

Adeoye, Josiah Makinde Akinbo (1900–1972)

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Josiah Makinde Akinbo Adeoye was a pastor, evangelist, T.V. and radio host, and church administrator in Nigeria.

Early Life, Education, and Marriage

Josiah Makinde Akinbo Adeoye was born in 1900 at Abeokuta, Ogun state, Nigeria, to a prominent Egba chief—Ntowa of Egbaland.¹ Pastor Adeoye stated in his diary that his parents were heathen. He was born into a polygamous home, but he was the eldest of the children and, therefore, the heir to the family chieftaincy title.² Though we do not have a record of his early education, he was highly educated for his time. He spoke fluent English and represented the growing Nigerian Seventh-day Adventist mission in many foreign meetings and travels.³ He migrated from Abeokuta (in western Nigeria) to Lagos, where he initially embraced The Salvation Army (T.S.A.) faith. He rose to the level of captain with the T.S.A. and told stories to his granddaughter of how he played the trumpet for The Salvation Army band.

Pastor Adeoye was one of the first few converts to the Seventh-day Adventist faith in the early 1920s. He reported in his 1958 diary that he has been in the church service for 30 years.⁴ He received his early evangelistic training with Pastor W.T.B. Hyde. He received practical training from Pastor I. A. Balogun in 1930. In early 1958 Pastor Adeoye attended training programs for leading African evangelists. He also completed two years of



Pastor J.M.A. Adeoye with his family: wife, Lydia Asake; daughter, Clementine Oluremi; son, Christopher Olaseinde.

Photo courtesy of Bosede Ade-Oshifogun.

advanced ministerial education at Bekwai, Ghana, and Ihie, Eastern Nigeria.⁵

Pastor Adeoye married Lydia Asake Aregbesola of Igbaraoke, Ondo state, Nigeria, on April 20, 1933. Their marriage was blessed with Clementine Oluremilekun and Christopher Olaseinde.

Ministry

J.M.A. Adeoye, as he is usually called, served the church from his conversion until his death in 1972. He served for more than 40 years. In his diary, he recorded:

“Early in 1942, my father, who has traditionally succeeded my grandfather as Chief Ntowa, died, and it was my turn traditionally to succeed him as his heir. I had to decide whether to resign my appointment to succeed him, which meant returning to idolatry practices or renouncing my heirship to the chieftaincy. This is a great hour of decision as it meant much. Pastor W. McClements helped me greatly at this crucial moment. I have to decide to follow Christ. I was transferred from Lagos to Ile-Ife. There I was, just in a hidden place for the embarrassment of my people who kept sending messages for my return to them and succeed my father. My junior brother succeeded my father. In this respect, I lost my right to my father’s land and property and my role as an heir in my father's household and became completely ostracized. At last, I had to struggle and, by God's help, built a small house for my family in the outskirts of Lagos. Should I be called suddenly to rest from my labors, they may find a little resting place. Today I am a happy man enjoying the power of redemption in my life, working for the salvation of others. In the cross, In the cross, Be my glory ever, till my raptured soul Shall find rest, beyond the river.”⁶

Ministerial Training and Early Ministry

Josiah Adeoye was ordained to the gospel ministry by Pastor McClements and other ministers in December 1949.⁷ He started his evangelistic ministry in Lagos and conducted several sessions between 1952 and 1955 at Lisabi Hall, Ebute Meta, Tom Jones Hall, Lagos, and Lagos Island, Nigeria. Many souls were won to Christ, and a few Lagos church companies were born following these efforts. In 1955 he was appointed district leader of Ibadan district and field evangelist of the West Nigerian Mission. He moved his family to the mission compound at Oke-Bola, Ibadan, where the writer (his granddaughter) lived with him for five years.⁸

Pastor J.M.A. Adeoye, then field evangelist of the West Nigerian Mission, Ibadan, was one of the delegates at the 48th Quadrennial Session of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A. He was dressed in his colorful agbada and was reportedly one of the most photographed delegates from the entire division.⁹ While in the U.S.A., he received a gift of \$200 (approximately £70) from the seminary graduating class to equip the library of the new Junior College of West Africa.¹⁰ He participated in several ordination ceremonies. Of particular note was the ordination of Pastors J. A. Makinde and J. A. Adeogun, where

he offered a sincere prayer of consecration and dedication.¹¹ He participated in the groundbreaking ceremony of the Adventist College of West Africa (now Babcock University, Ilishan, Nigeria) on September 17, 1959, along with dignitaries such as the Oni of Ile-Ife (king), Pastor Grover C. Winslow, Pastor Howard J. Welch, and the Hon. Ayodele Okusaga.¹² He also participated in the first commencement service on May 29, 1966.¹³

