

**DIOCESE OF EVO
(Anglican Communion)**

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS/BISHOP'S CHARGE

**DELIVERED BY
THE RT. REV. INNOCENT U. ORDU, JP
BISHOP, DIOCESE OF EVO**

**ON
SATURDAY, 29th July, 2017**

**AT THE
SECOND SESSION OF THE THIRD DIOCESAN SYNOD**

**HOLDING AT
ST. MARK'S ANGLICAN CHURCH,
ELELENWO DEANERY**

BISHOP'S PICTURE

DIOCESAN ANTHEM AND SYNOD PRAYER

GREETINGS AND PROTOCOLS

“Blessing and honour, thanksgiving and praise, more than we can utter, be unto our most adorable Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, by all angels, all men, all creatures, for ever and ever. Amen.”

Your Excellency, The Executive Governor of Rivers State, Chief Barr. Ezebunwo Nyesom Wike, CON,

Your graces, the Archbishops and my Lords, the Bishops here present or represented;

My Lord, The Bishop of Otukpo Diocese, Rt. Rev. David K. Bello (our main Guest Speaker), the Synod Bible Study Leader, The Ven. Easy Ndekwu and other speakers ; Our Guests of Honour, especially Sir The Honourable Justice Iche and Dame Ngozi Ndu, OFR (Former Chief Judge of Rivers State); and Hon. O. K. Chinda-member Representing Obio/Akpor Federal Constituency at the House of Representatives who is also the Chief Launcher,

Members of the National and Rivers State Assemblies here present or represented.

The Chairman, Caretaker Committee of Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Hon. Innocent Paddy Wali and members of your Executive Council,

The President of the Diocesan Mothers Union & Women’s Guild, Mrs. Chinyere U. Ordu, JP (Mama Evo),

The Diocesan Registrar, Sir Barr. Nlerum S. Amadi & all other Diocesan Legal Officers,

Venerable Archdeacons and their wives,

Invited heads of churches in Rivers State here present or represented,

Other clergymen and their wives;

Highly respected Royal Fathers here present, especially His Royal Highness, Eze Dr. Sunny Weli Chuku, Eze Elelenwo-Etor and members of your Council of Chiefs and Elders,

All other Government functionaries at all levels or their representatives;

All our noble and gallant knights and ladies;

Church teachers, Lay Readers and their spouses;

Distinguished nominees of the Bishop to this Synod;

Other distinguished Synod delegates;

Members of the Diocesan/Local Synod Planning Committees

Our Diocesan men, women and youths;

Members of the fourth estate of the realm;

My dear ladies and gentlemen;

With great joy in our hearts we welcome you all to the **Second Session of the Third Synod** of our Diocese of Evo which began here at St. Mark's Anglican Church, Elelenwo Deanery, Port Harcourt since Wednesday 26th July, 2017.

We sincerely appreciate the sacrifice you have made by setting aside your other equally important engagements today just in order to honour us with your presence particularly at this presentation of our Synod Address/Charge. We confess that your coming has been a great encouragement to us and we say a big thank you to you all.

OUR SYNOD SPEAKERS

THE RT. REV. DAVID KAYODE BELLO

The Rt. Rev. David Kayode Bello was born on 2nd May, 1952 in Lagos. He had his early elementary school in Lagos, and obtained his First School Leaving Certificate. On 17th March, 1969, he was enlisted into the Nigerian Army in Lagos, as an infantry soldier. After his training, he was posted to 3rd Marine Commando, and saw action at Chokocho Igwuruta and Owerri axis during the Nigerian civil-war. However, he did not stay long at the war front because he was wounded, and subsequently taken to Lagos for medical care.

After the war, he became a Christian, and transferred to the Nigerian Army Chaplain Services (Prot.) in 1973. He studied at home and obtained the General Certificate of Education G.C.E. 'O' and 'A' Levels respectively. In 1975 the Army Chaplaincy sent him to Vining Christian Leadership Centre Akure (now Vining College of Theology) for his Catechetical training. He did so well at the end of the Course that he was asked to sit for entrance examination to Immanuel College of Theology in 1976.

He entered Immanuel College in September 1976 and graduated in June 1979 having obtained a Diploma in Religious Studies (University of Ibadan) and the College Diploma in Theology. He was Ordered Deacon on the 1st July 1979 by the Most Revd Timothy Omotayo Olufosoye, the first Primate of the Church of Nigeria. In September 1979, he was granted admission into University of Ibadan for his degree programme. By June 1982 he completed his Bachelor degree (Hons) studies in

Religious Studies. And by 27th June, 1982, he was ordained a Priest. Being a serving military personnel, he was exempted from the National Youth Service Corps and by September 1982, the Army authorities allowed him to go for Post-graduate Studies at the same University, having been granted admission. By the end of September 1983, he finished his Masters degree programme and was awarded an MA. The University also asked him to continue for his Ph.D programme. But he was not allowed by the Nigerian Army.

On the 1st November 1983, he was granted Presidential Commission to the rank of Lieutenant and posted to the Nigerian Army Chaplain Headquarters in Lagos as a Staff Officer grade II and he was also in charge of St. Luke's Military Church Yaba Lagos.

He was posted from Lagos to St. Luke's Military Church Kaduna as Vicar, and Garrison Chaplain in 1987. The same year he was promoted Captain. In 1990 he was posted to 21 Armoured Brigade Maiduguri as Brigade Chaplain and Vicar of St. Bartholomew's Military Church Maimalari Barracks, Maiduguri. In November 1992 he was promoted Major. In early 1993 he was posted to 82 Division Enugu as Staff Officer and Vicar, Our Saviour's Military Church Awkunawnaw. In June 1994, he was posted to Liberia as ECOMOG Chaplain. After six months in Liberia, he came back to Enugu and was appointed Assistant Director, Chaplain Services of 2 Division Enugu and Vicar of St. Paul Church, Enugu. In 1997, he was posted again to the Headquarters of the Chaplaincy and appointed Colonel Coordinate of the headquarters and Vicar All Saints (AHQ) Church Abalti Barracks. In November, 1998 he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and in the year 2000, he was posted to 2nd Division, Nigerian Army, Ibadan, as Assistant Director, and Vicar, All Souls Military Church, Odogbo Cantonment. In the year 2001, he went to Oxford University, England for a Summer Programme in Theology. On returning from Oxford, he was posted to 1 Mechanised Division, Kaduna as Assistant Director, Chaplain Services and Vicar, St. Luke's Military Church, Kaduna. He was promoted to the rank of Colonel in November, 2003. It was while he was serving at Kaduna, that he was elected the second bishop of the Diocese of Otukpo in September, 2003. There and then he resigned his Commission and retired from the Nigerian Army.

Preferment in the Church

Canon

– *Oct. 1990 by Bishop of Maiduguri*

Venerable	–	<i>1997 by Bishop of Ibadan</i>
Consecrated Bishop	–	<i>November 17, 2003 at St. Cyprians Anglican Church Port-Harcourt.</i>

He is married to Mrs. Edith Temitope Bello (nee Lawson) and the marriage is blessed with children.

We thank His Lordship, Rt. Rev. D. K. Belo, Bishop of Otukpo, for accepting to come as our Main Guest Preacher at this Synod. So far he has blessed us immensely and we look forward to tomorrow's thanksgiving service when he shall speak to us again as the Lord shall give him utterance. May God bless his ministry, family and the Diocese of Otukpo under his care.

VENERABLE EASY NDEKWU **Our Synod Bible Study Leader**

Venerable Easy Ndekwu is a native of Ubulu-uku in Aniocha South LGA of Delta State. His early education passed him through C.M.S. Primary School and St. Anthony's College, all in Ubulu-uku respectively. After his secondary education, he left for Ibadan, Oyo State, in search of greener pastures.

He later proceeded to Federal Polytechnic Ado - Ekiti, Ondo state, where he obtained HND in Food – Technology (1982-1986). After his NYSC, he became self-employed until 1992 when he relocated to Port -Harcourt. He worked with Perkins Chemical Company, a subsidiary of Fugro Nigeria Plc., as a production manager. But in 1999, because of the call of God upon his life, he resigned from the company and became a full - time church worker with St. Matthew's Ang. Church, Nkpogu, Deanery as the assistant evangelism officer.

He later proceeded to Westley Theological Seminary, Owerri, Imo state, where he obtained Diploma in Theology (2001-2002). That same year he enrolled with St. Paul's University College , Awka, Port Harcourt satellite campus, and obtained another Dip.Th. The Venerable Easy Ndekwu also has a PGD in peace and conflict resolution from the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State (2012) ,and Masters degree in missions from Crowther Graduate Theological Seminary Abeokuta, Ogun State (2014).

The Ven. Easy Ndekwu was ordained a Deacon in 2004, priested in 2005, preferred Canon in 2008 and collated Archdeacon in 2011. He served as Church Teacher, St. James Ang. Church, Lewa in Gokana Archdeaconry, now in Ogoni Diocese, from 2002 to 2004. He was Vicar of the same church (2004-2005) as well as Vicar, St Paul's Anglican Church, Onne in Niger Delta North Diocese (2005-2006). Between

2007 and 2010, he was Vicar, Our Saviours Anglican Church, Diocese of Uyo. He was Archdeacon, Cathedral Church of All Saints, Uyo (2011-2014) and Chaplain to the late Bishop Isaac Orama (2006-2013).

The Ven. Easy Ndekwu is a member of Board of Directors, Evangelism Leadership and Missions International Institute (ELMI) and Niger Delta Peace and Conflict Resolution Committee. Presently, he is the Vicar of St. Silas Anglican Church, Okoroete, Archdeacon, Eastern Obolo Archdeaconry and Clerical Synod Secretary, Diocese of Uyo.

The Ven. Easy Ndekwu is married to a lovely wife, Ememobong, and they are blessed with a daughter and two boys; Glory, Samuel and Emmanuel.

We are grateful to The Ven. Ndekwu for the pains he took to prepare our two Synod Bible Study outlines as well as teach them. Ven. Ndekwu will also be addressing our youths in tomorrow morning's synod youth service. We thank him also for accepting to come after having been recommended and released by the Rt. Rev. Prince Antai Asuquo, Bishop of the Diocese of Uyo. Our thanks also go to the Bishop himself.

REV. DR. STEVE OGAN

Dr. Steve Ogan is a multi-talented and versatile person. His passion is to develop people to fulfill their primary assignments in life. His vision is to prepare people for the prepared place of their destinies through the written and the spoken word.

He attended Kitwe Primary School in Zambia and the Township School in Port-Harcourt. He also attended the Okrika Grammar School, where he served as the Library Prefect.

Steve Ogan believes that reading books is an indispensable part of leading men. This informs his habit and hobby of reading and writing daily. He strongly believes that a book a day drives ignorance away.

Dr. Steve Ogan studied History at the University of Port Harcourt between 1977-1981. He went on to do a Graduate Programme at the University of Ibadan, where he earned a Master of Arts in 1983 and a PhD in Legal History in 1989. He has written many books which are best sellers. His Master's Degree thesis earned him the Chief Salubi Prize in History at the University of Ibadan. His Ph.D thesis was on the subject of the foundations of the Supreme Court of Nigeria. Although he is not a Lawyer, he speaks to Lawyers and Judges at their leadership conferences because of his skill in multi-disciplinary approach to intellectual reflection.

On November 8, 2004, Dr. Steve Ogan was given a Bestsellers Award by the Uzima Publishers in Nairobi, Kenya for two of his books ***How To Beat Your Husband*** and ***How to Beat Your Wife***. Since then, five other titles have entered into Uzima's 20 Bestselling List. In 2006, Dr. Ogan was honored as the First Prolific Writer and Public Speaker in the 1977 Pioneering Class of the University of Port Harcourt.

"How to Beat Your Husband" has remained Uzima's Number 1 bestselling book for several years now. He has written more than a 150 books, many of which are published in Nigeria, East Africa, the United Kingdom, India and Malaysia. Dr. Steve Ogan is a much sought after conference speaker and marriage counselor. He majors in the areas of leadership, intercession, marriage and family life. He has spoken at leadership conferences of the Medical and Legal communities in Uganda. He has also given lectures at the Ugandan Parliament and at the University of Makerere, Uganda. He is one of the resource persons in the Sundulous African Leaders Training Programme under the Intercessors for Africa, with headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.

Dr. Ogan serves as a teacher and trainer for governmental and corporate institutions. He is a trustee of several boards, which include, Intercessors for Africa and University of Agriculture Chapel, Umudike, Abia State, the Rainbow Book Club which recently won, on behalf of the Rivers State Government, the Port Harcourt World Book Project of UNESCO in 2014. He is passionate about the ethical development of people and places, particularly Nigeria and Nigerians.

He is married to Atim Sofiri Ogan, and they have five biological sons and many adopted children and grandchildren.

Dr. Ogan delivered the Synod Talk yesterday, Friday, 28th July on "DISCIPLINE AS A DISTINCTIVE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH". As usual and by the help of the Holy Spirit, Dr. Ogan was outstanding in his presentation. We thank him and pray that he continues to enjoy more and more of God's grace in his family and ministry.

KASARACHI HAYFORD INNOCENT

Was born on December 3 and attended Government College Umuahia, Abia State.

He holds academic degrees in Mass Communication (University of Nigeria, Nsukka); Communication Studies (University of Port Harcourt) and Development, Policy and Political Communication (University of Port Harcourt).

Kasarachi Innocent, or KC for short, is the Our Chief Press Secretary/Diocesan Protocol Officer (1) and by God's grace, a peculiar preacher of the gospel, a trained communicator, broadcaster, teacher and motivational speaker. He is the producer-

presenter of *StandingTall on Radio*, a motivational programme which airs on *Family Love*, 97.7 FM, Port Harcourt, every Wednesday morning by 8.15am. He speaks at churches, schools, youth meetings and skills empowerment seminars. He has mentored and continues to mentor countless youths among whom are his students.

Kasarachi is the founder and CEO, *StandingTall Foundation* (which caters to the needs of the challenged and less privileged and maintains outreaches to Nigerian prisons) and *StandingTall Books* (a publishing outfit which also organizes creative writing and public-speaking seminars for budding writers and speakers). He is also editorial consultant to several publishing outfits, churches and youth magazines.

In the field of scholarship, Kasarachi specializes in marketing communications, health communication, client/customer relations strategies, communication theories, political communication and policy analysis and development communication.

His services have continued to be retained by several bodies for training, and workshop facilitation for their staff and members. Among such bodies are:

- Degema Prisons, Port Harcourt Prisons
- University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Imo State University, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka; Delta State University, Delta State, Nigeria
- The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International, Christian Graduate Fellowship of Nigeria
- Living Faith Church Winners Chapel, Rivers and Anambra States
- Gospel Faith Mission International, Port Harcourt, Abundant Life Evangelical Ministries, Port Harcourt, Gateway International Church, Port Harcourt, Christian Pentecostal Mission, Rivers and Cross River States, Church of God Mission, Rivers State, Charismatic Renewal Ministries, Nigeria (Rivers, Anambra, Enugu and Imo States)
- Christ Chosen Church of God, National (Nigeria)
- Sought Out Group of Schools, Port Harcourt , Exceptional Diamond School, Port Harcourt, National Association of Exceptional Children, Nigeria, The Quintessence International Schools, Port Harcourt
- Showers Christian High School, Port Harcourt, Almighty Favour Hospital, Port Harcourt, Allwell Printing Press and Consultancies, Port Harcourt

In addition to publishing articles in several local and international journals, he has authored the following books:

- Think and Stand Tall
- The Pathway to True Greatness: Cheating your challenges into Chances
- The Two Goats and the Hole
- History of the Mass Media in Nigeria
- Fundamentals of Mass Communication

- Basic Graphics and the Rudiments of Printing

Kasarachi has been a teacher all his life and has taught from Nursery to the University level. At the last count, he has taught in two universities and a polytechnic.

He is happily married to his friend and confidant, ***Gift***, and from the union has come 4 children '***Neme, 'Nanu, Sochi' and Kosi***'.

His best quote is:

Never allow your background to keep your back on the ground.

Mr. Kasarachi addressed the gathering of our youths in this synod on Wednesday, 26th and this morning Saturday, 29th on the topic: "Discipline as an Essential Continual Process for Growing in Christ as a Youth."

We sincerely appreciate him for challenging and motivating our youths through his addresses. We pray the Lord to abundantly bless him and daily renew his grace and strength upon him and his family.

OUR SYNOD VENUE

ST. MARK'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, ELELENWO DEANERY

Elelenwo is a prominent town in the larger Oropotoma Kingdom in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. By every indication and verification evidence, the Town and its residents is progressive and dynamic, having transformed from a village setting in the 1960's and early 70's to an urban status. Before the advent of Christianity, Elelenwo was obviously in the dark as idol worship was the religious norm as obtained in the other neighbouring villages.

Advent of Christianity

The advent of the Christian Religion in Elelenwo could be described as accidental. This is because a group of young men and women in the Community formed a Social Club called and known as IKULELE. Prominent members of the Club included Late Sampson Njohabuenwu Onwuchekwa (Head of the Club), Moses Amadi Enhere, Sam Ejekwu Chinda and Herbert Okujagu.

In the course of their social interactions, Herbert Okujagu went to Oginigba village for the marriage ceremony of his wife, Nwanyinma. There he saw a group of people: men, women and children gathered in a place on a Sunday evening, singing, praying and worshipping God. Perhaps, to satisfy his curiosity, as he continued his regular visit to Oginigba, Mr. Okujagu decided as a matter of fun to follow the group in what they were doing. As he continued taking part in the Church Service, he found it quite interesting and rewarding.

Later on, Mr. Okujagu developed deep interest in the church activities at Oginigba, he decided to relate his new experience to his Club members in Elelenwo.

As history has it, most of them were thrilled. However, a few of them jeered at him. Members, who were interested, followed him to Oginigba and experienced the ineffable joy of worshipping God. They made enquiries and found out that the source of the new association was from OKRIKA. They went to the Churches in Okrika and Ogan-Ama and invited the Christian teachers who taught them the mode of worship. That became the nucleus of the Church in Elelenwo in 1912.

Place of Worship

The first place to worship God for the new converts was a hut built by Mr. Williams Ow'honda Owunna. What appeared initially to be confined to Rumuodani Community quickly spread to all parts of Elelenwo, namely Rumueheleze and Rumuodunwere. Mr. David Igiri Amadi, Mr. Jacob Chinwo, Mr. John Weli, Mr. Harry Ndamati and Mr. Nyebuchi Ihunwo amongst others became ardent and

staunch members of the Church. The increase in the membership necessitated the request for a Church Agent and a piece of land to build a bigger place for worship. The first Resident Agent sent to Elelenwo was Randolph Okujagu. Some of the Church Agents that came after him were Harry Ogan and Aduari.

The land that was given to the Church was an area regarded in those days as evil forest known as **Ohia Bishi Nda Echendu**. Of course, it was a taboo to enter and/or cultivate such a land. Members of the Church fearlessly cut the trees and cleared the area for worship. They expanded rapidly up to the corner opposite the present-day Rumuodani playground.

Ironically, those who were still doubting the efficacy of the new God saw the rapid expansion of the Church as a challenge to their traditional influence and authority. They were bitter and angry as the young adherents began to farm on the Sabbath days, popularly known as **Riagbo**, which were regarded as sacred days. The Church members refused to participate in all forms of obnoxious traditional rites and ceremonies. Attempts made by the opposing forces to disorganize and/or eliminate the Church failed woefully. The light of God dispelled the forces of darkness, and the Church grew stronger to the shame of the detractors. In 1922, Rev. Cole, Superintendent of the St. Peter's Church, Okrika (now Cathedral) came to Elelenwo Community and carried out a mass baptism of both adults and children.

Establishment of a Mini School

In the same 1922 a mini school started in the Church and many young men like Mr. Micah Onwunna, Mr. Joseph Chukwu, Mr. Lawrence Wodi, Mr. Thompson Chinda, Mr. Edwin Onwuka, Mr. Rufus Aso and Mr. Lawson Ndu attended the school. The Church and school came to stay and the Church was given the name of the Patron Saint, Mark.

Building a Permanent Church at a Central Place

The work on the permanent Church building at the present site started on 4th August, 1936. The foundation Stone was laid by The Rt. Rev. A. M. Gelsthorpe, D.S.O.D.D, Assistant Bishop on the Niger. The building of the Church was regarded as a Community project. Levies were imposed on all eligible adults in the three Communities that make up Elelenwo. However, a tragedy occurred on a certain day, when a club led by Mr. Andrew Onwuchekwa went round to collect levies for the permanent Church building. A scuffle ensued when they met Mr. Anya Chinda for his own payment. Mr. Anya Chinda apparently in a feat of anger inadvertently hit Mr. Andrew Onwuchekwa and he collapsed and died. The sad and tragic incident affected the Church building project. Many influential members left the Church; thus the Church was unable to pay its assessment, as her finances became slim.

The assertion that the old Church building was built by the community members irrespective of their faith is buttressed by the names of the plaque: Bekee Ehoru,

Worgu Chinda, Wanoro Chinda and Nyebuchi Ihunwo. The persons whose names appeared on the plaque were not members. They were chiefs and community leaders who ensured that money was collected for the execution of the laudable church project in their town.

A temporary thatch building was used for worship. The iron-roofing sheets from the old Church building at the temporary site were used for the parsonage at the new site. Between 1939-1943 Mr. Erastus Wojinda Wodi (now late Chief Erastus Wojinda Wodi JP) served St. Mark's Anglican Church Elelenwo in the capacity of a Church Agent without any salary or stipend. This was as a result of the withdrawal of the Church Agent at a time the Church was unable to pay its assessment. Mr. Erastus Wojinda Wodi volunteered and served as the Church Agent until the Church was able to pay its assessment in 1943. Sequel to this development an Agent was reposted to St. Mark's Anglican Church in 1944 in the person of Agent Anusiem and normal worship began. The parsonage was transferred in the time of Mr. Anusiem. This was in 1944. Unfortunately, the temporary thatch structure for worship was blown down by a heavy rainstorm in 1948. Members moved to one of the schoolrooms of the new school for Church activities. Work on the new building (now demolished) started again in 1956. It was completed before the Nigeria Civil War in 1967; and dedication of the Church building was performed by The Rt. Rev. Y. A. Fubara, JP, Bishop of the Diocese of Niger Delta on Sunday, 21st April, 1974.

A major growth in the church was the inauguration of St. Mark's Anglican Church as an autonomous parish by the Rt. Rev. Samuel Onyuku Elenwo, JP, Bishop of the Niger Delta Diocese on 10th March, 1984. The first priest that served in the new parish after the inauguration was Rev. E. E. Epele (now a retired Archdeacon). The Catechist at the time of the inauguration was L. O. Babia.

Another Crisis in The Church

A few years after the inadvertent killing of Mr. Andrew Onwuchekwa, Christianity in Elelenwo suffered another major setback, when a dead woman was refused burial following her death during childbirth. A major crisis erupted in the Church when the corpse of Mrs. Woroma Amadi, wife of Mr. David Igiri Amadi was brought for burial in the Church premises. The elders of Rumuodani objected to her being buried on their land. The members from Rumueheleze and Rumuodunwere were enraged and they left the Church. They built their own Church at Ngbabo-Ebeagwu: a place almost opposite the present Eheleze hall. By the grace of God, sanity prevailed through the efforts of Rev. Jumbo (Later Bishop Dimieari) and there was re-union.

The Growth of The Church

In spite of the chequered history of the Church, St. Mark's Church, Elelenwo has recorded monumental progress, growth and development: both physically and spiritually. The old Church building which was erected by Community efforts became grossly inadequate for the ever increasing membership.

Still counting the innumerable blessings of God, which has ensured the growth of the Church, the construction of the present church building was undertaken by Chief Friday Ogwutum Chuku, Ogbuga I of Oropotoma (of blessed memory). On 21st November, 1996 Chief Friday O. Chuku single handedly started work on the ambitious, gigantic church building project. The foundation stone laying ceremony was performed by the Rt. Rev. S. O. Elenwo, JP, Bishop of the Diocese of the Niger Delta North on Saturday, 12th April, 1997. Late Chief Friday Chuku and undoubtedly had a lofty idea to make the church building one of the best, East of the Niger. Unfortunately, he did not to fully actualize his dream. However, he was able to complete the block work and fix the long-span roofing sheets of the church building by the end of October, 1998.

The Church authorities and some public-spirited members took over the finishing touches to the building. The members who massively supported the Church authorities include the following: Late Chief Eric Bekwele Asor, Sir, The Hon. Justice Iche N. Ndu, Late Eze Anoro Chinda, JP, Late Eze G. B. Wodi, Chief Prince Nyebuchi Ehor, JP, and Sir Chief Surv. B. O. Ejekwu among others. Worthy of note here is the commitment and zeal of a one-time Works Committee Chairman of the Deanery, Mr. Joe Onukwufor who faithfully supervised the works in the new church edifice until his death in 2006.

Many other members of the church and the community particularly in recent years have equally made their wonderful contributions towards the growth of the church here at Elelenwo. We commend them for their efforts and say a big thank you.

Rise to Deanery Status

On 16th July, 2002, the Diocesan Board met and recommended the creation of Deaneries in the Diocese. That decision of the Diocesan Board was ratified by a One-Day Synod held on Monday, 29th July, 2002. Consequently, St. Mark's Church, Elelenwo was among the eight initial Deanery Churches created in the Diocese of Niger Delta North. The Formal Inauguration of the Church as a Deanery took place on Tuesday, 8th October, 2002 with the Venerable (now Bishop) Innocent U. Ordu instituted as the first Rector of the Deanery by the Bishop, The Rt. Rev. Ignatius C. O. Kattey, JP (now Archbishop).

St. Mark's Elelenwo: the First Single Church (Deanery) to Host a Diocesan Synod.

The year 2005 witnessed for the first time ever the hosting of a Diocesan Synod by a single church station with no help coming from any other church.

