

**DIOCESE OF EVO  
(Anglican Communion)**

**PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS/BISHOP'S CHARGE**

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

**ON**

**SATURDAY, 5<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST, 2023**

**AT THE**

**SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTH SYNOD**

**HOLDING AT**

**ST. PHILIP'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, OROIGWE DISTRICT,  
OROIGWE/ELIOGBOLO ARCHDEACONRY,  
OBIO, RIVERS STATE**

**Theme:**

**“Jesus: Unique in all the World”  
(Philippians 2:5-11)**

## **BISHOP'S PICTURE**

## DIOCESAN ANTHEM

1. O praise our Lord Creator of Evo Diocese,  
Come brethren, let us love, teach, and preach the gospel;  
Lord, grant us grace and wisdom, the strength to spread Thy Word,  
And teach us how to pray aright,  
God bless our Diocese.
2. O God our Father, bind us in brotherhood and faith,  
Thy will on Diocese of Evo be accomplished;  
The gains of perfection is our desire, Lord we pray,  
To know Thee more and more O Lord,  
God bless our Diocese.

## SYNOD PRAYER

WORTHY of praise from every mouth, of confession from every tongue, of worship from every creature, is Your glorious name, O Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Glory to You, O Lord Jesus, Who, having become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, are highly exalted, and have opened unto us the gate of everlasting life.

We bow our knees unto You, and with all our hearts, confess You as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

We pray You, O Almighty God, who has given unto Your only-begotten Son, the unique name, Jesus, to be the exceeding sweet and supremely loveable, above every other name; to mercifully grant that we who devoutly venerate this holy name on earth may be filled with the divine humility of Christ; that having the same mind, which was also in Him, we may look not everyone on his own things, but also on the things of others; emptying our wills of pride and our hearts of complaining, and laying down our glories before the cross, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

O LORD Jesus Christ, in all the fullness of Your power so gentle, in Your exceeding greatness so humble: Bestow Your mind and Spirit upon us, who have nothing whereof to boast; that clothed in true humility, we may be exalted to true greatness. Grant this, O Lord, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God for evermore. **Amen.**

Rising from this synod, grant us the grace O God, to present ourselves as a display of Christ's uniqueness through our daily living and reflect His nature to those who are yet to come to Him and be an encouragement to those who look up to us as kingdom ambassadors. We pray this through our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

## **PROTOCOLS AND GREETINGS**

- Your Excellency, Sir Siminalayi Fubara, GSSRS, the Executive Governor of Rivers State,
- Your Grace, the Dean, Church of Nigeria/Archbishop of the Province of Niger Delta and Bishop, Diocese of Ikwerre, The Most Rev. Dr. Blessing Enyindah, JP, DSSRS,
- Your Graces and my Lords – other Archbishops and Bishops/heads of denominations here present or represented,
- The Rt. Hon. Martin Chike Amaewhule, DSSRS, Speaker, Rivers State House of Assembly,
- Hon. O.K. Chinda, DSSRS, Minority Leader, Federal House of Representatives, Abuja,
- Other members of the National and State Assemblies here present,
- The Executive Chairman of Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Hon. Barr. George Chituru Ariolu and members of your Executive Council,
- Other functionaries of Government including Judicial Officers and Guests of Honour here present or represented,
- The President of the Diocesan Women and Girls’ Ministries and wife of the Bishop, Mrs. Chinyere U. Ordu, JP, FCAI, (Mama Evo),
- The Diocesan Chancellor, Sir Barr. Nlerum Amadi & all other Legal Officers of the Diocese,
- Our Synod Guest Speaker, The Rt. Rev. Gabriel O. Elabor, OSA, JP, Bishop, Diocese of Esan in Bendel Ecclesiastical Province,
- Other Speakers at this Synod,
- Brethren of the House of Clergy and their wives,
- Our highly revered Royal Fathers, Chiefs and Elders,
- Our special Nominees to the Synod,
- Co-Chairmen – Sir Ike B.S. Chinwo and Ven. Chidi S. Worgu and members of the Diocesan Synod Planning Committee,
- Sir Jonathan Amadi and members of the Local (Oroigwe/Eliogbolo) Synod Planning Committee,

- The Diocesan Presidents of the Christian Men’s Fellowship (CMF), Council of Knights/Ladies, Lay Readers Association; and the Anglican Youth Fellowship (AYF),
- Synod delegates from our various Administrative Blocs and churches
- Other members of the Diocesan Community,
- Distinguished Members of the Fourth Estate of the Realm;
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

In the name of God, We welcome every one of you to this **Second Session of The Fifth Synod** of our Diocese of Evo, holding here in St. Philip’s Anglican Church, Oroigwe District; headquarters of our host Archdeaconry, Oroigwe/Eliogbolo.

We are thankful to you for making out time out of your very crowded schedules to be present with us in this annual gathering of our Diocese as delegates, specially invited guests, friends of the Diocese or observers and more especially, for your highly esteemed presence at this presentation of our Synod Address/Charge. Your presence is a great motivation to us and we greatly appreciate it.

### **OUR GRATITUDE**

We are grateful to God for His unlimited acts of goodness to us as a Diocese; for the grace extended to us for ministry and other vocations in our individual capacities as Bishop, Clergy and Laity.

On the occasion of the Synod of our Diocese this year, we wish to express our gratitude to the Chancellor, Sir Barr. Nlerum Amadi, other Legal Officers, the Clerical Synod Secretary, The Rev. Dr. Ebenezer Owhor, and all Diocesan officials; our Diocesan Office staff led by the Diocesan Financial Secretary, Mr Lawrence Chinda, the Clergy and Church teachers, their wives, Synod delegates, members of the various Boards, Church Councils and Steering Committees of the Cathedral, Archdeaconries, Deaneries, Districts, Parishes and Station churches; the leaders of the various Diocesan Activity Groups, ministries and units, our respected Royal fathers and heads of our various communities in Evo and other friends of our Diocese, for your ceaseless and sacrificial supports and encouragement in diverse forms, **especially in the last one year.**

I thank very specially my wife, Mama Evo, Mrs. Chinyere Uchenna Ordu, JP, for standing prayerfully strong with me in all our tasks as Bishop of this Diocese.

Our special gratitude goes to the Co-Chairmen, Sir Chief Ike B.S. Chinwo and The Venerable Chidi S. Worgu, Sub-Committees' Chairmen and members of the Diocesan Synod Planning Committee; the Archdeacon, The Venerable Okechukwu Owmondah, the Priests and wives in the Archdeaconry, the Chairman, Sir Jonathan Amadi, members of the Archdeaconry Local Organising Committee, Chairman and members of the St. Philip's Anglican Church District Local Organising Committee and all parishioners of the Archdeaconry, for your enormous open and behind-the-scene efforts towards the success of this Synod.

Prior to the take-off of this Synod on Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> of August, we paid courtesy visits to the following personalities within the Oroigwe/Eliogbolo Archdeaconry: Eze Sir P.A. Okene, JP, Eze Nduru III, and his Rumunduru Council of Chiefs, Elders and Elites, Sir & Lady Jonathan O. Amadi and family, Mrs. Cecilia Ani and family, Chief Dr. Emeka Orlu, Chairman and members of Eliozu Council of Chiefs, Elders and Elites, Engr. & Mrs. Victor Otubor and family, Chief Anthony Nwanwa and members of Eliogbolo Council of Chiefs, Elders and Elites, His Highness, Eze Sir Barr. Emmanuel Utchay, Eze Rugwu and his Elingbu Council of Chiefs, Elders and Elites, The Rt. Hon. Martin Chike Amaewhule, Speaker RSHA, his family and associates, HRH, King (Amb.) C.A. Tata, JP, Eze - Oha Oro-Igwe, Eburu Eno II, Nyerisi Eli Oro-Igwe Kingdom and his Council of Chiefs, Elders and Elites.

We deeply appreciate them for receiving us at their homes and palaces and for their generous gifts and hospitalities extended to us. May the Lord greatly reward them.

We also thank the Archdeaconry for offering to feed all Synod delegates all through the days of our stay here, at no cost to anyone.

We pray that the Lord will bless and reward you all for your untiring sacrifices and labour of love towards the growth of His church in Evo and in solidarity with Us, His servants.

#### **OUR SYNOD HOST - OROIGWE/ELIOGBOLO ARCHDEACONRY**

On Thursday, August 6, 2009, barely 24 days after the inauguration of our new Diocese of Evo, We convened a One-Day Synod at the All Saints Cathedral, Rumuokwursi, where among other crucial issues tabled for deliberation and ratification, was that of the creation of three (3) new archdeaconries as proposed by us. These were Woji Archdeaconry, Evo South East Archdeaconry and **Oroigwe/Eliogbolo**

**Archdeaconry**, with St. Philip's Anglican Church, Oroigwe Parish, proposed as its headquarters.

The Oroigwe/Eliogbolo Archdeaconry which has The Ven. Okechukwu Owhonda as its current Archdeacon, was inaugurated by Us, here at St. Philip's on Sunday, 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2009, with The Ven. Chidi Samuel Worgu inducted as the first Archdeacon. This Archdeaconry which replaced the old Evo Archdeaconry began with the following churches:

**1. St. Philip's Anglican Church, Oroigwe District**  
(Archdeaconry Headquarters)

This Church began in 1911 as St. Philip's Anglican Church, Rumunduru and in 1934, was renamed St. Philip's Oro-Igwe, to give worshippers from the other communities of Oroigwe a sense of belonging and ownership of the Church.

