universities due to industrial actions by the unions has affected the planning of some programmes by the Directorate. The attendance of the youths at programmes was not very encouraging. The cashless policy and state of politics also introduced a lot of instabilities. These factors have affected attendance at youth programmes. We hope for better conditions soon so that we can have efficient planning and implementation of all the cardinal programmes of the Directorate.

## **IBADAN ECCLESIASTICAL PROVINCE**

Following the retirement of Baba and Mama Okubadejo last year, His Grace, The Most Rev. Abiodun Taiwo Olaoye, was elected as the new Archbishop for the Province. He has been presented and has resumed fully with the support of his wife, Mrs. Tessy Olaoye. We wish Baba and Mama Olaoye a fulfilling tenure in office. An investment company for the province was formed last year, and all dioceses within the province was given the opportunity to buy shares in the rights issue that took place last year. The Diocese of Ife invested ₦3,000,000.00. We will start receiving returns next month, May DV. Your Bishop is the Chairman/Managing Director of the investment company.

## **OSUN STATE**

We give honour and glory to Almighty God for His protection over us in Osun State despite threats to peaceful coexistence during the various elections that held within the period under review; God was able to avert bloodshed in the state.

We congratulate the newly elected Governor of the state, His Excellency, Governor Ademola Adeleke, and his deputy, His Excellency Kola Adewusi (an indigene of Ife). We pray that the good Lord will support them in the tasks associated with the office.

Our members, both retired and serving civil servants, informed us that the new government has started paying arrears of salary owed by the previous government and has promised to pay the backlog of gratuities and pensions owed the retirees in the state without delay. We applaud the effort of the Government on this and call upon the Governor not to relent on his promise made to the suffering citizens of the state to be the light that will brighten their darkness.

I want to renew my call on the government for the completion of Agahun Road, Ile-Ife; up to Garage Olode; and the reconstruction of the road around Arubidi Area, which is daily getting worse.

I also call upon the government to please release to us our school located by the side of our church, The Cathedral Church of St. Philip, Ayetoro, Ile-Ife, taken over by the government years ago. The school has become dilapidated since the roof

was blown off. We will be grateful for the quick response of the government on this school issue.

We sincerely commend your Excellency, the Governor of Osun State, for the relative peace being enjoyed in the state and encourage you to let the peace remain permanent for the progress of the state during your time.

## **STATE OF THE NATION – NIGERIA**

### **Nigeria at crossroads**

We thank God for our dear country, Nigeria. It is only by His grace that the country is still standing, judging by the challenges that we have faced as a country and as individual families and citizens.

An appraisal of the current situation is obvious: things are difficult for the average Nigerian. The previous couple of months have been particularly demanding as a fallout of the currency change and its attendant complications. The earning capacity of the average Nigerian was poor before; to further compound this situation, the hard-earned money is not even accessible. Hapless Nigerians have queued endlessly to access cash that is either not available or dispensed in trickles, far below what is needed. Unscrupulous bank workers and POS operators also used the opportunity to exploit fellow Nigerians. Businesses that depend on cash transactions either folded up or suffered significant losses, leading to hunger, anger, and frustration. Despite the benefits of a cashless economy, the timing was wrong, the implementation was faulty, and the needed infrastructure to support it was not



adequate. Even when Nigerians tried to do electronic money transfers, there were significant numbers of failed transactions.

Nigerians have also grappled with petrol scarcity, which has refused to abate. This has added to the travails of the average Nigerian, leading to a high cost of living and further driving the populace towards hunger and deprivation. It is therefore not surprising that Nigerians are still leaving for greener pastures in droves and “Japa” is no longer a joke. Seven out of 10 Nigerians are willing to leave their country if given the opportunity, according to a report published in 2021 by the Africa Polling Institute. Critical sectors such as health, education, and the banking sector are losing the cream of their professionals to other countries that have better security and higher pay with the prospect of living a better life. The protracted strikes in the education sector and poor motivation in the other sectors have further depleted the skilled manpower needed to develop the country. If the trend continues without a check, it is not going to augur well for the country.

We had the much-anticipated election cycles on the 25th of February and the 18th of March, 2023. The deployment of technologies such as BVAS and IREV and assurances from INEC and the government that the process would be transparent, credible, and without violence raised expectations. Nigerians, especially young Nigerians, registered massively, and on election day they trooped out to exercise their franchise. Unfortunately, the elections did not live up to expectations in

some states that witnessed voter intimidation, snatching of ballot boxes, violence, loss of lives, and other such anomalies. Our reputation as the model of democracy in Africa was damaged as the infractions were witnessed by election observers and the international community. Despite the imperfections witnessed during the elections, certain lessons have been learned by the electorate and the political class that should help further refine our democratic experience. Firstly, politicians are now realising that it is no longer business as usual; the voting populace now knows that they can hold leaders accountable and will not hesitate to remove nonperforming leaders irrespective of their party affiliations. Secondly, the young people realise that they have a say in how their country is governed and have determined to use democratic means to achieve their objective. The unprecedented performance of certain politicians at the last elections is testimony that there is a movement that is ready to challenge the status quo.

What the country needs to do now is reset and reboot so we can make progress and gradually get out of our current quagmire. The political class must live up to their promises and deliver good governance to the people. The newly elected leaders at every level need to hit the ground running when they are sworn in. The country is currently on life support and needs intensive care. There is no time to waste. There is a need to address the economic challenges and harness our vast human and natural resources to develop the country. New ways must be devised to address our problems, be they economic, security, educational, health, or infrastructure related.