While still in the bigger Niger Delta North Diocese made up of the present Dioceses of Niger Delta North, Ogoni, Etche, Ikwerre and Ewo, the Synod venue for 2005 was to be Ogoni Archdeaconry in the present Diocese of Ogoni. However, that

Archdeaconry with two others – Gokana and Tai were carved out and inaugurated as a Missionary Diocese in the first quarter of that year by The Most Rev. Peter Jasper Akinola, then Primate of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion).

This development created a vacuum as to which administrative bloc – Cathedral, Archdeaconry or Deanery would take up the challenge of hosting the 2005 Diocesan Synod. The Bishop, the Rt. Rev. I. C. O. Kattey, JP (now Archbishop) in the meeting of the Diocesan Synod Planning Committee held in early February of that year at St. Michael's Church, Rumuomasi, challenged the then Rector of Elelenwo Deanery, The Ven. Innocent Ordu (now Bishop of Evo) to accept with his Deanery to serve as an alternative Synod Venue. Notwithstanding the suddenness of that task and its huge financial implication, members of the Deanery accepted with the spirit of maturity the episcopal challenge when the news was brought through a letter from the Bishop, and hosted one of the best ever synod meetings up till that year and even a few years after from Wednesday, 4th to Sunday, 8th May, 2005. The Bishop, Rt. Rev. I. C. O. Kattey in his Presidential Address at that synod on Saturday, 7th May, 2005 had this to say:

“It is worthy of mention here of the spirit of maturity exhibited by Elelenwo Deanery when the need to get an alternative Synod venue arose. Without hesitation they responded positively to our request to host this Synod just three months ago. From what we have seen so far it is evident that there is the spirit of stewardship, unity and love among these people. To God be the glory!”

Twelve years after, we are gathered once again here at St. Mark's, Elelenwo Deanery with vast improvements in every sector of the Church to be hosted in yet another Diocesan synod – this time, the Synod of the eight years old Diocese of Evo, carved out of the Diocese of Niger Delta North.

Just as in 2005, we have witnessed unity, maturity and the true spirit of Christian Stewardship exhibited by the Priests led by the Rector, The Ven. Okechukwu Ow'honda, Deanery Council, members of the Local Synod Planning Committee headed by Sir Mike Ejims Enwukwe and the entire congregation and people of Elelenwo since the announcement of this church as our Synod Venue and our actual arrival and stay from last Wednesday.

We commend the efforts of all members of this Deanery and thank them for their kind hospitality.

The Building of The Present Rectory

Sunday, 24th July, 2004 will stand out as a memorable day in the life of St. Mark's Church, Elelenwo Deanery. The major event of that day's church service was the service of Christening and baptism of infant Daata, Sarima Apiafi, first granddaughter of Sir The Hon. Justice & Dame Iche Ndu, the then Chief Judge of Rivers State.

In attendance at the service were the then Governor of the State, Sir Dr. Peter O. Odili and his wife, Justice Mary who were godparents/sponsors of baby Daata. They were accompanied by other dignitaries from the Executive, legislative and judicial arms of government. The present Governor of Rivers State, Chief Barr. Nyesom Ezenwo Wike, then Chairman of Obio/Akpor Local Government Area was also in attendance.

Responding to the welcome speech and homily of the then Rector, Ven. I. U. Ordu (now Bishop), Governor Odili who felt quite pleased particularly with the beautiful interior of the church auditorium described St. Mark's, Elelenwo as "now Born Again" compared to the years past. Wondering what else was lacking in the Church, he said he was told there in the service that the Priest was living in a house far below the status and beauty of the Church building. He then announced a donation of Ten Million Naira towards the building of a befitting Rectory for the Deanery.

That pledge was redeemed within 48 hours. And so within 10 months what we have today as the imposing rectory of this Deanery was completed and commissioned/dedicated on Sunday, 8th May, 2005 by the Governor, Dr. Peter Odili and the Bishop, The Rt. Rev. I. C. O. Kattey assisted by the Guest Preacher, The Rt. Rev. Emmanuel O. Chukwuma, Bishop of Enugu (now Archbishop) during the Synod thanksgiving service. The Governor who was visibly impressed with the prudent management of the money donated towards the project and the quality of work done, further announced a fresh donation of Three Million Naira for the furnishing of the building.

The great role played by Sir The Hon. Justice Iche Ndu, then Chief Judge of the State in facilitating the prompt payment of the two pledges by the Governor will always be acknowledged and appreciated.

The prudent management of the funds by the then treasurer, Sir Alawari Ndu, the Works Committee Chairman, Mr. Onukwufor, the Rector and other Council members remain worthy of commendation.

Other imposing edifices have thereafter sprung up in the Deanery. They include a baptistery, a 2-storey quarters for the non-clerical staff of the Church, another 2-storey multipurpose complex - all built and dedicated under the pastoral administrations of The Ven. Dr. (now Prof.) E. C. Ndu, The Ven. Dr. F. N. Akah, The Ven. Akuro Omubor.

For this Synod, the current Rector, The Ven. Okechukwu Ow'honda has led the congregation to undertake a massive extension and expansion of the eastern end (altar) of the present church building to accommodate more worshippers and priests during divine services. This effort is highly commended by us.

Church Planting

In furtherance of the Great Commission mandate, St. Mark's Elelenwo Deanery has largely contributed to the every growing spread of Christianity in the community, particularly through the planting of more churches on Elelenwo soil. Between 2006 and 2014 the following churches have been planted through the evangelistic efforts of St. Mark's, Elelenwo Deanery:

- **New Covenant Anglican Church**, Eliminigwe, Elelenwo (May, 2006 [now a Parish]) which has in turn planted the **Anglican Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary** (November 2013), Eliminigwe Estate Phase 4, Elelenwo.
- **Chapel of Grace & Knowledge**, ACMGS, Elelenwo (October, 2009 [now a Parish]) which has also planted another Church, **The Light of The World Anglican Church**, Eliminigwe Estate Phase 3, Elelenwo.
- **Anglican Church of The Passion**, along Apna moto ekwu-Elijiji, Rumuodani (2010).
- **Maranatha Anglican Church**, Victory Estate, Elelenwo (2014).

Other Anglican Churches on Elelenwo soil not planted by St. Mark's include:

- Church of the Holy Spirit, Elelenwo
- Redeemer's Cross, TAP, Elelenwo
- Jericho Inn, Elelenwo
- New Life Anglican Church, Rumuodani, Elelenwo and
- New Jerusalem Anglican Church, Boskel Road, Off PH/Aba Expressway, Elelenwo.

This is a clear indication that Elelenwo in the 115 years has remained home to the Anglican Church and Institutions. No doubt Elelenwo has also benefited immensely from the presence of the Church spiritually, socioeconomically and in terms of cultural upliftment. To God be the glory!

Contribution of St. Mark's Church, Elelenwo Deanery Towards The Educational Mission of The New Diocese of Evo

In 2008 while still in the Diocese of Niger Delta North, the Rivers State Government handed over to the Diocese the Archdeacon Crowther Memorial Girls' School (ACMGS), Elelenwo. Considering the enormous financial burden the takeover of the school from government was to pose on the Diocese, and in view of the soon-to-be created Diocese of Evo within which the school is located, the Diocesan Board of our residual Diocese decided to hand over the infrastructural and administrative concerns of ACMGS to St. Mark's, Elelenwo Deanery. The Deanery with the Venerable Fynface Akah, as the Rector, in her usual spirit of maturity accepted the challenge and took care of the renovation of some of the dilapidated facilities in the school as well as the payment of the salaries of teachers and other workers for about a year until the Diocese of Evo was fully prepared to take over from the Deanery. We commend this sacrifice!

Ministers Who Have Served in St. Mark's Anglican Church Elelenwo

The Church has always been blessed with good priests who were mature, experienced, dedicated and committed to their duties. The following clerical staff gave adequate and commendable pastoral care to the church when they were at the helm of administration here at St. Mark's Church, Elelenwo.

Name	Position Year of Service
1. Randolph Okujagu	Agent - 1912 – 1913
2. Harry Ogan	Agent - 1914 - 1915
3. Aduari	Agent - 1916 – 1920
4. Erastus Wojinda Wodi	Agent - 1939 - 1943
5. Anusiem	Agent - 1944 - 1945
6. Rev. Jumbo	Vicar - 1945 - 1950
7. Rev. Y. A Fubara (later Bishop, now late)	Vicar - 1954 – 1960
8. Catechist Olaka Wogu	Curate - 1961- 1971
9. Rev. Oluka	Vicar - 1968 - 1969
10. Rev Oriakwu	Vicar - 1969 - 1975
11. Rev. S. A. Nyenwe	Vicar -1976 - 1980
12. Rev. Canon L. N. Ndu	Vicar - 1982 – 1983
13. Rev. E. E. F Epelle (later Ven. Now late)	Vicar -10 th Jan. 1983- 27 th Dec. 1986
14. Catechist L. O. Babia	Curate-8 th Jan. 1984 -30 th Dec. 1987
15. Rev. E.E. Ngaha (later Rev. Can. Now late)	Vicar 6 th Jan. 1986-30 th Dec. 1990
16. Rev. S.L Belnadogbara (now Ven.)	Curate 1 st Jan.1986-3 rd Sept.1991
17. Rev. G. O. Wodi (now Rtd Ven.)	Priest 2 nd Oct. 1988 - 2 nd Jan. 1991
18. Rev. I. W. Wopara (later Ven. Now late)	Vicar 3 rd Jan. 1991 - 13 th Jan. 1994
19. Rev. A.G. Ogbidor (now Ven.)	Vicar 9 th Jan. 1994 - 28 th Sept.1996
20. Rev. Can. S.A. Chikwe (now Rtd. Ven.)	Vicar 2 nd Jan. 1996- 27 th Dec. 1999
21. Rev. Richard N. Okpara (now Ven.)	Curate (later Vicar) 2 nd Jan.1999-15 th Aug. 2002
22. Ven. I. U. Ordu JP (now Bishop)	Last Vicar/First Rector 16 th Aug. 2002–6 th Jan. 2007
23. Rev. Alex Usifoh (now Ven.)	Curate 21 st July. 2002-4 th June, 2005
24. Rev. Samuel O Abada	Priest 2 nd Jan. 2004 - 26 th April 2007
25. Rev. Ugochukwu Nwaghai	Priest 30 th April 2007-

26. Rev. Can C.J. Wachukwu (now Ven.)
Curate 2nd July, 2005 - 6th Jan. 2007
27. Ven. Dr. Emenike Ndu (now Ven. Prof.)
Rector 7th Jan. 2007 - 28th Dec. 2008
28. Rev. I. G. Chinda Priest 7th Jan. 2007 - 28th April 2007
29. Rev. P. Ahuakagha (now Rev Can.)
Curate 7th May 2007 - 28th Dec. 2008
30. Ven. Dr. Fyनेface Akah JP, Rector 7th Feb. 2009 - 3rd Jan. 2011
31. Rev. Luke Odum (now Rtd. Rev. Can.)
Curate 7th Feb. 2009 - 28th Dec, 2009
32. Rev. Reginald Chinweze Priest 7th Feb. 2009 - 28th Dec, 2009
33. Rev. Ben A. Nwaoha (now Rtd. Rev. Can.)
Curate 15th Aug. 2009 - 2nd Jan. 2011
34. Rev. Rowland Benjamin Priest 13th July 2009 - 2011 - 4th Jan 2011
35. Rev. Kingsley Ohajianya (now Rev. Can Kingsley O.)
Priest 13th July 2009 - 2011 - 4th Jan 2011
36. Ven. Akuro A. Omubor - Rector 4th Jan. 2011 - 5th Jan. 2015
37. Rev. Can Chuka Opara - Curate 4th Jan. 2011 - 7th Feb. 2016
38. Rev. Moses Anyanefena - Priest 26th March 2011 - 17th Dec. 2011
39. Rev. Ahamefule Olluor - Priest 7th Jan. 2012 - 14th Dec. 2013
40. Rev. Samuel Ejekwu - Priest 5th Jan. 2014 - 4th Jan. 2015
41. Rev. Chukwujekwu Umenna – Priest 25th Jan. 2015 - 4th Feb. 2016
41. Ven. Okechuku Owhonda JP - Rector 5th Jan. 2015 Till Date
42. Rev. Raymond Osakwe Priest 9th Feb. 2016 Till Date
43. Rev. Chukwudi Evans Theophilus - Priest 5th Jan. 2015 Till Date

First Set of Knights

Sir Chief Eric Bekwele Aso	-	1995
Sir Chief Isaiah Sunday Onwuchekwa	-	1995
Sir Hon. Justice Iche Ndu	-	1995

Pioneer Lay Readers

1. Mr. Jacob Chinwo (now late)	-	1940
2. Mr. Edwin Onwuka (now late)	-	1950
3. Mr. Sunday Chinwo (now late)	-	1965
4. Mr D.O Chinda (now late)	-	1971
5. Mr. Samuel Otto (now late)	-	1980
6. Mrs. Nkechi Ejekwu	-	1983
7. Dame N.C. Anwuri	-	1983
8. Lady Comfort Franca Chinda	-	1986
9. Mr. Fidelis Weli (now Sir Dr.)	-	1990
10. Mr. John Ubele (now late.)	-	1991
11. Mrs. Esther Peter (now late)	-	2002
12. Mrs. Victoria Weli (now Lady)	-	2002

13. Mr. Romanus Ossai	-	2002
14. Mr. Ngo Jaja	-	2002
15. Mrs. Amaka U Adenta	-	2002
16. Mrs. Ogechi Onwuchekwa (now Lady)-		2002
17. Sir Joseph Elendu	-	2002
18. Mr. Victor Iyalla (now Sir)	-	2002
19. Mrs. Rose Ike Chinda	-	2008
20. Mr. Uche Ugwuja	-	2008
21. Mr. Frank Okonkwo	-	2008
22. Mr. Henry Otto	-	2008
23. Mrs. Patience Wodi (now Lady)	-	2010
24. Mrs. Blessing Aso	-	2011

People's Wardens

1. Mr. Josiah Amadi	-	1985-1989
2. Mr. Mike Wodi (now Sir Chief Barr.)	-	1990-1996
3 Mr. Charles Chinda	-	1996-2006
4. Mr. Alawari Ndu (now Sir)	-	2006-2009
5. Mr. Collins Amadi	-	2006-2010
6. Mr. Ben Otto	-	2011
7. Sir Hon. Simeon Weli	-	2011-2012
8. Mr. Ben Otto	-	2013-2014
9. Mr. Felix Ejims Otto	-	2015-2016
10. Chief Fortune D.R.N Chinda	-	2016
11. Mr. Austin Ehoru	-	2017

Pastor's Wardens

1. Mr. D.J. Weli	-	1984-1987
2. Mr. Emmanuel Amadi	-	1989-1990
3. Barr. Iche Ndu (now Rtd. Chief Judge)	-	1991-1995
4. Mr. Michael A Wodi (now Sir Chief Barr.)-		1996-1998
5. Mr. Josiah Amadi (now late)	-	1999-2001
6. Mr. Charles Chinda	-	2002-2006
7. Mr. Collins Amadi (now Sir)	-	2006-2008
8. Chief Fortune D.R.N Chinda	-	2011
9. Sir Hon. Simeon Weli	-	2011-2016
10. Mr. Henry Omunakwe Wodi	-	2017

Council Secretaries

1. Mr. Collins Amadi	(now Sir)	-	1989
2. Mr. Wilfred A. Ehoru	(later Eze, now late)	-	1990
3. Mr. Michael Wodi (now Sir Chief Barr.)		-	1993
5. Mr. Chukwuma Onwuchekwa (now Sir Engr.)		-	1999
6. Sir O.J Kamalu		-	2002

7. Sir Victor Iyalla	-	2004
8. Mr. Innocent Chinda	-	2006
9. Barr. Chimenem Wodi	-	2010
10. Mr. Ikechi Ndu	-	2015
11. Mr. Oscar Nyebuchi Weli	-	2017

Church Treasurers

1. Mr. D.J Weli	-	1970-1983
2. Mr. Fidelis Weli (now Dr.)	-	1989-1984
3. Mrs. Joy Aso	-	1984-1988
4. Mr. E.N Amadi	-	1988-1990
5. Mr. Mike Wodi (now Sir Chief Barr.)	-	1990-1996
6. Dr E.C Ndu (now Ven. Prof.)	-	1996-1997
7. Mr. Alawari Ndu (now Sir)	-	1997-2007
8. Mr. Innocent Chinda	-	2005-2006
9. Mr. Woji Weli	-	2006-2008
10. Mr. Innocent Chinda	-	2009-2013
11. Sir O.J. Kamalu	-	2014-2015
10. Mr. Felix Ejims Otto	-	2016-to Date

Church Clerks

1. Mrs. Violet Ezimuo (now late)	-	1992-2012
2. Mrs. Benice Asuru	-	2012-2014
3. Sis. Stella Nyeche	-	2014-2016
4. Mr. Kingsley Peters	-	2016 to Date

Organists That Have Served in St. Mark's

1. Mr. S. N. Ndukwe	-	1930-1989
2. Mr. Geoffrey Ukujagu (Assistant)	-	1975-1980
3. Mr. Victor Ndukwe	-	1981-2000
4. Mr. Mac Pepple	-	2009-2010
5. Mr. Owanete Samson	-	2011-2016
6. Mr. Christopher Bregbo	-	2016-Till Date

OUR SYNOD THEME

The theme for our synod this year “Urgent Need for Discipline seeks to address more elaborately an aspect of the theme for last year. At last year’s synod we dwelt on “Attitudes and Role relationships in God’s earthly family, the church.”

In examining some biblically established attitudes or patterns of behaviour that we must necessarily conform to, we considered in part on page 119 the wrong attitude and discipline of erring members of the church. In that address we said:

“In God’s earthly family, the church, members are orderly and disciplined in their private and public lives. This they do because of the reverence they have for the Father and Head of the Family, the love they have for the family, and for its members – the brethren. Everyone behaves himself perfectly and in a wise way (Psalm 101:2) towards other family members and those outside, in order to protect the purity of the home and guard against external ridicule and shame”.

This year’s theme, “Urgent need for discipline” taken from the Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter twelve, verse eleven and the Book of Proverbs, chapter twelve verse one aims however, at addressing the subject matter of discipline not only within the church but also as it affects the other spheres of human society.

Before however, we go into some details about the theme, let us undertake a survey of the two books of the Bible from where our texts are drawn.

The Epistle to The Hebrews

Author:

The Author is not named.

Ever since the first century the question of who wrote Hebrews has attracted much discussion. The answers of the early Christians varied. On the eastern shore of the Mediterranean and around Alexandria, they associated the book with Paul. Origen (A.D. 185 – 254) felt that the thoughts of the book are Paul’s, but that the language and composition are those of a different author. Some other scholars have proposed Apollos, Barnabas, Luke, Priscilla and others as its author.

If Paul is not the author, who is? The Book itself suggests that the writer’s extensive education included both Hellenistic and Jewish influences. A gift for teaching and heart for ministry and discipleship is also evident.

Apollos, the Master rhetorician from Alexandria fits this evidence. He was an eloquent and learned man and powerful in the scriptures. The following New Testament passages tell us about Apollos: Acts 18: 24-28; 19:1; 1Cor. 1:12; 3:4-6, 11;

4:6; 16:12; Titus 3:13. We may never be sure of the author's name, but if we read the epistle carefully, we will really get to know him.

Date:

The description of the Jewish sacrificial system and its priestly service (Hebrews 8-10) suggests that Hebrews was written before the destruction of the temple in A. D. 70. The religious sacrifices referenced, however, relate to the Old Testament tabernacle, not those of the temple. The best date therefore, is between A. D. 68 and 70.

Audience/Setting and Purpose:

The author wrote to Jewish Christians who were experiencing social and physical persecution from both Jews and Gentiles. Their sufferings threatened their commitment to Christ. They needed a renewal of confidence and an exhortation to persevere. The author therefore purposed to prevent some kind of reversion to Judaism by these struggling Christians by presenting through his writing the sufficiency and superiority of Christ. This current of thought, the author expressed strongly by his recurrent use of the word "Better".

Synopsis:

The epistle may be divided into two parts.

Whereas part I which majors chiefly on doctrinal issues such as the pre-eminence of Christ and of His Priesthood, part II focuses chiefly on practical teachings and exhortations.

Chapter 12 of the epistle falls within its second part and it has as its subject theme, "Spiritual Athletics and the Christian Race". It is from the eleventh verse that our Synod theme, URGENT NEED FOR DISCIPLINE is drawn. The Chicken Soup for the Soul Bible renders it thus:

"No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening – it is painful! But afterward there will be a quiet harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way"

This verse speaks of the good results of hardship, correction and chastening which are the usual features of the disciplined life and how they are necessary preparation one must subject himself through to be victorious in life.

The Book of Proverbs:

The book of Proverbs is a collection of moral and religious maxims containing instructions concerning right living. Also brief discourses on wisdom, justice, temperance, industry, purity, etc. In these pithy sayings a sharp contrast is drawn between wisdom and folly, righteousness and sin.

Solomon is generally credited with the authorship of a large portion of the Proverbs. It is quite probable that all were not original with him. In chapters 30 and 31 are found the words of Agur and Lemuel.

Definitions:

1. *URGENT*: This means 'Very Important'; requiring immediate attention.
2. *NEED*: Something necessary that one must have; an obligation; and a desire or requirement for a useful purpose.
3. *DISCIPLINE*: Training that produces obedience, self-control gained as a result of this training. Training (sometimes painful) that corrects, moulds, or perfects. Lastly, discipline is defined as the penalty an individual receives for breaking the laws of a unit of society (e.g. family, school, state or nation, fellowship group, church, age grade or professional association, community) to which he/she belongs with the view of restoring him back to those laws.

Our theme is implying that as much and critical as discipline is for the proper ordering of our lives as individuals, families and units of society, it has been so terribly overlooked everywhere, including the church.

The consequence of this neglect is that today there is a near total breakdown of law and order in every sector of our national life. The best thing therefore to do is for every person and all relevant institutions and units of our society to quickly rise to restore this vital tool we need at all levels for the proper ordering of our society at large no matter how painful the process of doing it or submitting ourselves to it will be.

For us to make progress in our walk with God as Christians and members of the church we must be willing to submit to His disciplines. A family that would earn the respect of everyone in the society must emphasize and exemplify discipline. A country, like Nigeria which aims to achieve lofty heights in national development and attract global recognition and respect must address and enforce discipline as a matter of urgent national importance.

The level of success and progress of a person, church, family and other units that make up a whole society will be determined largely by the level of discipline and perseverance of that person, or the persons that constitute that unit of society.

What this means therefore, is that we must understand discipline for what it is...doing what needs to be done, even if we don't want to do it".

The much setback we have suffered as a people in Nigeria has been mainly due to our lack of discipline and not because we are less endowed when compared with people of other nations. In fact, Nigeria is far better endowed with material, human and other resources than several other countries of the world. We are where we are presently because we have neglected the weightier matter of personal, family, religious, moral, ethical and national discipline, all of which combine to assist a nation in its march

towards greatness. In the words of an American entrepreneur, author and motivational speaker, Emanuel **James "Jim" Rohn** (1930 –2009),

“Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishments”. – Jim Rohn.

If we hope to attain greatness as a nation, we must imbibe the culture of discipline as a necessary part of our national life.

Since we are addressing the subject matter of discipline in a church gathering like this synod, it would only be proper that we first and foremost, do an introspection, i.e. look at discipline as it or should affect the church.

We need to do this, because when God’s wrath begins to fall on men generally for all acts of indiscipline, it (i.e. God’s wrath) will first begin with the church and its members.

“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” 1 Pet. 4:17.

We shall examine discipline from the perspective of the purpose of the church on earth. Considering the purpose of the church from a positive view point, C. I. Scofield, a great Bible teacher and the author of the Scofield Reference Edition of the Bible wrote: “Much is said concerning the ‘mission’ of the Church”. The ‘Church which is his body’ has for its mission to build itself up until the body is complete” (Eph. 4:11-16; Col. 2:19).

Part of the processes by which the church builds itself up unto completion is through its discipline – one of the many and manifold responsibilities and tasks that Christ has loaded it with.

Consequently, the church has as one of its many distinctive, the discipline of its members.

Four kinds of discipline are emphasized in the Bible. These are:

1. **Sovereign Discipline** (John 15:2; Acts 5:5, 10; 1Cor. 11:32; Heb. 12:9, 10; 1 Peter 4:17).
2. **Spiritual Discipline** (Heb. 12:11).
3. **Self-Discipline** (1Cor. 11:31; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1Jn 3:3);
4. **Church Discipline** (Matthew 18:17; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; Gal. 6:1; 2Thess. 3:6, 14; Titus 3:10, 11; 2John 1:10);
5. **Family/Parental Discipline** (Prov. 13:24; 19:18; 29:15; Eph. 6:4; Lev. 26:23; Deut. 4:36, 11:2; Exod. 20:20).

SOVEREIGN DISCIPLINE

The subject of God's discipline is a somewhat neglected and an unpopular one. We know that Christians are saved by God's grace and not by our own goodness or works (Eph. 2:8-9; 2 Tim. 1:9). It is true that when He died on the cross, Jesus Christ took all the punishment for our sins (Isaiah 53:5; Romans 5:8).

We know that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ (Romans 8:1). With all these truths, many think it to be odd when it is said that God disciplines His children.

The above scriptures notwithstanding, the fact remains that God still disciplines His children. This is what Hebrews 12:5-11 says,

“And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure; but he for *our* profit, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby”.

God's discipline is not punishment, as Jesus already bore our punishment, nor is His discipline motivated by a desire to inflict pain. Nor does God's discipline stem from anger. He does not lose His temper, treat us unfairly, or allow us to suffer anything that is not for our ultimate good (Romans 8:28). Rather, God's discipline comes from His great love for us. It is a token of His adoption of us as children.