St. Philip's Oroigwe became a Parish, created out of the now defunct Evo District in April 1983 while still under the Diocese of Niger Delta and a District Church on Sunday, 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2009, following the creation/inauguration of Oroigwe/Eliogbolo Archdeaconry.

The first "Agent/Teacher" to serve in this Church at its early stage in 1911 was Lazarus Dakka Kalio, sent from the parent Church at Okwujagwu, Okrika. Since then, several other categories of ministers have served in this Church, up to the present Vicar, The Rev. Canon Bright Okocha and Curate, The Rev. John Eze.

**2. Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Elingbu Parish**

This Church was founded on Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> January, 1988, by the Anglican Worshippers from Elingbu community who decided to pull out of the old St. Mathias Church, Atalimbu, following the alleged renaming of the Church by their Atali brethren who decided to drop 'mgbu' which stood for Elingbu, from the name of the Church. The Church was inaugurated a Parish on Sunday, 12<sup>th</sup> May, 1996, by the then Bishop of the Diocese of Niger Delta, The Rt. Rev. Samuel Onyuku Elenwo (JP) (now late).

Lay Reader Simon Amadi was the first Catechist of the Church. Several other categories of ministers have served in this Church till the present Vicar, The Rev. Samuel Chukwuemeka Udeh.

**3. Church of the Holy Spirit, Elioazu Parish**

This Church was established by St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Rumuobiokani Parish (as it was then known) with The Rev. Canon Innocent U. Ordu (now our Diocesan Bishop) as Vicar, on **Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2000**, following a crusade organised by the Parish in Eliozu community from Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> to Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> May of that year with the Evang. Onyechi Daniel as the main speaker. The inaugural service took place inside the Eliozu community hall and was presided over by then Archdeacon of Evo and then Bishop-elect of the Diocese of Niger Delta North, The Ven. I.C.O. Kattey.

On **24<sup>th</sup> June, 2003**, the Church was constituted a Parish under the Diocesan Churches of Niger Delta North and was formerly inaugurated on the **18<sup>th</sup> of February, 2007** by the Bishop, The Rt. Rev. **I.C.O. Kattey, JP** (now retired Most Rev).

Deacon Ikechukwu Anene was the pioneer minister of the Church. Several other categories of ministers have served in this Church till the present Vicar, The Rev. Canon John Nkuene.

#### **4. Mount Zion Anglican Church, Eliogbolo**

This Church was planted on **Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> June, 2000** by then Emmanuel Anglican Church, Okoro-n'-Odo Parish (now Archdeaconry Headquarters in DNDN). The Church was christened **Mount Zion Anglican Church, Eliogbolo**, on 8<sup>th</sup> August, 2002, and was inaugurated as a Parish Church in the Diocese of Evo with two other Stations – Christ the Redeemer Anglican Church and Living Waters Anglican Church both in Eliogbolo community on **Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2015**, by The Rt. Rev. Innocent U. Ordu, JP.

The Late Engr. Osita Ejikeme was the first Church worker. Several other categories of ministers have served in this Church till the present Vicar, The Ven. Lucky Owhonda.

**From December 2009 till recently, other churches have been planted in the Oroigwe/Eliogbolo Archdeaconry and are making steady progress in their growth.** These are:

##### **1. Anglican Church of Advent, Rumuewhara**

This Church came into existence on **Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> December, 2009**, following the peaceful departure of the majority of the Anglican faithful of Rumuewhara community out of St. Philip's Oroigwe District, to start a new congregation within their community. This was with the full approval and blessing of the Archdeacon/Vicar, The Ven. Chidi

S. Worgu, the DCC and members of St. Philip's, Oroigwe District. The Diocesan Bishop, The Rt. Rev. Innocent U. Ordu, JP, presided over the inaugural service which held in the assembly hall of BAMEF Group of Schools belonging to Chief Joel Amadi and also christened the new Church, **Anglican Church of the Advent, Rumuewhara**, in that same service.

This Station was granted Parish autonomy by the Diocesan Board of Evo sitting at the All Saints Cathedral, Rumuokwurusi on **Monday 10<sup>th</sup> August, 2020**, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> October of the same year. Subsequently, it was inaugurated a Parish Church on Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> October and its newly completed Church building dedicated the following day, **Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> October 2020**. Both events were presided over by Us, The Rt. Rev. Innocent U. Ordu, JP, Diocesan Bishop. The Rev. Samuel Ebi Fedigha who was at this time the Supervising Priest, assumed the position of the **first Vicar of the Parish**. The Rev. Hosanna Naenwi (now Canon) was the first minister to serve in this Church as Supervising Priest. Several other categories of ministers have served in this Church till the present Vicar, The Rev. Canon Chukwuemeka Okonkwo.

## **2. Upper Room Anglican Church, Eliozu**

This Church was planted by the Church of the Holy Spirit, Eliozu Parish, on **Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2010**, on a temporary and rented address at Chidi Weli Close, off New Jerusalem Layout, within Eliozu. We christened the new Station on Pentecost Sunday, **23<sup>rd</sup> May, 2010**. The foundation Stone of the new Church building of Upper Room was laid by Us on **Sunday, August 24, 2014**, and was formally dedicated to the glory of God by Us on **Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> December, 2020**. The Station has applied to the Diocesan Board for a Parish status which is on the verge of being approved. The Rev. Moses Upright Anyaefena was the first Church minister. Several other categories of ministers have served in this Church till the present Supervising Priest, The Rev. Dr. James Irikefe.

## **3. Christ, The Redeemer Anglican Church, Eliobolo**

This Station was planted by St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery, on **Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> November, 2010**, along the Eliobolo axis of the East/West Road. We christened it "**Christ, The Redeemer Anglican Church, Eliobolo**" on **Sunday, 8<sup>th</sup> May, 2011**, and later ceded it to the Oroigwe/Eliobolo Archdeaconry on **1<sup>st</sup> January, 2015**. The Church building and Parsonage of the Station were both fully funded by St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery, and were dedicated

by Us on Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2012 and Easter Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 2019 respectively. Mr Uchechukwu Chinda (now Rev.) was the first Church minister/worker in this Station. Several other categories of ministers have served in this Church till the present Supervising Priest, The Rev. ThankGod Amadi.

#### **4. Living Waters Anglican Church, Eliogbolo.**

This Station was planted by the Oroigwe/Eliogbolo Archdeaconry Board under The Ven. Sunday Opara (now late) as Archdeacon on Sunday, 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2013 and christened by Us on Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> of May 2015. Evang. Christian Gabriel (now Rev.) was the first Church minister/worker in this Station. Other ministers who have served here include Evang. Boniface Onu (now Postulant) from January 2015 to February 2019 and Ordinand Dandison S.F. Okuru (now Reverend) from February 2019 to February 2020. Evang. Felix Obidi is the current Church Teacher.

#### **5. Rehoboth Anglican Church, Egbaa-Rumunduru**

This Station was planted by St. Philip's Anglican Church, Oroigwe District on 20<sup>th</sup> December, 2015, under The Ven. Sunday Opara (now late) as Vicar, and christened by Us on Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2017. The leader of the District Church Evangelism Unit, Bro. Okechukwu Nathaniel (now Deacon) served as the first Church worker (Local helper) of this Station for nine months (December 2015 to September 2016).

The first Church Teacher to be posted by Us to this Station was Mr. Onyedikachi Mbachu who assumed worship duties formally on Sunday, 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2016. He was succeeded by The Rev. Christian Gabriel who came in as Supervising Priest on the 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2020. He is still serving there.

#### **6. Holyhill Anglican Church, Elioizu**

This Station which was planted through the evangelistic efforts of St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery, under the then Rector, The Rev. Canon Charles Obi Mordi (now Ven) on Sunday, 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2013. The Church started as a worship centre in the uncompleted event centre building - a property belonging to Sir and Lady Amah Hart, at the foot of Elioizu flyover. It was christened by Us on Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2014, at its Elioizu flyover location.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> September 2017, the church moved to her present permanent site acquired by the mother church, St. Andrew's, Rumuobiokani Deanery within Elioizu (at the

boundary of Elioizu and Rumunduru communities) and had the first Church service on Sunday, 1<sup>st</sup> October of the same year.

The new Church building of the Station equally erected by St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery, was dedicated on Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2021. We ceded the Station to Oroigwe/Eliogbolo Archdeaconry on Sunday, 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2023.

Mr. Virginus Chibuzor (now Rev'd), Mr. Kenechukwu Daniel and Evang. Mrs. Stella Ogbonna (Deanery Mission Co-ordinator) served as the initial Church workers. Other ministers who have served in this Station include The Rev'd Paul Maduakona Ezigbo from January 2014 as Church Teacher and Supervising Deacon and later Priest from November 2016 to May 2018, under The Rev. Canon Kingsley Ohajianya as Rector; Mr. Virginus Chukwuemeka Chibuzor (on second mission), as Church Teacher from May 2018 to October 2018, as well as Evangelists Fidelis Amadi, Simon Nwaimo (both interim missionaries) from St Andrews sent to cover duties from October 2018 to December and December 2018 to February 2019, respectively.

The Rev. Gift Chukwumati was the Supervising Deacon from February 2019, with The Ven. Thompson Onyewuotu as Rector and Supervising Priest from December 2019 under The Rev. Canon Gospel Onuchuku, and The Rev. Joseph Asonye as Supervising Deacon and later Priest, in 2021. The current Supervising Priest is The Rev. Michael Terhemba Jov who assumed duties at the Station on 1<sup>st</sup> of October, 2022.

