



Kwara Conference headquarters, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

Photo courtesy of Adekunle Ishola.

# Kwara Conference

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EMMANUEL OLUGBENGA AYENI

Emmanuel Olugbenga Ayeni

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Kwara Conference, formerly part of West Nigeria Conference, was organized in 2013. It is part of Western Nigeria Union Conference in West-Central Africa Division of the Seventh-day Adventists.

Seventh-day Adventist Church began in Kwara State in 1915 when David Caldwell Babcock, the pioneer of Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nigeria, visited Ilorin from his base at Erunmu, making Kwara State the second home of Adventism in Nigeria.<sup>1</sup> He was encouraged to go to Sao, a town seven miles north of Ilorin because the

people of Ilorin were predominantly Muslims. At Sao, Elder Babcock found a suitable station and opened a village school.<sup>2</sup>

## Territory and Statistics

Territory: Kwara Conference covers the present Kwara state of the federal republic of Nigeria, made up of sixteen local governments.<sup>3</sup> The church has membership in fifteen out of the sixteen local governments, namely: Asa, Edu, Ekiti, Ifelodun, Ilorin East, Ilorin South, Ilorin West, Irepodun, Isin, Kaiama, Moro, Offa, Oke-Ero, Oyun and Pategi. Baruten local government has yet to register any Adventist presence.<sup>4</sup>

Statistics (June 30, 2019): Churches, 29; membership, 2,727; population, 3,481,131<sup>5</sup>

## The Establishment of the Adventist Church in Kwara North

David Caldwell Babcock had opened his first station at Erunmu in the present Oyo state of Nigeria. His second station was opened in 1915 at Sao in Kwara state. In the same year, he received an invitation from Ipoti in the present Ekiti state where he opened his third mission station.<sup>6</sup> A school was started at Sao, which David T. Agboola described as “a sort of boarding and central school in 1916 for the three stations—Erunmu, Sao and Ipoti. Young men and boys of school age came to learn at Sao from those three Adventist stations.”<sup>7</sup> By 1918 the school at Sao had become “the first Seventh-day Adventist formal school in Nigeria where the early national workers were trained.”<sup>8</sup> Sao became the headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Western Nigeria until 1927 when it was moved to Ibadan.<sup>9</sup> From Sao, the Adventist message was spread to neighboring towns and villages such as Igbo-Emu, Elemere, Sosoki, Yereji, Budo Ayan, Lanwa, Oloje, Oke-Oyi, Ilorin, Amoyo, Olooru, Olugbija, Okutaala, Alagbaa, and Jokolu. Later, in 1970s and 80s, it spread to Bode Saadu, Bacita, Jebba, etc!<sup>10</sup>

## The Establishment of the Adventist Church in Kwara South

After Elder Babcock had settled in Sao, he got an invitation from Ipoti-Ekiti, which is 120 kilometers south-east of Ilorin and about 352 kilometers north-east of Lagos. As a result of his efforts, 150 members broke away from the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and accepted the Sabbath message.<sup>11</sup> It was from this location that the Adventists spread to the southern part of Kwara State under the leadership of an Irish young man, William McClements.<sup>12</sup> Amongst the communities that accepted the Adventist message in Kwara south are Omu-Aran (1924), Osi (1925),<sup>13</sup> Arandun (1933), and Rore (1935). Later, the Sabbath message was carried to Idofin Odo-Aga, Epe, Oke-Ode, Ajase-Ipo, Offa, Oro, Odo-Owa, etc.<sup>14</sup>

## Establishment of Kwara Conference

On May 30, 2011, the executive committee of the West Nigeria Conference voted to restructure the West Nigeria Conference into four conferences and one attached field. The conferences they planned to create are Lagos Atlantic, Oyo, Osun, and Kwara, while the attached field is Kogi.<sup>15</sup> On Saturday, November 19, 2011 the executive committee of West Nigeria Conference voted the establishment of Kwara Administrative Unit at the Kwara State camp meeting held at the permanent camp site at Ajase-Ipo.<sup>16</sup>

The three officers appointed to lead the administrative unit were Pastor Joseph Obasola Lawal (President); Pastor Gideon Olubukola Atolagbe (Secretary); and Elder James Olatunde P. Afolayan (Treasurer).<sup>17</sup> On January 3, 2012, the three officers swung into action to begin to prepare the administrative unit for conference status. God blessed their efforts and on December 15, 2012, the Kwara Administrative Unit was inaugurated into a full-fledged conference by the North-Western Nigeria Union Mission president Pastor (Dr.) O. A. Owolabi and Pastor (Dr.) Onaolapo Ajibade, the West-Central Africa Division Executive Secretary. The total number of workers at the inception of the conference was 17 (13 pastors and pioneer evangelists and four office workers).<sup>18</sup>