He loves us too much to allow us to remain in our sin. He loves too much that He will do whatever is necessary to make us holy. Sometimes the medicine must taste bad, but that does not change the fact that the physician's motive is mercy. While discipline is sometimes painful, God's purpose in disciplining us is for our own good, our holiness. The ultimate good for a Christian is to be sanctified, which is to be conformed to the image and likeness of Christ.

God allows us to undergo trials and temptations so our faith will be tested and we will grow in maturity as Christians. God uses these trials to discipline us for godliness. When suffering comes, it is wise to examine ourselves and to repent of any known sins. James 5:16a counsels,

“Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.”

Sometimes suffering is not a result of our sin, but is the result of living in a fallen world and is something God allows into our lives to grow us in Him. The best examples are Job who, though recommended by God for his uprightness, yet was

believed by his friends to be suffering because of his secret sins; the man who was born blind in the gospel of John (John 9:2-3); and Joseph who was sold into slavery by his brothers (Genesis 50:20). God used the sufferings of these men for His good purposes.

Discipline is not merely corrective, but also involves training (1Timothy 4:8) Titus 2:11-14). Titus 2:11-14 says

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; 14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

Finally, the end of Gods’ discipline is not only our good, but also His glory. The two are not mutually exclusive, but work together. As God causes us to grow in holiness, His grace is revealed in us and He is glorified.

In summary, God disciplines every one of His children. His motive is love. His practice is perfect. His purpose is our sanctification. His end is His glory. May we learn not to despise His discipline, but to be encouraged by it.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

Spiritual discipline entails the conscious efforts or actions an individual takes himself or herself, in order to grow and develop his or her Christian faith. Though at first painful, spiritual discipline resulting from obedience and faith, produces abundant blessings:

“No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening – it is painful! But afterwards there will be a quiet harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way” (Hebrews 12:11)-Chicken Soup for the Soul Bible.

Every believer should seek to become disciplined in order to grow spiritually.

Spiritual discipline is a continual process that helps the believer mature in Christ and know God’s will. It is as much an attitude of commitment as it is an activity in holiness. Specific spiritual disciplines may include personal training in Bible study, Prayer, Worship, Fellowship, Service, or Witnessing, among other godly practices. A conscientious, creative pursuit of these spiritual disciplines should continue throughout a believer’s life:

“And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Hebrews 6:11, 12).

Spiritual discipline is essential to deliverance from the power of sin and obedience to God's will. Without spiritual discipline, believers cannot walk with Christ, grow in faith, or receive the heavenly rewards awaiting those who diligently practice spiritual discipline.

SELF-DISCIPLINE

As a person grows up from the family or any other unit of society to which he now belongs, apart from the discipline of that unit which helps him to shapen up in life, there is the urgent need for him to learn self-discipline. Every individual must learn to call himself to order for his good and that of society at large.

Self-discipline begins when the individual chooses to willingly impose deprivations and sacrifices on himself as in the case of Jesus (Luke 9:58; Phil. 2:5-8).

Self-discipline constitutes the noblest form of discipline. The following statements by two reputable American personalities buttress the importance of self-discipline:

“In reading lives of great men, I found that the first victory they won was over themselves. Self-discipline with all of them came first” (Harry S. Truman, 33rd President of the US 1884-1972).

“No man or woman has achieved an effective personality who is not self-disciplined. Such discipline must not be an end in itself, but must be directed to the development of resolute Christian character” (John S. Bonnell, New York Presbyterian Preacher).

This same spirit of self-discipline is manifest in Jesus' teachings concerning self-denial and bearing of crosses (Matt. 10:37; Luke 14:25-33).

Over time, He selected 12 men who became His 'disciples', learnt under Him, the Great Teacher. They accepted His invitation to “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me” (Matt. 11:29).

A disciple therefore must be willing to learn or imbibe the disciplines of His Master, such as:

- a. Restraining the appetites – Prov. 23:1,2,20; Luke 12:22; 1 Cor. 9:27
- b. Subduing fleshy lusts – Rom. 6:6; 13:14; Gal. 5:16; Col. 3:5; 1 Peter 2:11; 4:2

Self-discipline therefore requires that a person learns and upholds the virtues of proper comportment/behaviour, self-restraint, departure from the life of excesses, proper dressing, thoughts, temperament, decent and courteous communication and right attitude to possession. All these will take conscious efforts particularly in a world that is madly opposed to the principles of godliness and right disciplines.

Every day we are expected to make lots of little self-discipline choices. In time, these choices shape who we become. For example, we are expected to get out of bed and get dressed in time to go to school as students; to our places of work as public servants and/or to church as worshippers. As a student, one is expected to commit himself wholly to studies and not to waste the time playing or moving aimlessly from one part of the campus to another. As workers, we are expected to arrive early enough to our places of work and justify our employment by our style and quality of work before our employers rather than spend all the time on things which do not count. As Christians, we are to prepare for church services and fellowship meetings and arrive early enough to join in the worship rather than spend the whole time before the mirror fixing our hair and other makeups. As ministers, we are expected to separate ourselves into God's presence to seek His face prior to standing before the congregation. All these take self-discipline.

It takes self-discipline for us as ministers and church leaders to obey episcopal/diocesan directives or policies; to meet set targets without offering **lying excuses**. It takes self-discipline to not yell back at someone who yells at you; to not retaliate, to not fight in the secret or public arenas when provoked.

It takes self-discipline to think of others' need and to share with them the blessings of God on our life; to put others first and our personal desires second. It takes self-discipline to still be in control of oneself when a beautiful girl or woman or a handsome man comes one's way. It will take self-discipline and self-control for a young widow not to mess up herself with men in order to get sponsorship in the face of economic hardship. It takes self-discipline to not loot the public treasury, which is to steal when one has the opportunity to do so.

Self-discipline allows us to live joyfully with God. It shows God's power at work, it helps us to become God's dependable people, it means controlling our desires, appetites and selfish ways. With it, we obey the laws of the church, our communities, state and nation, and as well as those in authority over us at these levels. With self-discipline we can overcome life's difficulties and destructive behaviours. Self-discipline will help us build strong character which will in turn communicate credibility, harness respect, create consistency and earn us trust.

May the Lord grant us grace to be self-disciplined.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

“Nothing can be more hurtful to the service (of God), than the neglect of discipline; for that discipline, more than numbers, gives one army the superiority over another - *George Washington (First US President from 1789-1797).*

Church discipline is the process of correcting sinful behaviours among members of a local church body for the purpose of protecting the church, restoring the sinner to a right walk with God, and renewing fellowship among the church members. It is usually not pleasant to those on whom it is meted out. If however accepted, it leads to amendment of life and restoration for the guilty.

Speaking further on discipline, George Washington had this to say:

“Discipline is the soul of an army. It makes small numbers formidable; procures success to the weak and esteem to all.”

The church is God’s army on earth and just as it applies to the regular army, the Church is called to preach and enforce discipline particularly amongst its members.

While it is God’s business to judge those outside of the Church, it is the church’s responsibility to judge (discipline) those within its fold.

The basis of the discipline of a local church is the holiness of God:

“Thy testimonies are very sure; holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, forever” – Psalm 93:5.

“Because it is written be ye holy, for I am holy” – 1Peter 1:16.

Therefore to take this holiness lightly is to invite the discipline of the church – Hebrews 10:30; 1Peter 4:17.

The Authority of Discipline

The ultimate authority of discipline resides in Christ, who authorizes His church to exercise it when needed (Matthew 16:19; 18:17-20; 1Cor. 5:4).

The Recipients of Discipline in the Church

Who demands church discipline? Professing believers who associate with the Church of God and are knowingly and rebelliously disobeying the clear commandments of scripture – 1 Cor. 5:9.

These include:

Troublemakers and those who sow discord (Prov. 6:16, 19; Rom. 16:17);

The unruly, disorderly, and undisciplined (1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:14), including the idle and lazy – 1 Tim. 5:6;

Those who disobey the great doctrines of the faith (2 Thess. 3:14);

False teachers and those who deny the great doctrines of the faith (1 Tim. 6:3, 5; 2 Tim. 2:16-18; Titus 3:10; 2 John 1:10, 11; Rev. 2:14);

So called brothers and sisters who are immoral, covetous, idolatrous, revilers, drunkards, swindlers, etc (1 Cor. 5:1-11).

The Procedures in Church Discipline

Church discipline is to be handled prayerfully, carefully and justly following these biblically prescribed steps:

First step: Note and mark those who are in need of discipline
(Rom. 16:17; 2 Thess. 3:14).

Second step: Arrange a private meeting with the offender (Matthew 18:15).

Third step: If this fails, set up a second meeting, this time with several others present (Matt. 18:16). During these preliminary private and semi-private meetings, the individual should be repeatedly admonished (Titus 3:10), rebuked (2 Tim. 4:2), and warned (1 Thess. 5:14).

Fourth step: As a final resort, the unrepentant one is to be brought before the entire church (Matt. 18:17; 1 Tim. 5:20) – a public announcement of his sin is to be made to the church.

Fifth step: Upon the refusal of the guilty party to submit to the church's discipline aimed at correcting him, he is to be made to suffer spiritual excommunication, i.e. publicly excluded from the church and the members separating themselves from that individual.

This constitutes two fearful things, a denial and deliverance.

- a. He is to be denied Christian fellowship.

The following phrases are used by Apostle Paul to emphasize this denial:

“Avoid them” (Rom. 17:17)

“Withdraw yourself from” (2 Thess. 3:6)

“From such withdraw thyself” (1 Tim. 6:3, 5)

“Reject” (Titus 3:10)

“Have no company with him” (2Thess. 3:14)

- b. He is to be delivered over to Satan:

“To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 5:5).

“Of whom is Hymaneus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme” (1 Tim. 1:20).

What does it mean to do this? The Greek word for destruction in 1 Corinthians 5:5 ‘*Olethros*’, is a reference to the act of spoiling or marring something. Apparently Paul was here saying, “If this fellow (the church member living in adultery) is having so much fun in his sin, then remove him entirely from your fellowship and let Satan kick him around a little! Let him taste what it’s like to face a hostile world without the prayers and love of a local church”.

Thus, when a Bible-believing church removes a person like this, it literally fulfils the divine command of Job 2:6,

“And the Lord said unto Satan, behold,
he is in thine hand; but save his life”.

Sixth step: Public restoration.

A person's deeds should reflect repentance. And so, when there is genuine repentance by the guilty party, he is to be publicly restored to the community of faith.

The Heart Attitude in Discipline

1. We are to avoid both vengeance and arrogance. Gal. 6:1.
2. We are to view the individual as an erring brother and not a bitter enemy. 2 Thess. 3:15
3. We are to approach him with sorrow and not sarcasm. 1 Cor. 5:2; 2 Cor. 2:4
4. We are to be ready to forgive him when repentance occurs (2 Cor. 2:7; 7:10-11).
This last attitude is of supreme importance for 2 reasons:
 - a. Lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow (2 Cor. 2:7)
 - b. Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices (2Cor. 2:11)

The Purpose of Discipline

1. It is to maintain the standards of the Church to a watching world (Matt. 5:13-16; Acts 5:1-16; Rom. 2:24)
2. It is to keep sin from spreading throughout the church (Joshua 7:3; 1Cor. 5:6-7)
3. It is to help the guilty person find his way back to God (2 Cor. 2:6-8)
4. It is to escape God's twofold judgment upon habitually sinning saints
 - a. Sickness (1 Cor. 11:30)
 - b. Physical death (1 Cor. 11:30)

"For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Cor. 11:31)

The Scope of Discipline

The church is called upon to discipline (if needed) all believers, but only believers. As a church we have no authority to judge individual worldly unbelievers for their smoking, swearing, sexual activities, etc. our only duty to an unsaved person is to lead him or her to Jesus Christ.

The Reaction to Discipline

How is the guilty person to react when disciplined by either God Himself or by a local church?

1. He can despise it, i.e. treat too lightly (as did Esau concerning his birth-right) – Heb. 12:5
2. He can faint under it, i.e. treat too seriously – Heb. 12:5
3. He can be exercised by it – Heb. 12:10, 11.

The real question is not so much what one has done wrong; though this, of course, is important, but what is one's attitude about it?

Discipline is a characteristic of the true church of Christ and this explains why it is codified in most church orders and confessional documents.

For instance, article 28 of the Belgic Confession (1561) of the Reformed tradition states that members of the church are to keep the church's unity in part "by submitting to its instruction and discipline, by bending their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ, and by serving to build up one another". Article 29 of the same confession document states further that the marks of the church, which include the practice of "church discipline for correcting faults, are intended to help believers discern and recognize the true church".

The implication of this therefore, is that any church that does not emphasize the discipline of its members cannot be rightly referred to as a true church of Jesus Christ. In the same vein, any church member who turns down its discipline cannot be counted as a true and committed member of the fold.

Christian Discipline and Love

Christian discipline is distinguished by Christian love. Jesus instructs His followers, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). This love however, must not be the show of emotionalism that merely approves of anything and everything. Christian love is a tough-minded love, a love in the midst of mess and trial. It is love for friends as well as enemies, and involves the ability to discern the appropriate ways to lie in concrete situations.

There are so many today within the church family who have a misplaced and mistaken understanding of love. For such persons, true Christian love would mean doing away with law and discipline. Biblical love is not opposed to discipline. The Bible is clear that we cannot love our brothers and sisters in Christ if we do not deal with their sins in the way that God prescribes. Sin is like a yeast that spreads throughout the whole lump of dough. The Lord Jesus Himself warned against this when He said to the Church in Thyatira, "Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols" (Rev. 2:20).

Thus, Christian love places a demand on all of us; and that is, that we reprove one another, not in anger, but in peace. Not only are Christians to submit to legitimate authority and be obedient but they are also to hold one another accountable and responsible for proper conduct primarily because we belong to one another and not to ourselves alone. As Paul puts it, "you are not your own, you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your bodies" (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

The Heidelberg Catechism opens with this theme and expands it to apply not only to our bodies but also to our souls: "I am not my own but belong-body and soul, in life

and in death-to my faithful Saviour, Jesus Christ”. Rather than leave people to hold on to the idea of autonomous and sovereign individual self, we owe it to one another to hold each other accountable, to rebuke one another in love so as not to nourish vices in our fellowships but to remove them; to hold fast to what we have been taught. This we are to do however not using, in the words of Peter Martyre Vermigle (1499-1562), “over rough and raw admonition: Lets we rather turn a man from salvation, than lead him unto it”.

Discipline unites those who come together to follow a particular path or leader, distinguishing those followers from the followers of other ways. Christians are distinguished by the life and disciplines of Jesus Christ which they are expected to uphold in their daily lives. These disciplines distinguish them from the followers of other religious, political or social leaders.

God disciplines those whom He loves so that they may share in His holiness (Prov. 3:12; Heb. 12:6; Rev. 3:19). When He disciplines us through the local church, we are to both recognize and submit to the authority of that local church and bear the pain of the correction without running away.

FAMILY/PARENTAL DISCIPLINE

In our prayer for the child as contained in the New Book of Common Prayer of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) at the church of the mother after childbirth, the minister says:

“Let him/her grow in discipline and in your grace”; and the people respond thus: “Until he/she comes to the fullness of faith”.

The scripture commands parents to raise their children in the training and instruction of the Lord. Family or parental discipline or training might be simply defined as a process to help children learn appropriate behaviours and make good choices in life. We begin “training” a child from a very young age by the ways we respond to their actions and attitudes.

Through proper discipline a child is consistently directed towards a right relationship with God and others; he/she learns to function in a self-controlled, accountable and mutually respectful manner in a family and society that is full of boundaries, rules and laws by which we all must abide.

With discipline, children gain a sense of security, protection and often feel accomplishment. Without proper discipline, children are exposed to the risk of a variety of behavioural and emotional problems.

In training or disciplining a child so that he/she grows up to be accountable and responsible in life, parents are to endeavour to avoid abuses. They should be guided by the following process:

Parents are to establish authority

Children need a clear answer to the question “Who is the boss?” Fathers and mothers are to embody the security and limits that come from submitting ourselves to a loving heavenly Father. God has delegated the oversight of our children’s welfare and development to us, placing us in a position of authority over them.

Starting when children are very young, parents need to model clarity and consistency. Unclear rules and sporadic reinforcement breed insecurity. Parents must say what they mean, mean what they say and act upon it. They must not overlook defiant behaviours just because the specific issue seems minor, or because it is a hassle to stop and discipline at the moment.

They are to discipline rather than punish

Punishment is negative, making someone pay for what they have done. Discipline is positive training toward a better future. Like touching a hot stove, we learn from the consequence of our actions. Discipline in childhood helps children avoid “learning the hard way” later in life.

Regardless of which form of discipline we use, however, the key is consistency. As author Ginger Plowman explains, it is not the severity of punishment but the “certainty of consequence” that makes the difference.

God holds parents accountable for how they use the authority He has given them. The Scriptures instruct parents not to “exasperate” or “embitter” their children (Colossians 3:21). Do not treat childish immaturity the same way as wilful defiance. Parents should never discipline children out of embarrassment, frustration or anger. Accidentally spilling the milk or waking the baby is not an occasion for stern discipline. But ignoring disobedience can make a child vulnerable to an ongoing spirit of rebellion.

Ultimately, the discipline we apply should be used in a way that restores a right relationship. It should provide a consequence that leads the child to repentance (sorrow for his or her wrong behaviour) and restoration of the relationship with father, mother and others.

Parents should lovingly instruct

Starting in the preschool years, discipline and instruction should become a package deal (Ephesians 6:4). Parents should not make the mistake of allowing their desire for changed behaviour to replace their desire for a changed heart. They should learn to use simple probing questions and share specific scriptures about wrong choices to instruct the child toward repentance. After disciplining a 2-year-old’s temper tantrum, for example, a parent might explain to the child that “God wants us to obey.” With a 4-year-old, he/she can go further, explaining self-control, reading Titus 2:6 and asking the child, “Do you think that you were self-controlled or out-of-

control?” Such loving instruction after discipline helps train the child to think as a follower of Christ rather than merely behave in order to avoid punishment.

There are equally other aspects of discipline: Discipline in schools, Workplace discipline, Moral discipline, National discipline, Fiscal discipline, Organizational discipline, etc.

DISCIPLINE IN SCHOOLS

School discipline is a required set of actions by the school management or staff towards a student (or groups of students) after the student's behaviour disrupts the ongoing educational activity or breaks a pre-established rule created by the school system. Discipline in schools as in other units of society guides the children's behaviour or sets limits to help them learn to take care of themselves, other people and the world around them. It helps to train a person's mind and character, building a sense of self-control and the practice of obedience.

School systems should set rules, and if students break these rules they should be subjected to discipline. These rules may, for example, define the expected standards of clothing, timekeeping, social conduct, and work ethic. The term 'discipline' is applied to the punishment that is the consequence of breaking the rules. The aim of discipline is to set limits restricting certain behaviours or attitudes that are harmful or going against school policies. Discipline often has a negative connotation, but it is a positive way of instilling community values upon youth.

As a rule, the more school discipline issues that are handled directly and **on the spot** by school authorities, the higher their status will be among the pupils/students. This is because, with time, the children will come to know what the school expects and what they should expect. This way, firm boundaries would have been established.

The Danger of Not Disciplining Wrong Doers

“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Ecclesiastes 8:11).

Discipline restores the purity of the Church as well as law and order in the society at large. In 1 Cor. 5:7, Paul commands, “Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just you are in fact unleavened”.

Leaven, i.e. yeast, is a type of sin. If one puts a small amount of yeast in flour, it spreads throughout the entire (5:6). Paul is saying symbolically what he also (5:2, 13) states plainly, that the church needed to remove the sinning man so that the purity of the Church would be restored and the sin would not spread any further.

This principle should apply in all other units of society.

In the family, for instance, if the parents do not consistently and impartially discipline a defiant child, very soon the other children learn that there are no consequences if they disobey their parents. The sin of the first child spreads to the others.

The same thing happens in a classroom when a teacher delays, ignores or fails to enforce discipline, there is a dropping off in concentration and soon the entire class is out of control. Once the class realises that the teacher, for example, has no way of making them work harder, there is a general feeling that there is no need to make the effort.

In the medium term, what typically happens with older children and adolescents is that the 'troublemakers' take over. Learning takes place only if the loudest and most disruptive elements decide to allow it - which of course means that it rarely takes place. The teacher's time and energy is spent dealing with the troublemakers, persuading them to behave or making threats that everyone knows will not be carried out.

In the long term, standards go right down in an undisciplined school. The students who want to learn find that they are being prevented from doing so; they see that the only way to get the attention of the staff is by behaving badly, and there is no time or attention left over for encouraging hard work or creativity. With time the school begins to experience a huge increase in bullying and fighting amongst the students, and quite often crime will also escalate in an environment where the school is not able to discipline those who do wrong.

On the community and government levels, if the authorities do not enforce the laws, the whole community and country soon devolve into anarchy. Consequently, we need to institutionalize discipline as a national culture in Nigeria.

As citizens of one nation, we the government and people of Nigeria must choose to live and conduct our affairs in accordance with the already established ethical and moral standards in our laws and intentionally put out of our national life everything (habits) and persons that insist on presenting us in very bad light.

We need to put in place national ethics and fundamental principles of decent human conduct. This will include among other values, the culture of obedience to the laws that guide the conduct of our activities as government and people.

We need national ethics in Nigeria to help us maintain orderliness in the society.

In this regard, all acts that violate our national laws and ethics must be investigated and persons found guilty of these should be punished by government. Such acts would include diversion of public funds into private pockets by officers of the State and other economic crimes; poor attitude to work – absenteeism, lateness, hiding of critical office files, bribery and extortion; armed robbery, rape and assaults on women and girls in our offices, schools and other places; examination malpractices including aiding and abetting of the same; violence during elections and sponsorship of same, undue heating up of the polity through unguarded hate and inciteful speeches,

militancy and acts of terrorism under the guise of religion and cattle rearing; and illegal entry into the country by those who come to foment troubles.

Agencies of government like the Police, the Judiciary, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC); authorities of our academic, traditional and other governmental and social institutions and organizations should stand on the existing laws of our land and sanitize and rid our society of all acts of indiscipline.

Those who choose the part of indiscipline within any unit of our society should not be allowed to just walk away untouched. If they continue to go unpunished, our nation and her institutions will be worse off for it as more persons will toe the path of evil. For “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34).

PROGRESS REPORT OF THE DIOCESE SINCE THE LAST (2016) SYNOD

DIOCESAN CONVOCATIONS

➤ ***Diocesan Seminar to mark the 2016 International Day of Peace and Prayer.***

This seminar was organized by our Diocesan Desk Office of the Justice, Equity and Peace Commission headed by the Deputy Registrar 2, Sir Chief Barr. G. O. Dike. It took place on Wednesday, 21st September, 2016 at St. Andrew’s Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery with the theme: “The Sustainable Development Goals: Building Blocks for Peace”.

Speakers at the seminary were Professor Okogbule S. Nlerum, Dean, Faculty of Law, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt; Ven. Professor Wotogbe Weneka, Head of the Department of Religious/Cultural Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Choba.

We thank Barr. Dike and his team for their excellent organization of this event which attracted the clergy, other members of the Diocese and some local chiefs and groups from our communities.

➤ ***National Day Evo Prays & Praise Carnival*** was held at the All Saints’ Cathedral, Rumuokwursi on Saturday, 1st October, 2016. Though the attendance of the Diocesan Community was not particularly impressive we were however, still able to stand in prayerful gap for our nation and state.

➤ ***2016 Diocesan Harvest Thanksgiving Service.***

This took place on Sunday, 2nd October, 2016 at the All Saints’ Cathedral, Rumuokwursi. The theme was “Jesus, the Lord of the Harvest” (Matthew

9:38). Our members came out in their numbers from the various churches, some clad in their traditional attires and with offerings in cash and kind. We thank the Bishop of the Diocese of Eha-Amufu, The Rt. Rev. Daniel Nkemjika Olinya for coming at our invitation to minister in the service.

We commend the Diocesan Harvest Committee led by Ven. Alex Usifoh for a great job done by them and also the Cathedral Church for ably hosting the annual Diocesan event.

Offerings in kind from the harvest were distributed to the Rehabilitation Home, Iriebe, retired Clergy, Widow clergy wives, church teachers, workers, and also for the clergy family retreat which held in December, 2016.

** This year's Diocesan Harvest Thanksgiving will hold on Sunday, 1st October, 2017 at St. Nicholas' Church, Woji District.*

➤ ***Diocesan Marriage And Family Life Conference***

This took place at the All Saints' Cathedral, Rumuokwursi from Tuesday, 1st November (All Saints' Day) to Thursday, 3rd with the theme: "The Family with Eternity in View". Speakers were The Rt. Rev. Johan Ibrahim, Bishop of Kontagora Diocese, Mrs. Chinyere Ordu (Mama Evo), Rev. Gospel Onuchukwu and We, the Bishop of Evo. Special sessions were held for men (Husbands), Women, (Wives), the youths, as well as for the Widows/Widowers. We commend the members of the Diocesan Family Life/Home Fellowship Ministry for packaging such a rich conference. This edition attracted a good turnout of couples, widows and youths from across the Diocese.

➤ ***Service of Commissioning of Church Teachers/
Ordination of Deacons and Priests.***

This took place on Sunday, 27th November, 2016 at the Church of the Holy Spirit, Eliozu Parish. It was preceded by a 6-day retreat for the candidates and their wives who joined mid-way into it.

Those commissioned were Evangelist Isaiah Orji, Mr. Edem Fidelis Chukwudi, Ndukauba C. Freeborn, Mbachu Onyeikachi, Nathaniel O. Victor, Festus U. O. Amamba, Daniel Onah, Ogochukwu Ogini, Nwarie C. Okezie, Ogunwo Whochukwu and Iwezor Prince Ezeudo.

Those ordained Deacons were

- Rev. Maduakona Paul Ezigbo
- Rev. Henry Chidi Odu

For the priestly ordination, we had

- Rev. Nelson Onyinye Okocha and
- Rev. John V.C. Eze.

