

Delta Conference

JOSHUA IDAHOSE AREBUN

Joshua Idahose Arebun

Delta Conference was organized in 2013 and it is made up of Delta state. It was formerly part of the Edo-Delta Conference. As of June 30, 2018, Delta Conference had 30 churches, membership of 6,645, and total population of 5,752,504. Its headquarters are in Ekpan, Delta state, Nigeria.¹

The area called Delta state was once an integral part of the old western region of Nigeria. It became an autonomous entity on August 27, 1991, after having been part of the old Midwestern state (1963-1976) and the defunct Bendel state (1976-1991). Delta state was created from the Bendel state on August 27, 1991.² Delta state has 25 local government areas. Its capital is Asaba. Delta state shares common boundaries with Edo and Ondo states to the northwest.³

Beginnings of Adventist Work in Delta State

The light of Adventism in Delta state started as a small spark in Warri (Iyara-Odibo) by Pastor E. E. Onumegbu and one unidentified literature evangelist from the East Nigeria Mission (now Eastern Nigeria Union Conference). Starting in 1949, the message gradually spread to other parts of the state.⁴ In 1961 Warri was merged with Benin to form an administrative district under the West Nigeria Mission with its headquarters in Ibadan, and the missionary work in Delta was supervised by this mission. The merger brought the work in Delta and Edo states under the same administrative unit. The new unit was named "Benin District," with Pastor S. A. Majolagbe as the district leader in the early 1950s.⁵

The Adventist church in Delta Conference started in Delta Central when Pastor E. E. Onumegbu and an unknown literature evangelist came to Warri as pioneers in 1948. They gave Bible studies to students and teachers in various schools within Warri. It was through this process that they came in contact with Pastor S. E. Mayiko and Elder M. J. Obrimah, who were then students of Urhobo College, and Pastor L. O. Osekete, who was then a teacher in Christ Apostolic School in Warri.⁶ This teacher and the two students became the pioneer converts of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Delta state, having studied all the Voice of Prophecy Bible lessons.⁷

In Warri area, it was Elder Sunday Mayiko and Pastor Nwaogwugwu who took over the pioneering work from Pastor Emmanuel Onumegbu. The duo worked very hard to plant churches in Aladja, Eru-mo-ko-kharen, Agbarho, and Effurun. Unfortunately, some of these churches did not survive due to lack of leadership to

nurture the new congregations. From the beginning in Odibo-Iyara, the work moved slowly but steadily to Ugeilli, Orogun, Sapele, in 1982, and to Great Hope, Effurun, Ekpan, and Udu, between 1945 and 1987⁸

Delta North

From Delta Central, the Adventist message spread to the little towns, Ubiaruku and Kwale, in Delta North in 1978 through the influence of L. O. Osekete. Following L. O. Osekete's decision to join the church, his appointment as a teacher in the school where he was teaching came under a serious threat, so he resigned and went to his home town, Ubiaruku. There he started to study with the natives using the Voice of Prophecy (VOP) lessons that he received from the VOP headquarters in Ibadan. It was at that time that a branch Sabbath School was first organized at Ubiaruku.⁹

A worship center started in Pama Rubber Camp at Uroka, Abraka, by Elders Amanze and Okwadigbo. Their efforts brought the family of Wilson Abovwe into the church.¹⁰ The Adventist mission came to the Ika area through Ebonu Alexander, a literature evangelist, in 1978. The church started in Boji Owa, Agbor, in the house of Justina Chinukwe.¹¹ From there it extended to Asaba and Akwukwu-Igbo about the same time through the effort of Pastor Chima P. C. who was the pioneer president of Bendel Mission. Some of the pioneer members of the church in the northern part of Delta were: Agnes Otoya, Francis Adiabge, Cecilia Osama, Julius Mokwuye, the Ebun family, U. G. Otionu, and Beatrice Achi.¹²