Our democratic process must be strengthened. INEC needs to address and correct some of the systemic failures witnessed during the last elections. The off-cycle gubernatorial elections are going to start soon, and the electoral umpire must perform beyond reproach to justify the confidence and the resources dedicated to the commission. There is no more room for excuses. With the plethora of court cases related to the last elections, the judiciary must expeditiously adjudicate so the country can move forward. Failure of the judiciary in this regard will spell doom for our democracy, God forbid. The African continent, and indeed the whole world, is watching us. Nigeria has been tremendously endowed with arable land, favourable weather, and prodigious human and natural resources. If we can manage what God has blessed us with, Nigeria would surely be a great country. This is not too much to ask for.

God bless Nigeria.

## **EVENTS SINCE 2022 SYNOD**

### **DEDICATIONS**

- 10/09/2022 Dedication of All Saints Anglican Church Building, Arode.
- 29/01/2023 Diocesan Women's Guild rededication service/ thanksgiving, held at the Cathedral Church of St Philip Ayetoro Ile-Ife.
- 30/01/2023 Dedication of a church building at Joseph of Nazareth Anglican Church Moro.
- 31/01/2023 Dedication of a church building at St. Philip's Anglican Church Aye-Obafemi
- 27/02/2023 Dedication of a church building at St. Peter's Anglican Church Elerin, Edunabon

### **FOUNDATION LAYING**

- 29/07/2022 Foundation laying of St. Paul's Anglican Kiddies Academy, Ayegbaju, Ile-Ife.
- 23/08/2022 Foundation laying of St. Stephen's Anglican Church Vicarage Ajidara Ondo Road, Ile-Ife.

### **CONFIRMATION**

- 24/07/2022 Confirmation service of Moro Archdeaconry, held at St. Jude's Anglican Church Moro.

### **INVESTITURES, ORDINATION AND COLLATION**

- 14/05/2022 Investiture of Chiefs held at CAMAC, Igboya
- 15/05/2022 Chieftaincy service for Baba Ijo of St. Paul's Anglican Church Ayegbaju, held at the same church.
- 10/07/2022 Trinity Ordination, held at the Cathedral Church of St. Philip Ayetoro, Ile-Ife.

- 26/11/2022 Investiture of Chiefs, held at Christ Anglican Church Iponrin.
- 27/11/2022 Investiture of Chiefs, held at St. Stephen's Anglican Church Ajidara Ondo Road, Ile-Ife
- 28/11/2022 Investiture of Chiefs, held at VAOMAC Edunabon.
- 21/01/2023 Investiture of Chiefs, held at the Cathedral Church of St Philip Ayetoro, Ile-Ife
- 22/01/2023 Collation of four (4) Archdeacons, held at St. Peter's Anglican Church Irewo, Ile-Ife.

### **CONFERENCES AND RETREATS**

- 03/05/2022 One day special retreat for Clergy and Evangelists, held at Obawole Chapel of Christ The Light, Bishop's Court Parakin, Ile-Ife.
- 27/06/2022 Clergy and Evangelists retreat, held at the Obawole Chapel of Christ The Light Bishop's Court Parakin Ile-Ife.
- 4-7/07/2022 Clergy School, held at the Diocesan camp Asipa.
- 06/09/2022 A day retreat for the Clergy and the Evangelists, held at Obawole Chapel of Christ The Light Bishop's Court Parakin, Ile-Ife.
- 08/10/2022 Diocesan family seminar, held at the Diocesan Camp Asipa .
- 06/02/2023 A day retreat for the Clergy and Evangelists, held at Obawole Chapel of Christ The Light Bishop's Court Parakin Ile-Ife.
- 21/02/2023 Pre-Lenten retreat held at St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church Oke Oloyinbo, Ile-Ife.

### **OTHER EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES**

- 26/06/2022 Diocesan Women mid-year thanksgiving, held at Christ Anglican Church Wasimin, Ipetumodu.

- 28/07/2022 Clergy and Wardens meeting with the Diocesan treasurer and the Bishop, held at the Bishop's Court Parakin, Ile-Ife.
- 31/07/2022 Retirement service for Ven. Lawrence Odunyemi, held at Christ Anglican Church Wasimin, Ipetumodu.
- 28/08/2022 Diocesan Youths Service, held at St. Jude's Anglican Church Moro.
- 09/09/2022 Diocesan Board Meeting, held at the Bishop's Court Parakin, Ile-Ife.
- 07/12/2022 Wardens & Priests meeting with the Diocesan, held at the Bishop's Court Parakin Ile-Ife.
- 09/12/2022 Diocesan Board Meeting held at Obawole Chapel of Christ The Light Bishop's Court Parakin Ile-Ife.
- 15/12/2022 Clergy and Wives Christmas Party, held at the Diocesan Camp Asipa.
- 19/12/2022 Diocesan Christmas Carol held at Obawole Chapel of Christ The Light Bishop's Court Parakin, Sponsored by Church of the Pentecost. O.A.U, Ile-Ife.
- 25/12/2022 Christmas Service, held at the Cathedral Church of St. Philip Ayetoro, Ile-Ife.
- 04/01/2023 Clergy and Wives Convocation, held at CAMAC Igboya, Ile-Ife.
- 07/01/2023 Power for the year held at the Cathedral Church of St. Philip Ayetoro, Ile-Ife
- 13-17/03/2023 Diocesan Mission Week to the rural churches in the Diocese of Ife.
- 25/03/2023 Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, held at St. Peter's Anglican Church Ireemo, Ile-Ife.
- 06/04/2023 Maundy Thursday Service, held at The Cathedral Church of St Philip Ayetoro, Ile-Ife
- 09/04/2023 Easter Service, held at The Cathedral Church of St Philip Ayetoro, Ile-Ife.