We congratulate them and their families and wish them well in their callings.

** The 2017 service of ordination of Deacons and Priests will take place on Advent Sunday, 3rd December, 2017 at St. Andrew's Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery.*

➤ **Diocesan Crusade and Rededication Service, 2017**

For the first time, the annual Rededication service of the Diocese to begin the year was preceded by a 3-Day Crusade from Thursday, 19th to Saturday, 21st January in the New Cathedral Building. The speakers were Evangelist Isaiah Orji, one of our newly commissioned Church Teachers and the Bishop of Jalingo, The Rt. Rev. Foreman Nedison. The Rededication service took place on Sunday, 22nd January in the New Cathedral Building. Both events witnessed the massive turn out of Evo Diocesan faithful and others. At the crusade, the message centred on the Diocesan theme for the year: "Great Expectations" (Prov. 10:28; 23:18) while the subject of "faithfulness" was the core of Sunday's message by Bishop Nedison.

➤ **Invitation to The 2017 Diocesan Discipleship Conference**

We invite the entire Diocesan Community to this year's Discipleship/Revival Conference holding from Wednesday, 27th to Saturday, 30th September, 2017 at St. Nicholas' Church, Woji District. This year's conference will be considering the theme: **"Living to Please God"** (1 Thess. 4:1-12).

TRAININGS AND HUMAN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

As part of our vision towards equipping the various categories of leaders in our churches and groups, the following trainings for human capacity development were carried out:

➤ **2017 Diocesan Post Vestry Meeting Leadership Training/Evangelism Summit**

This took place from Thursday, 16th to Saturday, 18th March at Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Elimbu Parish. It featured talks, Bible Study, discussions on the challenges and way forward for Missions, Evangelism, church planting and development in the Diocese. We thank the Vicar, Canon Igbamerun, the Parish Church Council and entire congregation for hosting us and in particular, HRH, Eze J. A. Utchay of Elimbu for feeding the clergy and their wives on the last day of the event. We appreciate our speakers, The Rev. Romanus Onyegbule and Mr. Kiki Briggs, our Bible Study leader for their quality roles.

➤ **Clergy/Church Teachers Trainings**

The Diocesan Council for Clergy and Laity Continuing Education held quarterly trainings for our Clergy and at other times held a combined School with the Church Teachers. The Church Teachers, Ordinands and Local Helpers however meet on monthly basis.

➤ **Clergy/Church Teachers' Wives**

Trainings hold also on a quarterly basis with the aim of improving the performance of our clergy and church teachers' wives in the supportive ministry to their husbands.

Poor attitude of Ministers and Wives to training

Sadly, attendance to these trainings by some clergy, church teachers and their wives leaves much to be desired. We had in the past and even at the last synod decried this lack of interest on the part of these ministers and their wives in equipping themselves adequately for the church's ministry to which they claim to have a call from God. Our spirit shall not continue to strive with any church worker or wife on this matter. This is the time for action!

The Directors of Studies should henceforth submit to us a detailed report of participation or otherwise of the clergy, church teachers and their wives in at every clergy/church teachers/wives school or trainings. In the spirit of the Church's discipline, those who no longer see the need to expose themselves to regular training and retraining should be prepared to leave the system. The church will no longer be willing to keep those whose performances have continued to decline simply because they are unwilling to improve themselves on what they pretend to know. "A stitch in time saves nine". Lay members of the church are hereby advised to counsel their clergy friends on this and other matters that border on proper adherence to the policies of our episcopal administration.

➤ **Clerks, Administrative Staff Training:**

Training for this category of our Diocesan staff holds yearly, though special workshop is always organized for them when the need arises.

A Two-Day Seminar and Refresher Course was organized by the Superannuation Office, Onitsha for clerks within the Diocese of the Niger Delta Province from Tuesday, 9th to Wednesday, 10th August, 2016 at the Bishop Crowther Memorial Secondary School (BCMSS), Rumuobiokani. The Rt. Rev. Chidi Oparaojiaku, Mr. Humphrey W. Amadi and The Rev. Canon Christian Nwanka, Administrator of the Superannuation Office were the speakers at the course.

Similarly, a Two-Day Retreat for all clerks of our Diocese on Friday, 8th to Saturday, 9th November, 2016 at St. Jude's Anglican Church, Oginigba Deanery.

A combined retreat for all Lay Workers was held on Thursday, 16th February, 2017 at Christ Church, Federal Housing Estate Parish, Woji.

The warnings issued above to clergy, church teachers and wives apply equally here to the various church office workers in the Diocese. So much is invested in the training and retraining of these set of personnel yet the incidences of poor financial record keeping and accounting systems in our churches continue to abound. We are not pleased with this ugly development and consequently advise all clerks and administrative staff of our churches who are proving un-trainable to either sit up on their duty posts or be prepared to lose their jobs.

DIOCESAN ACTIVITY GROUPS/CHAPLAINCIES

➤ **Diocesan Christian Men's Fellowship (CMF)**

The 2016 Diocesan Conference of the men under the new name Diocesan Christian Men's Fellowship (DCMF) took place at St. Philip's, Oroigwe District from Thursday, 22nd to Sunday, 25th September, 2016 with the theme "**Go Forward**" (Exod. 14:15). The Conference thanksgiving on Sunday featured the marriage blessing of 3 couples: Mr. & Mrs. Innocent Woshi, Mr & Mrs. Roland Madubuike and Mr. & Mrs. Samuel Amandu as well as the annual harvest thanksgiving of the DCMF.

** The 2017 Conference of the Diocesan Christian Men's Fellowship is coming up from Thursday, 21st to Sunday, 24th September at St. Simon's Church, Okporo Deanery.*

The Provincial CMF Conference was held at All Saint's Cathedral Church, Bori, Diocese of Ogoni from Thursday, 17th to Sunday, 19th February, 2017. The theme was "**It is not by might nor by power but by my Spirit**" (Zech. 4:6). The Rev. Canon Hosanna Naenwi ably represented us as the Conference Guest Speaker. We however worshipped with the men of our Province on Sunday, 17th during the Conference thanksgiving service presided over by the Archbishop, The Most Rev. I. C. O. Kattety, JP.

The Diocese of Edo was represented by the President, Mr. Bishop Anderson Nwanekwu and a host of others. The team took the **second position** for the 2nd year running at the singing competition amongst participating Dioceses. We congratulate them.

➤ **2017 Fathers' Week activities in the Diocese**

This year's Father's Week Celebrations was unique. Part of the activities included a football competition among the men's football teams of the various administrative blocs as well as that of the Diocesan Clergy. The Competition started on the 6th of May through 10th of June. At the end of which Trinity

Missionary Archdeaconry took the first position with Woji Archdeaconry and St. Andrew's, Rumuobiokani Deanery taking the second and third positions respectively.

The men visited the Compassionate Home at Nkpogu on Monday, 12th June, 2017 and donated food items and confectionaries.

Couples Night and a Day with the Bishop

On Tuesday, 13th June, 2017 a Couples Night for all men and their families was hosted by the Diocesan Executive of the CMF at the All Saints' Cathedral, Rumuokwursi. Tagged "**A Day With The Bishop**", the evening outing featured a talk on "**The Mind of Christ in Marriage**" (**Phil. 2:5**) which was ably delivered by The Rev. Dr. Steve Ogan, guest minister on our behalf. A keynote address was also presented by the President of the DCMF, Mr. Bishop Anderson Nwanekwu in addition to the cutting of cake and presentation of trophies to the winners of the football competition.

The week long Father's Day activities ended on Sunday, 18th June, 2017 being Father's Day proper with thanksgiving services in all our churches.

I am informed that the Diocesan Executive of the CMF in league with other leaders of the CMF at the Cathedral, Deanery, Parish and Station Church Levels resolved to remit 10% of offerings raised at their various churches thanksgiving outings. Reports reaching us however, indicate that only very few churches have complied with this agreement while others are not bothered about it thus continuing to frustrate the efforts of the Diocesan Executive in the execution of their programmes and activities. We would like to use forum to inform the men of this Diocese under the umbrella of the CMF that we are particularly not satisfied with the way most of them, including the leaders, have conducted themselves and responded to the activities of the fellowship and the Diocese these past eight years.

The zeal and spirit of exemplary leadership expected from the men have been quite lacking. Some of the members have remained very negative, unduly critical and retrogressive in the way they look at the activities of the fellowship. This is very regrettable and in our view, would not enhance the growth and progress of both the CMF and the Diocese at large. We therefore call on members of the Christian Men's Fellowship of this Diocese to act as true Christian men and avoid acts and utterances that tend to stagnate or diminish the essence of their existence.

➤ Diocesan Women and Girls' Ministries

- The Annual *Diocesan Girls' Guild Conference* was hosted at Christ Harvest Anglican Church, Faith Avenue (CHACFA) from Friday, 12th to Sunday, 14th

August, 2016. The theme was “Occupy Till I Come” (Luke 19:13). On Saturday, 13th, over 200 girls were formally inducted by us into the Girls’ Guild.

- Niger Delta Provincial Daughters of Hope Conference at St. Peter’s Cathedral, Okrika with the theme “Preserved for God’s Use” (Est. 4:14b) from Friday, 19th to Sunday, 21st August, 2016.
- The *Diocesan Sisters’ Forum Conference* held from Thursday, 15th to Sunday, 18th September, 2016 at St. Michael’s Church, Rumuomasi Deanery under the theme: “**Great Grace**” (Acts 4:33). It featured Talks, Bible Study, an Interactive Session, and other activities. A large number of our girls were in attendance.
- A *One-Day Prayer Retreat* for members of the Executive Committees of the various arms of the Diocesan Women and Girls’ Ministries was held on Saturday, 15th October, 2016 at the Rose of Sharon Anglican Church, Atali.
- The 7th *Annual Diocesan Women’s Conference* was held at St. Simon’s Church, Okporo Deanery from Wednesday, 7th to Sunday, 11th December, 2016. The Conference theme was “**The Mother: An agent in the raising of a godly generation**” (Exod. 2:1-10). It featured visitations, talks, drama, dance, worship, prayer, Bible Study and the Bishop’s wife’s address.

The wife of the Executive Governor of Rivers State, Hon. Justice Suzette Eberechi Wike delivered a great talk on the “**Role of the mother in the formative years of a child**” (Prov. 22:6). Other women who spoke at the Conference included Mrs Adunola Akinyemiju of St. Jude’s Church, Mende, Lagos West and Director of Association of Christian Schools International ACSI (Anglophone West Africa), Mrs. Chinyere Madugba, wife of Rev. Mosy Madugba of the Ministers’ Prayer Network, Dr. Mrs. Elizabeth Achinewhu-Nwogu of Focus Learning Support, Limited, United Kingdom; Lady Dr. Njideka Ebisi, Evangelist Mrs. Constance Echefu. It was concluded on Sunday, 11th December, with a Diocesan Women’s Conference/Harvest Thanksgiving Service.

** The Diocesan Women’s Conference for 2017 will hold from Wednesday, 6th to Sunday, 10th December and to be hosted by Trinity Missionary Archdeaconry at St. Matthias’ Church, Atali District.*

- The wife of the Bishop, Mrs. Chinyere Ordu, JP took the wives of the clergy and church teachers on a *3-Day retreat* which took place at Starking Hotel, GRA, phase two, Port Harcourt. The theme was “**The earnest expectation of the creature waits for my manifestation**” (Rom. 6:19). It featured talks, study of the Word and deep intercessions/night vigil. It was held from Friday, 24th to Sunday, 26th February, 2017.
- *Induction and Admission of Women.* The service of Admission and Induction of women into the Mothers’ Union and Women’s Guild respectively took place on Easter Eve, 15th April, 2017 at the Anglican Church of The Advent,

Rumuewhara. A total of 104 women were admitted into the Mother's Union and 132 into the Women's Guild.

- The *Diocesan Widow's Conference* was held from Friday, 23rd to Sunday, 25 June, 2017 at Bethel Anglican Church, Rumuibekwe. The theme was: "Unwavering Faith", (James 1:6). It featured Bible Study, Talks, Craft, etc. Through the Diocesan Directorate of Social Welfare we distributed food items to the over 200 widows in attendance.
- There is notable improvement in the Evo Garment Industry being anchored by our Diocesan women especially with the engagement of some good fashion designers – whose handwork is speaking for itself. The outfit is committed to the sewing of trendy traditional/english clothes for men and women, packet shirts, bed sheets/pillow cases, school uniforms, graduation gowns, choir robes, clerical wears. Bed-sheets and pillow cases currently in use at the Goshen Anglican Retreat Centre, Owerri were produced and supplied to the Centre by our garment factory. Two of the apprentices currently undergoing training at the factory are being sponsored by the Diocese.

YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

➤ Anglican Youth Fellowship (AYF)

The Anglican Youth Fellowship of our Diocese has continued to make steady progress in their ministry to the youths. 67 youths from our Diocese participated in the National Conference of the Fellowship held at Kubwa from 10th to 14th August, 2016. In a similar vein, our youths participated in the November, 2016 National meeting held at Awka, Anambra State.

On 18th of September, 2016 the AYF held a combined worship/general meeting at St. Michael's Anglican Church, Rumuomasi Deanery. We were present in their March 2017 edition held at St. Jude's Church, Oginigba Deanery and had a fruitful interaction with them.

The 2017 Bible Study Conference with the theme: "**Give Thanks**" (1 Thess. 5:18) was held at St. Philip's Anglican Church, Oroigwe District from Thursday, 13th to Sunday, 16th July. The Rt. Rev. Chidi Oparaojiaku, Bishop of Ohaji/Egbema Diocese, Imo State ably ministered to our youths.

We are grateful to the Rt. Rev. Chidi Oparaojiaku and the other speakers for being on hand at the Conference to challenge and bless our youths.

This year's Conference was used to mark the 70th anniversary of the Anglican Youth Fellowship (AYF) in Nigeria.

➤ **Anglican Youth Corps Fellowship (ACF)**

The Diocese organized a Business Investment and Economic Empowerment Seminar on Saturday, 24th September, 2016 at the Anglican Church of Pentecost, Rumuogba Parish for serving Youth Corps members and some other fresh graduates. The Seminar theme was “**Keeping Your Dream Alive**” (**Gen. 37:3-11**). It exposed participants to numerous business investment and agricultural opportunities and strategies to help them become economically self-reliant.

Several other activities carried out by the Chaplaincy included Evangelism/assistance outreach to the Orientation Camp at Nonwa, free transportation services to and from Nonwa for new members who could not locate the camp and their various places of primary assignment at the end of the orientation exercise.

The Diocese, through this same Chaplaincy, organized a marriage seminar on Courtship, Engagement and Marriage.” It was handled by the Chaplain, The Rev. Collins Daniel. Some of the corps members assisted in carrying out Evangelism outreach to welcome, assist and mobilize the next batch in May, 2017 and also helped the Anglican Corpers’ Fellowship in various ways.

We appreciate the gesture of Olive Plants Anglican Church, under the leadership of Brother Chika Amadi, for the provision and furnishing of a 2-bedroom flat accommodation which the Diocese used for 3 months to lodge some stranded corps members. Also in collaboration with Olive Plants, the Chaplaincy organized a medical outreach within the Rumuolukwu community, Rumuomasi where the church is located and also presented a drama on the Passion of Christ during the Holy Week.

➤ **Boys Brigade**

The Rivers State Council of the Boys Brigade organized a State Integrated Training Course (SITC) at ACMGS, Elelenwo from Sunday, 14th to Sunday, 21st August 2016. The Diocese gave huge financial support to the Obio/Akpor Battalion Council to enable it host the training. In attendance were over 1, 500 officers and boys from all over the State whose presence adequately overstretched the limited facilities at our girls’ school. The immediate past National President of the Boys Brigade (Nigeria), Prince Yandev Amabai was also in attendance. In his address, he reminded members of the Boys Brigade that they belonged to the church from where the organization started. Consequently, he advised officers and boys of the Brigade at all levels to desist from flexing muscles with the leadership of the church, but endeavour at all times to submit themselves to the authority and guidance of the spiritual leadership of their local churches.

New Battalion Councils Chairmen

Two of our own, Dame Loretta Enwezor and Sir Chief Raymond Elenwoke were elected and inaugurated as Chairmen of the Garrison and Obio/Akpor Battalion Councils of the Boys Brigade respectively. We congratulate them.

Our Investiture As A State Grand Chaplain

We were in August, 2016 appointed Grand Chaplain of the Rivers State Council of the Boys Brigade. Our formal Investiture Service took place on Sunday, 5th February, 2017 at Christ Church, Interdenominational, Forces Avenue, Port Harcourt. We took over from the former Methodist Archbishop of Port Harcourt, now serving at Uyo Archdiocese, The Most Rev. C.O.N. Nwankpa. Also on that occasion the inauguration of the new State executive Council led by Professor Blessing Chimezie Didia as State President took place.

➤ **Public and Private Secondary Schools' Ministry (PPSSM)**

This Diocesan ministry was established to take the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to all non-Diocesan Secondary Schools in Evo Kingdom. The Ministry strives to achieve this through proclamation, capacity building, partnership, purposeful Bible teachings, relevant literature materials, special holiday camp meetings, Bible quiz and debates amongst public and private schools in Evo.

We have in the past called for more persons to volunteer to assist us in carrying out this ministry. To the glory of God the number of College Evangelists has now increased. Consequently, the impact of the ministry's activities is now being strongly felt in a good number of the schools. Members of the Ministry are presently covering as many as 37 schools every week.

On Friday, 17th February this year, the PPSSM organized a Schools' Quiz Competition in the areas of Mathematics, English Language, Bible Knowledge and General Paper (Current Affairs). Six schools participated and at the end, Archdeacon Brown Education Centre (ABEC), Woji took the 1st position and our own Woji Town Word of Faith came 2nd.

Through the outreaches of this ministry, 11 students of ABEC were baptised within the Synod year; while those confirmed by us were – ABEC – 9 students, Word of Faith, Woji-9 students and Christy Toby Inclusive Education Centre, Iriebe – 2 students.

We commend the Chaplains, The Reverends Ozioma Iheanetu, John Eze their team of School Missionary Evangelists for their greatly improved stewardship. We charge them to engage more genuine volunteers and still do more.

➤ **Clergy and Church Workers/Children**

Family Retreat – A 3-Day retreat of the Bishop, Clergy, their wives and children was held from Friday, 16th to Sunday, 18th December, 2016 at ACMGS/Chapel of Grace and Knowledge. The theme was “The Unique Christ in a Pluralistic World”. The retreat featured talks, prayers, Bible studies, seminars, workshops on snail farming, shoe and bag making and making of jewellerys from used plastic bottles. There was also football match between the clergy and church teachers which ended 2-0 in favour of the clergy. We thank the various churches that contributed towards the staging of the programme through their offerings.

➤ **Anglican Children’s Ministry (ACM)**

Our children and their teachers participated in the Provincial ACM Conference was hosted by the Diocese of Niger Delta North from Thursday, 18th to Sunday, 21st August, 2016 at St. Paul’s Cathedral, Diobu, Port Harcourt.

In the maiden children singing competition, our children represented by the All Saints’ Cathedral Children’s Choir took the 2nd position and in the Bible Quiz they came 4th with 17 points.

The 2016 annual Church of Nigeria Children’s Ministry Train-the-Trainers Course and Teachers Conference took place at the Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, Oyo State from Monday, 29th August to Sunday, 4th September with the theme: “Arise, Let us Build”(Neh. 2:17). Our Diocese was equally in attendance.

At the local Diocesan level, the following activities by the Diocesan Children’s Ministry took place:

- Evo Children Rejoice was held on Saturday, 22nd October, 2016 at St. Jude’s Church, Oginigba Deanery.
- Christmas Party was hosted on behalf of the Bishop in all churches in December, 2016.
- The Third edition of the Diocesan Teen-star Conference in conjunction with the Anglican Youth Fellowship was held at ACMGS, Elelenwo from Thursday, 6th to Sunday, 9th April, 2017 with the theme: ‘Great Expectations-You are a Leader!’
- The 2017 Diocesan Children’s Week/Singing Competition took place from Monday, 22nd to Sunday, 28th May. The singing competition finals took place on Sunday, 28th May, 2017 at St. Jude’s Oginigba Deanery with the Cathedral Children and Diocesan Schools Choirs retaining their first and second positions respectively while the Church of the Holy Spirit, Elioju and St. Nicholas’ Woji Came third and fourth respectively.
- The 8th Annual Diocesan Anglican Children’s Ministry Teachers’ Conference took place from Friday, 21st to Saturday, 23rd July, 2017 at St. Simon’s Church, Okporo Deanery. The theme was “A Living and Holy Sacrifice” (Rom. 12:1).

➤ **Council of Knights**

The Diocesan Council of Knights under the leadership of Sir Chief Ike B. S. Chinwo has continued to make us proud through their various activities, notwithstanding however, the cold and lukewarm attitude of most knights towards the Council's activities.

At thanksgiving service of last year's synod the Council of Knights empowered 15 widows from across the Diocese with the sum of N50, 000 each to start or improve their petty trades and other small scale businesses and are poised to repeat the act in the course of this synod.

At the Diocesan Rededication Service in January this year, the knights in keeping with their tradition awarded scholarship to 30 students of our Diocese for the 2016/2017 academic session. 22 of the recipients were already in the previous scheme while 8 were fresh beneficiaries.

We are grateful to members of the Council for their support towards the training of some of our postulants in theological schools. We pray that this gesture be extended to may more of our postulants and serving priests.

The knights held their annual retreat on Friday, 17th and Saturday, 18th February, 2017 at New Wine Ang. Church, East West Road Parish, Okporo. We presented a talk on "The Knights in the Mirror of Nehemiah and the Challenges of our time as Christians". Others who delivered papers at the retreat were The Ven. Dr. S. C. Nwachukwu (Rtd) and Sir Ogundu Charles Chuku, JP, former President General of the Joint Council of Knights (JCK).

We commend the Knights Council for the 2-day evangelism outreach at Emmanuel Church, Okporo Iriebe (their mission field) between 31st March and 2nd April, 2017 and for their continued support to that station church.

On Saturday, 24th June, 2017 the knights held a luncheon at the Archbishop Akinola Retreat Centre, Rumuobiokani to both interact among themselves and raise funds to support their numerous works of charity. This particular charity luncheon witnessed a very low turnout and commitment from the knights of our Diocese and we wish to state how displeased we are about this. To whom much is given, much more is expected" (Luke 12:48). Knights in this Diocese must not continue to let God and His church down when it matters most. As soldiers of the Cross they should be ready at all times to rise in defence of the spiritual and material wellbeing of the needy in our midst. This annual mopping up of resources for charity work is God's invitation to every member to share in His burden for the needy and should therefore be embraced whole heartedly and cheerfully. God loves cheerful givers.

The Ladies of the Knights under the leadership of Lady Uzo Onweluzo held their Conference in September, 2016 at St. Nicholas' Anglican Church, Woji District.

** The 2017 Conference of the Ladies of the Knights holds from Saturday, 23rd to Sunday, 24th September at St. Michael's Church, Rumuomasi Deanery.*

➤ **Diocesan Lay Readers Association**

The 7th Annual Conference of the Association was held at the Cathedral from Friday, 7th to Sunday, 9th October, 2016. Conference theme was "All Sufficient Grace" (2 Cor. 12:9). We commend the president of the Association, Sir Paul Chukwumati and his Executive Committee for the commendable work they are doing in the - Diocese despite the very poor commitment being exhibited by most of the serving lay readers in the Diocese.

The beginning of the year retreat and service of renewal/reaffirmation of the vows of licensing for all Diocesan lay Readers was held from Friday, 3rd to Sunday, 5th March, 2017 at Rose of Sharon Church, Atali and Holy City, Pipeline.

We have noted that a large percentage of readers in this Diocese who are holding our licenses and are desirous to officiate in our churches are most unwilling to participate in the activities of the Association not even the crucial beginning of the year retreat and service of renewal of vows of license.

We use this medium to remind all lay readers in the Diocese that those who fail to participate in the programmes of the Association and whose licenses are not endorsed as a result of that shall have their licenses as Lay Readers revoked. No clergyman should assign tasks to readers who do not satisfy this requirement, including wives of clergy who are lay readers.

Annual Lay Readers' Exchange of Pulpit

On the Sunday, the 2nd of July, 2017 the Diocesan Lay Readers observed the annual exchange of pulpit. Members were sent to various churches across the Diocese. The theme for this year's outing was "The Lord Thy God will Provide for You" (Genesis 22:6-14). We are pleased with the report of good performances by those who were sent to the churches. We thank them. We had directed churches to support the Lay Readers' Association with offerings to enable them continue with and complete the on-going parsonage building at Holy City Anglican Church, Pipeline, Rumuokwursi – their Mission Field.

** The 2017 Diocesan Lay Readers' Conference holds from Friday, 15th to Sunday, 17th September at St. Andrew's Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery.*

Provincial Lay Readers Association

In the last Provincial Council meeting hosted by our Diocese on Thursday, 2nd February, 2017, the Archbishop, The Most Rev. I. C. O. Kattey, JP in his address announced plans to create a platform for all Readers as a vital group for the propagation of the gospel where they will meet from time to time. Accordingly, he announced the appointment of The Ven. Lucky Owihonda of the Diocese of Calabar as the Provincial Chaplain. In keeping with this, the Provincial Association was formally inaugurated on Monday, 24th July, 2017 by the Archbishop at St. Paul's Cathedral, Diobu, Port Harcourt.

➤ **Diocesan Music Ministry**

The **2016 Choir singing competition and celebration of St. Cecilia's Day** took place at the church of the Holy Spirit, Eliozi Parish on Saturday, 26th November. Six Choirs and the guest choir of Bethel Church, Amadi-Ama, Diocese of Okrika took part in the day's outing.