Delta Administrative Unit

In line with the decision of the North-Western Nigeria Union Mission to reorganize the field, Edo-Delta Conference called a mini-constituency meeting on June 26, 2011, at Edo-Delta Conference headquarters in Benin City, where it was overwhelmingly voted to reorganize the Edo-Delta Conference into two conferences based on the two states, Edo and Delta.¹³

Following this action, Delta was organized into an administrative unit on December 24, 2011, at a Delta zone family camp meeting at Ewreni, Delta state. Pastor Olatunji Olaofe was appointed the president; Pastor Joshua Idahose Arebun, the secretary; and Elder Daniel E. Edafe, the treasurer.¹⁴ These officers, with the help of God and the support of the entire membership of Delta, worked tirelessly to see that the unit attained conference status at the stipulated time.

The work started in a three-bedroom apartment generously donated by Elder and Mrs. Friday O. Nwanganga in the Ekpan area of Warri, Delta state. The apartment served as an office and residence for the three officers between January 1 and August 21, 2012, when the conference secretariat was completed. On August 22, 2012, an inspection team comprised of representatives from the West-Central Africa Division and the North-Western Nigeria Union Mission officers came to inspect the unit and gave recommendation for conference status to the

Delta administrative unit. Within the period of the administrative unit, a total of 563 baptisms were recorded. Thus, the membership rose from 4,105 to 4,668.¹⁵

Birth of the Delta Conference

Delta was formally inaugurated as a conference on December 1, 2012, at an historic constituency session held November 29 to December 1, 2012, at DSC Church, Warri. The constituency meeting elected the following as the pioneer officers: Pastor Olaofe A. Olatunji, president; Pastor Arebun Joshua Idahose, executive secretary; Brother Edafe Daniel Esemireru, treasurer.¹⁶

The pioneer directors were: Pastor J. Ikhane, Personal Ministries, Sabbath School, Evangelism; Pastor Chibuna Victor, Publishing Ministries; Pastor Abu Ahmed, Chaplaincy; Elder and Mrs. Idiodi, Stewardship, Family Life; Elder T. Umore, Youth, Children's Ministries; Arebun J. I., Ministerial Secretary; Mrs. J. Ewhe, Communication; Mrs. J. Onoruvie, Health Ministries; Elder Alimasunya C., Education; Elder Onokpofure F., Adventist Men's Organization; Mrs. Queen Adugbo, Adventist Women's Ministries; Akpojoto Ogbiruveta, Legal Adviser; and Mrs. J. O. Olaofe, Shepherdess International.¹⁷

Delta Conference Pioneer Field Executive Committee (2013-2016)

Pastor Olatunji Olaofe, chair; Pastor Joshua I. Arebun, secretary; Elder Edafe Daniel, Pastor J. Ikhane, Pastor Ripley Oriakhi, Pastor Augustine Akhaine, Pastor Goodluck Ajuzie, Elder N. O. Idiodi, Elder S. Oseghe, Elder S. I. Anaba, Elder T. Umore, Mrs. Q. Adugbo, Yegbovwre Paulina, Elder Onakpofure F. and Fume Orji.¹⁸

During this first quadrennial period, 22 new areas were entered, and 1,559 new members were added to the church through baptism. The number of congregations rose from 72 to 97, districts rose from 13 to 16, and organized churches rose from 25 to 28.¹⁹

Delta Second Constituency Session

The second constituency meeting of the Delta Conference was held November 16-19, 2016, at Ekpan. The session brought in new leadership. The following, elected at this constituency meeting, are the leaders for the 2017-2020 quadrennial period: Pastor Joshua Idahose Arebun, president; Pastor Amos Opeke, executive secretary; and Elder Daniel Esemireru Edafe, treasurer.