## **SYNOD THEME**

### **From Personality to an Institution: Jacob's Encounter at Bethel - Genesis 32:28-32**

#### **Introduction**

*“Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.” Gen 25:23*

The account of Jacob, Isaac's second son and Esau's twin brother, can be found in Genesis from Chapter 25:19 to Chapter 35. What lessons can we learn from Jacob, who started his life as a cheat, deceiver amongst other things, but through God's transforming power became a nation, God's own people?

His mother Rebekah went to inquire of the Lord when she was having strange feelings during the conception of the twins. She was told that the older (Esau) will serve the younger (Jacob). Right from the womb we were told Jacob was going to be a nation.

When he was born, he was given the name Jacob, which implies that he is deceitful and a fraud. You may be wondering how someone named cheat/deceiver became a great nation of God. I believe the answer is found in the word of God which says, *“My ways are not your ways...”* Isaiah 55:8. God can use anyone and anything to achieve His purpose. Nobody is too bad for God to use.

The purpose of this address is to take us through the journey Jacob went through to become a nation. I hope that his story

would encourage you and I to believe that no matter how challenging our current circumstances are, God is still capable of turning things around and birthing a godly nation through us.

### **Manifestation of the name Jacob (Supplanter, Deceiver, Cheat)**

The first clear manifestation of his name was recorded in Genesis 25:29-34

*Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, “Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I’m famished!” (That is why he was also called Edom.) Jacob replied, “First sell me your birth right.” “Look, I am about to die,” Esau said. “What good is the birth right to me?” But Jacob said, “Swear to me first.” So, he swore an oath to him, selling his birth right to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So, Esau despised his birth right.*

Here we see Jacob negotiating with his senior brother for Esau’s birth right. This drive to be first must have begun in the womb, as we learn in 25:22 that *“the two children struggled with each other in her womb.”* One may assume Jacob wanted to be the first to emerge from the womb, but Esau triumphed. Esau later got careless (unwise), the bible says in Genesis 25:34 that *“So Esau despised his birth right”*. He eventually paid dearly for it. Don’t be careless or carefree. Don’t leave things to chance. The bible says in 1 Peter 5:8 *“Stay alert! Watch out for*



*your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.”* My prayers for you is that you will not be devoured.

Jacob, on the other hand, never gave up his desire to be the head. When he saw an opportunity, he took advantage of it. **How often do we give up on our dreams, without pressing through?**

Jacob was a determined man who knew what he wanted in life, and when he spotted an opportunity, he seized it. Many of us children of God misuse opportunities and instead blame the devil. Have you ever noticed that fraudsters work harder than most of us? Imagine the outcomes if we, who have the grace of God, worked more. **Even Yahoo boys stay up all night on their computers with the hopes of catching a prey, however, a vigil of prayer to the Lord is challenging for us. God help us!**

In life, we must make the most of opportunities that come our way. Scripture says in Matthew 10:16 *“be wise (shrewd) as serpents and harmless as doves.”* How well are you using the opportunities life throws your way?

### **The journey to Bethel (First Encounter)**

The story picks up again in Genesis 27:1 when Isaac wanted to give Esau the blessing belonging to the first son.

Genesis 27:1-30 *“When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called for Esau his older son and said to him, “My son.” “Here I am,” he answered. Isaac said, “I am now an old man and don't know*

the day of my death. Now then, get your equipment—your quiver and bow—and go out to the open country to hunt some wild game for me. Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die.” Now Rebekah was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau left for the open country to hunt game and bring it back, Rebekah said to her son Jacob, “Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, ‘Bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the LORD before I die.’ Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you: Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it. Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies.” Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, “But my brother Esau is a hairy man while I have smooth skin. What if my father touches me? I would appear to be tricking him and would bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing.” His mother said to him, “My son, let the curse fall on me. Just do what I say; go and get them for me.” So, he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and she prepared some tasty food, just the way his father liked it. Then Rebekah took the best clothes of Esau her older son, which she had in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob. She also covered his hands and the smooth part of his neck with the goatskins. Then she handed to her son Jacob the tasty food and the bread she had made. He went to his father and said, “My father.” “Yes, my son,” he answered. “Who is it?” Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau your firstborn. I have

done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing.” Isaac asked his son, “How did you find it so quickly, my son?” “The LORD your God gave me success,” he replied. Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Come near so I can touch you, my son, to know whether you really are my son Esau or not.” Jacob went close to his father Isaac, who touched him and said, “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.” He did not recognize him, for his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so, he proceeded to bless him. “Are you really my son Esau?” he asked. “I am,” he replied. Then he said, “My son, bring me some of your game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing.” Jacob brought it to him and he ate; and he brought some wine and he drank. Then his father Isaac said to him, “Come here, my son, and kiss me.” So he went to him and kissed him. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he blessed him and said, “Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed. May God give you heaven's dew and earth's richness— an abundance of grain and new wine. May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed.” After Isaac finished blessing him, and Jacob had scarcely left his father's presence, his brother Esau came in from hunting.

Rebekah, Jacob's mother, was his Destiny Helper. Her skilful interventions at crucial moments in Jacobs life aided him in achieving his life goal. Similarly, God has placed Destiny Helpers

along your path in life. Have you identified them? How effectively are you utilizing them?

For Jacob, he carefully followed his mother's instructions and got what he had always desired. Diligence in all we do is essential if we want to achieve nation status in life. Many of us are fond of doing things haphazardly. The result of such a carefree attitude is failure. His mother's absence during a vital period in his marriage was disastrous for him. He picked Leah over Rachael, his true love!