#### **7. Our Saviour Christ Anglican Church, Egbelu-Rumunduru**

This Station was planted by All Saints Cathedral, Rumuokwurusi, under The Rev. Canon Chris Chukwumati (then Canon Residentiary, now Ven.) in the school hall of Chim's International School, belonging to Lay Reader Chima Nwachukwu (now late) on Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2012. It was christened by Us on Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> December, 2012. The foundation stone of the ongoing new Church building was laid by Us on Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2015.

In September, 2016, the Church commenced the erection of a temporary structure for worship beside the new main Church building (under construction) and on Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> October, 2016, relocated from its temporary place of worship at Chim's International School Hall. The Station was ceded to Oroigwe/Eliogbolo Archdeaconry by Us on Sunday, 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023. The magnificent and imposing new Church building is still under construction.

Mr. Gift Chukwumati (now Rev'd) was the first Church worker/minister in this Station from July 2012 – August, 2016. He was succeeded by Church Teacher Okechukwu V. Nathaniel (now Deacon) from September 2016 to October, 2022. The Rev. Amoson Ijah is the current Supervising Priest.

### **8. Anglican Worship Centre, Elimbu**

This Station was planted by the Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Elimbu, Parish under the Rev. Canon Samuel John Ejekwu as Vicar on Sunday, 30<sup>th</sup> May, 2021.

Ord. Benjamin Peterson is presently serving as the pioneer Church Teacher.

***See our Synod Address at the Second Session of our First Synod (2011) hosted by Oroigwe/Eliogbolo Archdeaconry for full history of the advent of the Church in this Archdeaconry.***

### **OUR SYNOD SPEAKERS**

**The Rt. Rev. Gabriel O. Elabor, Osa, JP, Bishop, Diocese of Esan**  
(Our Synod Guest Preacher)

The Rt. Rev. Gabriel O. Elabor was born in Ubiaja, Esan South-East LGA of Edo State on Sunday, December 21, 1980, the same day his father was priested by the late Bishop W. Idahosa of Benin Diocese, to the royal lineage of Elabor. A prince of Ubiaja Kingdom, Bishop Gabriel Elabor is the son of the late Rev'd Emmanuel Ihensenkhen and Mrs. Victoria Amenkhiena Elabor of Ewu, in Esan Central L.G.A. of Edo State. He is the second to the last child in a family of seven children. He was baptised in February 1981, at All Saints' Anglican Church, Ubiaja, and was confirmed by the late Bishop A.A. Agbaje, at Our Saviour's Church, Ebelle, in 1998.

#### **Education:**

The Rt. Rev. Gabriel Elabor attended Central Primary School, Ubiaja; Edeikholor Grammar School Ubiaja, Amahor Secondary School Amahor, Ebelle Secondary Commercial School, Ebelle as well as Anglican Grammar School, Ebelle, graduating in 1991.

He received a Diploma in Theology as well as a Diploma in Religious Studies from Ezekiel College of Theology (in affiliation with Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma) in 2005 and 2006 respectively. He also bagged a National Diploma in Business Administration from King's Polytechnic, Ubiaja in 2010. In 2014, Bishop Elabor received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminology from Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. He also bagged a post-graduate Diploma in Religious Studies from Crowther Graduate Theological Seminary Abeokuta in 2017, as well as a Master of Arts Degree in Church History from the same University in 2018. He is currently pursuing a Master of Social Science Degree in Criminology.

**Appointments:**

The Rt. Rev. Gabriel Elabor was ordained a Deacon in 2006 by The Rt. Rev'd Friday John Imaekhai. He was also ordained a Priest in 2007 at the Cathedral of St. Andrew, Eguare, Ekpoma, and thereafter preferred Canon of the Cathedral in 2013. Finally, he was preferred Archdeacon and Collated in 2016 by Archbishop Friday John Imaekhai, Ph.D., JP.

**Pastoral Experience**

In terms of his pastoral service, Bishop Elabor has served as:

- Vicar, St. Johns Church, Ukpenu, July 2006 to June 2008;
- Assistant Priest, Cathedral of St. Mary, Kuala Lumpur, Diocese of West Malaysia, July to December, 2008;
- Vicar, St. Michael's Church, Emu, 2009 to 2010;
- Vicar, St. Peter's Church, Iki-Opoji, 2010 to 2011;
- Vicar, St. John's Church, Idumebo, 2011 to 2015;
- Canon in Residence, St. Andrew's Cathedral, Eguare, Ekpoma, 2016 to February 2017;
- Administrator, St. Andrew's Cathedral, Eguare, Ekpoma, March 2017 to July 2020, from where he was elected to the See of Esan.

**Administrative Experience:**

In addition to his pastoral duties and service, The Rt. Rev. Elabor has also served in the following administrative positions:

- Chaplain of the Anglican Youth Fellowship (Nig) Esan Diocese
- Prisons/Corps Members Chaplain, Diocese of Esan
- Brigade Chaplain, Diocese of Esan
- Bishop's Chaplain II
- Archbishop's Chaplain I
- Clerical Synod Secretary
- Member, Synod Actualization Committee
- Vice Chairman, Synod Actualization Committee
- Chairman, Diocesan Harvest Committee
- Chairman, Diocesan DIVCCON Mobilization Committee

The Rt. Rev'd Gabriel Oseikhuenmen Elabor, was elected to the See of Esan as the 3rd Bishop, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July, 2020. He was consecrated at the Cathedral Church of Advent, Gwarimpa, Abuja and enthroned at St. Andrew's Cathedral, Eguare, Ekpoma, on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September, 2020. The Rt. Rev'd Gabriel Oseikhuenmen Elabor is happily married to one female wife who is a medical Doctor, Dr. Chidalu Unoma Elabor. The union is blessed with three wonderful kids.

Bishop Elabor took us through the daily Synod meditations and will be ministering to us tomorrow, Sunday, 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2023, during the Synod thanksgiving service. We are grateful to his Lordship for sacrificially accepting to join us in this Synod as a major speaker. May the Lord greatly bless Your Lordship, family, Diocese/ministry in Jesus Name!

**The Rev. Dr. James Irikefe**  
(Our Bible Study teacher)

**Preamble**

The now Reverend **James Irikefe**, PhD; was formerly known and addressed as Ojo, James Irikefe. He was born on **October 27, 1956 at Otefe**, Oghara in Ethiopie West Local Government Area of Delta State, to the family of **Chief Justus Ogede & Mrs Ruth Erhiawariota Ojo**; both of blessed memories. James was number ten of his mother's ten; and twenty-one of his father's twenty-four children.

**Early Education**

He had his Primary education at the then **St. Matthew's Anglican Primary** (now Eyerekpoko Primary) School, Otefe, from 1963 to 1968. Remarkably, during one of their vacations, he accompanied an older niece to go write Common Entrance Examination and as he stood by the window watching, one of the invigilators approached him; and the following conversation ensued: "**Young boy, how are you, and what's your name?**" I'm fine Sir, my name is James! "**How old are you?**" I am ten years old. "**What class are you?**" I am in Primary Four. "**Can you write?**" He responded in the affirmative with excitement and that's how he was invited to write his first Common Entrance Examination, in 1966.

Sadly though, James did not have a formal Secondary Education. His father genuinely confessed he could no longer at his age bear the cost of sponsoring a child in Secondary School. However, twelve years later, James enrolled as a part time student at the Institute of Continuing Education, Benin City; Edo State. Due to paucity of funds, he

was only able to sustain the programme for four months, and registered to write the General Certificate Examination (GCE), in 1981 and the Senior School Certificate (SSC), in 1994. Between 1993 and 1996, he was Council Chairmanship Candidate in his L.G.A. of Ethiope West in Delta State.

In 2004, still desiring to study, he enrolled at the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), when the Port Harcourt Study Centre was established. This was made possible by the efforts of his dear wife – Grace. Sadly again, the Open University was then simply too open; it had no graduation plan.

### **The Call to Godly Priesthood**

The call to be an ordained minister of God, suddenly, and gladly resurrected his hunger for education as can be gleaned from the records below:

- Bishop Crowther College of Theology, Okene Kogi State, Dip. Th/RS - 2010
- Bishop Crowther College of Theology, Okene, Kogi State, B.Th - 2011/ 2015
- Crowther Graduate Theological Seminary, Abeokuta, Ogun State, M.Th - 2016/ 2017
- Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, Oyo State, M/A (Religious Studies) - 2018
- Crowther Graduate Theological Seminary, Abeokuta, Ogun State, PhD - 2017/2019

### **CHURCH WORK**

The Rev. Dr. Irikefe has served as:

- Teacher, Adult Sunday School: St. Matthew’s Anglican Church (SMAC), Nkpogu, Deanery, Port Harcourt - 2001-2011
- Evangelism Officer: Christian Men’s Fellowship (CMF), SMAC, Nkpogu Deanery, Port Harcourt - 2001 -2003
- Vice President: CMF, SMAC, Nkpogu Deanery, Port Harcourt - 2004- 2006
- Licensed Lay-Reader: Niger Delta North Diocese, Port Harcourt - 2002 – 2011
- Chairman, Adult Sunday School, Niger Delta North Diocese - 2007 – 2011
- Superintendent: Adult Sunday School, (SMAC) Nkpogu Deanery, PH - 2009 – 2011

### **Diaconate Ordination:**

His ordination as Deacon was done by The Rt. Rev. (Dr.) Blessing A. Erifeta JP, Bishop, Diocese of Sapele at St. Jude’s Anglican Church, Jeddo Okpe LGA, Delta State on July 8, 2011. He was Priested on July 7, 2012 by The Rt. Rev. (Dr.) Blessing A. Erifeta JP,

Bishop, Diocese of Sapele, at St. Mark's Anglican Church, Oghara Junction, Ethiope West LGA, Delta State.

