

North East Nigeria Conference

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The North East Nigeria Conference (NENC) belongs to the West-Central Africa Division. It was started as a mission station in 1931 by John J. Hyde and his wife, Louise M. Hyde, who was a trained nurse.¹ In 1932 the station was formally established as a mission field of the Nigeria Union Mission, with headquarters at Ibadan.² The mission field was organized as the Northern Nigeria Mission in 1954 with headquarters at Jengre.³ For efficient and effective administration and speedy expansion of the church, the North Nigeria Mission was reorganized in 1993 into two entities: North East Mission (NEM) with headquarters at Bukuru, and North West Conference (NWC) with headquarters at Kaduna. Ten years later, in 2013, the NEM attained the status of North East Conference (NEC).

The territory of NEC consists of seven states: Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Plateau, Taraba (excluding Takum local government area), and Yobe.⁴

Statistics (2017): churches 77; membership 18,296; population 30,197,310.⁵

Origin of the Seventh-day Adventist Work in North East Nigeria Conference

The Adventist church was introduced in northern Nigeria in 1931 when John J. Hyde, who served first in Ghana and Sierra Leone, arrived and opened a mission station at Jengre. In 1932 the station was established as North Nigeria Mission, and it was formally organized in 1954. The pioneering missionary outreach began with a dispensary established by Mrs. Louise M. Hyde which largely served victims of jigger epidemics.⁶ The dispensary was so often frequented that it served as one of the best methods of sharing the Three Angels' Messages with the people.⁷

Formative Events that Led to the Organization of North Nigeria Mission

John Jacob Hyde, on arrival in Nigeria from Sierra Leone in 1930, stayed at Ibadan where preparations were being made for entering the Northern Nigeria territory. A team arrived in Jos, capital of Plateau province, on

February 9, 1931, but they were unable to secure a suitable location for the establishments of a mission station. Earlier Christian missionaries of various denominations had carved out their own spheres of influence all over the Plateau province. Zangon Kataf in Zaria province was chosen as a place to begin work, but the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) at Kagoro protested vehemently, and Hyde was compelled to abandon the site. Finally, a strategic location which straddled the borders of the Plateau and Zaria provinces was found at Jengre. This was the first headquarters of Adventist work in northern Nigeria in 1932. The mission headquarters was later moved from Jengre to Bukuru in 1961.⁸

Development of the Conference

The establishment, growth, and development of the NEC was expanded largely through: the construction of churches, health ministries, and educational institutions. By conducting public evangelism and house-to-house visitation, people embraced the Adventist faith, many churches were constructed, and pastors and laymen were employed to take charge of the gospel ministry. The first indigenous minister to be ordained was Bulus Mallum Kakwi in 1954.

The health ministry established clinics and hospitals where the sick could receive the attention of nurses and physicians. Louise Hyde established the first clinic at Jengre in 1931. The dispensary drew large crowds of people for the treatment of common diseases such as malaria, and the dressing of sores and ulcers. The dispensary gradually grew and eventually developed into a full healthcare institution when Jengre Hospital was built and officially commissioned in 1948. J. Ashton Hyde (son of John and Louise Hyde) was the first medical director while also serving as the superintendent of the North Nigeria Mission. The first nationals to work in the hospital were Istifanus Kaji Dariya and Timoni Kadaki.⁹

Another important ministry of the church was its educational institutions. In 1932 the church initially started as a Bible school at Jengre station. It eventually grew into a formal primary school in 1943. The primary institution became a standard four school. After completing the four-year course, ambitious children aspiring for further education went to Ibadan to complete standard six.¹⁰ Among the first children admitted to the primary school were Timoni Kadaki, Daniel Dada Magaji, and Isaac Kipiri.¹¹

The advancement and progress of the North Nigeria Mission was largely the result of the Jengre SDA Hospital and Jengre SDA Primary School. The standard four primary course was upgraded to a standard six school in 1947. By 1955 the institution changed its program to a course running for seven years. Between 1948 and 1957 the quality medical care at Jengre Hospital attracted patients from all parts of northern Nigeria. Similarly, the high quality of Adventist education at Jengre SDA School attracted children from all over the northern region. The Jengre Hospital had four main wards with two for males and two for females. The capacity of the four wards was 48 beds. There were always more patients to be admitted than there were beds. Many of the patients had to sleep on mats on the floors of the wards. In addition to the in-patient department the hospital operated a

daily out-patient clinic with a high attendance of Hausa Muslims, cattle Fulani, other Christian missionaries, and traditionalists.