It is important to state that the crooked nature of Jacob attracted repercussions. In Genesis 27:41 we were told "*Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob."* Jacob's theft of Esau's birth right and blessing was to cost him his life. He would have been killed if it were not for the timely intervention of his Destiny Helper (Rebekah), who helped organize his escape. Some of us consider ourselves "too smart" (to use the modern-day slang). We deceive and exploit people; remember, there will come a day of reckoning.

After Rebekah has skilfully convinced Isaac to let Jacob go to Paddan Harran on the pretext of searching for a wife, we see Isaac blessing Jacob again. He prophesied what Jacob will later become in life.

*Genesis 28:3-4 "May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples. May he give you and your descendants*

*the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now reside as a foreigner, the land God gave to Abraham.”*

Here we see the Grace of God at work in Jacobs life. Grace is unmerited favour we receive from God. As you read the story of Jacob, you see Grace manifesting from time to time.

Isaac’s prayer for Jacob before his departure to Paddan Harran is another confirmation of the Prophecy given to Rebekah before Jacob was born. The journey to Paddan Harran led him to Bethel (House of God).

*Genesis 28:10-22 “Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the LORD, and he said: “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it.” He was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other*

*than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven." Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's household, then the LORD will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."*

At Bethel, Jacob had his first encounter with God. In a dream, God promised Jacob that he would be established. When Jacob awoke, the first thing he did was build an altar where he prayed to God and made a covenant with Him. Bethel means "house of God." During Jacob's encounter with God, he realized he was standing in the house of God, which is why he called the city Luz Bethel to symbolize his current reality. Altars are also significant in our lives. We can build spiritual Altars of thanksgiving for everything God has done for us when we give thanks to God. The background to our thanksgiving services is people establishing Altars in His house for what God has done in their lives. Have you made it a practice to build Altars? **You can start today.**

### **His life in self-exile (Meeting his match – Laban)**

Just because you received a prophecy does not guarantee that everything will fall into place. 1 Corinthians 13:9 says, "Now our knowledge is partial and incomplete, and even the gift of prophecy reveals only part of the whole picture!" and 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy

1: 18 says *This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare.* The experience of Jacob teaches us that there may be unforeseen obstacles in our path to destiny. If we focus on those obstacles, we will derail. However, if we stay focused on our goal, we will overcome those obstacles. Jacob faced many such obstacles on his way.

In Paddan Harran, Jacob met his own match in Laban, a greater deceiver. After working for Laban for seven years in order to marry Racheal his heartthrob, Laban got him drunk and planted Leah, Racheal's elder sister, in his room. He woke up the next day to discover that he had been deceived. He had to labour for another seven years before he could marry Racheal. Laban also had Jacob's wages changed several times and he laboured under Laban for a total of twenty years before gaining his freedom.

We can conclude that he paid dearly in Paddan Harran for his deceitful lifestyle. Be careful of the way you live your life; you may face consequences later in life, and you may not be as fortunate as Jacob to get out of it.

Another way to look at what happened to Jacob is by recognizing that destinies are not achieved in one day; it may take years. During the time of delay, God was shaping Jacob into a nation. Most of his children were born in Paddan Harran, and he became wealthy there through the grace of God. In actual fact, we may conclude that Jacob did not waste any time.

We must also learn to make the most of our time, despite the challenges that we experience along the way. Don't engage yourself in idleness it is costly. We see Jacob being favored by God, which enabled him to build wealth. Instead of complaining about your situation, do something intelligent. In the middle of nowhere, God has promised to build a path for us.

*Isa. 43:19 "Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."*

Ask God to show you the way out of your predicament and then take action. The Lord spoke to Jacob when the fullness of time arrived in Paddan Harran.

*Genesis 31:13 "I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to me. Now leave this land at once and go back to your native land."*

We must develop the ability to hear and obey God's instructions. Jacob endured the hardship under Laban until God spoke to him again. He summoned his family and informed them of his plans to flee Paddan Harran. He was gone for three days before Laban was informed that he had escaped. Laban immediately pursued him for seven days before eventually catching up with him. The night before they met again, God warned Laban not to hurt him since it was God who had instructed him to flee. God can protect us if we rely on Him and follow His instructions.



## **Jacob's encounter at Jabbok (He wrestled with God and Man)**

Jacob started to prepare for his meeting with his brother, Esau. He sent messengers ahead of time to inform Esau that he was on his way to meet him. The report they brought back that Esau was on his way to meet him with 400 men terrified Jacob. He devised a plan to appease his brother. He divided his family and possessions into groups, hoping that if one group was attacked, the other would be safe. We witness his deceitful nature in action once more.

He was alone after crossing the ford of the Jabbok. He had sent his wife and children to the opposite side of the stream.

*Genesis 32:24-31 "So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome." Jacob said, "Please tell me your name." But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there. So, Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared." The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip."*

Jacob remained behind to plan and pray while his family settled in for the night in their camps across a flowing brook. Suddenly, a Man appeared before him, and Jacob engaged in a wrestling struggle! When the Man saw that Jacob would not give up, He reached out and merely touched Jacob's hip socket. Jacob immediately felt pain and managed to look down to discover his hip was out of joint!

This was a test to see if Jacob would quit or keep fighting. Jacob realized who he was dealing with: God Himself (Jesus Christ - Hosea 12:3-4)! He didn't let go because God was the only way out of his predicament, and Jacob knew it. The Man said, *"Let Me go, for the day breaks"* (Genesis 32:26). *"I will not let You go unless You bless me!"* replied Jacob.

