

Northern Nigeria Union Conference

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The 2015 General Conference Session approved the formation of a newly reorganized Northern Nigeria Union Conference (NNUC) together with two other union conferences in Nigeria: Eastern Nigeria Union Conference and Western Nigeria Union Conference. The NNUC, consisting of—North Central Nigeria Conference (NCNC), North East Nigeria Conference (NENC), and North-West Nigeria Conference (NWNC)—was reorganized in November 2013. The Northern Nigeria Union Conference originated from the then North Nigeria Mission (NNM) which for more effective and closer administration was split into North East Nigeria Conference (NENC) and North West Nigeria Conference (NWNC). Shortly before reorganization of the Northern Nigeria Union Conference (NNUC)—there was the need of a third local conference so that the union will have at least three local fields. This led to the organization of North Central Nigeria Conference (NCNC) in 2012.¹

Territory

The North Central Nigeria, North East Nigeria, and North West Nigeria Conferences² are made up of the Nigerian states of Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe, and Zamfara, and the Federal Capital Territory.

Statistics (June 30, 2017): churches 220; membership 42,654; population 94,603,102.³

The Initiative for a Union

The need for a union for the whole of northern Nigeria was generated in the minds of the two leaders of NENC and NWNC. These leaders met to study the church policy requirement for the creation of a new union mission. Committees were set up composed of members from the two conferences to further examine the church policy and write up a proposal to create a union mission in the northern region. It was necessary to first carve out a third local conference within the northern territory.⁴

Committees

On November 9, 2004, the two officers of the North-East and North-West Nigeria Conferences led by Ezekiel D. Magaji and Iliya I. Kwarbai, respectively, met at Jengre SDA Hospital and appointed a 15-person committee to

propose a memorandum for the creation of the third conference. The committee members consisted of Ezekiel D. Magaji (chair), Markus D. Akwai (secretary), Simon Y. Arabo, Sarah Bali, Abednego I. Chidawa, Daniel M. Dangana, F. Emelogu, Goodluck N. Emolugu, Nathaniel T. Karima, Nathan T. Kiyani, Iliya I. Kwarbai, Danladi F. Maisamari, Yakubu A. Mallum, Steven T. Mato, and Mikah S. Nasamu.⁵

In order for the proposed union to have three local fields, another committee was appointed to write a proposal for the creation of the third local conference. This committee was set up in 2009 and was chaired by Barrister Sunday N. Abednego. Other members included Bulus Irmiya, Amala P. Ziri, J. Amusajato, Sarah Bali, Abednego I. Chidawa, Chindo K. Hycenth, L. T. C. Eruba, D. A. Essien Imeh, Bullus Irmiya, and H. E. Ufomba. Its terms of reference were to do a study and make recommendations for the creation of a third conference to be called North Central Conference, with headquarters in Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria and within the territory of the new conference.⁶

The committee's proposal was voted by the two fields in the north and sent to the West-Central Africa Division through the office of the president of North-Western Nigeria Union Mission (NWNUM), Joseph Ola. The two northern conferences, now led by Stephen H. Bindas for NENC and Ibrahim B. Maigadi for NWNC, clearly understood the requirement for the creation of a third local conference. The two fields voted in their mini-constituency meetings at Jengre and Saminaka to allocate some churches to form the new local conference. From the NENC the churches were taken in Benue and Nassarawa states, and Abuja in the Federal Capital Territory. The churches taken from the NWNC were mostly in Niger state. Abuja was to serve as headquarters of the new local conference.

The Birth of North Central Nigeria Conference.

