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## Aba South Conference

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**NWOKEDI N. C. ONWUTUEBE**

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The Aba South Conference is part of Eastern Nigeria Union Conference in the West-Central Africa Division. It was organized in 2013. It was formerly part of East Nigeria Conference. The territory of the Aba South Conference in the Eastern Nigeria Union Conference of the West-Central Africa Division encompasses part of Aba South, Osisioma Ngwa, Ugwunagbo, Ukwa East, and Ukwa West Local Government Areas of Abia State.<sup>1</sup> At the end of 2018, the

conference had 24,644 members in 91 churches and 51 companies<sup>2</sup> among a population of 1,875,452.<sup>3</sup> In 2017, the area was ministered to by 19 credentialed ministers, 16 licensed ministers, 6 commissioned ministers, 6 credentialed missionaries, 4 licensed missionaries, 6 other employees, and 9 literature evangelists.

## Historical Background

The Church in Eastern Nigeria could unofficially be dated back prior to 1923. Before Jesse Clifford, the first official missionary of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, came to the eastern part of Nigeria, eight persons were already Seventh-day Adventists at Abua in Rivers State.<sup>4</sup> Elder Emmanuel O. Adaelu's grandmother had worshipped as a Seventh-day Adventist before the arrival of Jesse Clifford in 1923.<sup>5</sup> These people learned about the Bible Sabbath through Mr. Bankole, who attended the Adventist High School in Waterloo, Sierra Leone. On May 1, 1923, Jesse Clifford came to Aba from Ivory Coast.<sup>6</sup> As the work of Jesse Clifford with those of the Adventist pioneers grew in Eastern Nigeria, the first mission station was inaugurated as East Nigeria Mission.<sup>7</sup> From this time, the work progressed to what is known as the Eastern Nigeria Union Conference with the following entities and institutions: 12 conferences, four missions, five secondary schools, many primary schools, one hospital, and some sick bays. One of these conferences is the Aba South Conference.

## Metamorphoses

The Aba South Conference office is situated in Alaoma, Osisioma-Ngwa Local Government Area, Abia State. The dream of Aba South Conference (ASC) was hatched in 1995 at the defunct Nigerian Union Mission's sixth quinquennial session held at the Adventist Seminary of West Africa, now Babcock University. There, the plans committee recommended to the East Nigeria Conference (ENC) Executive Committee to reorganize the territory into Anambra-Imo Mission, Ubakala-Ngwa Mission, and Aba South Mission.<sup>8</sup> However, this recommendation was not implemented immediately.

Thirteen years later, during the Eastern Nigerian Union Mission (ENUM) constituency held in Port Harcourt, a recommendation was given to further reorganize conferences within ENUM territory for administrative convenience. On February 18, 2011, ENUM's recommendation was put into action by the ENC.<sup>9</sup> On April 8, 2011, the Executive Committee of the ENC, under Pastor Moses C. Njoku as president, voted to reorganize the conference into three entities:<sup>10</sup> East Nigeria Conference East, East Nigeria Conference North, and East Nigeria Conference South. The name the conference bears today was formally adopted in 2012.<sup>11</sup>

With the above action in view, a stakeholders' meeting was held for the consideration of suitable names and sites for the new conferences. Aba South Conference was unanimously accepted with its permanent site at Alaoma. By March 17, 2012, the proposed Aba South Conference was inaugurated as an administrative unit. The following were nominated to oversee the affairs of this unit: Pastor Daniel U. Oriaku—president, Pastor Joseph M. Ukegbu—executive secretary, Elder Chinatu Ubali—treasurer, Pastor Nwokedi N. C Onwutuebe—director of the Youth, Chaplaincy, and Stewardship and Trust Services departments, and Pastor Okechukwu H. Ekeke—director of the Sabbath School and Evangelism departments.

## West Central African Division Survey Team

By April 16, 2012, the administrative unit under the supervision of the ENC was implemented.<sup>12</sup> The unit operated with strong financial indices, increase in membership, and workforce. This excellent performance led to a special visit from a West-Central African Division (WAD) survey team in August 2012. The WAD team was composed of Pastor Onaolapo Ajibade, then the executive secretary of the WAD; Pastor Daniel Opoku Boateng, then the secretary of the Strategic Planning and Ministerial departments of the WAD, and Elder Emmanuel Manu, then the treasurer of the WAD. The team gave a favorable report to the WAD Executive Committee, which voted a conference status for the field in 2013.<sup>13</sup> The officers and directors were then as follows:

Pastor Moses Chidi Njoku	president
Pastor Joseph M. Ukegbu	executive secretary
Elder Cyrus Kelechi Nwaji	treasurer
Pastor Okechukwu H. Ekeke	ministerial secretary; Family Life director

Pastor Nwokedi N. C. Onwutuebe	Chaplaincy, Stewardship, Children's, and Youth Ministries and Planned Giving and Trust Services director
Pastor Samuel Onwunata	Publishing Ministries, Spirit of Prophecy, and Voice of Prophecy director
Pastor Dobson Ahuama-Levi	Sabbath School, Evangelism, AMO, and Personal Ministries director
Deaconess Uloma Clara Emelogu	Women's Ministries director
Deaconess Salome Egbulefu	Education director
Elder/Dr. Ndukauba Eleweke	Health director
Elder Iheanyichukwu S. Wogu	Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director and legal adviser