At the end of proceedings the participating churches performed accordingly:

- 1st position with 91.22% - St. Mark's, Elelenwo Deanery
- 2nd position with 90.88% - St. Nicholas', Woji District
- 3rd position with 84.44% - Bethel Church, Rumuibekwe Parish
- 4th position with 84% - New Covenant, Eliminigwe Parish, Elelenwo
- 5th position with 72.77% - Church of The Holy Spirit, Elelenwo District
- 6th position with 71.88% - Daystar Ang. Youth Church, Rumuokwursi

Best Choir Conductor – Sir Patrick Ase of St. Mark's Church, Elelenwo Deanery;

Best Organ Accompanist – Mrs. Deborah Sampson.

We appreciate Sir Alex Orakwue and Engr. George Iwoh for their part sponsorship of the competition with the Diocese with their donations of N250, 000 and N220, 000 respectively.

The Diocesan Choir turned out in their largest number ever at this year's Rededication Service and last year's harvest services and gave their best. We thank them.

The finals of the 2017 edition took place at St. Philip's Church, Oroigwe District on Saturday, 22nd July.

The following Church Choirs and individuals emerged victorious at the end of the competition:

- 1st position with 132.1% - St. Andrew's, Rumuobiokani Deanery
- 2nd position with 115% - Chapel of Grace & Knowledge,
Firstfruits Parish, ACMGS, Elelenwo
- 3rd position with 113.4% - St. Nicholas' Church, Woji District
- 4th position with 112.7% - Holy Ghost Anglican Church, Iriebe Housing Estate Parish
- 5th position with 112.1% - Church of The Holy Spirit, Elelenwo District
- 6th position with 109.1% - Daystar Anglican Youth Church, Rumuokwursi
- 7th position with 106% - Christ Church, FHE Parish, Woji

Best Organ Accompanist – Mr. Solomon Victor
Best Choir Conductor – Oforji Chukwuemeka Ben Esq.

Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Choba (Niger Delta North Diocese) which featured as a special guest choir thrilled the audience with renditions in both Ikwerre and Kalabari Languages. The All Saints' Cathedral Children's Choir, winners of 2016 and 2017 Diocesan Children Singing Competitions also performed at the occasion on special invitation.

We thank both Engr. George Iwoh and Sir Chief Alex Orakwue for once again supporting the staging of the 2017 finals with the sum of N300, 000 and N250, 000 respectively.

The 2017 Diocesan ACM Singing Competition took place at St. Jude's Anglican Church, Oginigba Deanery. The result is as follows:
All Saints' Cathedral, Rumuokwurusi – 1st position
Evo Diocesan School's Choir – 2nd position
Church of The Holy Spirit, Eliozu Parish – 3rd Position

It is regrettable that despite our efforts at encouraging the retention of our hymn singing heritage by growing our children through the above event, no Station Church participated in the competition, only ONE Parish Church was present, while five out of the ten Administrative Headquarter churches participated. The rest simply despised the competition notwithstanding our previous directives and charge on this matter. For instance, in our last year's synod address we said:

“There is need for the clergy and the lay leadership of our churches to encourage these children now if we intend for them to take over the church of tomorrow and sustain our Anglican Heritage. It is regrettable to note that a good number of churches did not expose their children to this healthy competition. We do not understand what the pastors/church teachers of such churches are still doing in those stations if activities that encourage fellowship and healthy growth of groups within the church are not encouraged by them. It is so sad that most clergymen whose choirs come for Diocesan competitions are not even there to encourage them with their presence. This definitely betrays the spirit of The Good Shepherd and we pray that it does not continue.”

Sadly this charge was not heeded and we consider this non-compliance as gross indiscipline and a calculated attempt by these priests, teachers, choirmasters and Church Councils to hinder the progress of the Diocese. We will no longer tolerate this!

Henceforth, clergymen and teachers of churches whose choirs fail to take part in the Diocesan Adult and Children Choirs Singing Competitions will face heavy sanctions. They should prepare to proceed on three months suspension without pay. Choirmasters and Organists who frustrate the efforts of their priests in making the choirs participate in this competition will have their appointments revoked. All those concerned are hereby advised to toe the path of obedience and discipline.

2017 Diocesan Music Conference

The second edition of the Diocesan Music conference was held at the All Saints' Cathedral, Rumuokwursi on Friday, 23rd and Saturday, 24th June, 2017. The event which had as its theme: "The Role of a Music Minister in A Changing World" was well attended. We were the Chief Speaker at the occasion. Other clergymen of our Diocese were also present.

Three-Day Residential Church Music Seminar/Workshop organized by Centre for Church Music, ACU, Oyo in collaboration with CHOPIN held at ACU, Oyo from 30th June to 2nd July, 2017. We sponsored Mr. Batambari G. Ntamzor Secretary of the Diocesan Choir Council and Organist/Choirmaster of Mount Zion Anglican Church, Eliogbolo Parish to the seminar. We hope he will impart the knowledge acquired to others in the Diocese.

➤ **Industrial Chaplaincy**

This unit of the Diocese has continued to make steady progress in keeping with our vision of taking the gospel and the ministry of the Church to every sector of our society. The quarterly market evangelism, monthly bus evangelism, weekly/monthly fellowship activities of the unit have taken them to several business and financial institutions within our Diocese. While commending their efforts we charge everyone in the Diocese to feel free to invite the Chaplain and members of this unit to their business places for prayers. This ministry would also need sponsorship and provision of an evangelism bus to enable members carry out their ministry activities. We hereby call for generous response of all and sundry in this regard.

Rogation Week Visits

During the 2017 Rogation Week, we in company of the Industrial Chaplain, The Rev. Ugochukwu Nwaghai visited the following establishments and business outfits owned by members of our Diocese who had invited us to come and pray for them, their staff and bless their endeavours. They are:

- Zancicia Group, Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt
- Classig Oil and Gas Support Service Ltd, Trans-Amadi Ind. Layout,
- Anointed Boutique, Old Aba Road, Rumuomasi,
- Linzo Contracting Limited, East West Road, Rumuokwursi,
- God's Divine Favour shop/Diviella Boutique both at Woji,
- Ingram Resources Nigeria Limited/Mein Oil Fuel Station, Ozuoba,

- A fabric Shop at Rumuomasi and Poultry Farm at Rumuobiokani.

We were also at the International Secondary School (I. S. S.) of the Rivers State University, Nkpolu, Port Harcourt. It was a most challenging yet spiritually fulfilling experience for us and we pray that God will continue to hear the prayers of His Church for the genuine endeavours of our members.

➤ **Family Life and Home Fellowship Ministry**

A special Programme targeted at promoting the Unity of every family and the church tagged “Evo Family Weekend” was held in all churches from Friday, 28th to Sunday, 30th April, 2017. It featured seminars, special discussions and Bible Studies on the unity of the family. We commend the efforts of Mrs. Ijeoma Anagbogu and her ministry team as well as The Ven. Okey Owihonda, the chaplain for the efforts put in for this event.

➤ **Sports Ministry**

- The Diocesan Sports Ministry organized a Youth Football Competition which kicked off on Saturday, 15th October, 2016 at BCMSS, Rumuobiokani. The final match was played on Tuesday, 15th November between St. Andrew’s Rumuobiokani and Evo South East Archdeaconry youth teams with Rumuobiokani emerging victorious by two goals to nil.
- The Evo Clergy Football Club and their Ikwerre Diocesan counterparts had a friendly match at Isiokpo on Tuesday, 22 March, 2017 to mark the 10th anniversary of that Diocese. The Evo clergy team defeated their host by 2 goals to nothing. We congratulate our team.

➤ **Directorate of Ecumenism, Interfaith & Inter-Diocesan Relations**

This Directorate was formally Inaugurated by us on Friday, 24th March, 2017. It is headed by The Rev. Gospel Onuchukwu as Director.

BOARDS, COMMITTEES, INSTITUTIONS AND DIRECTORATES

➤ **Diocesan Missions, Evangelism, Church Planting and Development Board**

This Board organized a 2-Day training programme for members of church Missions and Evangelism Committees and teams on Friday, 14th and Saturday, 15th October, 2016 at New Wine Church, East/West Road Parish Okporo. The theme was “A Living Sacrifice”.

The Board also organized a Joint Fresh Commitment Retreat for its members and those of the Industrial Chaplaincy and the Public and Private Secondary Schools Ministry on

Saturday, 4th March, 2017 at Church of The Epiphany, Azumini, Rumuokwurusi. The three arms share a lot in common in their scope of duties – reaching out to a specialized sectors of the society.

➤ **Evo Diocesan Education Board and Schools**

To the glory of God, the Diocesan Education Board has continued to provide leadership and governance in uplifting the standards of the three existing Diocesan Schools; Archdeacon Crowther Memorial Girls School (ACMGS), Bishop Crowther Memorial Secondary School (BCMSS) and Word of Faith Group of Schools (WOFGS). The Education Board has also initiated the process of supervising and regulating all Parish Schools in the Diocese, by enlisting and collecting data on such schools. Henceforth, and in keeping with the new Rivers State Government directives towards regulating privately-owned educational institutions, all parishes seeking to establish schools must follow the guidelines laid down by the Government, and the Diocesan Education Board, as a precondition for formal approval by the Lord Bishop.

Towards improving the general and personnel management of the Diocesan schools, the Board engaged the services of an HR Consultancy, Vital Solutions Consult, to carry out a study leading to the development of an HR Policies and Procedures Manual, covering areas such as Codes of Conduct, Conditions of Employment, Performance Management, Job Descriptions, Job Categorisation and Salary Grading systems.

A Staff Audit exercise has been embarked upon, at the conclusion of which it is hoped to identify staff that are qualified and competent on their jobs, and those who may either need (re)training or to be released. An improved salary structure will thereafter be proposed.

The Education Board has also formally applied to the International HQ of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) to initiate the process of accreditation for Evo Diocesan Schools. Following the application, assessment visits were undertaken by staff of the National and State offices of the ACSI. We pray that the Lord will lead us to a successful accreditation of our schools.

Students' Academic, Spiritual and Extra-Curricular Activities

We thank God for the continued growth of the schools, which now have a combined population of 1,514 students in all levels, compared to 1,434 last year, while staff population has marginally increased to 237.

Following the unsatisfactory West African Examinations Council's (WAEC) results in Mathematics last year, the Board undertook a number of initiatives to improve performance.

We are grateful to Brother Kiki Briggs, who volunteered the services of his Glory Educational and Management Consultancy to carry out a 2-week remedial programme across the 3 schools aimed at improving the teaching and learning of Mathematics.

The Board also engaged the services of Mrs. Remi Cephas Michael for an 8-week intensive Mathematics coaching class for final year students prior to this year's WAEC examinations.

The Mathematics Laboratory, equipped with tools and games to aid the learning and practice of Maths is about being completed at ACMGS.

We are pleased to announce to Synod that these interventions have substantially reflected in the 2017 WAEC examination overall performances of our students as follows:

ACMGS, Elelenwo

- Mathematics – 44% credit level, a major improvement over last year's 13%;
- English Language – 100% credit level

BCMSS, Rumuobiokani

- Mathematics – 86% credit level
- English Language – 100% credit level

WTWoF, Woji

- Mathematics – 100% credit level
- English Language – 95% credit level

We are pleased to report that one of the students of BCMSS, Rumuobiokani, **Master Israel Akelachi Ozurumba** emerged 3rd out of 192 other participants in the 2017 Rotary International Port Harcourt South Essay Competition.

The United Nations **International Day of the Girl Child (IDOGC)** was celebrated on Tuesday, 11th October, 2016 at ACMGS by Her Excellency, Hon. Justice Suzzette Eberechi Nyesom-Wike, wife of the Executive Governor of Rivers State, herself also an Old Girl of the School. In attendance were the Deputy Governor, Dr (Mrs.) Ipalibo Banigo, and other Government functionaries: We, the Bishop/Proprietor of Evo Diocesan Schools; Sir Victor Dania, The Chairman and other members of the Diocesan Education Board were also present. The event was the flag-off of Her Excellency's pet project: **RivEthics**. The day's event featured lectures and motivational speeches by Her Excellency, and other speakers; cultural displays and dance by the students as well as presentation of study materials and other gifts to the staff, students and other guests at the occasion by Her Excellency. We are grateful to Her Excellency for that maiden visit as wife of the Governor to her Alma Mata – ACMGS, Elelenwo and for choosing to host the event there.

Also, on the 14th of October, 2016, **The Teens Connect International Centre**, an NGO, marked the IDOGC again at ACMGS with the theme "Girl Progress = Goals Progress". The Rivers State Chapter of the Girls' Brigade joined ACMGS to celebrate the event.

Two of the schools (ACMGS and BCMSS) had series of Excursions this year in place of Inter-House Sports. These trips took them to such places as The Biafran War Museum, Umuahia, The 7-Up Bottling Company, Aba, Obudu Cattle Ranch, Cross

River State, Afam Power Station, Oyigbo, Rivers State House of Assembly, Silver Bird Television among others.

Staff Development

The Education Board in its commitment to the training and retraining of staff has continued to support their attendance of both internally-organised and 3rd-party retreats, seminars and conferences. To this end, staff of our schools participated in the following major training programmes, among others:

- ❖ The staff training workshop in Lagos organized by the Kingdom Schools Institute (KSI) in partnership with ACSI in August, 2016.
- ❖ ACSI Teachers National Leadership Conference in Port Harcourt in April, 2017.
- ❖ The ACSI Conference for Schools' Governing Board in Lagos in March 2017, which was attended by the principals of the Evo Schools and some Education Board members.
- ❖ ACSI International Training Workshop: We accompanied on special invitation, the Principal of ACMGS, Mrs. Chinyere U. Ordu, JP to the 15th annual KSI International Conference which held from 14th to 16th June, 2017 at Prestonwood Christian Academy, (PCA) a Baptist Church-owned Nursery/Primary/Secondary School in Dallas, Texas, USA.

Infrastructural Developments,

We are grateful to God for the spiritual and moral standard of our schools, as we also embark on the infrastructural developments that will improve the overall standard of the Schools.

- ❖ At ACMGS, following the dedication and commissioning of the two-storey Nursery/Primary building by the Hon. Commissioner for Education last year, work started on the construction of an eighteen-classroom block for the Secondary School and offices, and is now at the first floor decking level.

For BCMSS, work has started on construction of a multi-purpose block to accommodate an examination hall, laboratories, library and offices. The foundation stone laying ceremony was performed by our Archbishop, The Most Rev. Dr. Ignatius C. O. Kattey accompanied by other Bishops during the Niger Delta Provincial Council Meeting which held at BCMSS in February this year.

The paving and landscaping of the area around the Dormitory and Classroom blocks has progressed fairly satisfactorily, now giving that environment a good ambience.

At WoFGS, the Architectural drawing for a two-storey class room block is ready and now being reviewed for Diocesan approval. This is the first of a multi-phase development which will see a complete facelift of the schools and bring the facilities to an acceptable standard. By God's grace, the project will commence next academic session.

We appreciate the continued support of the co-proprietors of this school, the Woji Town Word of Faith Schools Limited, through the person of Mrs Ngozi Oyewole,

(nee Eke), We pray that other members of the family, and indeed the community at large will join hands with our Diocese to make this school the success it was envisioned to be by their late mother and queen, Dame Beatrice Eke.

Special Donations and Support

Our gratitude goes to all those, too numerous to mention, who have supported the schools with donations in one form or the other. We pray that God will continue to enrich them all. We note especially the following:

Mrs Ngozi Oyewole who donated 40 different titles of story books to the WTWoF primary section and 50 pieces of wrapper materials to all the staff at Christmas. Her continued support to the school and encouragement of staff and students is always appreciated.

Mrs. Woluchem (Lolo Ugoeze) donated 12 yards of 12 different wrappers to the minders of the WTWoF School.

We specially commend and thank the Old Girls of ACMGS, Elelenwo for their ongoing support to their alma mater. The National Old Girls Association has completed the roofing of the multi-purpose hall project, while the 1990 set and the USA branch have supported work and equipped the Mathematics Laboratory to near-completion. Also, the 1996 set has built and completed a kitchen for the school.

These exemplary and laudable initiatives must serve as a challenge to our other Old Students Associations, especially those of BCMSS, Rumuobiokani.

Finally we acknowledge the contributions of the Education Board towards the development of Sports, through the donation of trophies for Athletics to BCMSS and Word of Faith by the Board Chairman, Sir Victor Dania.

The Evo schools still need a lot of support. We are appealing to the Rivers State Government to fulfil its promises to support the infrastructural development of ACMGS, being one of the Mission Schools returned by Government to their original owners in 2008 and provision of school buses for our schools.

We pray the Almighty God to bless you all, as you continue to support the Diocese towards making the Evo Diocesan Schools internationally accredited centres of academic, spiritual and moral excellence.

We also continue to appeal to well-spirited individuals, groups and organisations to help us as they are led in the infrastructural upgrading of our schools.

➤ Bishop Elenwo Memorial Hospital (BEMH)

The journey to the birth of the Bishop Elenwo Memorial Hospital started with the setting up and inauguration by us of a Committee to source both for funds and partners to assist us furnish the Sick Bay soon after it was completed and handed over to the Diocese by the Ladies of the Knights of Evo Diocese led by Lady Uzo

Onweluzo. This committee which was inaugurated on Tuesday, 6th September, 2016 had the following as members:

Sir Victor O. Dania	-	Chairman
Sir Dr. E. Amobi	-	Member
Lady Dr. Ndidi Utchay	-	“
Pharm. Ijeoma Okey-Ewurum	-	“
Sir Rogers Nwachinemere	-	“
Sir Chidi Osuji	-	“
Mr. Emeka Awanye	-	“
Sir Chief Ike Chinwo, President	-	Council of Knights as Ex-officio

In the process of the work of this Committee, it became clear that the Diocese could actually develop what the ladies had done into a much bigger hospital facility. This idea was accepted by us and the Diocesan Board. Consequently, an elaborate restructuring and expansion of the completed Sick Bay Project was embarked upon by the Diocese leading to what we have on ground presently as Bishop Elenwo Memorial Hospital.

The Diocesan Board at its meeting held at St. Michael's, Rumuomasi Deanery on Wednesday, 21st December, 2016 resolved to give this name to the new health facility located within Bishop Crowther Memorial Secondary School, Rumuobiokani.

The hospital has since been registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC). On Tuesday, 7th March, we inaugurated the Hospital Management Board of the Diocese as approved by the Diocesan Board at its meeting of Thursday, 2nd March, 2017 at St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery. The ten members of the Board are:

- Dr. Rogers Weli
- Lady Dr. Ndidi Utchay
- Dr. Bright Amadi
- Dr. E. W. Amobi
- Pharm Ijeoma Okey-Ewurum
- Lady Uzo Onweluzo
- Dame Meg Orianwo
- Sir Victor Dania
- Sir Chief Barr G. O. Dike, JP
- Rev. Dr. Ebenezer Owzor

To the glory of God the head of our church in Nigeria, The Primate, His Grace, The Most Rev. Nicholas D. Okoh, dedicated the hospital on Monday, 8th May, 2017 with our Archbishop and 14 other Bishops in attendance.

Mrs. Chinyere Elenwo, wife of the late Bishop Samuel Onyuku Elenwo and some members of the Elenwo family were also present and have since written to us to say thank you for immortalizing their late husband and father.

We remain deeply grateful to the following for their invaluable roles played and sacrifices made towards the construction and dedication of the Bishop Elenwo Memorial Hospital:

- Sir Victor O. Dania, the Chairman of the hospital remodelling and furnishing committee and others in the team.
- Lady Uzo Onweluzo, the chairperson of the Hospital Dedication Committee and all other members. She and members of the Committee sacrificially provided the food and other refreshments consumed at the dedication by those in attendance. They also donated to the hospital a 32” Samsung Television Set and some cleaning mops.
- Dr Rogers Weli, the Chairman of the Diocesan Hospital Management Board and his members.

We appreciate the high-level zeal, commitment, faithful and exemplary sense of stewardship with which these persons approached their assigned task preparatory to the take-off of the Diocesan hospital. May the Lord reward each and all of them abundantly for their sacrifices. Amen.

We specially thank The Ven. Dr. Fynface N. Akah, JP for doing and giving so much to assist us play host to the Primate and some of the Bishops. The Lord replenish his pocket.

Other donations to the hospital were received in the course of construction and at its dedication from the Diocesan Mothers’ Union and Women’s Guild, St. Andrew’s Church Rumuobiokani Deanery and the Deanery Council of Knights, the Port Harcourt Central Camp of Gideons’ International which donated some hospital bedside Bibles and the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) which donated some hospital equipment and other items.

Presently, Bishop Elenwo Memorial hospital (BEMH) has 11 beds in wards with the following units/sections:

- Out Patient/Reception,
- Male/Female Wards
- Paediatric Ward
- 2 Private Wards
- Maternity Ward and Delivery Room
- A Theatre
- A Laboratory
- Accident and Emergency Unit
- A Security beat.

Looking Ahead

For better offering of health services, i.e. living up to its motto of being a place of “healing and comfort to the sick”, the Bishop Elenwo Memorial Hospital (BEMH) would need greater funding, support and patronage by the entire Diocesan Community as well as our friends and partners.

To this end, we call on all who are touched and led to come forth and assist us in further equipping of the hospital.

We do not pray for sickness; if however, any member of the Diocese falls sick, we hereby encourage him/her to patronize the services of this young Diocesan Health Centre. A strong medical team is already in place at the hospital and we plan to recruit more hands as funds come our way.

Meanwhile, to launch out fully to the public, the Hospital Management Board has proposed to give a **free registration to the first 50 persons** that will visit the hospital and also to stage a One-Day free medical outreach in the hospital with the envisaged support of the Rivers State Ministry of Health, SPDC and other relevant government agencies.

We hereby call on all medical practitioners in the Diocese to lend their support to the hospital as service to God and humanity to enable the hospital stabilize.

Henceforth, the clergy and members of all Church Family Life/Marriage Committees should ensure as a matter of Diocesan policy, that all couples preparing for their weddings in Evo churches mandatorily carry out **ALL** their pre-wedding medical tests/examinations in our BEMH hospital. Similarly, all Diocesan schools Principals are to send to BEMH their newly admitted students/pupils and employed staff for their necessary medical examinations. We wish to warn all clergy, intending couples and the management of our Diocesan Schools and anyone who may want to sabotage this directive not to contemplate it as that will not be taken lightly.

With time, we, the Hospital Management and Diocesan Board shall come up with other ways of making the hospital enjoy more patronage and be of great service to the community.

➤ **Diocesan Youth Information and Communications
Technology (ICT) Centre**

This is presently located in the Old Bishop’s office chapel space. It was formally commissioned by us, with the Bishop of Kontagora Diocese, the Rt. Rev. Jonah Ibrahim on Thursday, 27th October, 2016. Key diocesan officers were present.

Training at the centre commenced with 30 Desktop/Laptop computers with accompanying accessories and the same number of trainees.

The Diocesan website of Evo – www.dioceseofevo.org was unveiled at the occasion. The then Caretaker Committee Chairman of Obio/Akpor LGA, Hon. Prince Collins Onunwo was represented by his Adviser on Legal Services, Hon. Ejekwu.

We appreciate the huge moral and financial support of Sir Chidi Osuji towards the eventual take off of the centre. Our gratitude goes to the Rev. Canon Joseph Ofoegbu, Messrs Emmanuel Legborsi and Godspower Ozomeyo – Coordinators of the Centre for their invaluable efforts.

The first set of trainees formally passed out and were presented their certificates on Saturday, 18th March, 2017, at the Post Vestry Meeting/All Leaders training held at Holy Trinity Church, Elingbu Parish.

The second set of trainees have also completed their studies and are to be presented to us for passing out in this Synod.

The Centre was opened for the purpose of empowering our youths in particular and others as well with helpful trainings and skills in the ICT sector to enable them become self-employed and possibly secure jobs in firms. We expect our youths to take advantage of this opportunity. We hereby repeat our early directives to Churches **to sponsor at least 2 persons per year at the Centre** as part of their welfare and empowerment packages for the Youths. All priests, church teachers and church council members are to ensure compliance.

➤ **Bishop's Advisory Committee On Empowerment**

This Committee has continued to work very hard towards providing assistance to some members of our Diocese particularly through trainings for skills acquisition and provision of empowerment or trade tools.

During the 2017 Diocesan Rededication Service, we gave out empowerment tools to the 2015/2016 set of beneficiaries/graduates of the Committee's skills acquisition trainings in various fields.

Items given out to a total of 18 persons include:

- Gas Cookers with oven and cylinders
- Sewing machines with electric motor
- Generator and stretcher
- Laptops

It is our prayer that these recipients will remain faithful in the use of the skills and tools acquired for their own economic wellbeing.

The Diocese has for 2017 so far disbursed the sum of N1, 322, 400 for the training of a fresh set of 20 applications in Catering Services, Decoration/Event Management, Dry Cleaning, Welding, Fashion Designing and Hair Dressing.

We are quite pleased with the untiring efforts of Dame Priscilla Nosiri and Sir Chidi Osuji, both of them Advisers to the Bishop on Economic Empowerment.

The Lord bless and reward them in Jesus name amen!

The membership of this Advisory Committee has been enlarged with representatives from the various administrative blocs. They include:

- Mrs. Lizzy Dibiazue – All Saints’ Cathedral, Rumuokwursi
- Mr. Dan Okechukwu – Rumuomasi Deanery
- Mrs. Elizabeth Obike – Rumuobiokani Deanery
- Mrs. Joy Madume – Elelenwo Deanery
- Mrs. Seun Ijaware – Woji Archdeaconry
- Mrs. Charity Chukwueloka – Evo South-East Archdeaconry
- Engr. Geoffrey Ikenga – Oginigba Deanery
- Mrs. Edith Ordu – Okporo Deanery
- Mrs. Juliet Isaac – Oroigwe/Eliogbolo Archdeaconry
- Evangelist Silas Ekezie – Trinity Missionary Archdeaconry
- Mrs. Stella Mukoro – Diocesan Churches

They shall shortly be inaugurated.