In anticipation of the creation of North Central Conference (NCC) in the northern territory, the NWNUM appointed a sensitization committee chaired by Bitrus B. Nabasu, with Simon B. Harry as secretary. Members of the committee were Eyinna Abaribe, Yohanna U. Harry, Eirdy Abraham, Stephen H. Bindas, Abednego I. Chidawa, Thomas A. Laiya, Ibrahim B. Maigadi, Washington Nwachwukwu, Mary Ayuba, and Larry Toweh. The duty of the committee was to sensitize the membership of northern Nigeria in the two conferences for the actualization of the North Central administrative unit in Abuja and the realization of the Northern Nigeria Union Mission. This was in view of the realization of the creation of Northern Nigeria Union Conference. In 2013 the North Central Nigeria Conference (NCNC) was organized with Yohanna U. Harry as president, Ibrahim D. Maviah as secretary, and Abednego I. Chidawa as treasurer.⁷

The organization NCNC paved the way for the organization of the Northern Nigeria Union Conference, since now there were at least three fields in the north of Nigeria.

The Birth of Northern Nigeria Union Mission

It is well known that, "It is one thing to have a dream or passion for a good cause, yet it is another thing to get the goal achieved." The major condition for creating the Northern Nigeria Union was achieved by first establishing the North Central administrative unit in November 2012. This brought the number of conferences in the north to three: NEC, NWC and NCC.

At first, the work of organizing a union mission was like moving a huge mountain. The achievement was largely attributed to the laity who caught the vision for the creation of a third local conference in the north. The laity supported the creation of the North Nigeria Union Conference by offering free accommodation for offices and housing the president of the union during the first five years. Elder Jacob Gyang Buba offered a four-bedroom duplex for five years, rent-free, for the establishment of the union conference. He further donated one hectare of land for building a permanent building for the NCNC headquarters. Elder Simon B. Harry donated a two-bedroom flat rent-free at Nyanya. Elder Livingstone T. C. Eruba gave a two-bedroom flat rent-free at Gwagwalada, while the church at Nyanya offered three-bedroom bungalows rent free. The offer of rent-free accommodation enabled a smooth beginning for the conferences.

A series of supervision and evaluation was undertaken by the NWNUM officers to ensure the smooth beginning for both the newly organized conference and the proposed union. This was followed by officers from the West-Central Africa Division with headquarters at Abidjan in Cote d'Ivoire and finally from the General Conference with headquarters at Washington DC in the USA. The officers overwhelmingly recommended the formation of the union and local conferences, thus giving birth to the North Central Conference with headquarters at Nyanya and the Northern Nigeria Union Conference with headquarters right inside Abuja. The General Conference at the 2013 Annual Council voted in favor of the recommendation to organize the three conferences of NEC, NWC, and NCC to form the Northern Nigeria Union Conference.⁸

Inauguration of Northern Nigeria Union Conference

In the words of Ulrich Zwingli, "Our confidence in Christ does not make us lazy, negligent or careless, but on the contrary, it awakens us, urges us on, and makes us active in living righteous lives and doing good." The inaugural constituency session of the Northern Nigeria Union Conference took place at Buken Academy, November 21-24, 2013. The General Conference vice president, Pastor Benjamin Schoun; GC associate treasurer, Pastor George Egwakhe; WAD president, Pastor Dr Gabriel Wari; and others led the session. The following are the officers who were elected for the new union conference, as well as the present officers: Haruna S. Bindas, president (Nov. 2013-Dec. 2015); Francis Freeman Daria, secretary (Nov. 2013-Dec. 2015); Markus M. Dangana, treasurer (Nov. 2013 to present); Francis Freeman Daria, president (2016-2018);⁹ Yohanna Uchopo Harry, secretary (2016-2018), Yohanna Uchopo Harry, president (2019 to present).¹⁰

Source

Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook, 2018. Accessed May 2, 2019. <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/2018.pdf>.

NOTES

1. "Northern Nigeria Union Conference," accessed May, 2019, <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/2018> pdf.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Iliya I. Kwarbai (a former president of North West Nigeria Conference), interview by author, Abuja, Nigeria, May 2, 2018.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. "North Central Nigeria Conference," accessed May 2, 2019, <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/2014> pdf.
8. "Northern Nigeria Union Conference," accessed May, 2019, <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/2018> pdf.
9. Ibid.
10. Yohanna U. Harry, personal knowledge as the current president of Northern Nigeria Union Conference.

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