

Adeogun, Joseph Adeyemo (c. 1905–1971)

JOSHUA ADEOGUN

Joshua Adeogun is the son of Joseph Adeyemo Adeogun.

Joseph Adeyemo Adeogun, pastor, evangelist, teacher, and church administrator, was born at Inisa in Odo – Otin local government area of Osun state in southwestern Nigeria. Like many people in their community, his parents were illiterate and did not record his birth date, but it is estimated to sometime in 1905.¹ The Seventh-day Adventist message reached Nigeria in 1914. Adventist mission remained largely under the leadership of white missionaries appointed to Nigeria by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Joseph Adeyemo Adeogun became the first Nigerian national to be elected president of an Adventist mission section in 1961.²

Adeogun did not have the benefit of early education, but he worked on the farm as most young people of his time. He later attended the SDA comprehensive “Theology and Trades” education in Sao, Kwara state. In Sao he came in contact with Pastor McClement, an Irish missionary from Newbold, England. Pastor McClement noticed that Joseph Adeogun was honest and had developed great interest in the gospel, so he took a lot of interest in him. After his graduation, the mission committee met and sent him to Owobale, presently Egbeda local government of Oyo state. Thus, he began his lifetime career at Owobale in 1931. In 1932 he married Comfort Wuraola Oyeyemi Bamidele, one of the daughters of Pastor James Abiola Ojo, who was an early convert of Adventist pioneer missionary to Nigeria, David C. Babcock. Comfort complemented Adeogun’s work as a pastor. They had six children, namely: Caleb (1932-2016), Elizabeth (1934-2009), Joshua, Dorcas (1940-1998), Titus (1942-1981), and John. Adeogun was ordained to the gospel ministry in 1956.³

By 1933 Pastor Adeogun had served as an evangelist and teacher in Ibadan and in Omu-Aran, in what is present-day Kwara state. In Omu-Aran the majority of the communities he served were composed mostly of farmers. He worked long, exhausting hours ministering to the farmers in their homes and on their farms. He was transferred to Omuo where he served the church from 1935 to 1944, and the Lord blessed his efforts. As a pioneering minister, he sowed the seed of Adventism in Ekiti and Moba, regions that had never before heard about the Adventist Church. He raised the standard of education around his sphere of influence ensuring that children of church members had access to formal education, while his wife was actively engaged in the activities of Women’s Ministries and the Dorcas Society. He moved from Omuo to Aiyetoro-Ekiti and later to Ipoti in 1946 and acquainted these regions with Adventism.⁴ He faced stiff opposition from the unbelievers in these regions who often threatened to kill him and destroy his family, but by the grace of God he overcame them all.⁵

As a result of his ministry in the Ekiti and Moba regions many young people came to know Jesus Christ and went on to attend the higher education system of the Church. Some trained as nurses, others as teachers, and many as evangelists. Some of the families that were blessed through his ministry were the Isijolas, Adekanyes, Oludumilas, Popoolas, Filoduns, Elekojus, and Apatas. These families and their descendants and several others became outstanding church pillars who continue to shape the course and progress of the Adventist Church today.⁶



Joseph Adeyemo Adeogun

Photo courtesy of Dorcas Omolaabi, daughter of Joseph Adeyemo Adeogun.

Adeogun was nominated to attend ministerial training at the Adventist Training School, Ihie, in eastern Nigeria, from May 1948 to February 1949. The training enhanced his effectiveness as a minister in subsequent mission stations where he worked. Some of these places included Osogbo, Abeokuta, and Aiyetoro in Ekiti state. By the beginning of 1955, the field committee voted that Pastor Adeogun should go for further studies outside Nigeria. He was sent to Bekwai in Ghana for two years.⁷

In 1958 Adeogun was transferred to Ibadan to serve as the Home Missionary Secretary for the church, thus becoming the first indigenous person to be so appointed. This was a department appointment in which he excelled. Pastor G. M. Ellstrom, the mission president in southwestern Nigeria, recommended that Adeogun be made his deputy. He served under Ellstrom's tutelage until he was elected mission president in 1961. Pastor Ellstrom thus became the last expatriate in that part of Nigeria and Adeogun became the first indigenous minister to assume the mantle of leadership.⁸

Christian education was foremost in the mind of the new president. He was instrumental in founding the first Adventist tertiary institution in Nigeria, the Adventist College of West Africa at Ilisan-Remo in 1959 (now Babcock University), and a secondary school, the Adventist Grammar School, Ede (1960). Pastor Adeogun saw to it that students were annually sponsored by the West Nigeria Mission to attend the Adventist College of West Africa, now Babcock University. Many beneficiaries of these sponsorships later became regional and country-wide church leaders, and notable education leaders within and outside the church, spreading Adventist educational values and influence in their territories.⁹

His influence was also felt throughout his home region. He became the link between his home community and the Church, and through his efforts the SDA Community Health Centre was established. Pastor Adeogun had a passion for souls and wanted to finish the work of God. His personal ministry was outstanding and the West Nigeria Conference will remember the contributions of Pastor Adeogun in the early development of the ministry of the Adventist church. As a result of his zeal for the work, he wore himself out prematurely, just as James White did. He could no longer cope with the ever-increasing demands of his job, and he therefore retired from active service in 1968. He did not live long after his retirement, but ended his earthly pilgrimage on March 25, 1971.¹⁰

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. Joshua Adeogun, personal knowledge as a son of Joseph Adeyemo Adeogun as he told his children his life history.?
2. Abiodun Ayodeji Adesegun, "Adeogun, Joseph Adeyemo and Comfort," *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 2007, accessed May 10, 2019, <https://dacb.org/stories/nigeria/adeogun-joseph/>
3. Joshua Adeogun, personal knowledge as a son of Joseph Adeyemo Adeogun as he told his children his life history.?
4. Abiodun Ayodeji Adesegun, "Adeogun, Joseph Adeyemo and Comfort," *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 2007, accessed May 10, 2019, <https://dacb.org/stories/nigeria/adeogun-joseph/>
5. Joshua Adeogun, personal knowledge as a son of Joseph Adeyemo Adeogun.?
6. Ibid.?
7. David O. Babalola, *Sweet Memories of Our Pioneers* (Somolu, Lagos: Emaphine Reprographics Ltd., 2001), 133-134.?
8. David T. Agboola, *The Seventh Day Adventists in Yoruba Land, 1914-1964* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Day-Star Press, 1987), 56.?
9. Abiodun Ayodeji Adesegun, "Adeogun, Joseph Adeyemo and Comfort," *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 2007, accessed May 10, 2019, <https://dacb.org/stories/nigeria/adeogun-joseph/>
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