

Ekpendu, Isaac Alozie (1931–2014)

IKECHI CHIDI EKPENDU

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Isaac Alozie Ekpendu served in the administration of the East Nigerian Conference when it began in 1977 and then in the Nigeria Union Mission administration from 1990 to 2000.

Early Life, Education, and Marriage

Isaac Alozie Ekpendu¹ was born on June 4, 1931, to Elder and Mrs. Abraham Ihesiharauka Ekpendu of Umuawa village in Isialangwa South Local Government Area, Abia State, Nigeria. He was the first and oldest son of the family of nine children.²

Ekpendu began his education at the Seventh-day Adventist Primary School in Umuocha, where he completed standards 1 to 3 from 1943 to 1946. He completed infant 1A, 1B, class 2 and standard 1 in 1943. He then finished at the Seventh-day Adventist School in Umuobiakwa, completing standards 4–6 from 1946 to 1949 and receiving the First School Leaving Certificate. During his years in Umuobiakwa, he stayed with Elder Isaac Amarizu, who took him in as a son.³ When he graduated, he was ranked as one of the best six students in the school. Later, he went on scholarship to Imia for the Pivotal Teachers' Certificate (PTC).

Mr. Roger Coon, an American missionary, seeing Ekpendu's intellectual capabilities and disposition to life, advised him that he needed a higher qualification to prepare him for better service to God. Ekpendu heeded the counsel and, in 1963, began to attend the Adventist College of West Africa. Despite various engagements during his time there, Ekpendu's academic work was not negatively affected, and he graduated with a bachelor of arts in theology in June 1967.⁴

Pastor Isaac A. Ekpendu married Victoria Ukachi on January 10, 1960. This marriage was blessed with six children: Ngozi Nwachukwu, Mrs. Omoyemi Nancy Emole, Mrs. Ugochi Anaele, Mr. Obinna Ekpendu, Mrs. Chituru Onyenmuru, and Pastor Ikechi C. Ekpendu. He also had numerous adopted children. A caring and loving husband, Pastor Ekpendu called his wife "Honey." A peaceful, loving, and soft-spoken man, he was all that a friendly father could be to his children and taught them all the ways of the Lord.⁵

Ministry

While in Umuobiakwa for his primary education, Ekpendu developed passion and skill in music. His love for music led to his first official assignment as the Umuawa District choirmaster. He later served in the first committee to translate the *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* into the Igbo language (*Abu Otuto*). He took up ministerial work in 1950 and began his service in Itungwa. After his PTC course at Ihie in 1955, he was called to work as the Voice of Prophecy principal in the West Nigerian Mission in Ibadan. There, he also served as a singing evangelist for Pastor J. Adedigba Makinde, the father of Professor J. A. Kayode Makinde.⁶

While attending the Adventist College of West Africa from 1963 to 1966, his faithfulness, diligence to duty, and creativity endeared him to Pastor Jan Paulson, the former General Conference president. The latter sought Pastor Ekpendu's opinion on how to generate revenue for the college, and Pastor Ekpendu suggested starting a bakery. When the bakery began operations, Pastor Ekpendu was the first baker of the whole wheat bread that the bakery sold. He later became the chief baker and sales officer, conveying the bread to numerous customers in Lagos, then the capital of Nigeria. The bakery that started in 1963 is the Babcock University bakery today, having 103 employees.⁷

After his graduation in 1967, Pastor Ekpendu was posted to the East Nigerian Mission in Port Harcourt as the secretary of the Voice of Prophecy department. During the war, he served as a relief agent, working with Rev. Canon Magnus Adiele from Okpulo-Umuobo. Immediately after the war in January 1970, Pastor Ekpendu was posted to head the Okpuhie district. By November of the same year, he was assigned to the then East Nigeria Mission as the secretary of the Voice of Prophecy department.⁸ He was ordained into the gospel ministry in 1972. The following year was the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Eastern Nigeria. Pastor Ekpendu was the chairman of the Golden Jubilee Committee. By the middle of the same year, he was posted to Abakaliki, and then to Umuahia, in 1975.⁹

In 1977, Pastor Ekpendu was elected the first executive secretary of the East Nigerian Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, where he served until 1980, when he was transferred to Onitsha. He served in Enugu from 1983 until 1986, when he was elected as the then East Nigerian Conference director of the Voice of Prophecy and Spirit of Prophecy, the conference evangelist, and as Temperance department director. In 1987, he was reelected as the East Nigerian Conference secretary, where he served under Pastor Achilihu. By 1990, he was the first and only field secretary for the now defunct Nigeria Union Mission, a position he held for five years while Pastor Luka Tambaya Daniel was the union president. By 1992, he was serving as the Ministerial Association department secretary¹⁰ and Global Mission director of the same union, and he continued in the Ministerial Association department under Pastor Adebisi Ola. He held the Ministerial Association secretary position until he retired in 2000. Before his retirement, he championed the union's roofing project, in which hundreds of churches were roofed in Nigeria.¹¹

Retirement

During his retirement years, Pastor Ekpendu impacted his community. Pastor I. A. Ekpendu empowered many with the little he was paid for self-sustenance. In his hometown, he focused on developing people in the area of education. He was the chairman of the education board of Umuawa Community Primary School. To those who were in his village, he was a vanguard of peace until he was called to rest on December 17, 2014, at 2:50 p.m.¹²

SOURCES

"Pastor Isaac Alozie Ekpendu." *Pioneers*, Babcock University. <https://www.babcock.edu.ng/egw/pioneer-of-the-month>.

Service Records of Isaac Alozie Ekpendu. The Archive of Western Nigeria Union Conference, Ikeja, Lagos State, Nigeria.

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NOTES

1. Information in this article has been adapted from the following article authored by the author of this article: "Pastor Isaac Alozie Ekpendu," *Pioneers*, Babcock University, <https://www.babcock.edu.ng/egw/pioneer-of-the-month>.
2. Ikechi Chidi Ekpendu, personal knowledge as Isaac Ekpendu's son.
3. Victoria U. Ekpendu, interview by the author, Umuawa village, January 10, 2015.
4. Ibid.; Howard J. Welch, "Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, at ACWA," *West Africa Advent Messenger* 21, no. 10 (October 1967): 7.
5. Victoria U. Ekpendu, interview by the author, Umuawa village, January 10, 2015.
6. Ibid.
7. Ikechi Chidi Ekpendu, personal knowledge, as Isaac Ekpendu's son.
8. "East Nigerian Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1970), 198.
9. Ikechi Chidi Ekpendu, personal knowledge.

10. "Nigeria Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing, 1992), 40.

11. Service records of Isaac Alozie Ekpendu in the archive of Western Nigeria Union Conference, Ikeja, Lagos State, Nigeria.

12. Victoria U. Ekpendu, interview by the author, Umuawa village, January 10, 2015.

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