

Imo, Zacchaeus Nna (1916–1996)

WISDOM CHUKWUEMEKA ADIELE

Wisdom Chukwuemeka Adiele, D.Min. (Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya), serves as executive secretary of Aba East Conference. He is actively engaged in the medical missionary work and special needs ministry. He had served as ministerial secretary, youth director, chaplain, education director, and children ministries director.

Zacchaeus Nna Imo was a pastor and church administrator from Nigeria.

Early Life, Education, and Marriage

Zacchaeus Nna Imo was the only remaining son of Chief Dinneya and Nwamu Imo Nwaji of Ohaogwe Ohanku Ndoki. He was born on February 8, 1916. He became the only son because his two elder brothers died as babies.¹

He attended elementary school at the SDA School, Aba. It was the influence of the Seventh-day Adventist School that made him change from his Anglican membership to being a Seventh-day Adventist. Pastor Onwere was one of his teachers at Aba. He attended Nigeria Training College (NTC) Ihie from 1950-1952 in order to prepare himself for service for the Lord.²

He fell in love with Nwamuna Onwunali, the daughter of Elder Dick Onwunali of Umuokenya, Ovom II. Shortly thereafter, he married her on June 24, 1939. Their marriage was blessed with nine children, five sons and four daughters.³

Ministry

He joined the denominational service of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nigeria on April 4, 1937, as a teacher and evangelist. He started on his own as a school teacher and later he combined teaching and evangelism. After sampling the two professions, he became more inclined to evangelism and asked God earnestly to show him the path to follow. Eventually he was directed towards being an evangelist. His first assignment as an evangelist was at Ukpakiri, a village very close to Ovom II.⁴

His teaching and evangelistic career took him to Seventh-day Adventist schools at Ovom, Osaa-Ukwu, and Ukpakiri from 1937-1942.

He was ordained to the gospel ministry on March 14, 1954, in recognition for his hard work, dedication to duty, gentleness, and humility in the Lord's vineyard.⁵

He received various types of licenses and credentials namely: probationary license (1937), missionary license (1938), missionary credential (1943), ministerial license (1952), and ministerial credential (1954).⁶

He held positions as Bible instructor and associate district leader at Nigeria Training College (NTC) Ihie from 1952 to 1953. The gospel ministry work took him to several parts of Eastern Nigeria: Ukpakiri, Osaa-Ukwu, Ahoada, Obosi-Onitsha, Nchia Eleme, Osusu, and Ihie; and he went to the United States of America for various church meetings.⁷

From 1966-1976, he was mission president of the East Nigeria Mission, a position he held for 11 consecutive years with remarkable and noble achievements. He was the longest serving president of the East Nigeria Field—a record which has not been broken by any mission/conference president of the then East Nigeria Mission or the current East Nigeria Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Nigeria. He was the third indigene to be the president of the East Nigerian Mission.⁸

The Lord used him in a very special way during the Civil War of 1966-1970. The vital records of the church could have been completely lost if he had not been a prudent, wise, and competent administrator. He used a reconciliatory approach to thorny issues in church administration, especially during and after the Civil War of 1966-1970. His soft-spoken words, charisma, and personal influence were a source of inspiration through which he touched the lives of many who found refuge in the Lord Jesus Christ.⁹

The creation of Rivers Mission and South East Mission immediately after the Civil War in 1970 was a clear demonstration of his administrative foresight and competence.¹⁰

He worked very hard for the East Nigeria Mission to attain conference status—a dream which was realized by the succeeding administration a year after he left the office of president in 1977.¹¹

He retired from active service on January 1, 1982, to his hometown Ohanku, where he engaged himself as patron and counselor to elders and to the young people who came to draw from his wealth of knowledge and wisdom in secular, religious, and administrative matters.¹² The church and the community missed him when he died and was buried on August 28, 1996. His life on earth spanned eight decades. He died at the age of 80.

Legacy

His diligence in service resulted in his being elected president of the East Nigeria Mission (ENM) in 1966. This same diligence kept him in this position for 11 years. All through his tenure as the president of the East Nigeria Mission, he was focused on mission. This accounts for his joyful return to field work when he left office. He continued serving as a church pastor until his retirement in 1982. His humble attitude after exiting office was a rebuke to those who feel that going back to the field as a church pastor after being the president is humiliating.

Imo, Zylus. *Biography of Late Pastor Z. N. Imo: In Memory of Pastor Zacchaeus Nna Imo* Unpublished manuscript, 1996. In the author's personal collection.

Oluikpe, F. O. Funeral oration delivered on behalf of the East Nigeria Conference of SDA Church on the occasion of the burial Service of Pastor Zacchaeus Nna Imo at Ohanku-Ndoki on August 28, 1996. In the author's personal collection.

NOTES

1. Zylus Imo, *Biography of Late Pastor Z. N. Imo: In Memory of Pastor Zacchaeus Nna Imo*, 1996, unpublished manuscript, the author's personal collection.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. F. O. Oluikpe (executive secretary, East Nigeria Conference), Funeral oration delivered on behalf of the East Nigeria Conference of SDA Church on the occasion of the burial service of Pastor Zacchaeus Nna Imo at Ohanku-Ndoki on August 28, 1996, the author's personal collection.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Zylus Imo, 1996.

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