



Ekiti Conference headquarters, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Photo courtesy of Christopher Ogah.

# Ekiti Conference

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Formerly part of South West Nigeria Conference, Ekiti Conference was organized in 2013. It is part of the Western Nigeria Union Conference, which is part of the West-Central Africa Division. Ekiti Conference covers the present Ekiti state of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; made up 16 local governments.<sup>1</sup> The church has membership in all the local governments, namely: Ado, Efon, Emure, Ekiti West, Ekiti South West, Ekiti East,

Gbonyin, Ido/Osi, Ijero, Irepodun/Ifelodun, Ise/Orun, Ikere, Ikole, Ilejemeje, Moba, and Oye<sup>2</sup>

As of June 30, 2018, Ekiti Conference had 33 churches, 40 companies, 19 regular employees, three lay pastors, eight pioneer evangelists, two literature evangelists, membership of 9,273, and general population of 3,348,048. Ekiti Conference headquarters is in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti state, Nigeria.<sup>3</sup>

## The Establishment of SDA Church in Ekiti North

The Seventh-day Adventist Church began in Ipoti Ekiti, Ekiti state in 1915, following the invitation extended to Elder David Coldwell Babcock, the pioneer Adventist missionary Nigeria. Without hesitation, he left Sao town several miles north of Ilorin Kwara state, his second missionary base, to go to Ipoti to fulfill this divine mandate. Ipoti Ekiti, a community that is situated at the central part of Ekiti state, gave a warm reception to Elder David C. Babcock. Thus, the seed of Adventism was sown and a village school was opened to facilitate the understanding of the gospel.<sup>4</sup>

Elder David C. Babcock opened the first Seventh-day Adventist Church at Ipoti Ekiti in 1915, and he gathered many followers. Some of these were: Elders Pa Olomjobi Daniel, Donka John, Daniel Omolewa, Isaiah Balogun, John B. Oriola, Chief Daniel Ojo, and a few others.<sup>5</sup>

These people worked assiduously to ensure that the gospel was properly planted in the community. As excited as they were, the Adventist message was confined to Ipoti territory until 1922, when Pastor I. A. Balogun was sent to Otun to preach the Adventist message.<sup>6</sup> He met a peer group hosted by David Ajayi Erinfolami, a younger brother to Mr. Alabi. They were entertaining themselves with palm wine and they happily served Pastor Balogun, but he humbly refused to drink. He turned the discussion to a Bible school where he regularly taught them how to read the alphabet (Alawiye/Olope). This was a native community school.

This method became a traditional way in which Balogun taught them the doctrines of the seventh-day Sabbath and other relevant teachings. Thus, the Adventist Church began in Otun. David T. Agboola, a renowned historian in Yoruba land, believed that the approach of Isaiah Balogun was a true reflection of Jesus' method as He mingled with people, understood their needs, presented the message in their context, and bid them to follow Him.<sup>7</sup> Many were converted to the Adventist Church. From Otun Ekiti, Ekiti state, the Adventist message spread to the neighboring towns and villages such as Epe, Erinmope, Ikun, Ayetoro, Ira, and Iro. In the 1970s and 1980s it spread to Ikole and Oye.

## Establishment of the SDA Church in Ekiti South

The Spirit that led in the spread of God's Church, led Pa Ayanwale, a native of Edugbe Quarters in Omuo Ekiti to settle at Otun Ekiti as a result of a tribal war that ensued in Omuo Ekiti. He was married at Otun and was blessed with three children namely: Adegbenle Ayanwale, Jacob Ayanwale, and Adeniran.

When Pa Ayanwale grew old, he decided to return to his native town, Omuo Ekiti, with his children. They had accepted the Seventh-day Adventist faith at Otun. On returning home, despite the acute hostility from the Anglican Church (CMS), he continued to practice his faith. Through his family, many people accepted the Adventist faith. From this little beginning, the Adventist church spread to neighboring towns and villages. Amongst the communities that accepted the Adventist messages in Ekiti South are Omuo-Oke quarters, Ijero Omuo Ekiti, (1997), Ode Ekiti (2004), Imesi Ekiti (1999), Ikere (1950), Ise-Emure Ekiti, and Kajola.<sup>8</sup>

## Establishment of the SDA Church in Ekiti Central

The spirit of mission led Pastor J. A. Alade, a student of Adventist College of West Africa (now Babcock University) to sell religious books in Ado Ekiti. He was directed to a battery charger named Joseph Adeniyi (now Elder J. A. Adeniyi), popularly known as Omo Igbala (saved child). Pastor Alade and J. A. Adeniyi, like the disciples of Jesus Christ, went in search of Abolarinde Ojo and then organized worship services immediately. This breakthrough in Ado Ekiti Central started in 1969 with the following: The Asanso family from Ikun Ekiti, Mr. Aluko from Ikosu Ekiti, Mr. Molomo from Ibadan, Mr. and Mrs. Jayeola, and many other faithful followers.<sup>9</sup> From this little light, the Seventh-day Adventist faith grew unhindered in the neighboring towns and villages. Some of these are Igede Ekiti, Ilawe, Iyin, Ikere, Aramoko, and Efon communities.