### **Priestly Service**

He has served in the following capacities in the Church:

- **Deacon/Priest:** St. Peter's Anglican Church, Ogharefe, Delta State  
2011 – 2014
- **Curate:** St. Stephen's Anglican Church, New Ogorode Road, Sapele – 2014 - 2019
- ***In July 2019, Rev. Dr. James Irikefe who was ordained and serving in his home Diocese of Sapele in consultation with his wife, Hon. Justice Grace Irikefe, resolved to transfer and continue his priestly service in the Diocese of Ewo. Having consulted Us thereafter, he formally applied to the Bishop of Sapele, The Rt. Rev. (Dr) Blessing A Erifeta, JP, to transfer his service to Ewo. His request received the blessing and approval of his home Bishop. Consequently, we absorbed him into the ministerial team of our Diocese as a Priest and thereafter he has been assigned as follows:***

**Curate:** St. Nicholas Anglican Church, Woji District - **January 3, to February 2020**

**Curate:** St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Rumuobiokani - **February 2020 to 26 February, 2023**

**Supervising Priest:** Upper Room Anglican Church, 19 Farm Road, Elioizu – **February 27, 2023 till date.**

The Rev James Irikefe, PhD, is a Patron – Boys Brigade of Nigeria. He is happily married to his beautiful, beloved and amiable wife, friend and helper – Hon Justice Grace Tamunobaribi Eserophe Irikefe (rtd) and they are blessed with Three children (Bobby, Fubi and Favour); Four grandchildren – 2 Boys, and Twin Girls (Joel, Rukky, Esther and Estelle). For his hobbies, The Rev. Dr. Irikefe loves travelling and sharing.

The Rev. Dr. James Irikefe has been our Bible Study leader/teacher in this Synod and has ably undertaken that task so far. He will be concluding tomorrow morning with Bible Study 3. We are grateful to him for cheerfully accepting the role we assigned to

him in this Synod. Rev. James, may the Lord greatly bless you, your family/household and ministry!

**Justice Elsie Thompson**  
(Synod Talk Speaker)

Nwanwuri Thompson is from Port Harcourt, Rivers State Nigeria and is a serving Judge of the High Court of Rivers State Nigeria. Called to the English Bar in 1984 after obtaining her LL.B Honours degree from Queen Mary College, University of London. She was later called to the Nigerian bar in 1985. She holds an LLM in International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law from the Aberystwyth University, Wales.

Justice Thompson was elected to the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights for a term of six years on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2010 as the first Nigerian. Her term ended in July 2016. She was also elected to serve as the Vice-President of the Court from 2014 to 2016.

Prior to her appointment as a High Court Judge, Justice Elsie Thompson was in active private legal practice for 20 years and worked on human rights cases with a bias for championing women's rights. She has served in several associations notably the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), where she held several positions including the offices of the Country Vice President (National President) and Regional Vice President for Africa. She is currently a member of the Board of trustees of FIDA Nigeria.

Justice Thompson is a resource person at seminars and conferences and a mentor to many young lawyers. She has presented several papers on women and children's rights as well as other topical legal issues. She is also a member of the Honourable Society of Gray's Inn and a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, United Kingdom.

Justice Thompson is happily married to Sir Igonibo Emmanuel Thompson and they are blessed with children. She is a Knight of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Anglican Communion.

Over the years, Justice Thompson has supported our family and episcopal ministry in Evo as a dependable ally and friend. We shall continue to be grateful to her. She delivered one of our Synod talks on the **“Rising cases of gender violence in the society: The response of the Church.”** May God greatly reward her!

**Dr. Steve Ogan**

(Synod Talk Speaker)

Dr. Steve Ogan is a multi-talented and versatile person. His passion is to develop people to fulfil their primary assignments in life while 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 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 and 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 honoured 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 220 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 many African nations. 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 Accra, Ghana.

Dr. Ogan serves as a Teacher and Trainer for governmental and corporate institutions. He is a trustee of several boards, including Intercessors for Africa and University of Agriculture Chapel, Umudike, Abia State, the Rainbow Book Club which won, on behalf of the Rivers State Government, the Port Harcourt World Book Project of UNESCO in 2014.

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

Rev. Dr. Steve Ogan has over the years encouraged and supported our ministry in the Anglican Communion. We consider him to be one of us in the communion as he readily accepts to minister to us each time he is invited. He is indeed a true brother, friend and partner in the ministry of the gospel. We will always be grateful to him.

Dr. Ogan spoke to us in this Synod on **“The spiritual and social effects of homosexuality and other deviant sexual behaviours and perversions in our modern society.”** May the Lord bless him abundantly and flourish his life, family and ministry. Amen.

**Prof. Clement Eme Adibe, DSSRS**

(Synod Talk Speaker)

Clement Eme Adibe is a professor of Political Science at DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois, USA. He was born in Rumuigbo, Obio/Akpor Local Government Area to Late Mr. Andrew Amaewhule Adibe and Late Mrs. Leah Nyekpunwo Adibe. He completed his primary education at Holy Trinity School, Rumuapara, in 1976, and secondary school at Akpor Grammar School, Ozuoba, in 1981. Thereafter, he went to the Federal School of Arts and Sciences, Ogoja, Cross River State, in 1982. In 1983, he began his

undergraduate studies in Political and Administrative Studies at the University of Port Harcourt (Uniport), and graduated in 1987. He proceeded for the National Youth Service (NYSC) programme at Ogun State (1987-1988). After completing his NYSC programme, he worked briefly as Administrative Officer with the National Electoral Commission (NEC) in Port Harcourt Local Government Area (PHALGA), and taught as an Instructor at the University of Port Harcourt, Department of Political and Administrative Studies (1988-1989).

In 1989, Eme Adibe left Nigeria on a Canadian scholarship to pursue post-graduate studies at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada. He obtained his MA in Political Science in 1990 and immediately began his PhD programme, which was supported by scholarships from Queen's University and the Social Science Research Council, New York, and The MacArthur Foundation, Chicago, USA. He completed his PhD in Political Science in 1994 and was awarded his degree in 1995. He subsequently took up appointment with the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) in Geneva, Switzerland. He returned to Canada late in 1995 to pursue post-doctoral research through the Killam Post-Doctoral Fellowship programme at Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, where he also served as an Assistant Professor. From there, he joined the faculty of DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois, USA, in 1996, where he currently resides with his family.

Professor Eme Adibe has held several research fellowships. He was an International Institutions Fellow at the Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA (1992-1993); Thomas J. Watson, Jr. Institute for International Studies, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, USA (1993-1994); Center for International Affairs, University of Ghana, Legon (1993); the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), Oslo, Norway (2001-2002).

Professor Eme Adibe served as a member of the Board of Directors of the Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS) from 1997-2000; member of the Executive Board of ACUNS (1999). He has lectured and presented at seminars, conferences and colloquia around the world. His publications include *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Somalia* (1995); "The Liberian Conflict and the ECOWAS-UN Partnership" (1998); "Do Regional Organizations Matter?" (2003); "Accountability in Africa and the International Community" (2010); "From Benign Neglect to Strategic Engagement: The Challenges of Transforming America's African Policy in the Age of

Obama” (2014); “Trump and Merkel are Proof that Fear Drives Politics,” *Fortune Magazine*, December 19, 2015; “Reimagining Africa: A Continent in Transition and Its Implications for World Order,” *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of International Studies*, 2022.

Professor Eme Adibe who received the Distinguished Service Star of Rivers State (DSSRS) award from the Governor of Rivers State, His Excellency Dr. Nyesom Wike (GSSRS) in 2017 is married with four children.

Professor Eme delivered one of our Synod talks on “**Political transitions and the quest for a better Nigeria.**” We are immensely grateful to him for sacrificially coming to address us on this critical national concern. God bless him!

## **OUR SYNOD THEME:**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The theme of our Synod this year is “**Jesus: Unique in all the World.**” This theme challenges us to reexamine and strengthen our view of Jesus, taking into consideration the so many contrasting opinions and teachings about Him, particularly, from religious groups and sets outside the Christian faith.

There are many out there (including some persons who profess faith in the biblical claim so strongly upheld by the Christian Church over many centuries that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven and to God), who have often asked the question: “What will happen to those who believe otherwise?”

In responding to this question, our Synod theme seeks to engage us in a scriptural evaluation of Jesus and all that make Him a unique personality, that is, distinct or special from others – a spiritual exercise that can help us stand strong in our conviction that He is the only way.

But first, let us undertake an **analysis of the Epistle to the Philippians**, from where we drew our theme. This Book of the Bible was written by Apostle Paul to the first Church he established on European soil, in the Roman Province of Macedonia. It was written while the apostle was in prison, and at a time when he was troubled by the opposition of other Christian workers towards him and was distressed by false teaching

in the Church at Philippi. Yet, this letter breathes a joy and confidence that can be explained only by Paul's deep faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul's immediate reason for writing the letter was to thank the Philippian Christians for the gift which they had sent to him in his time of need (Phil. 2:25; 4:18). He used this opportunity to reassure them so that they may have courage and confidence in spite of all his troubles and their own as well. He pleaded with them to turn the example of Jesus, particularly, his humility and self-sacrifice, into a pattern for the Christian life (Phil. 1:18-30; 2:5-11). He admonishes them to avoid being controlled by selfish ambition and pride, reminding them that their life in union with Christ was a gift of God's grace which they had received through faith and not through obedience to the ceremonies of the Jewish Law. He also wrote to them of the joy and peace that God gives to those who live in union with Christ.