## First Constituency Session of Kwara Conference

The first constituency session of Kwara Conference was held on December 13-15, 2012 at Adventist Church Permanent Campsite, along Igbaja Road, Ajase-Ipo and the following officers, directors, and executive committee members were elected to pilot the affairs of the young conference from January 2013 to December 2016. The officers were Joseph Obasola Lawal (President); Gideon Olubukola Atolagbe (Secretary); and James Olatunde P. Afolayan (Treasurer).<sup>19</sup>

The directors elected to various departments were Emmanuel Olugbenga Ayeni (Sabbath School/Personal Ministries/Evangelism/Global Mission/Children's Ministries); Joseph Olatunde Owolabi (Adventist Youth Ministry/Chaplaincy); Joshua Adeniyi Adesina (Ministerial Association/Family Life); Julius Abiodun Awoniyi (Publishing Ministry/Spirit of Prophecy/Voice of Prophecy); David Ayodeji Omowumi (Adventist Men's Organization); Felicia Iyabo Ajayi (Adventist Women's Ministry); Amos Bamidele Dada (Stewardship/Trust Services); OyeseGUN Oyerinde (Strategic Planning); Folorunsho Fashiku (Communication); Jacob O. F. Obafemi (Education); Emmanuel Agboola Ajiboye (Health); and Solomon Olorukooba (Public Affairs and Religious Liberty). Other members of the executive committee were Titilayo Afolabi, Rebecca Ajiboye, Elizabeth Omowumi, and Clement Okezie Onunka,<sup>20</sup>

## Second Constituency Session of Kwara Conference

The second constituency session of the Kwara Conference was held on October 26-30, 2016, at Seventh-day Adventist Secondary School Permanent Site, Oke-Ode and a new set of leaders were elected and another executive committee was inaugurated (for 2017-2020). The officers were Gideon Olubukola Atolagbe (President); Emmanuel Olugbenga Ayeni (Secretary); and Funminiyi Ezekiel Owolabi (Treasurer).<sup>21</sup>

The following directors were elected to various departments: Job Oluwagbenga Adebayo (Sabbath School/Personal Ministries/Evangelism/Global Mission); Temitope Elizabeth Odetoje (Adventist Youth Ministry/Children's Ministry); John Olatunde Kuranga (Chaplaincy/Campus Ministry); Julius Abiodun Awoniye (Ministerial Association/Family Life); Stephen Otola Azikwe (Publishing Ministry/Spirit of Prophecy/Voice of Prophecy); David Ayodeji Omowumi (Adventist Men's Organization); Felicia Iyabo Ajayi (Adventist Women's Ministry); Joseph Olatunde Owolabi (Stewardship/Trust Services); Joshua Adeniyi Adesina (Strategic Planning); Ayotunde Alao (Communication); Oluwatoyin Samuel Alabi (Education); Kehinde Samson Kolapo (Health); Solomon Olorukooba (Public Affairs and Religious Liberty); and Adedayo Ibukun Atolagbe (Shepherdess International). Other members of the executive committee chosen from each of the seven districts that made up the conference were Cecilia Olubunmi Dada, Janet Funsho Obafemi, Ruth B. Oke, John Sunday Omotoso, James A. Olaoye, Matthew Lawal, Abraham Olushola Bamidele, Afolabi Funsho Afolayan, and Temidayo O. Ogundele.<sup>22</sup>

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## NOTES

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2. Ibid.
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5. "Kwara Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=52308>.
6. David T. Agboola, *Seventh-day Adventist History in West Africa (1888-1988)* (Ibadan: Lasob Production, 2001), 24-26.
7. David T. Agboola, *The Seventh-day Adventists in Yoruba Land 1914-1964* (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1987), 4.
8. Babalola, *On Becoming A Conference*, 27.
9. Agboola, *Seventh-day Adventist History in West Africa (1888-1988)*, 28.
10. Babalola, *On Becoming A Conference*, 31.
11. Agboola, *Seventh-day Adventist History in West Africa (1888-1988)*, 26.
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14. Kwara Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church, *Report of the Inaugural Constituency* (December 13-15, 2012), 11, 12.
15. Kwara Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church, *Inauguration of Kwara Conference* program booklet (December 13-15, 2012), 9.
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19. Ibid., 25.
20. Ibid.
21. *Report of the Second Constituency Session*, 15.
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