➤ **Directorate Of Civic And Political Affairs (DCPA)**

Our Diocesan Desk Officer of the CON Directorate of Civic & Political affairs headed by the Rev. Canon Chuka Opara hosted a special Town Hall Meeting on a tripartite Approach to communal peace: “The Role of Government, the Church and traditional institutions” on Saturday, 25th March, 2017 at the Rumuodara Town Hall, Okporo. The interactive forum was packaged for all stake-holders on peace and harmonious con-existence.

We delivered a keynote address and some other speakers and seasoned peace advocates and practitioners from the academia took the stage as well at the occasion, chiefly, Hon. Prince Dr. John S. Bazia, JP, then Rivers State Commissioner for Chieftaincy and Community Affairs.

The event attracted notable government recognized traditional rulers from different parts of the State including HRM, Eze Sir S. O. Worlu, Nyerisi Mbam Oro-Esara.

We thank the paramount Ruler of Okporo – Okwursi, Eze Sir Morgan N. Amadi and the Rumuodara Council of Chiefs led by His Highness, Eze John E. Amadi for their huge support towards the hosting of the programme.

The State commissioner for Chieftaincy and community affairs commended our Diocese for organizing the highly successful event and promised to partner with us in staging similar outings in other parts of the State.

In recognition of our modest efforts in promoting peace in the State, the Rumuodara Council of Chiefs presented us and the Commissioner with a plaque of recognition as “Ambassadors of Peace”. We appreciate them.

➤ **Directorate of Social Welfare**

This arm of the Diocese under Mrs. Sylverline Majebe as Chairman, and Rev. Dr. Ebenezer Owhor as Chaplain with other members of the Directorate carried out the following activities during the year:

- Visits to the Rehabilitation Home, Iriebe; retired Clergy and Widow Clergy Wives with food items and cash from the Diocese after the Diocesan harvest thanksgiving in October, 2016.
- Organized a lecture on the importance of Alkaline water to health at the Diocesan Women's Conference in December, 2016 at St. Simon's Church, Okporo Deanery.
- Carried out a HIV/AIDS awareness outreach to the three Diocesan Schools during the last WORLD AIDS DAY and also during the Diocesan AYF General Meeting at the Church of the Advent, Rumuewhara on 1st and 3rd December, 2016 respectively.
- Held a prayer retreat at the Anglican Church of Pentecost in February, 2017 to intercede for all welfare cases in the Diocese.
- Paid a visit to Rumuobiokani Cottage Hospital in May, 2017
- Also paid a visit to some aged and sick widows in the Diocese in June, 2017, and
- Presented a Health Talk at the June, 2017 Diocesan Widows Conference and also made donations of food and other gift items from the office of the Bishop.

Weekly Remittances to the Diocese: Awards to Outstanding Churches

It has been our practice for some years now to publicly appreciate the Churches/groups that excel each year in the remittance of the 10% or 15% of their weekly income to the Diocese. For the year **2016**, and despite a repeat of the incidences of under-remittance discovered after due Diocesan audit scrutiny the following churches and group outperformed the others and have therefore qualified to receive our Diocesan awards:

Category A for the Cathedral and Deanery Churches

1st position – St. Andrew's Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery with a total remittance of N18, 375, 172. 26 (**short** from the N19m+ of 2015 and N21m+ of 2014).

* Performance on a steady decline. Improved performance expected.

Category B for Archdeaconry Headquarter Churches

1st position – Church of The Holy Spirit, Elenwo District with a total remittance of N3, 791, 879. 57 (**short** from the N4.8m+ of 2015 and N4.9+m of 2014).

* Performance on a steady decline. Improved performance expected.

Category C for Parish Churches

1st position – New Wine Anglican Church, East/West Road Parish, Okporo with a total remittance of N4, 372, 883. 01 (**short** from the N4.7m+ of 2015 and N6.9m+ of 2014). * Performance on a steady decline. Improved performance expected.

Category D for Station Churches

1st position – Church of the Advent, Rumuewhara with a total remittance of N1, 275, 676. 30 (**over** the N907, 840. 00 of 2015 and N871, 390. 34 of 2014).

*Position earned possibly from payment of under-remittances of 2015. Church to endeavour to earn genuine scores.

Category E for Worship Centres

1st position – Anglican Worship Centre (now Maranatha Ang. Church), Victory Estate, Elelenwo with a total remittance of N259, 648. 50 (**over** the N157, 720. 00 of 2015 and N86, 464, 00 of 2014). * On a steady rise. We commend them.

Category F for Activity Groups

1st position – Mothers' Union/Women's Guild (Women's Work Office) with a total remittance of N3, 504, 383. 20 (over the N3.3m+ of 2015 and N2m of 2014).

* On a consistent rise. We commend them.

Category G for Archdeaconries

1st position – Oroigwe/Eliogbolo Archdeaconry with a total remittance of N124, 316. 50 (over the N113, 691. 00 of 2015 and N166, 064. 00 of 2014).

* Unstable performance. Improvement desired.

These winning churches, Archdeaconry and group shall receive their awards from us before the close of this Synod. We commend them.

EPISCOPAL VISITS AND FUNCTIONS

Confirmations/Baptisms

During the Synod year we held confirmation and baptismal services as follows:

1. Sunday, 11th September, 2016: **17** Candidates confirmed at The Anglican Church of The Advent, Rumuewhara.
2. Sunday, 29th January, 2017: **35** Candidates confirmed at St. Mark's Elelenwo Deanery
3. Palm Sunday, 16th April, 2017: **40** candidates confirmed at St. Simon's Church, Okporo Deanery
4. Easter Sunday, 16th April, 2017 **52** candidates confirmed at All Saints' Cathedral, Rumuokwursi
5. Sunday, 21st May, 2017 **37** candidates confirmed at St. Nicholas' Church, Woji District
6. Sunday, 2nd July, 2017 **90** candidates confirmed at Church of the Holy Spirit, Elelenwo District.

7. Saturday, 1st October, 2016, baptism of infant Beloved Sharon Chioma, child of the Rev. & Mrs. Ahamefule Olluur at New Wine Church, East/West Road Parish, Okporo.
8. Sunday, 30th October, 2016, baptism of infant Kelechi Daniella, child of Mr. & Mrs. Charles Daniel at Holy Ghost Anglican Church, Iriebe Housing Estate Parish, Iriebe.
9. Friday, 4th November, 2016, baptism of infant Fedora, child of Mr. & Mrs. Chukwu Ndunaka at Chapel of Refuge, Bishop's Court.
10. Saturday, 25th March, 2017, baptism of infant Onyinyechukwu Gold child of Evangelist Mrs. Chinedu Opara at Chapel of Refuge, Bishop's Court.
11. Saturday, 3rd June, 2017, baptism of infant Divine, Chinnazaekpere, child of The Rev. & Mrs. Samuel Udeh at Chapel of Refuge, Bishop's Court.
12. Saturday, 22nd July, 2017, baptism of infant Oroma Renee child of Mr. & Mrs. Austin-Wopara at Chapel of Refuge, Bishop's Court.
13. Saturday, 22nd July, 2017, baptism of infant Chukwuzuluoke Chimfulumnanya child of The Rev. & Mrs. Chukwujekwu Umenna at True Vine Anglican Church, Abuja Estate, Iriebe.
14. Sunday, 23rd July, 2017, baptisms of infants at New Covenant, Eliminigwe Parish, Elelenwo:
 - a. Chimasirim, Sarima, child of Mr. & Mrs. Livingstone Okampa (after 13 years of marriage)
 - b. Elijah, child of Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Duukori
 - c. Chimzibudnu, child of Mr. & Mrs. Collins Orlu

Church Christening

The following newly planted Church Stations were christened by us during the past synod year:

Sunday, 23rd October, 2016: Former St. Michael's Anglican Youth Worship Centre formally christened "OLIVE PLANTS ANGLICAN YOUTH CHURCH, Rumuolukwu, Rumuomasi.

Sunday 26th March, 2017 (Mothering Sunday): Former Anglican Worship Centre, Eliminigwe phase 4 planted by New Covenant, Eliminigwe House Estate, Elelenwo formally christened ANGLICAN CHURCH OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

Sunday, 28th May, 2017, Former AWC, Rumuibekwe planted by the Cathedral, Christened SAINTS IN GLORY ANGLICAN CHURCH, RUMUIBEKWE.

Sunday, 2nd July, 2017. Former AWC, Rumuodani, Elelenwo planted by Church of the Holy Spirit, Elelenwo District christened NEW LIFE ANGLICAN CHURCH, RUMUODANI, ELELENWO.

Sunday, 2nd July, 2017. Former AWC, Boskel Road, Off Port Harcourt-Aba Expressway, Elelenwo planted by Church of the Holy Spirit, Elelenwo District

christened NEW JERUSALEM ANGLICAN CHURCH, BOSKEL ROAD, ELELENWO.

Sunday, 9th July, 2017. Former AWC, Eliminigwe Phase 3 planted by Chapel of Grace & Knowledge, ACMGS, Eelenwo christened LIGHT OF THE WORLD ANGLICAN CHURCH, ELIMINIGWE PHASE 3, ELELENWO.

Sunday, 9th July, 2017. Former AWC, Victory Estate, Eelenwo planted by St. Mark's Church, Eelenwo Deanery now christened MARANATHA ANGLICAN CHURCH, VICTORY ESTATE, ELELENWO.

Sunday, 16th July, 2017. Former AWC, Shell Pipeline, Atali planted by St. Andrew's Ang. Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery on Sunday, 26th February, 2017 now christened SAINT JOHN, THE EVANGELIST ANGLICAN CHURCH, RUMUKAMALU, ATALI.

Foundation Stone Laying of New Infrastructures:

- The Archbishop, The Most Rev. I. C. O. Kattey, JP laid the foundation for the building of a multi-purpose block to accommodate an examination hall, laboratories, library and offices at Bishop Crowther Memorial Secondary School, Rumuobiokani on Thursday, 2nd February, 2017.
- We laid the Foundation Stone for the expanded Altar section of St. Mark's Church, Eelenwo Deanery on Friday, 12th May, 2017. This expansion was embarked upon by the Deanery in preparation for this Synod.
- We also laid the Foundation Stone for a new 3-storey building to cater for the non-priestly workers and a teenage church hall at St. Andrew's Church Rumuobiokani Deanery on Tuesday, 16th May, 2017.

DEDICATIONS

The following were dedicated by us within the period under review:

- Thursday, 1st September, 2016: A Fast Food Centre – CRUZANTO at Akpajo, owned by Dr. Okey and Pharm. Ijeoma Ewurum.
- Sunday, 11th September, 2016: A water Borehole by the women of the Church of Advent, Rumuewhara being their 2016 Mothering Sunday project.
- Sunday, 16th October, 2016: Permanent Church Land and temporary building of Ebenezer Anglican Church, Slaughter Road, Woji.

- Sunday, 27th November, 2016: A 45KVA Power generating set donated by the CMF; a Boys Brigade parade/flags stand, altar stalls and pews at Church of the Holy Spirit, Eliozi Parish.
- Wednesday, 14th December, 2016: A water Factory – an investment by St. Nicholas Church, Woji as well as a Baptistry build by the St. John's Men's group in partnership with the sanctuary keepers of the church.
- Sunday, 8th January, 2017: A 3-Bedroom flat built by the Diocese for the family of the Late Rev. Canon Chukwuemeka Ogu at Unity Estate, Eneka.

We are however pained that this house which cost the Diocese millions of naira from the offerings, levies and remittances of members, groups and churches of the Diocese was among those affected by the recent demolition of buildings alleged to have been erected on government land at the Eneka Estate. May we here state categorically that the piece of land purchased by the Diocese for this project was far from being near or part of the area acquired by the Rivers State Government. The damage has however been done and we sympathise with our sister and widow clergy wife, Mrs. Blessing Ogu and her children over this matter. We pray that the Rivers State Government will very shortly remedy this situation by compensating her and every other person affected by this unfortunate incidence.

- Sunday, 29th January, 2017: 6 speakers, 4 violins, 1 saxophone, 1 viola and 1 clarinet at St. Mark's, Elelenwo Deanery.
- Sunday, 26th March, 2017: Lectern, and 3 altar seats with desks at Anglican Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Eliminigwe.
- Monday, 8th May, 2017: Bishop Elenwo Memorial Hospital by the Primate of All Nigeria, the Most Rev. Nicholas D. Okoh.
- Wednesday, 29th July, 2017: Extended and Enlarged Altar Section of St. Mark's Anglican Church, Elelenwo Deanery.

GRATITUDE FOR SPECIAL DONATIONS/GIFT

We appreciate the following for their special donations and continued support to the Diocese:

1. Sir Godfrey & Lady Angela Oluabunwa, for their N2, 500, 000 naira Educational grant to 25 Senior Secondary School Students of our Diocese at last year's Synod Sunday Service for the third year running. We are happy to report that we have already received a cheque to the same amount for this year for disbursement. However, we will not be able to disburse the grant to recipients because of lack of time to undertake a thorough selection process as our practice is. We believe that we will do this during this year's Diocesan Harvest. This commitment is to last till 2018 based on their 2014 synod thanksgiving service promise.

2. His Excellency, Chief Barr. Nyesom Ezenwo Wike, Executive Governor of Rivers State for the gift of a Land-Cruiser Prado, 2015 model to us.
3. His Excellency, Chief Barr. Nyesom Ezenwo Wike, Executive Governor of Rivers State for the redemption of a pledge of N10m made to the Diocese of Edo by a past government of Rivers State during our 2014 Synod held at St. Andrew's Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery and another N10mn pledge by him at our last year's synod thanksgiving service at Oginigba Deanery.
4. Sir, The Rt. Hon. Austin Opara, Former Deputy Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives, Abuja – A processional Cross to All Saints' Cathedral, Rumuokwursi.
5. Dr. Elizabeth Achinewu-Nwogu of the Focused Learning Support Limited, UK – the sum of 500 pounds towards the Diocesan Youth (ICT) Centre.
6. We acknowledge and appreciate the donations of several members of the Diocese towards the provision of wooden chairs for the New Cathedral auditorium.

May the Lord abundantly reward all these persons, the Governor and Government of Rivers State in Jesus name-amen.

We are also grateful to a couple who prefers to remain anonymous for proposing and also committing themselves to sponsoring 5 clergy with their wives fully on a one-week retreat for rest in any place of resort to be determined by the Bishop. This gesture will last for a period of five years with effect from this year. May God's manifold blessings be multiplied unto this couple and their family.

OUR SUPPORT TO OTHER DIOCESES

Within the past one year, our Diocese equally gave financial support in aid of the following dioceses and church within the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion):

1. Diocese of Kontagora – N1, 000, 000 support towards the payment of clergy and missionary workers stipends.
2. Diocese of Enugu North – N500, 000 support towards their Bishop's Court project
3. Diocese of Isiala Ngwa South – N300, 000 support towards the Diocese investment project.
4. St. Michael's Church, Owa-Alero, (Primate's Jerusalem Church), Ika Diocese - (N500, 000).

CHILD BIRTHS

We rejoice with the following families on the arrival of their new babies:

1. The Rev. & Mrs. Tukabari Poni – a baby girl.

2. The Rev. & Mrs. Raymond Osakwe – a baby boy
3. Barr. Godfrey & Mrs. Chinonye Nwokomgbe, the Programme Co-ordinator, Native Tongue Communications – a baby boy.
4. The Rev. & Mrs. Chukwuemeka Udeh - baby girl.
5. Mr. Mike & Mrs. Precious Azonwu – a baby boy.
6. Mr. Wisdom and Mrs. Nkechi Ogolo – a baby girl.
7. Mr. Chinedu and Mrs. Uche Opara, Local Helper at NCAC, Eliminigwe – a baby girl.
8. The Rev. & Mrs. Chukwujekwe Umenna – a baby boy.
9. Postulant & Mrs Amoson Ijah – a baby girl.

CONGRATULATIONS

We extend our hearty congratulations to the following members of the Diocese for their individual happy moments within the Synod year:

Birthday Celebrations

- Ven. Charles Obi Mordi, celebrated his Golden Jubilee (50 years) birthday on Wednesday, 24th August, 2016.
- Mrs. Pricilla Usifoh, Diocesan Women Worker also celebrated her Ruby (40 years) birthday on Wednesday, 24th August, 2016.
- Lady Victoria Agbojogu celebrated her Golden Jubilee (50 years) birthday on Sunday, 4th September, 2016.
- Mrs. Ibinabo Obuoforibo celebrated her Platinum (70 years) birthday anniversary on her Easter Monday, 17th April, 2017.
- Lady Lale Aminobiren, our Assistant Lay Synod Secretary on her Golden Jubilee (50 years) birthday celebration on Monday, 25th July, 2017.

Weddings/Marriage Anniversaries

- Former Miss Nengi Marvis Iyalla (Daughter of Sir Victor Iyalla) and Mr. Chibuzo Ajoku on Saturday, 13th August, 2016 at St. Mark's, Elelenwo Deanery.
- Mr. Uzoma Edwin Igboeli and former Miss Ebere Helen Eze on Saturday, 13th August, 2016 at Chapel of Grace and Knowledge, ACMGS, Elelenwo
- Former Miss Oroma Comfort Amadi (staff of BCMSS, Rumuobiokani) and Mr. Samuel Esosa Otubor on Saturday, 3rd September, 2016 at All Saints' Cathedral, Rumuokwurusi.
- Miss Nancy Isaac & Mr. Charles Benibo – both staff of All Saints' Cathedral on Saturday, 3rd September, 2016 at the Cathedral.
- Mr. Godstime Okere (Cathedral AYP President) and former Miss Ijeoma Njideka Okafor Saturday, 22nd October, 2016 at the Cathedral.

- Mr. Ifeany Samuel Nwaiwu (a Diocesan Clerk serving at IMACO) and former Miss Joy C. Anukam on Saturday, 22nd October, 2016 at the Chapel of Grace & Knowledge, ACMGs, Elelenwo.
- Mr. Charles Egbu (Bishop's Court Manager) and former Miss Kelechi Ejiogu on Saturday, 11th February, 2017 at the Chapel of Grace and Knowledge, ACMGS, Elelenwo.
- Former Miss Ann Promise Owbor (daughter of Sir P.W.O. Owbor-the Diocesan Treasurer) with Mr. Ikenga David on Saturday, 1st April, 2017 at St. Nicholas' Church, Woji District.
- Former Ms. Obiageli Joy Uchendu (after so many years of prayerful waiting) with Mr. Godwin Chukwuneke on Saturday 18th March, 2017 at St. Faith's Cathedral, Awka.
- Sir Henry and Lady Ahunna Imoni on their Silver Jubilee Wedding anniversary thanksgiving on Sunday, 23rd April, 2017 at St. Andrew's Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery.
- The Rev. Canon & Mrs. Godwin Ikechukwu Anene on their successful Marriage Blessing on Saturday, 6th May, 2017 at St. Simon's Church, Okporo Deanery.

Others

- Rotarian Sir Tayo Gbenga Opanubi of All Saints' Cathedral, Rumuokwursi on his installation as the 4th President (2017-2018 Rotary Year) of Rotary Club of Port Harcourt Airfield, District 9141, Nigeria.
- HRH, Sir Ben Emeka of All Saints' Cathedral, Rumuokwursi on his election, coronation and Thanksgiving (on Saturday 22nd July, 2017) as Igwe Okebo II of Umueri in Anambra State.

- St. Michael's, Rumuomasi Centenary

St. Michael's Church, Rumuomasi Deanery Celebrated her Centenary anniversary on Saturday, 8th and Sunday, 9th October, 2016 with a book launch (The History of the Church) and a centenary special Thanksgiving service which was graced by the wife of the Executive Governor of Rivers State, Justice Mrs. Suzette Eberechi Wike with some female members of the State Executive Council and wives of legislators from the Rivers State House of Assembly. The Church presented us, the Governor, Dr. Dakuku Peterside and others with an award of Excellence. Impressed by his conduct, appearance and performance in the choir, the Governor's Wife in her address to the church announced her immediate adoption of a boy-chorister of St. Michael's, Master Chike Obilor.

We rejoice with and congratulate St. Michael's on this centennial celebration and also thank the Deanery for the award given to us and others. May the Lord continue

to grant the Deanery many more years of purposeful and Christ-centred ministry. To the Governor's Wife we say a big thank you for her charitable gesture towards the youngster.

UPDATE ON THE NEW CATHEDRAL CHURCH BUILDING AND DEDICATION

So far the new cathedral building has advanced quite far from what it was within the last one year. The entire gallery has been fully tiled, all the doors and windows mounted and wiring for the organ, speakers, fans and other electrical wirings completed. The Diocese has equally placed order for 1, 200 specially designed chairs in place of the traditional pews, some of which have already been delivered. We intend to spend over N30 million on this item alone from our 2017 budget and the freewill pledges made by members of the Diocesan Community in response to our call during the Diocesan Rededication Service of January this year. We are however yet to commence the tiling of the floor of the main auditorium and the Altar. Other outstanding tasks within the building include provision of Choir and Altar Stalls, rails for the gallery, painting, acquisition and installation of a Pipe Organ and other Sound Systems as well as the landscaping and interlocking of the Cathedral premises.

We had initially planned to dedicate the Cathedral Building by September this year – a day before the start of the Church of Nigeria General Synod. But in view of the challenge of funds to complete the outstanding works listed above, we are now left with the stark reality of putting off the proposed September 17th date for its dedication to a later date.

We now use this medium to call on members of our Diocese who made pledges of any kind in recent years towards the new cathedral project to endeavour to fulfil such pledges as money realised would assist us in our efforts to complete the edifice. We also call on those who are yet to make any commitment towards the cathedral building to please do so to enable them share in God's blessings on every partner of progress.

ROSE OF SHARON, ATALI

This church established by the women of our Diocese is so far not enjoying the support it needs from everyone in the Diocese to remain functional. It is very regrettable that our well-conceived strategy by which churches are to send at least 2 of their members to that station every Sunday for worship has been largely sabotaged by some priests who pretend to forget and some of our parishioners who defy their priest's appointments of them to that church – a sacrifice everyone may be required to make perhaps not more than once in a year.

I appeal to all of us to desist from wanting to serve God only within the confines of our comfort zones. We will not make progress with God in our walk with Him if we are always unwilling to make sacrifices. Let the labours of our women in giving us Rose of Sharon not be in vain. Let us encourage that church to stamp its presence in its area of existence and the service priest there, Rev. Isaac Ezeokpo.

NEW LAND ALONG THE PORT HARCOURT/ABA EXPRESSWAY, RUMUOGBA

It has always been our desire to have our Anglican presence along the areas of our Diocese within the Port Harcourt/Aba Expressway. To the glory of God, this **Great Expectation** in line with our 2017 Diocesan Theme has finally materialised. With the approval of the Diocesan Board, we have acquired a piece of land (approximately 4 plots) along the Expressway at Rumuogba at a cost of Seventy–Eight Million Naira. To God be the glory! Fifty Million Naira has so far been paid for this asset leaving a balance of Twenty Eight Million Naira. Please support the Diocese to liquidate the remaining amount by the end of this August.

Church of Resurrection, Rumuogba:

From Oginigba Deanery to New Wine, East/West Road Parish, Okporo

It is our further desire to hand over the above piece of land to the New Wine Anglican Church, East/West Road Parish, Okporo for the sole purpose of developing a facility there for the church of Restoration, Rumuogba presently under Oginigba Deanery, which will, with effect from January 1, 2018, come under the supervision of New Wine, Church, East/West Road Parish.

We thank St. Jude's, Oginigba for all their efforts at overseeing the Rumuogba station since we handed it over to the Deanery. We charge the Deanery to remain in full control of the station – spiritually, pastorally and financially till 31st December this year and ensure to leave no liabilities behind for New Wine Parish that is taking over. Every form of controversy or argument must be avoided in this matter. We mean well by this action.

RETIREMENTS

- The Rev. Canon Luke Odum,

Following increasing dwindling performance in his services as a priest occasioned by his poor state of health, we were compelled to send the Rev. Canon Luke Odum on early retirement from the active ministry of the Church with effect from the fifteenth of April this year. Both the Diocese and All Saints' Cathedral Church have continued however to cater for him particularly in the payment of his monthly basic salary and his

superannuation commitment. We wish him the best in retirement and God's healing grace.

- **The Ven. Sunday C. Opara**

The Venerable Sunday Chukwuemeka Opara will be proceeding on retirement from the active ministry of the Diocese by the close of this year, precisely 31st December. This is coming at the end of our two-year service extension granted to him since 24th January, 2016. On behalf of Synod, the Diocesan Board and the entire Diocese we wish to thank very profusely The Venerable Sunday & Mrs. Uju Opara for their immense and honest contributions to the growth of our Diocese since inception. We pray that the good Lord will continue to sustain, guide and grant them robust health and peace of mind even in retirement. Once again, we say to Venerable Mrs. Opara, **Thank You!**

As tradition demands, we expect his present station – St. Jude's Anglican Church, Oginigba Deanery which by God's grace shall be his last with Woji Archdeaconry which he is also supervising to arrange a befitting send-off for him and his wife in consultation with the office of the Bishop.

DEATHS AND OUR COMMISERATIONS

1. Thursday, 11th August, 2016: Mrs. Felicia Kenneth – Food and Nutrition/Home Economics teacher at Word of Faith, Woji.
2. Tuesday, 16th August, 2016: Eze Sir G. N. Nwanwa, the Paramount Ruler of Eliogbolo Community and a committed Knight and a Founding Father of the Diocese of Evo. He was buried on Saturday, 10th September, 2016.
3. Wednesday, 24th August, 2016: Eze R. M. Nyeche, father of Sir Okechukwu Nyeche and paramount Ruler of Rumuodunwere, Elelenwo.
4. Thursday, 10th November, 2016: Sir Prince Udo Egege, our Chief Diocesan Auditor, who was murdered in cold blood in a bush along Igbo-Etche.
5. Thursday, 17th November, 2016: Sir Christopher Onukem of St. Simon's Church, Okporo Deanery. He was buried on Wednesday, 14th December, 2016.
6. Saturday, 26th November, 2016: Lady Pauline Nnodi of Church of the Advent, Rumuewhara, wife of Sir Silas Nnodi.
7. Friday, 23rd December, 2016: The Rev. Canon Leo Nwachukwu, Vicar of Holy Ghost Anglican Church, Iriebe Housing Estate Parish. He died in a motor accident while returning from his village. He was buried on Friday, 27th January, 2017 at his home town, Anumara, Mbaise, Imo State.

