

Oyeleke, Hezekiah Oluwole (1946–2017)

OPENLA OYELEKE

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Hezekiah Oluwole Oyeleke was a pastor and church administrator in Nigeria.

Early Life, Education, and Marriage

Hezekiah Oluwole Oyeleke was born on November 12, 1946. His father was Pa Oyeleke, and his mother was Emily Oyeleke. They all hailed from Modakeke, in the Ife East area of Osun State, Nigeria, and were cocoa farmers.¹

Hezekiah attended the Local Authority Primary School situated in the Balogun area of Ilesha, a town in Osun State of Nigeria. He started in 1955 and finished in 1960, earning the Primary School Leaving Certificate.² He did not attend a secondary school, but he took the four-year pre-college ministerial certification course between 1975 and 1979 at the Adventist Seminary of West Africa (ASWA). At the end of the program, he earned the American General Educational Development (GED) qualifier for a college education. With this, he got admission to ASWA to pursue a B.A. in theology with a minor in public health in 1980, which he completed in 1983.³

Hezekiah married Modupe F. Solademi on November 25, 1984. The marriage is blessed with a son named Openla Oyeleke, who has given his parents a grandson, Tijesunimi, Joshua.⁴

Ministry

Hezekiah was converted into the Seventh-day Adventist Church sometime after his primary school education. At the time, he was helping his father on his father's farm. After his conversion, Hezekiah joined the evangelistic



Hezekiah Oluwole Oyeleke

Photo courtesy of Openla Oyeleke.

team of Pastor J. D. Johnson, an American missionary in Nigeria at that time. The group was called “The Bible Speaks Evangelistic Team.” Eventually, he personally conducted evangelistic efforts and planted a church in each of the following villages: Asabi Jugbe, Koola, Lagere Oko, Ajebamidele, and Kajola. This apparent calling for the gospel ministry caused Pastor J. D. Johnson to encourage Hezekiah to further his education beyond primary school.⁵

Oyeleke’s first church after his seminary training was the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Apapa, in Lagos. While in the Apapa church, he was also overseeing the Lagos Island and FESTAC Seventh-day Adventist churches.⁶ In 1984, the West Nigeria Mission elected him the Youth director for the mission.⁷ While the Youth director, he pastored a group of Adventists in Iwo Road of Ibadan. He nurtured the group to become a full-fledged church. In 1985, he was transferred to Lagos to head the Lagos district of churches. While in this position, he helped to acquire the land on which the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Orile, Lagos, is built. He was transferred back to Ibadan in 1986 to head the Irefin district of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.⁸

Oyeleke was ordained to the gospel ministry in 1988⁹ and was transferred back to Lagos to be the pastor of Yaba district of churches. One of his great achievements while in this position was mobilizing the members in the district to raise the money needed to buy the land that the FESTAC Seventh-day Adventist Church was occupying in 2019. In 1991, he was posted to be the pastor of the church in Abeokuta, the Ogun State capital. During his tenure there, the leasehold on the land on which the church was built expired, and the church was threatened with eviction from the land. Pastor Oyeleke spearheaded the raising of the funds for an outright purchase of the land. God blessed his efforts, and the land was purchased. A befitting church building was constructed by the church after the old church building was pulled down.¹⁰

The purchase of the land was possible because Pastor Oyeleke had taught his church members to be faithful in returning tithes and offerings, so much that the Abeokuta church had the highest per capita in tithe and offering in the whole conference in the 1990s. This prompted the West Nigeria Conference to elect him as the Stewardship director in 1999.¹¹ He held this position until 2004, when he was made the pastor of Ososami district of churches.¹²

Later Years and Legacy

Pastor Oyeleke retired in 2013 and died on February 6, 2017.¹³ Pastor Hezekiah Oluwole Oyeleke has left a legacy of hard work, commitment, and faithfulness. He was a great advocate of stewardship benevolence, resulting in churches under his care prospering. Through his effective leadership, three churches were able to purchase land on which to construct their church buildings.

"Life of Hezekiah Oluwole Oyeleke." Funeral ceremony program booklet, February 2017. Personal collection of Openla Oyeleke.

Service Record of Hezekiah Oluwole Oyeleke. Western Nigeria Union Conference archives, Ikeja, Lagos State, Nigeria.

Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook. Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000.

Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook. Washington, D.C.: Office of Archives and Statistics, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1985.

NOTES

1. "Life of Hezekiah Oluwole Oyeleke," funeral ceremony program booklet, February 2017, personal collection of Openla Oyeleke.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Service Record of Hezekiah Oluwole Oyeleke, Western Nigeria Union Conference archives, Ikeja, Lagos State, Nigeria.
7. "West Nigerian Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Archives and Statistics, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1985), 42.
8. Service Record of Hezekiah Oluwole Oyeleke.
9. Ibid.
10. "Life of Hezekiah Oluwole Oyeleke."
11. "West Nigeria Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Silver Spring, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 49.
12. Service Record of Hezekiah Oluwole Oyeleke.
13. "Life of Hezekiah Oluwole Oyeleke."