The Man released his grip and stepped back. Jacob had remained firm and passed the test. "What is your name?" He inquired. "Jacob," came the response. The name Jacob means "heel-catcher" or "supplanter." Jacob had lived up to his name, taking Esau's place and receiving his birth right and blessings by deception.

The man spoke again, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel: for you have struggled with God and with men, and you have prevailed" (Genesis 32:28). Jacob's new name, Israel, was given by God Himself and denotes "prince with God, power with God, and prevailed with God" (to prevail means "to overcome or rule").

This biblical account shows us that he removed all distractions so that he could concentrate and reflect with God. Also, he

persisted in his struggle with God. He did not allow the distraction of discomfort in the hips to keep him from receiving his blessing. Are you determined to persist in your prayers and study of God's word? Will you continue to pray until God responds? His unyielding determination transformed him from Personality to Nation.

From rogue to prince! Jacob had grown and learned some valuable lessons. He was fully aware of his priorities. He had refused to let go of God despite his pain and distress.

### **SHECHEM (Disobedience to God's instruction and its consequences)**

When Jacob saw Esau approaching with 400 men, he divided his family, first the servant wives and their children, then Leah and her children, lastly Racheal and Joseph. In the case of a catastrophe, the despised Leah should go first, followed by Rachael, the loved one. The man was a schemer! He walked ahead of them and bowed seven times as he approached his brother. Their reunion was cordial. They hugged and cried together, and Jacob offered him gifts which he declined, but Jacob insisted before he accepted. When the time came for them to continue their journey, Esau offered to accompany him to Seir.

After convincing Esau to go ahead and that he would meet him there, he went another way to Succoth and then on to Shechem.

Jacob bought a land from the family of Hamor; father of Shechem for 100 pieces of silver and settled there. It is

important to note that the instruction God gave him at Paddan Harran was for him to return to Bethel in Canaan land. Disobedience has its own set of consequence.

*Genesis 34:1-2 “One day Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and Leah, went to visit some of the young women who lived in the area. But when the local prince, Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, saw Dinah, he seized her and raped her.”*

That was the price paid for Jacob's disobedience to God's instruction. What instructions did God give to you, and how well did you obey them? Partial obedience or disobedience comes with consequences. In the case of Jacob, his daughter was raped (Genesis 34:1-2). Moses was unable to enter the promised land (Deuteronomy 32:51-52), while King Saul lost the kingdom (1 Samuel 15:27-28). Receive grace to obey God fully in Jesus' name.

The sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, avenged the defiling of their sister, Dinah, by killing all the men of Shechem when they were weak from the circumcision done to arrive at a truce. It was after this event that the Lord spoke again, reminding Jacob of His earlier instruction.

*Genesis 35:1 “Then God said to Jacob, “Get ready and move to Bethel and settle there. Build an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother, Esau.”*

## **Departure from idolatry (the awe of God demobilized the people who would have given them problems)**

*Genesis 35:2-5 “So Jacob told everyone in his household, “Get rid of all your pagan idols, purify yourselves, and put on clean clothing. We are now going to Bethel, where I will build an altar to the God who answered my prayers when I was in distress. He has been with me wherever I have gone.” So, they gave Jacob all their pagan idols and earrings, and he buried them under the great tree near Shechem. As they set out, a terror from God spread over the people in all the towns of that area, so no one attacked Jacob’s family.”*

Jacob’s family reconnected with God by destroying the idols they had held onto till that point in their journey. They purified themselves. This resulted in the presence of God accompanying them. What idols are you holding on to? Is it money, possessions, or people that are compromising your friendship with God? It is time to let them go in order to experience God's awesome presence. Don’t deceive yourself by saying I have not made a graven image for myself. Pride could become an idol in your life, obstructing your friendship with God.

Notice that after letting go of their idols and purifying themselves, the terror of God fell on all the people on their way to Bethel (Luz). When you carry the presence of God, terror will fall on all your enemies, you will not have to fight battles, God will fight for you.

*Psalm 27:1-3 “The LORD is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life— of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked advance against me to devour me, it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall. Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident.”*

God’s provision for safety is there if you allow Him to lead you. If you purify yourself and get rid of all idols.

### **Return to Bethel (obedience and confirmation of God’s blessing)**

*Genesis 35:6-7 “Jacob and all the people with him came to Luz (that is, Bethel) in the land of Canaan. There he built an altar, and he called the place El Bethel, because it was there that God revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother.”*

Finally, Jacob returns to Bethel, the city where God first spoke to him. God appeared to him once again.

*Genesis 35:9-15 “After Jacob returned from Paddan Aram, God appeared to him again and blessed him. God said to him, “Your name is Jacob, but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel.” So, he named him Israel. And God said to him, “I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will be among your descendants. The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you.” Then God went up from*

*him at the place where he had talked with him. Jacob set up a stone pillar at the place where God had talked with him, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it. Jacob called the place where God had talked with him Bethel.*

As previously stated, Bethel is God's house, and it was only when Jacob returned to Bethel that God fully formed His covenant with him. This is the covenant He made with Abraham and Isaac, to which Jacob has now been added. As a result, he became a nation. God said to him “Be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you.” God changed Jacob’s name to Israel. We are all aware of what Israel represents: ‘God’s own people.’

God continues to affirm the covenant promises He made to Abraham. In this passage, God reverts to the words He spoke to Abram (Genesis 17:4-6), and even further, to the creation covenant, “*Be fruitful and multiply,*” to remind Jacob of the grace of the covenant which he had established with Abram, then with Isaac, and now with Jacob. There are four parallels between the covenant with Abraham and this covenant:

- A) The name change - Abram to Abraham, and Jacob to Israel.
- B) The promise that kings will come from his body (v.11).
- C) The exhortation to be fruitful and increase in number.
- D) The promise that a “community of nations” come from him.