This letter is marked by its emphasis on joy, confidence, unity and perseverance in the Christian faith and life. It also reveals the deep affection Paul had for the Church at Philippi.

It is from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> verses of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Chapter of this Epistle that we shall be basing our discourse on the subject of Jesus' uniqueness.

**In Philippians chapter 2, verse 5 to 11, we draw our theme text, thus:**

*“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:*

*And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of [things] in heaven, and [things] in earth, and [things] under the earth; And [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (KJV)*

In the above text, we find a unique feature of the Epistle to the Philippians. It is what some have described as a Christological hymn. This beautiful rhythmical passage presents a brief lesson in Christology, beginning with Jesus' pre-incarnate state, followed by His incarnation, crucifixion, and ultimately His heavenly exaltation.

In this text, Paul lists out the steps which Jesus took that stood Him out (to earn the name above every name).

**Verse 6** contains the great Christological section known as the Kenosis passage (verse 6-11; see John 1:1-18; Col. 1:15-23; 2:9,10; Heb. 1:1-4, the definitive Christological passages). The ‘form’ (Gk *morphe*) of God indicated the essential inward reality that would manifest the outward, visible glory of God in heaven. Satan had grasped for equality with God (Isaiah 14:12-14), Adam and Eve had grasped for it (Gen. 3:5,6) but Christ had no need to grasp for that which He already had (Phil. 2:6).

**Verse 7** contains the phrase, “made Himself of no reputation” (Gk Kenosis, literally, “empty”). It expresses the idea that Jesus set aside, not His deity, but the glory of His deity – His privileges (verse 7; see John 13:3,4; 1 Pet. 3).

“Coming in the likeness of men” was a new phenomenon (Phil. 2:7). God made man in His likeness (Gen. 1:26); now He voluntarily made Himself in man’s likeness. In so doing, “He humbled Himself” (Phil. 2:8; the same word translated “lowliness” in verse 3).

The word ‘humility’ means a yielding of the heart. While the Old Testament understanding of humility includes lowliness or affliction, its New Testament meaning is primarily a personal quality of dependence on God and respect for other people. Humility is not a natural human instinct; it is a God-given virtue of holy living. The essence of the mind of Christ was humility and sacrificial love for others, while the essence of the unregenerate human mind is selfishness and pride. Jesus Christ’s life provides the perfect example of humility. Though He was and is eternal deity, Jesus appropriated humanity with all the attributes of that personhood, except sinfulness (Phil. 2:5-8).

Jesus emptied Himself of the desire for:

1. Recognition (2:7)
2. Personal profit (7,8)
3. Life itself (8)

Accordingly, believers should take heed to humble themselves to be what they need or desire to be.

At a time (when) the Greek world abhorred the quality of humility, Christ came as a humble Saviour. He humbled Himself to become obedient to God’s will, which led to

His death on the cross. Jesus urged His followers to humble themselves before God and man and to ‘practise’ humility.

*“For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted”. Luke 14:11 (KJV) (See also Matt. 23:12; 18:1; Luke 18:14)*

Scripture promises that God will exalt those who are genuinely humble:

*“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.” James 4:10 (KJV) (See also Luke 1:52, 1 Pet. 5:6; Col. 2:18)*

Humility comes not from self but from God and results in the praise of God.

**Verse 8** indicates that the death of the cross was Jesus’ final humiliation. No Roman citizen could be crucified; Paul the writer of the Epistle to the Philippians was exempt; the Philippian readers, unless they were slaves, were exempt. This form of death carried an Old Testament curse:

*“His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; **(for he that is hanged [is] accursed of God;)** that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee [for] an inheritance” – (Deuteronomy 21:23; KJV).*

This was the type of death Jesus subjected Himself to.

**From Verse 6-8**, we note Jesus’ voluntary seven-step descent into self-emptying:

1. Jesus made Himself of no reputation;
2. He took the form of a bondservant;
3. He came in the likeness of man;
4. Found in appearance as man;
5. Humbled Himself;
6. Became obedient to death;
7. Even the death on the cross.

**Verse 9:** The opening word “Wherefore” refers to the previous context of verses 6-8. Jesus showed the greatest example of a humble servant. Rather than coming first as God and King, Jesus freely took on the form of a human being. He was humiliated and oppressed, following the will of the Father, in order to be the sacrifice for our sins. As

a result, “Jesus” will be given the ultimate glory and honour... “God has highly exalted Him.” In the two other places in the Bible where the phrase “highly exalted” is used, we find interesting connections. In 1 Chronicles 14:2, David’s kingdom was “highly exalted.” In Psalm 47:9, God himself was “highly exalted.” Jesus was highly exalted both as the coming Son of David and as the Lord. God’s way “Up” is “Down.” Jesus’ voluntary descent into self-emptying (verses 6-8) brought about the Father’s determination to lift Him up (verses 9-11).

The last phrase of this verse notes that the name of Jesus (Phil. 2:10) is a name honoured and empowered above every other name on earth. This name, ‘Yeshua’ translated Joshua in English, in the original Hebrew, means “God saves”, and was predicted before His birth. Both Mary and Joseph were told this name while Jesus was still in the womb (Luke 1:31; Matthew 1:21).

*“And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS” - Luke 1:30-31 (KJV)*

He fulfilled the prophecies of the Messiah by becoming the suffering servant (Isaiah 53) who would live again (1 Cor. 15) and will one day return to reign forever.

**Verses 10 & 11** describe the bowing of every knee and confession by every tongue. What does this mean? This statement emphasises the universal Lordship of Jesus Christ. Bowing of every knee will be no mere genuflection but an expression of total submission and worship from more beings than we can now envision (v. 10).

See also Revelation 5:13:

*“And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, [be] unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” (KJV)*

What this means is that one day, all people, whether they are believers or unbelievers, will acknowledge Jesus and bow to Him and every tongue will confess that He is Lord and this will all be done to glorify God.

“Jesus Christ is Lord” includes three names (Phil. 2:11): **Jesus** - His earthly name - Acts 2:22:

*“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know” (KJV);*

**Christ** - His Messianic title or intercessory name - Acts 2:31:

*“He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption” (KJV); and **Lord** - His glorious eternal title - Acts 2:36; Rev. 17:14:*

*“Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (KJV);*

*“These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him [are] called, and chosen, and faithful” (KJV)*

**From verse 9 to 11**, we note also God the Father’s seven steps of lifting Jesus up:

1. God highly exalted Him;
2. Gave Him a name;
3. Those in heaven will bow;
4. Those on earth will bow;
5. Those under the earth will bow;
6. Every tongue will confess Him Lord;
7. Jesus is Lord!

Our synod theme text, Philippians 2:5-11, just like 1 Timothy 3:16, beautifully summarises the message about Jesus’ life, death and resurrection and its significance. The text contains the early Christian Church’s confessions of faith. The apostles proclaimed Jesus as the Saviour, who by His death and resurrection, had opened heaven to all who would believe in Him – Hebrews 10:19-22.

What is Philippians 2 telling us? We’re supposed to be like Jesus in how we complete each other’s joy, we are supposed to be like Him in our humility, but we’re not to be concerned with becoming like Him in exaltation. Because He is our pride and joy, when He is exalted, we’re satisfied.

## Who is JESUS?

2000 years ago, a man appeared on the scene of history. His name is Jesus. Born in Bethlehem in Judea, probably in 5 BC, towards the end of the reign of Herod the Great, Jesus grew up into manhood just like every other person but He was different to anyone else. He was no ordinary man and was unmatched in history.

Popularly referred to as Jesus of Nazareth, a village in Galilee, He grew up and lived most of His life in obscurity there until He began His public ministry probably in AD 30.

As an itinerant preacher and healer in His mid-thirties, His message was: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near!' (Matthew 3:2; 4:17). It was a message loaded with political freight and revolutionary fervour. 'The Kingdom of God (or 'of heaven') was a potent idea for Jews that expressed the sense that their real king was God and that one day, He would come to deliver them from alien rule, and establish them again as His chosen people. He broke religious taboos in reaching out to the outcasts and 'untouchables', and proclaimed a kingdom in which the poor are blessed and the self-righteous condemned.

Despite His refusal to openly proclaim Himself as the Messiah, and avoiding political arguments, Jesus was quickly executed for political sedition at the age of about 38, leaving about 120 followers behind to continue with His earthly ministry. The date of His death can fairly be fixed around April AD 33. So, from sometime in mid-AD 30 until then, He had travelled around Galilee, Samaria and Judea (then under Roman rule). Occasionally, He ventured outside traditional Jewish territory (Matthew 15:21; 16:13), but basically, He confined Himself to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel' as He put it (Matthew 10:6). He left no writings, yet 47% of the New Testament contains a collection of writings of such extraordinary quality about Him that have shaped world history and continue deeply to affect the lives of those who read them.