Jengre SDA Primary School, which started with fewer than 20 pupils in 1943, had by 1957 grown to more than 400 children drawn from Muslims, various Christian denominations, and traditionalists.¹²

Most Christian missions in northern Nigeria, such as Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, and Sudan Interior Mission, had offices in Jos but not the Adventists. With the permission of the Nigeria Union Mission, the president of North Nigeria Mission, A. D. Roberts, in 1961 transferred the headquarters of SDA Church from Jengre to Bukuru, which lay less than ten miles south of Jos. Bukuru continues to remain the headquarters.

Reorganization

The advancement and progress of the North Nigeria Mission necessitated the reorganization of the church. The first reorganization split the mission into two administrative units in 1993: North East Mission (NEM) and North West Nigeria Conference (NWC). In the reorganization, the NEM had the following states: Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Yobe, Plateau, Taraba, Nassawa, Benue, and FCT, with E. D. Magaji as president. The NWC had the following states: Kaduna, Kano, Jigawa, Niger, Sokoto, Katsina, Kano, Kebbi, and Zamfara, with Y. M. Musa as president. Ten years later, NEM attained conference status in 2003. By then it had two established secondary schools; one at Jengre in Plateau state and the other at Numan in Adamawa state. Though there are several local church nursery and primary schools, only the one at Bassa has been officially registered with the government. The director of education in the NEC is working to encourage and ensure the registration of the local church schools. Jengre SDA Hospital in the NENC has been the only major healthcare institution in the Northern Nigeria Union Conference. There are a number of rural clinics, most of which are concentrated in Kaduna state. Among them are Yadin Lere, Maigamo, Ramin Kura, and Warsa, with only Kurgwi in Plateau state.¹³ In early July 2017, a team of short-term medical missionaries from Loma Linda University established a new clinic at Eto Baba in Jos.¹⁴

The church has also done well with public evangelism. One of the major public campaigns, conducted for over one month at Jos in 1993 by W. Jones from the United States, resulted in the baptism of more than 400 people. Subsequently, Dave Nyekwere conducted a public campaign in Jos which added a substantial number of baptized members to the church.¹⁵

North East Nigeria Conference Presidents

From its inception the following have served as the presidents of the NEC: John J. Hyde (1931-1950), Jacob J. Till (1951-1952), John Ashford Hyde (1953-1954), B. A. Roberts (1955-1962), David H. Hughes (1962-1967), B. C. Burge (1967-1969), F. R. Faber (1970-1971), B. W. Ackah (Ghanaian, 1971-1975), Pastor Frize (1976), D. C. Clotheir (1976-

1979), S. H. Jensen (1979-1995), E. D. Magaji¹⁶ (1985-1995), Y. M. Musa (1996-2002), E. D. Magaji (2003-2009), S. H. Bindas, (2009-2013), and E. G. Jugbo (2014-present).

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1. J. G. Nengel, "Seventh-day Adventist Church History in Northern Nigeria," a paper presented at Evangelism Summit organized by the North West Nigeria Conference, Kaduna, July 16-17, 2016, 5.
2. W. Clements, Nigerian Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists, P. O. Box 19, Ibadan, to the Resident, Zaria Province, Zar Prof 41, N.A.K., January 26, 1932; also see Nengel, SDA Church History, 7.
3. Adekunle A. Alalade, *Limiting Factors to the Success of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa: the Nigeria Case Study*, Ibadan: Agbo Areo Publishers, 2008.
4. "North East Nigeria Conference," accessed May 1, 2019. <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/2018> pdf.
5. Ibid.
6. Louise M. Hyde, Northern Nigeria; Nengel, SDA Church History.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Nengel, "SDA Church History in Northern Nigeria," 17.

11. John Nengel, personal correspondence to author, July 2017.

12. Ibid.

13. Dayo Aloa (ed.) *90 Years of Adventism in the Nigeria, 1914-2004: A Compendium*, Lagos Nigeria: Adventist Publishing Ministry, 2004.

14. Joshua Ezra Mallum, personal knowledge as secretary of the North East Nigerian Conference.

15. Ibid.

16. Alalade, 76.

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