In essence, the promise to Jacob is a reaffirmation of the promise made to Abraham. As a result, God was telling the patriarchs, “Your future is one of fruitfulness.”

Today, as children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we are an integral part of this covenant, having accepted Christ, so that the blessing of Abraham might come upon us and we may receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

## **Conclusion**

As we reflect on the life and times of Jacob, we see a man whose beginning was nothing to write home about, considering that he lived a dubious life. Despite the costly errors he committed, we witness God working out his purpose in his life. I believe we can see ourselves in Jacob as well. The many wrong choices we have made in life, and the grace of God working in us despite them. We recognise that unless we fully fulfil God's instructions, we will be going in circles. This process typically results in pain, which could have been avoided if only we chose to absolutely obey God.

As you re-examine yourself, I encourage you to cultivate the habit of taking advantage of all the amazing positive opportunities that life presents you with.

Never give up because of some setbacks along the way.

*And now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Timothy 1:17).*

**+Olubunmi, Ife**

2023



**APPENDIX A**

**PROFILES OF**

**RESOURCE PERSONS**

## **PROFILE OF THE RT. REVD. FESTUS OYETOLA SOBANKE THE BISHOP OF OMU-ARAN DIOCESE**

The Rt. Revd. Festus Oyetola Sobanke hails from Ogere Remo in Ikenne Local Government Area of Ogun State.

Born to the family of late Mr. Johnson Abiodun Sobanke and the late Mrs. Abigail Sobanke nee Ogunbayode Atoyebi of Ijomu Oro in Kwara State.

He had his elementary schools in Army Children School, Apapa Lagos, from where he proceeded to Christ Church School Ogere Remo upon his father's retirement from civil service in Lagos. He went to Ositelu Memorial College for his secondary school.

The young Festus received divine call into the ministry at a very tender age when he was in secondary school and this however reflected in his commitment, dedication and his spiritual life in the school. He was an active member of the Methodist Evangelical movement (MEM) of the Methodist Church before he returned to the Anglican Church fully and became one of the youth leaders of Christ Anglican Church, Ogere Remo.

The Rt. Revd. Festus Sobanke joined the fulltime ministry in the year 1996 as a Church Agent in the Diocese of Ijebu under the leadership of the Rt. Revd. Prof Akin Omoyajowo.

In Sept 1999, Festus gained admission into the Archbishop Vining College of Theology, Akure. The Reverend father in God distinguished himself academically and was the captain of his set for the 3 years and ended up the general of the college

during his days. Upon completion of his theological training he was posted to Kwara Diocese and ordained Deacon and priested by The Rt. Revd. Jeremiah O. Fabuluje in 2002 and 2003 respectively. Festus was part of the first set of clergy at the inauguration of the Diocese of Omu-Aran on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 2007. He also served as the Chaplain to the Bishop of Omu-Aran from April 2007 to Feb 2019, he was youth Chaplain of the diocese from 2007-2018, and also the EFAC coordinator for Kwara province from 2013-2019. He was also the Chaplain to Anglican Children Ministry in the Diocese.

In 2004, Festus proceeded to the University of Ibadan for his first degree in religious studies. He was preferred CANON in 2004 and made Archdeacon in 2013 by the Rt. Revd. Philip Adeyemo.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of FEB 2019, Festus was elected the Bishop Successor of the Diocese of Omu-Aran and consecrated on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2019. Bishop Sobanke is happily married to Mrs Rachael Tinu Sobanke and the marriage is blessed with Marvelous, Majesty and Miracle.

## **PROFILE OF THE VERY REV. SAMSON ADEBOYE AWOYODE DEAN, CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PHILIP, AYETORO**

Sanson Adeboye Awoyode was born on the 11th of April, 1958. He attended St. Philip Primary School, Ayelabowo street, Ile-Ife, where he obtained primary school leaving certificate in the year 1970. He had a short stay for one year at Oduduwa College, Ile-Ife before proceeding to Ife Anglican Grammar school, Ile-Ife, where he obtained West African school certificate “O” & “A” levels in the year 1978. He attended the National school of produce Technology, Ibadan campus, where he obtained National certificate in produce technology in the year 1981. He attended Immanuel college of Technology, Ibadan, where he obtained Diploma in Theology in the year, 2003.

While he was in the civil service, he rose through the ranks from the post of assistant produce superintendent to chief produce superintendent all for 33years before voluntarily retiring from service in the year 2012. He was ordained Deacon in the Diocese of Ife in the year 1999. Priested year 2000, preferred statutory canon (twice) 2006 and 2007, Preferred Archdeacon (2009) and was installed Dean of the cathedral of St. Philip, Ayetoro, Ile-Ife on the 2nd September, 2018.

He was elected a synod secretary (lay) to the synod of the diocese of Ife in the year 1996, elected synod clerical secretary in the year 2009 and finally elected synod secretary in the year 2018. He served meritoriously in the Diocese of Ife as Director of the Directorate of social welfare, Director, Directorate of

Economic Empowerment, and the exalted office of the Director of Administration.

He served in various churches in the dioceses which includes, St. Philips Cathedral (as a Deacon) Vicar of St, John's Yakoyo, Our saviour church, Iloro, All soul's church Opa, St, Peter's church, Iremo, St. Paul's church, Ayegbaju and currently serving as the Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip, Ayetoro, Ile-Ife.

He is married to Mrs. Felicia Olutoyosi Awoyode, the marriage is blessed with promising young children and grandchildren.