#### A New Dawn

The president, Pastor Moses C. Njoku, was called to serve as the ENUC executive secretary after the union's constituency held in December 2013. His call to the union brought in Pastor Josiah C. Nwarungwa as the president effective January 1, 2014. The church in Aba South Conference had grown in all ramifications. At the Aba South Conference Executive Committee meeting held on October 26, 2014, it was voted to record the ENUC Executive Committee's action of reorganizing the Aba South Conference.<sup>14</sup> Then on January 1, 2015, the conference was reorganized, and the Aba West Mission was formed. The following took charge of the work in this territory: Pastor J. M. Ukegbu—president, Pastor O. H. Ekeke—executive secretary, and Elder C. K. Nwaji—treasurer. The exit of Pastor J. M. Ukegbu as the executive secretary brought Pastor Goodluck Obioma Alozie as the executive secretary of Aba South Conference from 2015 to 2017. In 2017, the second quadrennial constituency session of the Aba South Conference was held, electing the following officers and departmental directors:

Pastor Josiah C. Nwarungwa	president
Pastor Nwokedi N. C. Onwutuebe	executive secretary
Elder Cyrus K. Nwaji	treasurer
Pastor Dobson Ahuama-Levi	ministerial secretary, Family Life and Special Needs Ministries director
Pastor Emmanuel C. Nna	Stewardship and Trust Services director
Pastor Kingsley N. Nwaobia	Sabbath School, Personal Ministries, and Global Mission director

Pastor Promise C. Ohuoba	Youth and Children's Ministries director
Pastor Charles C. John	Spirit of Prophecy, Voice of Prophecy, and Publishing director
Pastor Nwokedi N. C. Onwutuebe	Education director
Elder Innocent C. Anyahuru	AMO director
Sister Ijeoma Ukoha	AWM director
Elder/Dr. Ndukauba Eleweke	Health director
Elder Chuks Nwosu	Public Campus Ministries director
Elder Iheanyichukwu S. Wogu	Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director and legal adviser

## Conclusion

Where Aba South Conference is today with regard to infrastructure, spiritual, economic, and manpower development is evidence of what the Lord has done. Pastors Gilbert Warri, Opoku Boateng, Bassey E. O. Udoh, Moses C. Njoku, and others were the vehicles that the Lord used to transport the vision of the reorganization. Dr. Emmanuel Onyenmaobi Araelu (MFR) donated the land where the conference office is situated. Also, he contributed meaningfully in the building of the conference secretariat.

The Aba South Conference office of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Eastern Nigeria Union Conference is located at Alaoma, Abayi, in Osisioma-Ngwa Local Government Area, Abia State in Nigeria. The mailing address is P. O. Box 8007, Umungasi Aba, Abia State.

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### NOTES

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2. Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, *2019 Annual Statistical Report: Advance Release of Membership Statistics by Division for 2018*, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR2019A.pdf>, 18.?
3. Population as of June 30, 2018. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Aba South Conference."?
4. Josiah C. Nwarungwa, "Our Unique Prophetic Movement" (paper presented at the Union Ministerial Council, Eastern Nigeria Union headquarters, Abayi Osioma, Abia State, Nigeria, January 16–20, 2019).?
5. Emmanuel O. Adaelu, interview by the author at his village home, March 2014. At the time of this interview, Elder Adaelu was 78 years old. See Emmanuel Onyemaobi Adaelu, *A Grateful Heart: An Autobiography and Attestation* (Lagos: Jamiro Press Link, 2018).?
6. Nwarungwa, "Our Unique Prophetic Movement."?
7. "Aba East Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2019), 390.?
8. Eastern Nigeria Union Mission Constituency Plans Committee recommendations, 1995 (Eastern Nigeria Union Conference archives, Abayi, Osioma, Abia State, Nigeria).?
9. Minutes of the East Nigeria Executive Committee meeting, February 18, 2011, action no. 2011:51 (Eastern Nigeria Union Conference archives, Abayi, Osioma, Abia State, Nigeria).?
10. Minutes of the East Nigeria Executive Committee meeting, April 8, 2011. Reaffirmation of the earlier action on reorganization of the conference, 2011:101—East Nigeria Conference East, East Nigeria Conference North, and East Nigeria Conference South.?
11. Minutes of the East Nigeria Executive Committee meeting, action 2012:63 (Eastern Nigeria Union Conference archives, Abayi, Osioma, Abia State, Nigeria). The conference earlier wanted to name it East Nigeria Conference South, but at this meeting it was formally voted to name it Aba South Conference.?
12. Minutes of the Eastern Nigeria Union Mission meeting, December 27, 2011, action 19. BEO (Eastern Nigeria Union Conference archives, Abayi, Osioma, Abia State, Nigeria).?
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