Jesus Christ stands different from all other founders of faith, political or religious leaders, living or dead. He was and is the Son of God, the most remarkable man who ever lived. He is the centre-piece of human civilisation and His very being cries out for us to entrust our lives to Him. That is why we call what happened before Him 'BC' (Before Christ) and what happened after Him 'AD' (*anno domini*, in the year of our Lord). Some people think He was just a 'good religious teacher.' However, that suggestion does not fit with the facts.

## HIS UNIQUENESS

So, what are those qualities of Jesus that make us adjudge Him as a unique personality in all the world?

**First, Jesus Christ is unique in his birth.** Only He, was born of a virgin – A virgin, Mary, conceived by the Holy Spirit to bring Him to birth:

*“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us”. Matthew 1:23 (KJV) (See also Luke 1:26-35)*

He was God Himself, coming to the earth in human form with a unique mission, and that is, to bring light to those in darkness and ignorance of sin (Matthew 1:21). He was the Saviour being born into a man’s heart, thus bringing the hope of salvation and eternal life to the hopeless (1 John 5:11,12).

**Second, Jesus was unique in prophesy and in His own claims.** No other leader’s life was foretold so clearly and accurately as in the case of Jesus:

*“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, [though] thou be little among the thousands of Judah, [yet] out of thee shall he come forth unto me [that is] to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth [have been] from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2; KJV)).*

There are a great number of Old Testament prophecies concerning His birth, life, resurrection, person and purpose, all of which were fulfilled by Him and no other (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7; 53; Psalm 16:10; 22; Zechariah 11:12-13; 13:7).

**He is unique in substance and position.** He alone is both God and man (John 10:30). He Himself, claimed to be the unique Son of God – on an equal footing with God (Matthew 16:15-17). Jesus frequently referred to Himself as the “Son of Man” (Matthew 8:20), and 10 times in John’s Gospel, Jesus is proclaimed the “Son of God” (John 1:1,4,34).

Jesus assumed the authority and ability to forgive sins and people felt forgiven (Mark 2:1-12; Luke 7:36-50). He said that one day He would judge the world and that what would matter then would be how we had responded to Him in this life. Jesus is unique because God the Father has committed all judgement to Him (John 5:22). Having lived in this world perfectly, He is the only One qualified to judge the world.

C.S. Lewis pointed out that: ‘A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher: He would either be insane or else he would be ‘the Devil of Hell.’ ‘You must make your choice”, he writes, ‘either Jesus was, and is, the Son of God or else He was insane or evil.” C.S. Lewis goes on and says, ‘But let us not come up with any patronising nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.’

Jesus Christ is unique because He claims to be the **only way to the Father** (God):

*“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”- John 14:6 (KJV),*

a claim no other in history has ever made. Apostle Peter affirms this claim of Jesus while responding to the people’s reaction after the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate:

*“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”- Acts 4:12 (KJV).*

There is no other way to salvation apart from Jesus.

**Third, Jesus was unique in character:** Many people who do not profess to be Christians regard Jesus as the supreme example of a selfless life. Dostoevsky, himself a Christian, said, ‘I believe there is no one lovelier, deeper, more sympathetic and more perfect, than Jesus. I said to myself, with jealous love, that not only is there no one else like Him, but there could never be anyone like Him.’ As far as His teaching is concerned, there seems to be general agreement that it is the purest and best ever to have fallen from human lips. Drawing from his earlier argument that it seemed clear that Jesus could neither have been insane or evil, C.S. Lewis concludes that ‘however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God.’

**Fourth, Jesus is unique in His existence,** John 1:1-2. Jesus alone exists before the beginning of time.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. (KJV)*

*Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am (John 8:58; KJV).*

In the gospel of John, there are seven instances where Jesus makes a statement alluding to His own divinity. These are known as the seven “**I AM**” statements. When Moses asked God how He should be identified to Israel, God said, “I AM WHO I AM... Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM’ has sent me to you.” This phrase implies the simplest expression of God’s nature: He just is, He must be. When Jesus uses this phrasing, He is deliberately invoking the same essence. By using the title of “I AM”, everyone listening knows exactly what He means: that He is God (John 10:33). Those who suggest that Jesus never actually claimed to be God should consider the reaction of the religious leaders to His words, shown in the next verse. They are so enraged that they attempted to stone Jesus (John 8:59) right then and there:

*“Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.” (KJV)*

#### **Fifth, Jesus is unique in His reign:**

*“But unto the Son [he saith], Thy throne, O God, [is] for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness [is] the sceptre of thy kingdom”. Hebrews 1:8 (KJV)*

Only Jesus reigns forever. Concerning this, a song writer says:

*“There are kings, there are kingdoms, There are mountains, there are thrones, Only Jesus will reign forever, To His kingdom there shall be no end.”*

#### **Sixth, Jesus is unique in His teachings.**

Jesus had remarkable powers of healing, which created a huge response. But all the Gospels agree that it was His teaching which captivated people and conveying a powerful sense of the mysterious significance of His own person. He taught ‘with authority’, ‘not like the teachers of the law’:

*“For he taught them as [one] having authority, and not as the scribes” (Matthew 7:29; KJV).*

#### **Seventh, Jesus is unique in His miraculous works.**

In His ministry, Jesus demonstrated the attributes of God. He showed that he had power to heal the sick (Matthew 9:1-7) and even raise the dead (John 11; Luke 7:12-15; 8:41-55) in fulfilment of the scriptures which promised the presence of God to His people. He calmed the wind and waves (Mark 4:37-41; Psalm 89:8-9); and demonstrated ability to know people inside out (John 1:46-50; 2:23-25; Psalm 139).

#### **Eighth, Jesus was unique in that He lived a pure and sinless life**

He never committed a sin and, although He was fully human, He had no sin nature. That is why He is the Holy One of God (Acts 3:14; John 6:69; 1Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5).

**Ninth, Jesus is unique in that He alone had power over His own death and the ability to take back His life again** (John 2:19; 10:17-18). Note that His resurrection was not a “spiritual” one, but physical (Luke 24:39). His resurrection from the dead, never to die again, distinguished Him as the unique Son of God (Romans 1:4).

**Tenth, Jesus is unique in His sacrificial death and resurrection.**

In ancient Greek mythology, the hero, Prometheus, was captured and chained to a mountain peak, where he was sentenced to stay forever. Each day, a giant eagle arrived to feast on his liver. Hermes came to him and said, “Do not hope for an end to your suffering until a god appears as your substitute in torment, ready to descend for you into the Hades.” According to the myth, this was done by the wise and just god, Chiron, who sacrificed himself for Prometheus and delivered him from torment.

This story is in some ways, a picture of what happened for us the day Jesus died on the cross. Mankind was bound by sin, and there was no hope of escape unless God took our place. And that is exactly what happened. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on our behalf and paid the penalty for our sin. He had spoken of His death much earlier as, ‘for others’, ‘a ransom for many’ (Mark 10:45; John 6:51; Luke 18:31-34). It was the death of Christ – the shedding of His blood – that satisfied the demand of a Holy God as payment for our sins (Hebrews 9:12,22). Where we to write a thousand days, we still could not express the meaning of Christ’s sacrifice for the sins of mankind. Its full significance is beyond our comprehension.

The death of Jesus (despite the Gospels’ record of His powerful impact on many in His time), appears to paint a picture of one whose life actually ended in apparent failure. But after His death, all that changed. Within a few years, a new strong Jesus movement sprang up with thousands of disciples to the point that even opponents of the movement recognised that it had ‘turned the world upside down’ (Acts 17:6).

What exactly could have accounted for this turn of event in Jesus’ favour and honour? It is what some have tagged ‘The Great Comeback’ – His resurrection from the dead! (Matthew 28). The Gospels are united in recording that Jesus also predicted His resurrection (Mark 9:30-32; Matthew 17:22-23).

Who would not be inspired by the competitor who makes a comeback after being down and seemingly out of the running? The runner who stumbles while coming off the starting blocks but moves gradually into the lead, stirs the imagination of us all. The team that can come from behind in the last moments to win, excites us even more than the team that constantly wins by scoring big in the first part of the game.

Jesus made the most amazing comeback the world has ever seen. After being humiliated, insulted, spat upon, whipped, beaten, and nailed to a cross, His executioners claimed victory and declared Him dead. A military guard secured His tomb. How could anyone be more down and out than that?

Yet the struggle was not over; it was only the beginning. Three days later, He rose from the grave and reappeared as the victor over sin, death and hell – a comeback like no other in all of history!

### **SS&S 152**

Low in the grave He lay,  
Jesus my Savior!  
Waiting the coming day,  
Jesus my Lord!

#### *Chorus*

*Up from the grave He arose,  
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes;  
He arose a victor  
From the dark domain  
And He lives forever  
With His saints to reign.  
He arose! He arose!  
Hallelujah! Christ arose!*

### **IN CHRIST ALONE (Stanza 3)**

There in the ground His body lay,  
Light of the world by darkness slain;  
Then bursting forth in glorious day,  
Up from the grave He rose again!  
And as He stands in victory,  
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me;  
For I am His and He is mine—  
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

### **A&M 140**

1. Jesus lives! thy terrors now  
Can no more, O death, appal us;

Jesus lives! by this we know  
Thou, O grave, canst not enthrall us.  
Alleluia.

2. Jesus lives! henceforth is death  
But the gate of life immortal:  
This shall calm our trembling breath,  
When we pass its gloomy portal.  
Alleluia.
3. Jesus lives! for us he died;  
Then, alone to Jesus living,  
Pure in heart may we abide,  
Glory to our Saviour giving.  
Alleluia.
4. Jesus lives! our hearts know well  
Naught from us his love shall sever;  
Life nor death nor powers of hell  
Tear us from his keeping ever.  
Alleluia.
5. Jesus lives! to him the throne  
Over all the world is given:  
May we go where he is gone,  
Rest and reign with him in heaven.  
Alleluia.