## **PROFILE OF THE VENERABLE OLABODE THOMAS OSUNNIYI DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATIONS**

The Venerable Olabode Thomas Osunniyi was born in Ijebu-Jesa, Oriade Local Government Area of Osun State, over six decades ago.

He attended both Primary and Secondary Schools at Ijebu-Jesa after which he proceeded for his Grade II Teachers Certificate at the Division Teachers' Training College, Ipetumodu. He later proceeded to the University of Ife, Ile-Ife for his first degree in History passing out in 1984. He obtained his Postgraduate Diploma in Management Studies and Master's in Business Administration at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. He taught in many Schools (Primary and Secondary) in Ile-Ife for over two decades before retiring.

He started his active service in the Anglican Church after he got converted in early 1990 and became actively involved with the Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion (EFAC). He was the Diocesan Coordinator of the group for many years. He also served as the Zonal Coordinator of the Fellowship for Ife/Oke-Osun Zone (Comprising of the Diocese of Ife, the Diocese of Ife East and the Diocese of Oke-Osun).

He attended Immanuel College of Theology for his Ordination training. He was ordained a Deacon in June, 2003 and Priested in December of the same year. He was preferred a Statutory Canon of the Cathedral of St. Philip, Ayetoro, Ile-Ife in 2007. He became an Archdeacon in 2008. He had served as Archdeaconry Administrator of Ipetumodu Archdeaconry

(2007-2009), Ayegbaju Archdeaconry (2009-2014) and he is currently the Vicar of St. Peter's Anglican Church, Iremo, Ile-Ife and the Archdeaconry Administrator of Iremo Archdeaconry. He doubles as the Director of the Directorate of Education (Schools and Sunday School Department) and the Director of Administration of the Diocese till date.

His marriage to Oluwaremilekun continues to enjoy God's abundant blessings and divine fruitfulness.

# **APPENDIX B**

## **COMMUNIQUE**

AND

## **PASTORAL LETTERS**

FROM

**CHURCH OF NIGERIA  
(ANGLICAN COMMUNION)**





# CHURCH OF NIGERIA (Anglican Communion)

THE MOST REV'D HENRY C. NDUKUBA, MA, BD, MA (Ed.)  
Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of All Nigeria.

**COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE CHURCH OF NIGERIA (ANGLICAN COMMUNION) HELD AT THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST BARTHOLOMEW, (KUBWA DIOCESE) BETWEEN MONDAY, 13TH AND FRIDAY, 17TH FEBRUARY 2023.**

## Introduction

The Standing Committee of the Church of Nigeria -Anglican Communion which held under the protection of God Almighty at The Cathedral Church of St Bartholomew, Kubwa (Diocese of Kubwa), from Monday, 13th - Friday, 17th February, 2023 was presided over by the Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of the Church of Nigeria - Anglican Communion, the Most Reverend Henry C. Ndukuba, DD, supported by his wife, Mrs Angela E. Ndukuba, the President of Women's Organisations; attended by 154 Archbishops and Bishops, 153 clergy, 85 lay members and 78 members of the Mothers' Union. The Standing Committee received many guests and visitors during session, including the immediate past Primate of the Church and his wife, Archbishop Nicholas and Mrs Nkasiobi Okoh, and the President of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), and the Most Rev'd Daniel Okoh, among others.

## Theme

The theme of the Meeting was *Watch and Pray: Godly Disposition When Kingdoms Rage* (Matthew 26 :40-41).

The Standing Committee recognizes the challenges of the time in both physical and spiritual dimensions, which include the various tensions, problems, difficulties and dangers that are confronting individual members of the society and the church in particular. It recognizes that the godly response which our Lord Jesus Christ offered his disciples was to watch and pray lest they fell into temptations, such that could distract them from their race and derail them from attaining their eternal reward. Noting that the present situation confronting the Nigerian masses and indeed the whole world present similar features that could overwhelm the people.

It is imperative therefore for believers to not only pray but also watch lest they fall into the various temptations and distractions of the present time. By watching, the Church and its members can discern through the Word of God how to navigate the maze of the challenges of the time so that they do not fall away or be overwhelmed by the weight of those sins that can easily capture the believer from looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of their faith. By praying, believers are encouraged to actively bring such challenges and problems of our time to God Who is able to deliver and heal the numerous problems being faced in the country now.

housekeeping, and other important means of livelihood. This is urgent to avoid further complications that may have adverse effect on the forthcoming general elections.

### **General Elections**

The Standing Committee appeals to Nigerians to exercise their franchise by casting their votes for the candidate of their choice at the forthcoming General Elections. It appeals to security agents to make the atmosphere conducive and safe for the voters without interfering with the electioneering process, but only to offer adequate security to the public and electrical officers and voting materials.

It calls on INEC to do its utmost in ensuring that the will of the people prevail and ensure that no voters are disenfranchised by the failure of BVAS. It is vital that the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) functions seamlessly if the election is to be a success.

### **Church of England and the Blessing of Same-Sex Marriage**

The Church of Nigeria dissociates itself from the recent decision of the Church of England on the blessing of Same-Sex Marriage. It affirms its unwavering commitment to the Authority of the Word of God that recognizes marriage as a Holy Institution between a man and woman in lifelong union. It will not bless any aberration nor will it support it. Rather, the Church prays for repentance and healing for anyone involved in such.

### **Exodus of Youths from Nigeria otherwise called the 'JAPA' Syndrome**

The Standing Committee notes with great concern the rate at which Nigerian youths are leaving the country owing to frustration and lack of fulfillment. The "JA-PA" syndrome is unfortunately becoming most popular. The Church is disturbed by the inability of Government to respond to this. It therefore calls on Government to urgently put in place mechanisms for redressing this trend before it is too late and before the country becomes impoverished, without capable human beings that can contribute to the human capital development of the nation. Nigerian Government should do everything possible to minimize brain drain in all sectors of the economy and national life.