8. Saturday, 24th December, 2016: Madam Jenny Nwerebuekwu Chike-Ehie, mother of Sir Chief Chike Ehie, JP.
9. Monday, 6th February, 2017: Mr. Alexander I. Eze, the father of Rev. John V.C. Eze. He was buried on Friday, 3rd March, 2017
10. Saturday, 18th February, 2017: Mrs. Violet Ezimuo, a retired clerk of St. Mark's Church, Elelenwo and St. Andrew's Church, Rumuobiokani Deaneries.
11. Monday, 13th March, 2017: Mr. Friday Onuoha of New Wine Church, East West Road Parish, Okporo.
12. Pa Evangelist Emmanuel Ilechukwu, Father of Ven. Dr. Gideon Ilechukwu, our Guest speaker at last year's synod at St. Jude's, Oginigba.
13. Mr. Fabian Ajonuma: the Sexton of Anglican Church of the Messiah, New Haven Parish, Iriebe.
14. Sir George Emeruem of All Saint's Cathedral, Rumuokwursi and Chief Sir Robert Bennett Ihekweme Ogoke, husband and father respectively of Lady Joy Emeruem.
15. Lady Nora Okorie of St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery. Mother-in-law and mother of Mr. Onyedika & Mrs. Jane Mbachu.
16. Mrs. Ifeoma Akorneme U. Ndukwe the wife of the Cathedral Choirmaster, Mr. Victor Ndukwe

We commiserate with the families of The Most Rev. Emmanuel K. Mani of Maiduguri Diocese, Jos Province and The Rt. Rev. Prof. John Akao of the Diocese of Sabongida-Ora, Bendel Province on the demise of these two fathers in God.

Our prayers and commiserations go to the family of Sir Dr. Chike and Lady Prisca Worlu of Church of the Holy Spirit, Elioazu Parish on the mysterious death of their daughter, Ruwuhoma, her husband Mr. Kingsley Ginika Wosu and their four children. May the God of comfort gather their broken hearts, heal and see them through this moment of grief.

We also commiserate with The Rev. Canon and Mrs. Bright Okocha on the death of his elder sister.

May the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace and to their families we pray for the continuing comfort of the Holy Spirit.

NIGER DELTA PROVINCIAL MATTERS

➤ **The 2nd Provincial Council meeting for the year 2016** was held at St. Cyprian's Church, Hospital Road, Port Harcourt by the Diocese of Niger Delta from Friday 2nd to Sunday, 4th September, with the theme: "The Good Samaritan: Do Good to Others" (Luke 10:25-37). Bishops were assigned to some churches in the mother Diocese to worship on Sunday, 4th September. We worshipped and also ministered at St. Michael's, Buguma, headquarters of the Kalabari North Archdeaconry. We were so well received by the priests, leaders of the church as well as the Queen of the Kalabari Kingdom, Her Royal Majesty, Queen Dame Florence on behalf of His Majesty, the Amanyannabo of Kalabari, Amachree XI, King Professor Theophilus J.T. Princewill. We thank them for their hospitality.

➤ **The first meetings of the Provincial Council and Women Executive for 2017** were hosted by our Diocese from Wednesday, 1st to Thursday, 2nd February, 2017 at BCMSS, Rumuobiokani. They were presided over by His Grace, The Most Rev. I. C. O. Kattey, JP, Archbishop of the Province and his wife, Mrs. Beatrice Kattey, JP.

The theme was "Daniel, the man after God's heart" (1Sam. 13:14). Part of the activities for the meetings were daily revival services from Tuesday, 31st January to Thursday 2nd February by the Archbishop at St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery, Church of the Holy Spirit, Elelenwo and a joint gathering of staff and students of our 3 Evo Diocesan schools; and the laying of the foundation stone for a new block of classroom, laboratories, offices, library at BCMSS on Thursday, 2nd. The Joint Evo Schools Choir ministered at the Holy Communion Service and evening Revival and performed excellently. The Chaplain, Rev. Samuel Obialor is here commended highly. The Local Organizing Committee headed by Ven. Sunny Opara and the Registrar did marvellously in their preparations and execution. We Thank them.

Special appreciation from us goes to the Principal of Bishop Crowther, Canon Chieme with his staff for the remarkable preparations made by them for the hosting of the meetings.

The Provincial Council condemned in very strong terms, the lingering inter communal crises between Deken and Deeyor communities in Gokana Local Government Area over land leading to loss of lives and wanton destruction of properties in Deken particularly the Bishop's Court and personal effects of the Bishop of Ogoni, The Rt. Rev. S.S. Gberegbara, the Diocese and St. Simon's Church, Deken. The attempted assassination of the Bishop was equally decried. The Council sued for peace in the area and also called on the Rivers State Government and security agencies to immediately intervene.

➤ **Archbishop Kattey's Disengagement**

The Archbishop of our Province, His Grace, The Most Rev. I. C. O. Kattey, JP and his wife, Beatrice will be retiring from the active ministry of the church by August next year. His Grace announced this at the Provincial Council meetings held at St. Cyprians' Church, Port Harcourt in September, 2016 and at Bishop Crowther Memorial Secondary School, Rumuobiokani in February this year.

To this end, a Committee to plan for a smooth disengagement programme in honour of our father and mother in the Lord was constituted at the BCMSS, Rumuobiokani Provincial Council Meeting.

The following are members:

The Rt. Rev. Solomon Gberegbara (Bishop of Ogoni)

The Rt. Rev. Emmanuel Oko-Jaja (Bishop of Niger Delta West)

Mrs. Precious Nwala (Mama Etche) and

Mrs. Chinyere U. Ordu, JP (Mama Evo).

Each Diocese is further directed to appoint a clergyman and a lay person to join the Provincial Committee. Consequently, we hereby appoint The Rev. Canon Bright Okocha and Sir P. W. O. Owhor to represent our Diocese.

➤ **The National Christian Leadership Conference 2**

This was organized by the Evangelism, Leadership & Missions Institute International (ELMI), the training arm of the Great Anglican Revival Team of the Province of Niger Delta from Monday, 24th to Friday, 28th April, 2017 at St. Paul's Cathedral, Diobu, Port Harcourt. This second edition of ELMI's annual training of Church leaders had as its theme "Modelling Jesus Christ in Leadership" (1 Peter 2:21). 21 Dioceses with a total of 1003 participants were represented at the Conference. Our Diocese of Evo recorded a total registration of 314 over and above the 136 of 2016.

➤ **Hosting of Church of Nigeria General Synod**

The long talked-about General Synod of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) to be hosted by our Province of Niger Delta is seven years away from now.

The Provincial Local Organizing Committee has gone extensively far in its preparations towards the event with the support and encouragement of His Grace, Archbishop Kattey, the bishops of the Province and their wives. Members of our Diocese in the various sub-committees have so far demonstrated deep commitment to their assigned tasks and we thank them for this.

We are grateful to His Grace, The Archbishop, Most Rev. I. C. O. Kattey and the bishops of the Province for entrusting us with the unique responsibility of heading the Local Organizing Committee. We there covet the prayers of Churches, groups, families and individuals towards a successful and hitch-free hosting.

The Diocese of Edo will be accommodating Bishops, wives and other delegates from the 10 Dioceses of Jos Province, 13 Dioceses of Niger Delta Province, the media team of the Anglican Cable News Network (ACNN) and some Church of Nigeria officials.

We must as a Diocese work hard to fulfil our part towards the hosting. Consequently, groups and administrative blocs such as the DCMF, MU/WG, Council of Knights, Cathedral, Archdeaconries and Deaneries with Diocesan Churches already levied as well as Diocesan Board members who made pledges to assist the Diocese should urgently pay their levies or redeem such pledges.

Churches whose buses/drivers would be needed should please cooperate. They should fix those uses now and release them as the request is made.

On Sunday, 3rd September, 2017 churches shall be paying to the Diocese all offerings they raise that day to further assist us settle our assessment for the General Synod hosting. We appeal to everyone to ensure compliance.

JOINT PROVINCES OF THE EAST

The Joint Council Meeting of Provinces, East of the Niger took place at Nike Diocese from Wednesday, 15th to Thursday, 16th February, 2017 with the theme: “If I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:16^d).

The Former Chairman of Council, Archbishop Christian Efobi formally ended his tenure and handed over to The Most Rev. Ikechi Nwosu, The Archbishop of Abia Province and Bishop of the Diocese of Umuahia.

At this (Nike) meeting, our Diocese as one of the regular stakeholder dioceses paid our second annual investment commitment of N5 million (which runs for five years) towards the development of Paul University, Awka in continued compliance with the appeal of the Primate of All Nigeria. A day before this meeting we had attended at Paul University, Awka, the meeting of the Committee of the Joint Council which is drafting a Memorandum of Understanding between the stakeholder Dioceses and the University management on the future of these investments by dioceses. As at today, work is still in progress.

The Superannuation Fund office has successfully completed work on the “Goshen Anglican Retreat Centre, Owerri” – a place of retreat, conferences and accommodation. This economic investment project of the Joint Council was dedicated on 30th March, 2017 by the Archbishops and Bishops of the East led by the Most Rev. Ikechi Nwosu. The Deputy Governor, His Excellency, Prince Eze Madumere represented His Excellency, Governor Rochas Okorocha of Imo State. We commend the Rt. Rev. Chidi Oparaojiaku and his superannuation office team for this

great achievement. We are glad to inform this gathering that our Diocese assisted in the furnishing of the centre with a room now named after ‘Evo’.

CHURCH OF NIGERIA:

➤ **Church of Nigeria Convocations**

1. Church of Nigeria **All Anglican Clergy Conference** was held at the Benue State University, Makurdi, Benue State from Monday, 12th to Friday, 16th September, 2016. The theme was “**Breaking Ministerial Limits**” (Ephesians 3:7-13). The Clergy of our Diocese were fully in attendance except for those we stopped from going on health grounds.
2. The last meetings of the **Church of Nigeria Standing Committee** and the Mothers’ Union, National Executive Committee for 2016 took place at the Cathedral Church of St. Faith, Awka, Province of the Niger from Monday, 19th to Thursday, 22nd September. The theme was: “**Who is on the Lord’s Side?**” (Exod. 32:26; 1Kings 18:21)

3. **DIVCCON 2016**

The sixth edition of the Divine Commonwealth Conference (DIVCCON) – the annual gathering of all Anglican faithful from across Nigeria and abroad took place from Monday, 7th to Friday, 11th November, 2016 at the National Christian Centre, Abuja. The Conference theme was “**Fear Not**” (2Kings 6:16). It featured devotional/warfare prayer sessions, Bible studies on the theme and Seminar paper presentations/talks on various topics. Over one hundred persons from our Diocese attended the Conference. The 7th edition is to hold from Monday 13th to Friday, 17th November, 2017 at the same venue. Registration is already in progress. We charge members of our Diocese to approach The Rev. Canon Olufemi Igbamerun and Rev. Samuel Fedigha further assistance on how to register. DIVCCON is such a spiritually enriching conference that no one should miss.

4. The **First Meeting of the Standing Committee for 2017** held from 20th to 24th February at the Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library, Abeokuta, Diocese of Egba, Ogun State, Province of Lagos. The theme was “**I Am That I Am**” (Exod. 3:14).

Some decisions worth noting:

- For the public worship services of the church, only the Authorized (KJV), New King James and RSV of the Bible should be used. Other versions could be consulted by members in their private devotions
- Plans in top gear for a new National Anglican Church-owned University
- Number of participants to the Church of Nigeria (CON) Standing Committee to be reduced to 10 delegates per Province.

➤ **Advent Sunday Offering, 2016**

Like all other Diocese in the Church of Nigeria, our Diocese observed this special day of offerings and 100% remittance to the Church of Nigeria on Sunday on 27th November last year. A total sum of **N5, 107, 318.90** was raised from all our churches and fully paid to the church of Nigeria. All monies realised from this exercise are being used to fund the building of the Church of Nigeria National Secretariat at Abuja.

We are glad to inform the Synod that work on this monumental edifice is nearing completion and it may be dedicated towards the end of this year.

➤ **Primate's Pilgrimage to Bonny**

We were in the Primate's entourage during his Pilgrimage to Bonny an Ancient Island Kingdom in Rivers State from Saturday, 3rd to Tuesday, 6th December, 2016. Main point of call was St. Stephen's Cathedral, Bonny which was established in 1864 by Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther and consecrated in 1889 where the history of the coming of Christianity to the Delta was told the pilgrims; the exploits of Bishop James Johnson also known as "Holy Johnson of Bonny" whose faith and piety manifested the Word of God by fire, Calmed the tide of heresies, saved the Cathedral from erosion, Opened the gates of heaven and entered, caused the Bonny River to stand still and speaks even in the grave and other early Christians of Bonny. Uncommon hospitality was extended to the Primate and the rest of us by the Cathedral Church, the Niger Delta Diocese and the King of Grand Bonny Kingdom, Edward Asimini Willam Dappa Pepple III and his Chiefs' Council.

➤ **Annual Bishops January Retreat, 2017**

This was held at Ibru International Ecumenical Centre, Ogbara-Otor from Monday, 9th to Friday, 13th January, 2017. The theme was **"Sundry Issues of Episcopal Concerns 2"**.

➤ **St. Matthias's Day Offering, 2017**

This annual offering and 100% remittance to the Church of Nigeria was observed on Sunday, 26th February, 2017 across the nation. Total offering received from Evo Churches and remitted to the Church of Nigeria was **N6, 520, 080**.

St Matthias' Day offering is used to offer relief to distressed Missionary Dioceses, the Church of Nigeria PhD scholarship programme in special fields, theological, other academic and some church-owned health institutions.

We are grateful to the Primate for including our Bishop Elenwo Memorial Hospital among the health institutions to benefit from the allocation to the tune of **N1, 000, 000**. For 2016, the same amount was allocated to the hospital. We look forward to receiving these allocations.

➤ **Church of Nigeria Publications Writers Workshop**

Our Diocese played host to the teams of writers/editors of the various national publications of the Church of Nigeria who converged here from Tuesday, 7th to Friday, 10th March, 2017 for this year's National retreat/workshop.

The event took place at St. Andrew's Church, and at the Archbishop Peter J. Akinola Retreat Centre, Rumuobiokani and drew participants – Bishops, Clergy, Laity and special consultants from across the country. We personally headed a committee set up to plan for and execute the staging of the event. Other members of the committee were The Ven. Chris. Chukwumati, Canon Kingsley. Ohajiamya, Rev. Sampson Abada, Rev. Samuel Fedigha, Rev. Ozioma Iheanetu, Rev. Paul M. Ezigbo, Mrs. Chidinma Otuka, Rev. Collins Daniel, Mr. Azubuike Obi, Mr. Mike Azonwu and Mr. Isaac Adiele.

We are most grateful to these persons, St. Andrew's church as well as the Retreat Centre at Rumuobiokani for their excellent stewardship. Participants adjudged the hosting as the best since the trainings started.

➤ **Eminent Anglicans**

The Primate met with these persons selected from all Dioceses in Nigeria at Abuja on Thursday, 4th May 2017 for high level interactions with them. We nominated Surveyor Gaius Assor, Eze Emeka Ihunwo and Chief Sir Ejims Enwukwe to represent our Diocese. They came back fully satisfied with the outcome of the meeting with the Primate.

➤ **Election of New Bishops**

The following new Bishops were elected at the Episcopal Synods of the Church of Nigeria held in September, 2016, February and May, 2017.

1. The Rt. Rev. Temple Nwogu – elected as the new Bishop of Isiala Ngwa, Abia State to replace the Late Rt. Rev. Owen Azubuike. He was consecrated on Tuesday, 1st November, 2016 at The Cathedral of St. Michael and All Angels, Aba.
2. The Rt. Rev. Yohana Audu – elected as the new Bishop of Damaturu, Yobe State –to replace the Rt. Rev. Abiodun Ogunyemi who was translated to the Diocese of Zaria, Kaduna State.
3. The Rt. Rev. Godwin Robinson – elected as the new Bishop of Lafia, Nasarawa State replacing the Rt. Rev. Milla Maza who has gone on retirement.
4. The Rt. Rev. Rufus Adepoju – elected as the new Bishop of Ekiti West, Ekiti State replacing the Rt. Rev. Samuel O. Oke who has also proceeded on retirement.

5. The Rt. Rev. Augustine Adepoju – elected as the new Bishop of Sabongida-Ora –who replaces the Rt. Rev. Prof. John Akao who was set for retirement before his painful demise.
6. The Ven. Dr. Stephen Ayodeji Fagbemi – elected as the new Bishop of Owo, Ekiti State, succeeding the Rt. Rev. Dayo Oladunjoye who is proceeding on retirement.
The Ven. Fagbemi was until his election, the General Secretary of the Church of Nigeria. He will be formally consecrated tomorrow, Sunday, 30th July, 2017 at the Cathedral of St. James' The Great, Ibadan, Oyo State.
7. The Ven. Emmanuel Adekola – elected as the new Bishop of Igbomina, Kwara State succeeding The Most Rev. Michael Adeyemi who is also going on retirement. Ven. Adekola was until his election the Sub-Dean of the Cathedral Church of The Advent, Abuja. He will be formally consecrated tomorrow, Sunday, 30th July, 2017 at the Cathedral of St. James' The Great, Ibadan, Oyo State.
8. The Ven. Dr. Emmanuel Onsachi, Dean of Bishop Crowther College of Theology, Okene – elected Bishop of Okene Diocese to take over from The retiring Rt. Rev. Prof. Emmanuel Ajulo. He too will be consecrated tomorrow at Ibadan.
9. The Ven. Emmanuel Morris – elected to take charge of Maiduguri Diocese after the demise of The Most Rev. Emmanuel K. Mani who died recently. He will be formally consecrated tomorrow, Sunday, 30th July, 2017 at the Cathedral of St. James' The Great, Ibadan, Oyo State.

➤ **New Archbishops**

- The Most Rev. George Lasebikan was re-elected Archbishop of Ondo Province for a second five year tenure.
- The Most Rev. Christian Efobi, re-elected Archbishop of the Province of the Niger
- The Most Rev. Ikechi Nwosu, re-elected Archbishop of Aba Province
- The Rt. Rev. Dr. Olusegun Adeyemi, Bishop of Kwara – elected Archbishop of Kwara Province for a term of five years to take over from the retiring Archbishop, The Rev. Michael Adeyemi.

➤ **New Deans**

Within the last one year, the following have briefly served as Deans of the Church of Nigeria. They include:

- Archbishop Ikechi Nwosu of Aba Province and
- Archbishop George Lasebikan of Ondo Province

- The latest Dean of the Church is Archbishop Edmund Akanya of Kaduna Province. **His tenure will expire in January, 2018.**

➤ **Episcopal Translation**

The Rt. Rev. Abiodun Ogunyemi – Bishop of Damaturu was translated to the Diocese of Zaria as the new Bishop. He replaces The Rt. Rev. Prof. C. S. Bello who has retired from active ministry of the Church. Bishop Ogunyemi was enthroned on Sunday, 8th January, 2017 at Zaria.

GLOBAL ANGLICAN FUTURE CONFERENCE (GAFCON) 2018

Information reaching us from the office of the Primate, Church of Nigeria and Church and Chairman of the GAFCON movement, The Most Rev. Nicholas D. Okoh, the next conference of this body will take place from the 17th – 22nd June, 2018 at Jerusalem.

Next year's conference will be the third edition and it coincides with the 10th anniversary of the movement. Our Diocese shall by the grace of God be represented at the Conference by the Bishop, his wife and any other officer(s) of the Diocese as shall be determined by either the office of the Primate or that of our Provincial Archbishop. The cost of sponsoring a delegate has been roughly put at \$1,500. The Diocese will be needing the financial support of you, our members to enable us participate in this coming global outing.

➤ **Rivers State Christian Association of Nigeria**

The 2016 Thanksgiving service and the formal Dedication and presentation of the New State and Local Government officers of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) took place on Saturday, 15th October at St. Paul's Cathedral Diobu, Port Harcourt. The theme was "A Heart of Gratitude" (Psalm 103:1). We thank the State Executive of CAN led by His Eminence, Most Rev. Dr. Isaac C. T. Anyanasikike for the privilege given to us to deliver the sermon of the day and also praying for the new State officers of CAN.

We participated actively in the interactive session held on Friday, 4th November, 2016 at the Government House Port Harcourt between the Governor and the leaders of Christian community in the State.

On Saturday, 11th February, 2017 we had the singular honour of decorating the Governor of Rivers State as the 'Apostle of Peace' when the State Branch of CAN launched the campaign for peace in the State at the Civic Centre, Port Harcourt. Two of the decorative items – a white stole with the inscription, 'Apostle of Peace' and a golden pectoral cross were hung over the Governors CAN.

The occasion was also used to raise funds for the relief of persons affected by social crises within the State.

RIVERS STATE

The Government of Rivers State under His Excellency, Chief Barr. Nyesom Ezenwo Wike, CON.

On behalf of the Synod and entire Anglican faithful of the Diocese of Edo we laud the efforts of the Rivers State Government particularly within the last two years under the able leadership of His Excellency, the Executive Governor, Chief Barr. Ezenwo Nyesom Wike, CON.

From the dynamic and focused leadership style of the Governor which has ushered in a rain of people-centred projects across the State, it is now evident that his coming to power could not have been a matter of chance or co-incidence. Within this short period in office, we see a governor who without doubt, has taken time to isolate, analyse and understand the areas where the citizens of the State are groaning for change and is systematically addressing the needs of the people, thus gradually making life bearable for them. Rivers State has in the last two years become a huge construction site with the Governor as the chief Project Engineer and site Manager.

We commend and thank His Excellency for the numerous road projects across the state. Some of which are within our Diocese, his strategic repositioning of the basic and tertiary education sectors aimed at guaranteeing quality education for all Rivers children and residents, the improved budgetary allocation and transformation in the healthcare sector and several other special projects, such as the Rivers State Ecumenical Centre, Chapel of Everlasting Grace, the Federal High Court Complex, Judges Quarters, the Pleasure Park, the Rumuokoro Market and Bus Park, the dredging and Land Reclamation at Mkpogu/Ogburn n'abali and Ogu, marine transport projects, housing and other related developments, just to mention a few.

The Governor has equally demonstrated within these past months in office that he is a leader whose ears are always open to the yearnings and appeals of his subjects.

At our last year's synod, the Governor announced a personal gift of a car to us and fulfilled that just as the thanksgiving service ended that day.

He told us to consider the rebuilding of the Mgbuesilaru-Rumuokwursi (RD) Road a done deal. Today that road is about 90% ready. Elelenwo Road is underway and not too long from now the pains of many years suffered by the people of this community and others who use this road will be a thing of the past. The Governor assured that the law forbidding the State Government from supporting schools returned to the church would be amended to enable him reach out to such schools as ACMGS, Elelenwo. That promise has since been fulfilled through the Rivers State House of Assembly.

We are grateful to His Excellency and to the Rivers State House of Assembly. This done, we are now very hopeful that our ACMGS and possibly two of our other schools would shortly begin to receive the attention of the Rivers State government.

The Governor also promised two buses for our 3 Diocesan schools. We know His Excellency has not forgotten this pledge just as he did not forget his promise of redeeming the 2014 synod pledge made by the immediate past Government and the One His Excellency made last year. He has long released the entire sum of N20m to the Diocese.

May the Lord bless our amiable, hardworking and God-fearing Governor and continually strengthen his hands at work for the continued advancement of our State.

Our Appeal To All Rivers People

The Lord commands us to pray for and support those He has placed over us as leaders, particularly as they follow the path of honesty, justice and uphold biblical morality even if we do not share the same political views with them.

We urge all Rivers people to set aside all selfish political interests and work for the progress of the State. Violent acts, inciteful speeches, malicious attacks and insults on the person and office of the governor will not help the image and progress of our State.

This Governor has shown himself to be quite committed to the duties of his office and should therefore be allowed by fellow politicians and detractors of his administration to stay focused rather than distract him. We should pray for his continued success in office and for the peace of the entire Rivers State.

Lastly, we appeal to all citizens and residents of the State to always safeguard and properly use the facilities being provided by the Government. We should respect our environment and preserve it as God's gift to us. Its abuse will hurt us very badly as we can see in the incidence of heavy flooding in some parts of the State.

Rivers State at 50

Created on the 27th of May, 1967, Rivers State celebrated her golden jubilee in the month of May this year. We rejoice with all our founding fathers, past and present leaders, especially our Governor, Nyesom Wike and the entire people of the State on the attainment of this golden height.

May the Lord continue to preserve our State in unity, love, peace and progress from generation to generation. Congratulations to all Rivers people!

NIGERIA: BURNING ISSUES OF CONCERN

➤ Agitation for Restructuring

The airwaves in Nigeria today have been taken over by calls for and opposition to the call to restructure the Nigerian nation. The fundamental aspect of Nigerian national life proponents have called to be restructured is the structure of governance. Stakeholders are laying emphasis on the entrenchment of fiscal federalism, resource control, state police, equity, justice and fairness. In a paper presented at the Late Gen. Usman Katsina Memorial Conference, in Kaduna some time ago, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar (former Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria) stated that since amalgamation, different segments of Nigeria's population have, at different times and sometimes at the same time, expressed feelings of marginalization, of being short-changed, dominated, oppressed, threatened, or even targeted for elimination. He also said that previous initiatives aimed at addressing these concerns have not yielded the desired results as mutual suspicions still exist leading to a fragile and unstable democracy.