Are you feeling out of the running today? Have you stumbled badly? Think about Jesus' suffering. Ponder His resurrection. Ask Him to give you the victory. Just imagine what He has to offer you, no matter how far down you are now! Jesus is the great overcomer! No one has ever overcome like Him.

**Finally, Jesus is unique in the names and titles he bears or that are ascribed to Him.** Below are such names and titles in their A – Z order:

1. Alpha – The beginning of all things - Rev. 21:6.
2. Bread of life – The one essential food – John 6:35
3. Chief Cornerstone – A sure foundation of life – Ephesians 2:20
4. Counsellor – Isaiah tells us that Jesus is a wonder of a counsellor! He is the counselor from God's right hand. He is God's special counsel and everything He says is the very counsel of God – Isaiah 9:6.
5. Christ – (Gk. *Christos*, Literally, "the Anointed One.") This title makes clear Jesus' redemptive mission and affirms Him as the fulfilment of Old Testament prophesy – Matt. 16:16; Heb. 5:5; 13:8
6. Door – By Him all who believe have access to heaven – John 10:7,9
7. Daystar/Dayspring – To give light to them that sit in darkness – 2 Pet. 1:19; Luke 1:78

8. Deliverer – He delivers them from their enemies and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob – Rom. 11:26
9. Desire of all nations – “I shall come and I will fill this house with glory – Haggai 2:7
10. Everlasting Father,  
Eternal Ruler, Elohim
11. Firstborn from the dead,  
Faithful and True  
Friend of children  
Friend of sinners
12. God – Father of all – Heb. 1:8  
Great High Priest – Our perfect Mediator – Heb. 3:1; 4:4  
Governor among the Nations
13. Head of All principality and power  
Heir of God  
Highly exalted one  
Holy One of Israel  
Hope of glory, of salvation
14. Immanuel (Hebrew, Literally, “God with us”) – The one who always stands with us – Matt. 1:23
15. Jesu (Greek *Jesous*, Literally, “Yahweh saves”)– Matt. 1:21; Heb. 2:9; 13:8
16. King of kings, Lord of lords – The Sovereign Almighty – Rev. 19:16
17. Lamb of God – He offered His life as a sacrifice for sins – John 1:29  
Light of the World - One who brings hope and gives guidance – John 9:5  
Lord – Sovereign creator and Redeemer – Rom. 10:9, Heb. 7:14; 1 Cor. 2:8
18. Mediator – Redeemer who brings forgiven sinners into the presence of God – 1 Tim. 2:5, Heb. 8:6, 9:15  
Man of sorrows  
Man of war  
Messiah – The title connecting Christ (Hebrew, Literally “the Anointed One”) with the Old Testament prophecy of a coming Prophet, Priest and King – John 1:41
19. Omega – The end of all things – Rev. 21:6
20. Prophet – Faithful proclaimer of God’s word – Luke 13:33  
Prince of glory  
Prince of Peace  
Physician, Propitiation for our sins
21. Quickening Spirit
22. Rabbi/Teacher – A title of respect for one who teaches the scripture – John 3:2
23. Saviour (Greek, *Soter*) – One who delivers from sin and death – John 4:42  
Shepherd – One who gives guidance and protection – John 10:11; 1 pet. 5:4; Heb. 13:20  
Son of David – A title connecting Jesus with the David’s throne, affirming God’s covenant with David – Matt. 9:27  
Son of God – A title of deity, signifying Jesus’ unique intimacy with the Father – Matt. 27:54; John 20:31  
Son of Man – A title identifying Jesus with us – Matt. 20:28
24. Teacher – John 3:2
25. Unchallengeable God

- Undefeatable God  
26. Victorious One  
27. Word (Greek, *Logos*) – A unique communication of God to man from creation until now – John 1:1  
Wisdom of God, who is and was, and is to come  
28. Yahweh  
29. Zion's king  
Zealous One

## **WHAT SHOULD HUMANITY DO WITH JESUS OR HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO HIS PERSON?**

As we bring this discourse to a gradual close, there is a question we must answer. That question is, what do we do with this unique personality called Jesus? Everything hinges on this question. How should the sinner (the unbelieving person), the Christian (the believer in Jesus), and the entire world order respond to Jesus?

First, the sinner is invited to a relationship with God through faith in Jesus. Everyone on earth was created to live in a relationship with God. Until we find that relationship, there will always be something missing in our lives. As a result, we are often aware of a gap. One rock singer described it by saying '*I've got an emptiness deep inside*'.

A woman, in a letter to someone, wrote of a '*deep, deep void*'. Another young girl spoke of '*a chunk missing in her soul*'.

People try to fill this emptiness in various ways. Some try to close the gap with money, but that does not satisfy. Aristotle Onassis, who was one of the richest men in the world, said at the end of his life: '*Millions do not always add up to what a man needs out of life*'. Others try drugs or excess alcohol or sexual promiscuity. These things can only provide instant gratification but they leave those engaged in them feeling hollow afterwards. Still, others try hard work, music, sport or desperate search for success. There may not be anything wrong with these in themselves but they do not satisfy that hunger deep inside every human being.

Even the closest human relationships, wonderful though they are, do not in themselves satisfy this '*emptiness deep inside*'. Nothing will fill this gap except the relationship with God for which we were made.

According to the New Testament, the reason for this emptiness is that men and women have turned their backs on God. Jesus said, '*I am the bread of life*' (John 6:35). He is the only one who can satisfy our deepest hunger because He is the one who makes it possible for our relationship with God to be restored.

By His saving death on the Cross, Jesus voluntarily offered Himself as a victim for the sins we committed in complete obedience to God, the Father's will. By that sacrifice of

Himself, all who acknowledge that it was for them and accept Him into their lives as their personal Lord and Saviour are forgiven of their sins and their redemption sealed before God. Furthermore, the gate of heaven is thrown open to all such persons.

Consequently, it is now up to all sinners to appropriate to themselves this Jesus' gift of Himself on the Cross in order to secure His salvation and an eternal home in heaven.

Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me"* (John 14:6).

This is the truth! Nothing can change it! There is no other way to God. Jesus is the only hope of salvation for the sinner. If you are yet to surrender your life to Him, DO SO TODAY and do not continue in your spurn of Him (Psalm 95: 7b -9). Jesus will receive you if you will believe Him.

Secondly, to all Christians, that is, to all who believe in Jesus and are sure of their redemption through His shed blood; to those who know Him personally, the name and person of Jesus should remain precious to them. They should continue to faithfully revere that name and serve the Bearer of it in spirit and in truth. God the Father, has "highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, ... and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

Throughout the rest of our lives as Christians and into eternity, let us continually magnify that wonderful name – Jesus. Let us commit ourselves to daily live in the personal relationship we now share with God through what Jesus accomplished for us on the Cross. We are to further commit ourselves to share the truth about Him with others.

Finally, to the nations of the world and the entire world order, Jesus is all that is needed to bring justice, peace and righteousness to our world systems.

Isaiah prophesied several hundreds of years before Jesus was born, that, "of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end" (Isaiah 9:7). Part of Jesus mission to the world is to establish a godly order, justice and peace, etc. wherever He is enthroned.

In addressing the heart of the political, social and economic problems of nations, states, institutions and global bodies, leaders at all levels should be humble enough to go to God Himself for direction. They should acknowledge Jesus and affirm His lordship over their affairs. He is the "desire of all nations" which Haggai 2:7 prophesied about and the radiance of God's glory, the One on whose shoulders rest squarely the burden of rulership and governance of nations and states.

## CONCLUSION

As Dave Brandon says, *“No one in history is like Jesus. He alone deserves our trust, and He alone is the path to God.”*

He alone bears the unique and most powerful name. There is no other name beside His name. No other name can save, heal and deliver. His name is awesome, dreadful and beyond what words can tell.

**Only one way leads to heaven – Jesus is that way!**

### A&M 225

1. At the name of Jesus  
every knee shall bow,  
every tongue confess him  
King of glory now:  
'Tis the Father's pleasure  
we should call him Lord,  
who from the beginning  
was the mighty Word.
2. At his voice creation  
sprang at once to sight,  
all the angel faces,  
all the hosts of light,  
thrones and dominations,  
stars upon their way,  
all the heavenly orders,  
in their great array.
3. Humbled for a season,  
to receive a name  
from the lips of sinners  
unto whom he came,  
faithfully he bore it  
spotless to the last,  
brought it back victorious,  
when from death he passed:
4. Bore it up triumphant  
with its human light,  
through all ranks of creatures,  
to the central height,  
to the throne of Godhead,  
to the Father's breast;  
filled it with the glory  
of that perfect rest.
5. Name him, brothers, name him,  
with love strong as death,  
but with awe and wonder

and with bated breath:  
he is God the Saviour,  
he is Christ the Lord,  
ever to be worshipped,  
trusted, and adored.

6. In your hearts enthrone him;  
there let him subdue  
all that is not holy,  
all that is not true:  
crown him as your Captain  
in temptation's hour;  
let his will enfold you  
in its light and power.
7. Brothers, this Lord Jesus  
shall return again,  
with his Father's glory,  
with his angel train;  
for all wreaths of empire  
meet upon his brow,  
and our hearts confess him  
King of glory now.

