Kio, James Bamidele Akhigbe (1936–2014)

MICHAEL A. T. SENNE-AYA

Michael A. T. Senne-Aya, D.Min. (Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya) has been the pioneer president of the Edo Conference in the Western Nigeria Union Conference since 2012. He previously served as the last president of Edo-Delta Mission before its formal reorganization into two separate conferences.

Pastor James Kio was the fifth president of the Edo-Delta Mission of the Nigeria Union Mission from 1998 through its elevation to conference status in 2002 and continued in this role until his retirement in 2004.
Early Life

James Bamidele Akhigbe Kio, popularly known as J. B. Kio, was born on Tuesday, August 18, 1936, at Ifon in Ondo State, Nigeria, to the family of Pa Joel Akhirevbulu and Madam Christiana Idobowa (Osayemen) Kio. Both parents were from Edo State, Nigeria; his father was a native of Ujemen-Ekpoma, in Esan West Local Government Area. James’s father worked as a civil servant in the Forestry Department in what was then the Western Region of Nigeria.

Education and Marriage

To limit the adverse effect that his father’s frequent movement would have on the lad, James was sent to live with his paternal grandmother at Ujemen when he was six years old. He was enrolled at the Church Mission Society (CMS) Elementary School in Iruekpen. He later rejoined his father at Ijebu-Ode to continue his elementary education. His early life in the village gave him an invaluable insight into the rich Esan custom and tradition. He highly cherished this cultural understanding the rest of his life.

James Kio’s coming into the Seventh-day Adventist family was by Providence. He was involved in a motor vehicle accident while traveling with his maternal uncle, Mathias Osayemen, in 1952. As a result, they were taken to the Seventh-day Adventist Hospital, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria, where he was treated for minor injuries, but his uncle sustained a major fracture of the collarbone. As James was involved in caring for his uncle and helping the nurses in the hospital, he was noticed as an energetic and bright young man by Sylval Turtill, a missionary nurse from Britain, and Dr. Sherman Nengel, an American medical missionary. They introduced him to the Seventh-day Adventist faith. This was the beginning of a life-changing relationship with Christ, and there was no looking back for the rest of his life. He would later work in the same hospital as a chaplain.

From Ijebu-Ode, James moved to Ado-Ekiti to complete his elementary education in 1954 at the Christ Apostolic School. He was among the last set of pupils that reached standard six before it was replaced with primary schools by the Obafemi Awolowo administration. He attended the Harding Memorial Secondary Modern School, Ado-Ekiti, and also the erstwhile Adventist Training College in Otun, Ekiti State. Based on his performance there, James Kio was recommended to proceed to Ghana to continue his education.

He arrived in Ghana in 1959 to attend the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary at Bekwai, Ghana. While there, he met Olu Efuntade, and they became the best of friends for the rest of their lives. He was baptized in 1959 by Pastor Louis C. Nielsen while in school at Bekwai. In 1961, at the completion of his studies in Ghana, James was deployed to Lagos to work as a minister of the gospel. Meanwhile, in the same year, he was admitted to study theology and history at the Adventist College of West Africa (ACWA) in Ilishan-Remo, Nigeria (now Babcock University).

Pastor J. B. Kio completed part of his theological and ministerial training (diploma) at ACWA and proceeded to Newbold College, England, where he obtained a bachelor’s degree in theology and history in 1964.

While working as a hospital chaplain at the Seventh-day Adventist Hospital in Ile-Ife, James Kio met Janet Omolara Adedeji, a nursing student at the Seventh-day Adventist Nursing School in Ile-Ife. They were married at ACWA on December 22, 1966, by Pastor Howard J. Welch. Their marriage was blessed with four children, two sons and two daughters: Oluwole Isibhor, Folake, Omomene, and Akhigbe.

In 1970, he was awarded a postgraduate diploma in mass communication from the University of Lagos, Nigeria. James Kio proceeded to the University of Houston in Texas, United States of America (U.S.A.), in 1973, where he obtained a master’s degree in speech communication and human relations from the University of Kansas.

Career/Ministry

James Kio was ordained into the gospel ministry on February 1, 1969, at the Adventist Grammar School in Ede, Osun State. There he was the chaplain and church pastor. As a pastor and teacher, he worked in Lagos, Osun, Ogun, and Oyo States.

He was the education secretary in the Western Nigeria Mission of the church from 1970 to 1972 and a lecturer at the Adventist College of West Africa from 1972 to 1973. In 1973, while studying in the United States, he worked on corporate communication at a private oil company in Houston, Texas. He served as an instructor at Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana, from 1979 to 1980. He was also an assistant professor at the University of Minnesota.

On his return to Nigeria in 1980, James Kio was elected director of the Communication, Youth, and Education departments of the Nigeria Union Mission, headquartered in Lagos. Within that same year, he was elected the director of the departments of Communication and Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL) of the newly created Africa-Indian Ocean Division, with headquarters at Abidjan, Ivory Coast. He served in that capacity from 1980 to 1990. In 1990, he became the director of the Ellen G. White Research Centre based at Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Nigeria. From there he was elected in 1998 as the fifth president of the Edo-Delta Mission of the Nigeria Union Mission, which he nurtured to a conference status in 2002. He retired in 2004.
Later Life and Legacy

After his formal retirement as a gospel minister, James Kio was invited to join the Babcock University family as a professor of communication. He finally bowed out from teaching and research in 2010 but remained with his wife, Janet, on the university campus, until he died on June 16, 2014, at the age of 78. He was buried in his hometown, Ujemen-Ekpoma, Nigeria, on July 24, 2014, at his own residence.12

Writing on behalf of the Ellen G. White Research Centre at Babcock University, the current director, Adelowo Felix Adetunji, said,

In his lifetime, James Bamidele Kio was a giant in many ways. Physically, he towered above any average man in height; professionally, he reached the zenith of his career as a communicator; and evidently, the late patriarch was a spiritual giant. In service, Baba was a diligent church worker. In recognition of his gifts and commitment, he received calls to serve his denomination at every level of its organization since 1961. He was the pioneer Director of the Ellen G. White SDA Research Centre. . . . Like every committed pioneer, he worked hard and ensured a solid foundation. We shall keep the vision Alive.13

SOURCES


Useful Sources


NOTES


2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.


5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Johnson A. Adeniji, tribute to late Pastor J. B. Kio, quoted in “A Legacy of Service to God.”

8. “A Legacy of Service to God,” 6.


10. “A legacy of service to God.”

11. Ibid., 6.
12. Ibid.

13. “A Legacy of Service to God,” 17.