### **Earthquake in Turkey and Syria**

The Standing Committee commiserates with the peoples of Turkey and Syria on the massive devastation caused by the recent earthquake, which has claimed the lives of over forty-one thousand people and rendered several millions of people homeless. We pray for wisdom and grace for the governments to handle the present situation effectively to the comfort of the people. The Church also sympathizes with all who are affected by disasters within and outside Nigeria, praying for God's comforting presence with them.

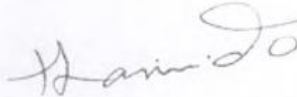
**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Church commiserates with the Nigerian masses on the level of tension, pain and agony that Nigerians are currently experiencing as occasioned by the lingering petrol crisis and the Naira redesign. It prays for a quick end to them whilst encouraging all to trust in God whom it confidently affirms will not abandon the people. It encourages all to exercise their voting right during the election while praying for a good and peaceful outcome. May we all watch and pray in times likes this and beyond (Matt. 26: 40-41).

Yours in the service of Christ,



**The Ven. Gershinen Paul Dajur, PhD**  
General Secretary, Church of Nigeria



**The Most Rev'd Dr. Ali Buba Lamido**  
Dean, Church of Nigeria



**The Most Rev'd Henry Chukwudum Ndukuba, MA, BD, MA(Ed), DD**  
Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of All Nigeria



# CHURCH OF NIGERIA

(Anglican Communion)

THE MOST REV'D HENRY C. NDUKUBA, MA, BD, MA (Ed.)  
Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of All Nigeria.

**PASTORAL LETTER FROM THE STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE CHURCH OF NIGERIA (ANGLICAN COMMUNION) HELD FROM MONDAY, 13TH TO FRIDAY, 17TH FEBRUARY 2023 AT THE CATHEDRAL OF BARTHOLOMEW, KUBWA, KUBWA DIOCESE.**

Dearly beloved in Christ,

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

Greetings.

The Standing Committee meeting of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) was held from Monday 13th to Friday 17th February 2023 at St. Bartholomew's Cathedral, Kubwa, Abuja. The theme was **“Watch and Pray: Godly Disposition when Kingdoms Rage” (Matt. 26: 40-41).**

We laud and magnify our God, who was, and is and will forever be. He keeps His Church despite the economic downturn and uncertainty of our time brought about by the redesign of our national currency, fuel scarcity, corruption in addition to insecurity that manifest in the form of banditry, kidnapping, etc. The protracted naira crisis has caused hunger and anger in the land, this has been worsened by the refusal of banks to accept the deposit of old notes and cash crunch. It is our prayer that God shall restore every loss, rebuild our ruins, heal our hearts, and restore the Church and our society to glory and greater growth.

The season requires that we trust the Lord to lead and direct us in all our activities as we seek to have His will enthroned in our lives and our nation especially in the days ahead. The theme of the Standing Committee meeting demands that in this critical times, we should Watch and Pray. With the elections few days away, we call on our members to get involved in the general elections and ensure that those elected to lead the nation and states are men and women with proven integrity and capacity. We further call on all Anglican faithfuls to cast their votes wisely and prayerfully. We appeal to our youths to say no to election violence, political thuggery and vote buying.

The recent decision of the General Synod of the Church of England on same sex marriage while at the same time claiming that it has not changed its traditional doctrine recognizing that marriage is between a man and a woman is to say the least disappointing, devastating and hurting. However, we call on all of you to hold tenaciously to your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the true Biblical Orthodoxy. The views of the Church of England do not represent the position of the Bible which is sufficient for our faith. We affirm that marriage is given by God for the union of a man and a woman and that it cannot be extended to those who are of the same sex. We of the GAFCON family encourage our brethren to remain firm and resolute in upholding and defending “the faith once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3). We continue to affirm that the Holy Scripture is authoritative in all matters of faith and any departure from the historic formularies and the plain teachings of the Scripture is an error and must be dealt with. We therefore, encourage and stand in solidarity with those marginalized Christians in the Church of England who are resolved to remain faithful to the Gospel of Christ and seek obedience to the teachings of the Scripture in all its entirety. We pray for them that they will not surrender the light of Christ to the powerful secular voices that have captured the church.

Mission and Evangelism continue to be our foremost task, so we appeal to all our churches to respond faithfully to the demands of the Great Commission as the Lord Jesus Christ commanded us in Matt. 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15-18. All our Mission organizations and CNMS have been repositioned for this task. We appeal for your prayers and support for the third edition of Joshua Generation which holds in the low week, Monday 10<sup>th</sup> – Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2023 at Moshood Abiola National Stadium, Abuja. Joshua generation is set up to encourage our youth and mobilize them to occupy their positions in the Church and society.

Finally, as we thank the Lord for another successful Standing Committee, we also appreciate the Bishop and his wife, the Clergy and their wives and all the faithful people of Kubwa Diocese who labored hard to ensure that the processes of this Standing Committee flowed seamlessly. May the Lord bless them all. We encourage you all in such a trying time as this to take solace in the Word of God in Isaiah 41: 10 *“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand”*. Where we find ourselves laboring for the kingdom let us all continue, guided by Jesus command to His disciples to “Watch and Pray.”

Yours in the service of Christ,



**The Most Rev'd Henry Chukwudum Ndukuba, MA, BD, MA(Ed), DD**  
Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of All Nigeria



**Rt. Rev. Olubunmi & Mrs. Nkechi Akinlade**