## Establishment of Ekiti Conference

On February 3, 2011, the South West Nigeria Conference (SWNC), during the constituency session at the conference headquarters, Akure, voted to restructure the South West Nigeria Conference into three conferences. These are: Mainland, Ogun, and Ekiti-Ondo. Surprisingly, positive signs of growth were manifested in both Ondo and Ekiti states, giving strong indication that both could survive independently.

On July 17, 2012, it was voted by the South West Nigeria Conference Executive Committee to organize Ekiti as a conference, since it had met the required standards. It was voted in that same meeting to have Ondo state as a mission.

## First Constituency Session of Ekiti Conference

Unlike other conferences, Ekiti Conference did not go through a year as an administrative unit. The commitment of Ekiti people to having a conference was rewarded. This was voted on July 17, 2012, by the South West Nigeria Conference Executive Committee. The first constituency session of Ekiti Conference was held November 15-18, 2012, at Opopogbooro, Ado Ekiti, which now serves as the conference headquarters. The following officers, directors, and executive committee members were elected to guide the affairs of the conference from January 2013 to December 2016. The officers were: Dr. Ezekiel Atolagbe Adeleye (president), Pastor Ogah, Christopher Osimhen (secretary), Elder Gbadura Peter Ehuwayijomo (treasurer).<sup>10</sup>

The directors elected to various departments include: Adeleye E. A. (Family Life); Ogah C. O. (Ministerial Secretary); Obebe Olakunle Emmanuel (Sabbath School/Personal Ministries/Evangelism/Global Mission/Children's Ministries); Olajide Akinlayo (Stewardship); Akinleye Oluwafemi B. (Adventist Men's Organization); Olu-Ajayi, Michael (Adventist Youth Ministry/Adventist Chaplaincy Ministry); Arogundade, Ayo (Communication); Ogunbiyi, Mrs. Christiana (Adventist Women's Ministries); Adesina Mrs. Elizabeth (Health); Mrs. Alebiose Ibiyayo (Education); Adeniyi Adeyinka Kingsley (Publishing Ministry/Spirit of Prophecy); Sule Olubusayo (Legal Adviser/PARL). Other members of the executive council were: Owoeye Mrs. Grace, Ogunbiyi Mrs. Grace, Olaoye Timothy, Aremu John Olu, Oludumila Oluwasegun, Oyinloye Adebisi, Babajide Gabriel, Kolawole Boluwaji, and Olajide Joseph.<sup>11</sup>

## Second Constituency Session of Ekiti Conference

The second constituency session of Ekiti Conference was held November 16-20, 2016, at the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Opopogbooro, Ado Ekiti, Ekiti state. This venue has been the conference headquarters since inception.

During this session a new set of leaders was elected, and another executive committee was appointed for (2017-2020). The officers were: Pastor Alofe Oluwafemi Samuel (president); Dr. Ogah Christopher Osimhen (secretary); Elder Anisere Afolabi Gbenga (treasurer).<sup>12</sup>

The following directors were elected to various departments. Kolawole Boluwaji (Evangelism/Global Mission); Timothy Olaoye (Sabbath School/Personal Ministries); Ezekiel Oladele Aina (Ministerial/Family Life); Daniel Omotunde Aina (Stewardship and Trust Services); Akinleye Oluwafemi Bamidele (Adventist Men's Organization); Ogunbiyi Christiana (Adventist Women's Ministry); Olu-Ajayi Michael (Adventist Youth Ministry); Ogunmola Samuel (Communication); Alabi Festus Iyiola (Publishing Ministry/Children's Ministry/Spirit of Prophecy); Olomjobi Olufolake (Health); Barr. Sule Busayo (Legal Adviser/PARL); Oludumila Oluwasegun (Strategic Planning and Development); Omole Ayotunde (Public Campus Ministry/Chaplaincy); Olasende Samuel (Education); and Opemiposi Alofe (Shepherdess International).

Other members of the executive council elected from each of the 11 districts that made up the conference were: Afolabi Aderemi, Dada A.K (Mrs.), Dada Felicia (Mrs.), Adeoye Segun, Akinkunmi Banke (Miss), Popoola Felicia (Mrs.), Aburo Ezekiel, and Oyedeji Rachael (Mrs.).<sup>13</sup>

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## NOTES

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4. David O. Babalola, *On Becoming A Conference, the Story of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Yorubaland 1914-2002* (Ibadan: OSB Design Ltd, 2002), 27-30.
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10. Report of the Inaugural Constituency, 2012, Ekiti Conference headquarters, 6.

11. Report of the Second Constituency, 2012, Ekiti Conference headquarters, 16-17.

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