Questions abound which beg answers. For instance: (1). Is the current Federal System of Government wherein the federating units are feeling short-changed and oppressed working? (2). Are some federating ethnic nationalities of the Nigerian State truly marginalized and dominated by some others? (3) Should Nigeria go back to Regional (Provincial) Government which gives the federating regions greater autonomy to manage their resources and grow at their own pace? (4) For how long will oil remain the main-stay of Nigeria's economy? What happens if the world's appetite for oil dwindles or better still oil is no more? Should the various States begin to look inward for alternative sources of revenue? (5) How will resources be shared? Should the emerging Regions control and manage their resources while contributing quotas to the center as opposed to the current system wherein States go cap in hand to collect from the center? (6) Nigeria purports to be a Secular State, has there been religious neutrality and tolerance by government and the people since Amalgamation? Many more questions abound.

One thing is certain, Nigeria as constituted and operating hangs on a cliff. In fact a one-time governor of Anambra state, Chukwuemeka Ezeife, in a report in the *Vanguard* newspaper was quoted as saying that

the time for restructuring Nigeria, to continue to exist as an entity as envisaged by her founding fathers, is running out. Nigeria is simply not working and we cannot continue to pretend that it is. According to Shedrack Fubara, a Nigerian born Canadian commentator, if Nigeria continues to postpone the evil day, it wouldn't be long before it melts before us in broad daylight.

Lending its voice, the apex Igbo socio-cultural group, Ohaneze Ndigbo notes that a situation where “a state like Kano alone has 44 local governments while the entire South-East has 95 cannot be said to be fair.” According to the president-general of the body, Chief Nnia Nwodo, Ohanaeze prefers restructuring to break-up as restructuring will bring Nigeria to a level where every person of whichever tribe, religion or class would have a sense of belonging and in return, give in their best for the development of the country.

In a lecture delivered by Professor G. G. Darah at the 2016 *Independent Newspaper* “Man of the Year Award” Ceremony in Lagos, on February 11, 2017, the renowned professor noted that the quest for the restructuring of the Nigerian political system has been made relentlessly since the 1914 amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates by the British colonial conquerors, which amalgamation was to say the least, a forced marriage of strange bedfellows. The Nigerian contraption once it came into existence, was to operate under a Federal Arrangement and the Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionary, says that a “federation is a country consisting of a group of individual states that have control over their own affairs but are controlled by a central government for national decisions.” There are 28 notable federations in the world today; among the well-known ones are the United States of America, Canada, Brazil, India, Russia, Switzerland, and Australia. Ethiopia in Africa is the best example of the system. Nigeria which is also listed among the world’s federations is only nominally so. Why do we say so? There can be no federalism when there is no fiscal federalism. Between 1952 and 1966 when Nigeria practised fiscal federalism, the country’s modernisation profile accelerated to earn the country a status comparable to that of India, Malaysia, South Korea, Indonesia, and Singapore, otherwise known as the “Asian Tigers” in global economic ranking.

The political activities and happenings in the Nigerian polity between 1960 and 1967 were all rooted in the attempt at restructuring the polity. The Tiv Uprising of the early 1960s, the creation of the Midwestern Region in 1963, the January 1966 military coup, the Isaac Adaka Boro 12-Day Revolution resulting in the Niger Delta Republic, the July 1966 revenge coup, the May 27, 1967 creation of 12 states, and the May 31, 1967 birth of the Republic of Biafra are cases in point. Between the 1990s and 2017, the clamour for federalist restructuring has remained loud and clear. One recalls that part of the coup address by the late Major Gideon Orkar on April 22, 1990, bordered on restructuring of the country. In response, the Babangida administration created six new states in 1991. But it was largely a self-serving exercise.

Other national issues like the demand for sovereign national conference, the constitutional conference, Jonathan's National Confab, the founding of bodies like the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), the formation of guerrilla groups such as Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF) and Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), were all rooted in the agitation for restructuring.

There are those who have vehemently stood against the call for the Nigerian polity to be restructured believing that doing so would lead to the disintegration of the country. But we must point out that a forced marriage is no marriage and is destined for disintegration from the onset. The Bible states clearly that two cannot walk together except there is an agreement as to the terms of the walk (Amos 3:3). The call to restructure the country is not a call to disintegrate, but if we must be together, we must do so by consent, clearly spelt out. We stand with Alhaji Atiku Abubakar when he said: "I suggest we resolve today to support calls for the restructuring of Nigeria's federalism to strengthen its unity and stabilise its democracy. I believe that restructuring will eventually happen whether we like it or not. The question is whether it happens around the conference table, in a direction influenced by us and whether we will be equal partners in the process." As Chief Femi Falana says, and we agree with him "we need political and economic restructuring to make the entity called Nigeria to exist in an ambient environment. Nigeria's economy is in few people's hands. If the oil blocks were given to regions/states or councils, they will be able to pay salaries." Our leaders must shun all forms of hypocrisy and support this

move. From the architecture of this problem, those waiting for the agitations to go away, may wait forever. The time to act is now.

➤ **Continued Marginalisation of and Trampling on Christians and Christian Interests**

It was with utter shock that we read a couple of months ago that Christian Religious Knowledge (CRK) had been removed from post primary school curriculum in Nigeria. In its place, a nondescript subject, Religion and National Values was enthroned.

In the aftermath of the removal, a non-governmental organization, Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria, HURIWA, said the removal of CRK from public schools' curriculum by the education ministry headed by Mallam Adamu Adamu is a sinister plot to cause inter-religious crisis in Nigeria. One may be forced to buy into the sentiment expressed this body when one looks at the arbitrary appointments of persons of the Islamic religious faith group to head the strategic educational agencies such as the National Universities Commission, NUC; Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB); Tertiary Education Trust Fund, TETFUND, amongst others, by the education minister.

The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) vehemently opposed the situation where CRK, according to the new curriculum, would no longer exist as a subject in schools but rather as a theme in civic education, whereas Islamic/Arabic Studies and French on the other hand, have been introduced in the new curriculum.

We consider this policy which would make Christian pupils and students study Islamic/Arabic Studies since French teachers are more or less non-existent in secondary schools, as an attempt to force Islamic studies down the throats of non-adherents of the religion, an ungodly agenda deliberately crafted towards Islamisation.

Though the management of the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), headed by Prof. Ismail Junaidu has denied the removal of CRK from the curriculum and the House of Representatives has ordered that the policy be reversed with immediate effect, we still want to state categorically that under no circumstances or

guise should Christian students be forced to study any other religion except those of their parents because we suspect that once public attention has moved on to other matters, these agents of darkness may still pass the backdoor to implement their ungodly agenda. May we remind them that section 38 (1) and (2) of the Nigerian constitution provides that on no occasion will a strange religious faith be taught to students/pupils of different religious persuasions. If there is any area of national life where political and religious rascality should not be displayed, it is education, the life-wire of our continued national existence as a nation and the future of our children.

➤ **Careless and Unguarded Utterances by Political Leaders**

On 18th June this year, the Department of State Services (DSS) issued a warning to all ethnic groups in the country against misinformation and hate speeches, saying they are capable of causing disunity. It vowed to stop at nothing to deal with any group found culpable in line with its mandate.

This warning came on the heels of the ultimatum issued Igbo living in Northern Nigeria to leave the region before 1st October this year by a coalition of Northern youth groups when it rose from a news conference in Kaduna. Several groups from all parts of the country have strongly condemned this order. We believe this relocation order is not only illegal, but strongly viewed to be against the spirit of our constitution, which allows for freedom of movement and association, among other things. However, we are pained that some persons who by their positions in the Nigerian society should know better, have openly supported these evil elements or kept criminal silence. We are also pained that security forces which had in the recent past swooped down on a Christian cleric for purportedly making a hate speech, have remained indifferent to the current case: no invitations have been sent out, no arrests have been made. We make bold to say that such criminal silence and inactivity by a government elected to protect all strata of the citizenry is the only invitation needed by agents of disunity to visit mayhem on innocent citizens.

We enjoin all political leaders to watch their utterances. The security and well-being of the citizenry is of much more importance than primordial

political gains or religion. The polity is already heated and the fabrics of national cohesion terribly stretched. The careless utterances by our leaders in the guise of defence of ethnic, political and religious interests, is enough fire to set the nation on the path of self-induced conflagration with telling consequences. If truly we treasure our continued existence as a people of one nation, the present day government and its security apparatus must appear and act at all times in a fair and just manner when issues of hate speech heat up the polity. Inasmuch as we commend Acting President Osinbajo's actions and series of meetings to arrest the situation, we demand that the government must divest itself of every vestige of partiality and religious bias when these issues occur. Mere condemnation of such utterances without any form of action to punish offenders amounts to bare faced hypocrisy and nothing more. Nigeria is bigger than any person, political affiliation or religious fanaticism. If we keep toying with the current gale of careless utterances and hate speech, we will only arrive at one destination: calamity.

On their part, the media must redefine their news values in this case to reflect national exigencies. Their reportage of the activities and utterances of political, religious and ethnic groups and persons must put the nation first. Again bloggers on the social media should not provide their platforms for fanning the embers of disunity, tension and incitement to violence. We must all remember the Rwandan Genocide of 1994, the Kenyan election crises of 2007 and the Nazi atrocities in the 2nd World War. These all share one thing in common: hate speeches and careless utterances by leaders.

In summary, our position on the state of our dear nation is that our leaders and indeed the citizenry must imbibe a culture of discipline in all we do to solve our myriad of problems. If the politician imbibes discipline on matters of politics, public finances and projects, if our electoral umpires commit to discipline in overseeing elections and reflecting the people's choice in results, if teachers imbibe discipline in their relationship with their students, if ministers of the gospel show and teach discipline, if those in the civil service entrusted with public funds go about their duties with discipline, if ordinary citizens show personal discipline within and outside their homes, then more than ninety per cent of our national problems would have been solved. A nation without discipline is dead on arrival.

COMING SYNOD VENUES AND DIOCESAN CHIEF LAUNCHERS OF BISHOP'S ADDRESSES

At last year's Synod, we announced that with effect from this year, major groups of the Diocese will now begin to serve as our Synod Chief Launchers at the Diocesan level while the host Administrative Bloc would also be required to either raise their own Chief Launcher to support the work of the Diocese at Synod or assume that position where they are unable to raise one. This Synod will be witnessing the implementation of that policy. Consequently, the Diocesan Clergy Welfare Association currently led by The Venerable Alex Usifoh, with the support of their wives, will be standing as our Chief Launcher today. We commend them in advance for the part they will be playing shortly. We are also grateful to the member representing Obio/Akpor Federal Constituency at the House of Representatives, Abuja, Hon. O. K. Chinda for accepting to stand as the Chief Launcher in honour of our host, St. Mark's Church, Elelenwo Deanery. May the blessing of the Lord be upon our clergy, the honourable member and all who will encourage our work in the Diocese through their financial commitment in appreciation of this address. For the next 4 years, the table below shows the coming synod hosts and the groups to stand as Chief Launchers.

Year	Host	Diocesan Chief Launcher Group	Host Chief Launcher
2018	Evo South East Archdeaconry	Diocesan Council of Knights	To be determined by host Archdeaconry
2019	Woji Archdeaconry	Diocesan MU/WG (All Women)	"
2020	Trinity Missionary Archdeaconry	Diocesan CMF (All Men)	"
2021	All Saints' Cathedral	Diocesan AYF (All Youths)	To be determined by Cathedral

CONCLUSION

As we conclude this address and gradually draw close to the end of this year's synod, may we use this medium to sincerely express our gratitude to everyone in the Diocese, our friends and partners within and outside the State for all you did to advance the work of God under our care.

We very specially appreciate all our clergy, church teachers and their wives, the chaplains and lay leaders of the various Diocesan groups and ministries and committees, Members of the Diocesan Board, the Synod Secretaries, members of the Synod Planning Committee, the staff of the Bishop and Diocesan Central offices, for you zeal and devotion to duty. May the Lord reward you greatly for all your work and service done in His name.

I shall not forget to thank profusely my wife, Mrs. Chinyere Ordu and our daughter who have always stood as great pillars of encouragement and support to me. I appreciate you both and pray that God's grace will abound towards you more and more.

I thank everyone of you for patiently going through this journey with me once again this year. May all you have listened to bless you and motivate you unto a life of deeper devotion to God and to His church now and in the years ahead in Jesus name, amen.

GOD BLESS YOU ALL!

+Innocent Ordu, JP

+Evo

APPENDIXES



THE CHURCH OF NIGERIA (ANGLICAN COMMUNION)

THE MOST REV'D NICHOLAS D. OKOH
Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of All Nigeria

PASTORAL LETTER FROM THE STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE CHURCH OF NIGERIA (ANGLICAN COMMUNION) HELD FROM 20TH TO 24TH FEBRUARY, 2017 IN THE DIOCESE OF EGBA, AT OLUSEGUN OBASANJO PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY COMPLEX, ABEOKUTA, OGUN STATE

Dear People of God,

Grace and peace to you from Him who is and who was and who is to come. Amen!

The Standing Committee of our Church was held under the protection and guidance of the Holy Spirit from 20th to 24th February, 2017 at the Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library Complex, Abeokuta, Ogun State. The meeting was hosted by the Diocese of Egba, Province of Lagos, with the theme "I AM THAT I AM" (Exodus 3:14).

This statement "I Am that I Am" was the way God revealed Himself to Moses and the people of Israel at a critical stage in their national life when they were living under Egyptian bondage. The situation was such that God's intervention was a dire necessity. God appeared to Moses in the burning bush and assigned him the mission to rescue Israel from Egyptian bondage. That was a difficult task for Moses because he had difficulty in speech. Also, he had a case to answer in Egypt arising from the Egyptian he had killed to save an Israelite. Besides, the Israelites had lived in Egypt for 430 years in the midst of many other gods worshipped in the land. To muster courage for the assignment, Moses required God to reveal His name so that the people of Israel would know the God who sent him. In response, God said to Moses, "I AM THAT I AM". That is what you will say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you'.

Brethren, "I AM THAT I AM" implies that God is real. He is the creator, the sustainer of all things, who exists from the beginning and does not change with changing times. For this reason, we can depend on Him to supply all our needs. Furthermore, 'I AM THAT I AM' is a self-disclosure name, by which God is assuring us that at a time like this in the history of our country that He will step in and loose the bondage of the captors over the life of helpless Nigerians. He will certainly save us from the bondage of economic recession, insecurity, deterioration of our social amenities, collapse of medical system, truncated educational system, and political absurdity. Though the need to stand for God as his messenger may be daunting and challenging, God's help and wisdom will always change the situation and help us navigate through the struggles we face.

We commend the youth organizations and other evangelical arms of our church for the efforts they are making to face the global challenges of the time. We encourage you to keep serving the Lord faithfully, believing in His unchanging nature, as He who promised is faithful. We must not compromise our faith in the bid to be like others. God is all we need in our lives to make good success.

We wish to draw your attention to the increasing need for relief materials for our brethren who are being persecuted in the North East of our country. We commend Dioceses that worked hard towards the Church of Nigeria Relief Fund launching in the past. A date for the Relief Fund launching for this year will be fixed in due course to enable us meet the rising need, and fulfil the imperative of Scripture. Please, give generously. On your behalf, we sent some relief materials to the victims of Southern Kaduna crisis. It is now needful more than ever that in this church and in our nation, we be our brother's keeper. May the LORD grant us grace so to do.

Brethren, your donations in launching the Primate's Address, continued support for St. Matthias' Day and Advent Sunday Collections are yielding great dividends. Because of your efforts, work is progressing steadily in the building of the Church of Nigeria Secretariat at Gudu, Abuja. We request that you continue to redouble your efforts on this until the project is completed. The DIVCCON, our annual soul enriching programme will hold from 13th to 17th November 2017, at the National Christian Centre, Abuja. Endeavour to attend. It is our hope that all Anglicans will join hands for the progress of our Church. A meeting of some eminent Anglicans is being scheduled for in the month of May to discuss a way forward in different areas of our church's life.

We wish to express our whole-hearted condolences to all those who were bereaved of beloved ones, or had unpleasant experiences of different sorts; those who have been victims of sectarian violent attacks around the country, especially in Southern Kaduna. We do share in your sorrows and pray that God may grant you all divine healing, consolation and restoration. We regret to inform you of the sudden demise of the Most Rev. Emmanuel Mari, the Bishop of Maiduguri and Mrs. Eunice Egbebumi, wife of the Bishop of Ilesha South West. May their souls rest in peace. Amen.

People of God, remember that it is our responsibility to pray for our leaders of both the church and nation, particularly at this national recession and turmoil, that God may grant them wisdom and courage to discharge their responsibilities. Pray especially for Muhammadu Buhari, our President who is indisposed, that God may grant him the help he so much needs.

Beloved brethren, we thank the Archbishop of Lagos, the Most Rev. Dr Michael Fape and the Bishops of the Province of Lagos and their wives for their contributions towards the success of the Standing Committee. We sincerely thank the Rt. Rev. Emmanuel Adekunle and his wife, the good people of Egba Diocese and the Local Organizing Committee for hosting the Standing Committee in a fantastic way. We sincerely thank the Executive Governor of Ogun State, His Excellency, Senator Ibukunle Amosun for his support which went a long way to make us comfortable during the meeting. We also thank Oba Michael Aremu A. Gbadebo

CFR, Okukenu IV, the Alake of Egbaland and the good people of Egbaland who made various contributions for the successful hosting of the meeting. May the Lord reward them abundantly.

Finally, brethren, we are living in perilous times. Things are really hard in the country. We encourage you in the name of the Lord. God whose name is 'I AM THAT I AM' will rise on behalf of Nigerians, and set our people free again to enjoy the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. God daily reveals Himself to us, but it takes diligence, commitment and faith, perseverance and resilience to match forward. The writer of the Hymn A & M 181 captures it this way:

*'His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour,
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower'.*

You should therefore renew your faith in this great God who is not limited by situation and circumstances. We charge you to stand firm, convinced that,

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble;
therefore we shall not fear though the earth gives way and the
mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters rage and
foam and the mountains quake with their surging" (Ps. 46: 1-3). Be still
and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations; I will be
exalted in all the earth (Ps. 46:10).*

May the Lord, who is faithful, strengthen you, protect you from the evil one, and lead your hearts in the love of God. And may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with you always. Amen.

Your beloved Father-in-God

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'N. Okoh', followed by a large, sweeping horizontal stroke that extends to the right.

The Most Rev. Nicholas D. Okoh

Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of All Nigeria



THE CHURCH OF NIGERIA (**ANGLICAN COMMUNION**)

THE MOST REV'D NICHOLAS D. OKOH

Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of All Nigeria

COMMUNIQUE FROM THE STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE CHURCH OF NIGERIA (ANGLICAN COMMUNION) HELD FROM MONDAY, 20TH TO FRIDAY, 24TH FEBRUARY, 2017, AT THE OLUSEGUN OBASANJO PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY COMPLEX, ABEOKUTA, OGUN STATE.

INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the leadership of the Most Rev. Nicholas D. Okoh, Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of All Nigeria with his wife Mrs. Nkasiobi Okoh, President of the Women and Girls' Organisations in attendance, met at the Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library Complex Abeokuta, Ogun State, from 20th-24th February, 2017. One Hundred and Fifty-Seven Bishops, One Hundred and Forty-One clergymen and Eighty-Four members of the House of Laity were present. At the opening ceremony, the Standing Committee welcomed His Excellency, Senator Ibikunle Amosun, The Executive Governor of Ogun State of Nigeria, the former Head of Interim Government, Chief Ernest Shonekan, as well as the immediate past Primate, The Most Rev Peter J. Akinola and Kabiyesi, Oba Michael Adedotun Aremu Gbadebo, the Alake and Paramount Ruler of Egbaland who delivered goodwill messages. The opening session was also graced with the presence of the mother of the Acting President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Mrs. Olabisi Osinbajo.

THE THEME OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE

The theme of the Standing Committee meeting was **'I AM WHO I AM?'** (Exodus 3:14).

At the end, the following Communiqué was issued:

At a time like this in the history of our country when we seem to be hopeless, crying for who will deliver us from the bondage of economic recession, insecurity in the nation, deterioration of our social amenities, inadequate medical system, substandard educational system, and political tension, the Standing Committee reminds all:

- That God's unconditional faithfulness is the perfect assurance that we have a future which no one or system, and not even the raging sin within, and troubles without can destroy.
- That we surely need the intervention of God to deliver and help us. To that extent we need to cry out to God at all times in repentance for God cannot answer us in sin.

- That we all must bear in mind that Yahweh is constantly with his people, in all circumstances and will ensure that the believer is safe both physically and spiritually.

GOODWILL TO THE PRESIDENT

While praying for the quick recovery of the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari and his safe return to the country soonest, the Standing Committee urges Nigerians to imbibe positive disposition towards our national leaders especially in times of health challenges as they are also human.

FEEDING OF PUPILS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The decision of the Federal Government to keep to her electoral promise by providing a meal each day for pupils in public schools is a welcomed development. The Standing Committee advises that this act of benevolence be extended to all States of the Federation. However the Committee strongly believes that investing more in quality education with a view to producing sound minds should be the goal of policies in this critical sector.

ALLOWANCES TO POOR PEOPLE

The Standing Committee appreciates the Federal Government's demonstration of concern towards the down trodden through the recent payments made to the poor in the society and recommends that extra efforts be made to put in place the machinery that will guide against diversion and abuse of funds, ensure its sustainability and possibly, formulate long lasting economic policies that will create jobs for the teeming youths of our great country. Government is further enjoined to ensure that this exercise must not turn out to be a source of political compensation.

RESTORATION OF PEACE TO THE NORTH EAST

In appreciation and recognition of the concerted efforts of the Federal Government against terrorism that has seen peace and normalcy now returning to the North East of Nigeria, the Standing Committee requests the Federal Government to provide adequate security for the returning displaced people, to prevent the chances of repeat attacks. As much as the Standing Committee rejoices over the news of some members of the Boko Haram sect surrendering themselves, Government is advised to ensure that these calibre of persons do not find their ways into our national security organizations.

ANTI-CORRUPTION WAR

The Standing Committee restates its support and commitment to the zero tolerance for corruption policy of the Federal Government. It recommends that the war should be spread across all tiers and arms of Government while those with the mandate to act should eschew personal interest, political vendetta and

bitterness so as to ensure, that there is true sense of justice in their actions. It is also believed that setting up of SPECIAL COURTS to try cases of corruption with time limit to such cases, as it is with electoral matters, will be the best way forward.

SECURITY

It has now become a common knowledge that some individuals in the same country bear arms freely and others cannot. Also certain, is the experience that the spate of kidnapping is not abating. The Standing Committee views these acts as unconstitutional and discriminatory besides the fact that it is capable of perpetuating crimes increasingly and threatening permanent peace. The Committee therefore calls for a firm and deliberate policy devoid of any sentimental considerations to disarm and stamp out the menace of these herdsmen. The Federal Government should muster the political will to achieve this.

SOUTHERN KADUNA KILLINGS

The continual merciless killings of innocent people especially Christians in Southern Kaduna, is becoming unbearable and intolerable. Most disturbing is the continuing ineffectiveness of the State and Federal Governments in controlling and bringing to an end these acts of terrorism. As a matter of urgency the Standing Committee calls on governments at all levels to take drastic actions that would usher in lasting peace and solution to this unending conflict.

ON ESCALATING PRICES OF STAPLE FOODS IN NIGERIA

While identifying with Government on her robust Agricultural policies and the improvement so far recorded, the Standing Committee expresses great concern over the very high cost of food in the country and urges the Federal Government to do something fast in this respect while at the same time calling on the citizenry to embrace agriculture and go back to the farm.

NATIONAL ECONOMY

By the indications of several economic indices, the Nigerian economy is evidently buffeted on every side and this trend is most disturbing. With deep concern therefore, the Standing Committee calls on the Federal and State Governments to introduce interim food relief and subsidy intervention that will cushion the effect of hunger and poverty in the land bearing in mind the policies as they are presently may not be beneficial to the citizenry if they die and do not live to enjoy it.

RECESSION

The effect of the present economic recession in the country is taking a very heavy toll on the citizenry. This is no doubt largely due to long years of failure to plan strategically. The Standing Committee accordingly, urges that bold steps be taken

to reduce hunger and poverty in the land to reduce anger and frustration which are gradually building up. The need to guide against the consequence of civil unrest at this stage of our national development is further emphasized.

GOVERNANCE

The Standing Committee is terribly worried that even in the face of the prevailing economic situation across the country the life style of most public officers are not affected. A situation where long convoys, retinue of attendants and lavish social outings indicative of insensitivity to the good and greater number of the citizens who are living between hunger and death is highly bemoaned. The Committee therefore calls on the government to reverse this trend and give the impression that our leaders are ones with those they are leading.

ON THE NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE CORPS (NYSC)

At its inception this scheme stood out with great promise for nation building as it was well funded and managed. The Standing Committee however notes with disappointment that today it is tottering as it faces inadequate funding, security challenges, scheduling delays with the attendant call up gaps. The need to review the scheme and strengthen it is hereby advocated.

ANGLICAN COMMUNION

The Standing Committee fully resolves to uphold, support and further extend the principles and mission of GAFCON and hereby renews commitment to its vision.

CONCLUSION

The 'I AM WHO I AM' is the God of all nations who is in charge of all situations and circumstances. He moves in mysterious ways and hides His face behind frowning providence. Knowing Him, obeying Him, fearing Him and working with His precepts is key to attracting His intervention to the numerous problems facing us as a nation. The assurance that He is the Almighty who alone created the whole universe out of nothing should inspire and encourage us not to despair in the face of the prevailing challenges. Thus the assurances of the Psalmist must renew our confidence that, *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea. Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.* (Ps. 46:1-3 & 10).



The Most Rev'd Nicholas D. Okoh
Primate of All Nigeria

*DIOCESAN VISION AND MISSIONS STATEMENTS TO COME AT THE BACK
COVER*