The directors were: Pastor G. C. Ajuze, Evangelism; Pastor J. Ikhane, Personal Ministries and Sabbath School; Pastor Chibuna Victor, Publishing Ministries; Pastor Abu Ahmed, Chaplaincy; Elder and Mrs. Idiodi, Stewardship, Family Life; Elder T. Umore, Youth, Children's Ministries; Mrs. J. Ewhe, Communication; Mrs. P. C. Oyem, Health Ministries; Elder C. Alimasunya, Education; Elder F. Onokpofure, Adventist Men's Organization; Mrs. Queen Adugbo, Adventist Women's Ministries; Akpojoto Ogbiruveta, Legal Adviser; Mrs. P.T. Arebun, Shepherdess

International; Pastor Benedict, Strategic Planning; Tony Achi, Associate Strategic Planning.

Members of the conference executive committee were: Pastor Joshua I. Arebun, chair; Pastor Amos J. Opeke, secretary; Elder Daniel E. Edafe, Elder Tony Achi, Pastor Ripley Oriakhi, Elder Fred Erha, Pastor Goodluck Ajuzie, Elder N. O. Idiodi, Mrs. Ezuzu Esther, Mrs. Ndidi Ogbuleka, Elder T. Umoru, Mrs. Q. Adugbo, Mrs. Mary Holiday, Elder Onakpofure F., and Fume Orji.²⁰

SOURCES

A Brief History of SDA church in Delta State, Delta Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church Inaugural Constituency Session program booklet. November 29 - December 1, 2012, DSC, Warri.

Delta Conference 1st Constituency Report, November 29-December 1, 2012. Delta Conference records, Ekpan, Delta state, Nigeria.

Delta Conference 2nd Constituency Report, November 16-19, 2016. Delta Conference records, Ekpan, Delta state, Nigeria.

Eregare, E. O. *An African Christian Church History; SDA Cosmology in Edo and Delta States: 1948-2012 and Ecumenical Initiatives*. Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria: Christ Coming Books Publishers, 2013.

Odiase, J. U. *The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Edo-Delta States of Nigeria*. Somolu, Lagos, Nigeria: Emaphine Publishers, 2001.

Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook. Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2019.

NOTES

1. "Delta Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2019), 410.
2. *A Brief History of Delta State*, a publication of the government of Delta state of Nigeria: <https://www.deltastate.gov.ng>. Accessed May 28, 2019.
3. Ibid.
4. Odibo Church Dedication booklet, 4.
5. Oral interview of the author with Elder Wilson Abovwe, a pioneer member of Seventh-day Adventist Church in Delta, May 27, 2018.
6. J. U. Odiase, *The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Edo-Delta States of Nigeria* (Somolu, Lagos, Nigeria: Emaphine Publishers, 2001), 17.
7. 7 Ibid., 18.

8. Ibid., 19.
9. *A Brief History of SDA church in Delta State*, Delta Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church; Inaugural Constituency Session program booklet. November 29 to December 1, 2012, DSC, Warri, 9.
10. Elder Abowwe W. O., interview by author, May 27, 2018.
11. E. O. Eregare, *An African Christian Church History; SDA Cosmology in Edo and Delta States: 1948-2012 and Ecumenical Initiatives* (Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria: Christ Coming Books Publishers, 2013), 96.
12. Ibid., 98-99.
13. Edo-Delta of Seventh-day Adventist Church, Mini-Constituency Meeting Report of June 26, 2011, Benin Cities.
14. Delta Conference of SDA Church, Edo/Delta Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, Ewreni, Delta state. December 22, 2011.
15. *A Brief History of SDA Church in Delta State*, Delta Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church; Inaugural Constituency Session program booklet. November 29 to December 1, 2012, DSC, Warri, 9.
16. Delta Conference 1st Constituency Report, November 29 to December 1, 2012, Delta Conference records, Ekpan, Delta state, Nigeria.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Delta Conference 2nd Constituency Report, November 16-19, 2016, Delta Conference records, Ekpan, Delta state, Nigeria.
20. Ibid.

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the [Seventh-day Adventist World Church](#)

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring , MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000