Radio and T.V. Ministry

In October 1959, the vision for T.V. ministry was born. The acting radio secretary, Pastor J.M.A. Adeoye, supplied West Nigeria Television (WNTV) with two *Faith for Today* films for auditioning purposes. WNTV subsequently invited the church to make a 52-week booking for 1960. On January 12, 1960, the Voice of Prophecy Board voted to sponsor *Faith for Today* or *It is Written* on WNTV in Nigeria.¹⁴ In 1959 Pastor Adeoye became the first national vice-principal for the *Voice of Prophecy* (V.O.P.) and principal of the Bible School in 1963. He also became the West African Union radio and T.V. secretary in the same year.¹⁵

In 1964 Pastor J.M.A. Adeoye gave an encouraging report of the radio and T.V. work in West Africa during the previous two years. The report showed the broadcast letters from Nigeria, other African countries, Asia, and Europe, an average of about 500 weekly; more than 150,000 viewed the *Faith for Today* program in Lagos and Ibadan, with responses from high-ranking government officials, educators, Asians, and Europeans living in Nigeria in those days.¹⁶ The *West African Advent Messenger* reported that Pastor J.M.A. Adeoye of the V.O.P. has been associated with Pastor Hughes for more than four years in the Radio-TV Department and became his successor. Pastor Adeoye was the first African in the West African Union to have been called to a union post. He had more than 30 years of unbroken service in the West African Union. His duties required him to travel throughout West Africa, as the *Voice of Prophecy* director—to Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, and the three regions of Nigeria.¹⁷ Because of his radio and television ministry involvement, some church members used the nickname—the African H.M.S. Richards. The total number of applications for the radio and correspondence school administered by Pastor Adeoye in 1965 was 11,172, and enrollments were 8,512. These numbers were second only to the British Isles, out of the seven unions in the division.¹⁸ During the tenure of Pastor Adeoye, the V.O.P. office in Ibadan, which served all of West Africa (except for a small sub-office in Monrovia, Liberia), was decentralized, which led to each local field having its own V.O.P. operation.

Later Life

In 1967 Pastor Adeoye moved his family back to his home at Shomolu Lagos, where he continued his semi-retired work for the Church. He retired officially in 1968. However, with the threat of losing the church land in Maryland, Lagos, he convinced the Church to fence the ground, and he situated his office in a small building on the land to deter invaders. He worked in this office until he suffered a mild stroke in July 1971. He recovered from the stroke, but it was not long before his condition deteriorated and he passed away on July 11, 1972.¹⁹

Legacy

J.M.A. Adeoye was the first ordained Adventist minister from Abeokuta, Ogun state, Nigeria. He was instrumental in acquiring and retaining Maryland landed property in Lagos, Nigeria. The property now houses the current Western Nigeria Union Conference headquarters. Pastor Adeoye was one of the pioneers of the V.O.P. Radio/T.V. Program in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nigeria.

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1. J.M.A Adeoye, *Choosing Christ*, a personal journal of Adeoye, unpublished, 1958, in the family's personal collection.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.
 7. Ibid.
 8. Ibid.
 9. Roger W. Coon, "The 1958 General Conference Session," *West African Advent Messenger*, September 1958, 1-2.
 10. News Notes, *West African Advent Messenger*, October 1958, 8.
 11. G. M. Ellstrom, "A high day in Ibadan," *West African Advent Messenger*, May 1957, 1.
 12. Howard J. Welch, "A Memorable Event at ACWA," *West African Advent Messenger*, September 1966, 1.
 13. Ibid.
 14. David H. Hughes, "Radio in Nigeria," *North Am Inf.* XIV/77 (1960):4.
 15. J. A. Adeniji, "Obituary," *West African Advent Messenger*, October 1972, 15.
 16. "Union Departmental Reports - Radio and TV ministry," *West African Advent Messenger*, April 1964, 6; Adeniji, "Obituary."
 17. "Farewell for new appointment," *West African Advent Messenger*, July 1963, 10.
 18. R. Unnersten, "Report of Radio and Bible Correspondence Schools for the Year 1965," *North Light (Statistical Suppl.)*, June 1966, 8.
 19. Adeniji, "Obituary."
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