## **THE DIOCESE OF EVO IN THE LAST ONE YEAR**

### **1<sup>st</sup> Session of the 5<sup>th</sup> Synod**

The 2022 Synod was hosted from Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> to Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> August, 2022, at St. Michael's Anglican Church, Rumuomasi Deanery. We express our gratitude to the priests and all members of the Deanery, the Chiefs and people of Rumuomasi, our Diocesan Synod Planning Committee, our guest speakers and all clergy and Synod delegates for their support and sacrifices, especially the Diocesan Lay Readers who launched our Address with over 5 million naira.

The Synod resource persons were The Ven. Dr. Gershinen Paul Dajur, General Secretary, Church of Nigeria who took the Synod meditations and a talk, The Venerable Ikechukwu Godwin Anene, Phd, who was the Bible Study teacher, while Professor Eme Ekekwe, Lady (Dr) Nnenda Omeodu, Dr. Joshua Uvieroghene Adjugah handled the other Synod talks, as The Rev. Canon Ozioma Iheanetu preached the Synod thanksgiving sermon.

We are very grateful that the Synod was well attended and was a huge success.

## DIOCESAN CONVOCATIONS

### **Nigeria's 62<sup>nd</sup> Independence Day: Evo Praise and Prays**

We assembled at St. Jude's Anglican Church, Oginigba Deanery, on Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2022 to celebrate Nigeria's independence under the programme "**Evo Praise & Prays**" with the theme, "Peace be still" (Mark 4:39). The programme featured talks by the Bishop and other speakers, praise & worship sessions, prayers for the church and nation, prophetic declarations and blessings, etc.

### **Diocesan Harvest Thanksgiving**

The 2022 Diocesan Harvest Thanksgiving Service was held at St. Jude's Anglican Church, Oginigba Deanery on Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2022. The theme of the Harvest was "**Bountiful Sowing as a Service to God**" (1 Kings 17:9-16, Luke 21:1-4, Genesis 22:12-18). The Guest preacher was The Rt. Rev. Benson N. Chukwunweike, Bishop of the Diocese of Awgu/Aninri in Enugu State.

We are grateful to a good number of you, Clergy and laity, representing various churches and groups in the Diocese, for your impressive turnout. The harvest generated well over **16 million naira** to the Diocese.

We thank the Harvest Committee chaired by The Venerable Charles Obi Mordi for their sacrifices and excellent performance.

**This year's Harvest will hold on Sunday, 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2023 at Chapel of Grace & Knowledge, First-fruits Parish, ACMGS, Elelenwo.**

### **Advent Ordination Service**

The 2022 Diocesan Advent Ordination of **1** Priest took place on Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> October at St. Matthias Anglican Church, Atali District. It was preceded by a weeklong retreat for the Ordinand co-ordinated by The Ven. Emmanuel Anyasodo who also preached the ordination sermon.

The Rev. **Anson** Herbert Gogonte was the only one ordained.

As part of the activities to mark the 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Diocese, we held a service of thanksgiving and yet another ordination of one Priest and eight Deacons on Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 at All Saints Cathedral, Rumuokwurusi. Those ordained were The Reverends **Anson** Herbert Gogonte – **Priest**; **Orlu** Victor Chika, **Ndukauba**

Cherechi Freeborn, **Opara** Chinedu Justin, **Edem** Chukwudi Fidelis, **Ndukwe** Nwabueze Daniel, **Wopara** David Chibuoso, **Ovunwo** Godwin Owohochukwu and **Nathaniel** Okechukwu Victor – **Deacons**.

We congratulate them with their wives and families and pray God to grant them a robust ministry experience as the years go by.

### **2022 Diocesan Discipleship/Revival Conference**

This annual Diocesan Conference which aims at raising faithful disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ and equally encourage spiritual revival of the Diocesan community was held from Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> to Saturday, 19<sup>th</sup> November, 2022 at St. Jude’s Anglican Church, Oginigba. Preceding the conference was a two-day “Community Praise” programme held at Oginigba Town Hall to create awareness in the community and invite people to the programme.

The theme of the Conference was “**The Believer’s Prize-Giving Day**” (**Matthew 25:19-21, 31-46; 1 Peter 5:4**) and it featured talks/expositions, Bible Study engagements, Group Seminars on diverse topics and Revival hours among many other activities.

We, the Diocesan Bishop with Mama Evo-Mrs. Chinyere Ordu, Ven. Alex Usifoh (Chairman of Conference Planning Committee), Ven. Azubuike Ugoha, Ven. John Adubasim, Rev. Canon Kingsley Ohajianya, Rev. Canon Ozioma Iheanetu, Rev. Samuel Udeh, Apostle Onyechi Daniel, Sir Hon. Chief Mike Enwukwe Ejims and others ministered at the conference.

To encourage effective mobilisation and improved attendance/participation in the future, beginning from last year’s Conference, we introduced a special attraction - the award of trophies to the administrative blocs with the highest attendance. The **first position** went to **Elelenwo Archdeaconry** with **153** attendees, Woji, Okporo/Rumuogba Archdeaconries as well as the Cathedral bloc took the second, third and fourth positions respectively. Paraclete Deanery recorded the lowest attendance.

We commend the Chairman of the Conference Planning Committee, The Ven. Alex Usifoh and his members as well as the Rector, Rev. Canon Ugochukwu Nwahaghi, and parishioners of St. Jude’s Oginigba, for their effort in ably planning and hosting the 4-Day Conference in addition to the two earlier mentioned Diocesan Convocations hosted by the Deanery last year.

## **Diocesan Rededication Services**

The 2023 *Diocesan Rededication Service* took place on Sunday, 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2023 at All Saints Cathedral, Rumuokwurusi. It was a service of thanksgiving for God's mercies in the past year and self-consecration for His service in the New Year.

This Service was preceded by a week-long Beginning-of-the-Year fasting and prayer retreat with a mission empowerment and strategic training in conjunction with the El-Rehoboth Global Leadership Foundation, Jos for the Bishop, Clergy, Church Teachers and their wives.

A major feature of the rededication service was the signing of our newly approved Diocesan Constitution into law.

## **Family Vigils & Diocesan Prayer Convocations**

We observed the Diocesan *Prayer Convocation & Hour of Answer* from Wednesday, 31<sup>st</sup> August to Friday, 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2022 at The New Wine Anglican Church, East West Road Parish, Okporo. The theme was "Let God Arise" (Psalm 68:1-4).

The Diocese observed the family vigils on 13<sup>th</sup> January, 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2023.

A 3-Day Diocesan Prayer Convocation was held from Thursday, 20<sup>th</sup> April to Saturday, 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 2023 at All Saints Cathedral, Rumuokwurusi. Held under the theme "**Transformation through the name of Jesus**" (Phil. 2:9-10, Acts 3:1-9), the programme had about 650 persons in attendance for all the days and featured talks by Venerables Azubuike Ugoha, Alex Usifoh, Rev. Samuel Udeh and Rev. Collins Daniel.

The latest edition of the Diocesan Prayer Convocation and Hour of Answer was held here at St. Philip's Anglican Church, Oroigwe District from Wednesday, 26<sup>th</sup> to Friday, 28<sup>th</sup> July, 2023. The theme was "Making significant advancement through the name of Jesus" (Deut. 1:6-6, Phil. 3:12-14).

## **OUR EPISCOPAL VISITS/ENGAGEMENTS**

### **1. Confirmation Services**

- a. Sunday, 14<sup>th</sup> August, 2022 - St. Jude's Anglican Church, Oginigba Deanery; **29** persons confirmed.
- b. Saturday, 8<sup>th</sup> October, 2022 - Anglican students in PAMO Medical University, TAP, Elelenwo; **16** persons confirmed.

- c. Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2022 - St. Matthias, Atali District; **56** persons confirmed.
- d. Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2022 - New Wine Anglican Church, East/West Road Parish, Okporo; **43** persons confirmed.
- e. Sunday, 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2023 – St. Andrew’s, Rumuobiokani Deanery; **74** persons confirmed.
- f. Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 - Emmanuel Church, Okporo, Iriebe Parish; **42** persons confirmed. This was the first Confirmation service ever held in this Church.

## **2. Other Churches visited for Worship**

- a. Church of The Epiphany, Pipeline, Rumuokwurusi on Friday, 6<sup>th</sup> January, 2023
- b. Holy City Anglican Church, Pipeline, Rumuokwurusi on Sunday, 5<sup>th</sup> February, 2023
- c. Anglican Church of the Epiphany on Sunday, 12<sup>th</sup> February, 2023
- d. St. Matthias, Atali District on Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2023
- e. Ebenezer Anglican Church, Trans-Woji on Palm Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2023 for foundation stone-laying of new Church building.
- f. All Saints Cathedral, Rumuokwurusi on Palm Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2023 for Rivers State PDP election victory thanksgiving service.
- g. Church of the Resurrection, Rumuomasi, on Monday, 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 2023.
- h. All Saints Cathedral, Rumuokwurusi on Maundy Thursday, 6<sup>th</sup> April, 2023 for service of washing of feet, Eucharist and blessing of the Holy Chrism.
- i. Calvary Church, RD Road, Mgbuesilaru, Okporo, on Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2023 for the Good Friday service.
- j. All Saints Cathedral, Rumuokwurusi, on Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> April, 2023 for Easter Day Eucharistic/thanksgiving service.
- k. All Saints Cathedral, Rumuokwurusi on Wednesday, 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2023 for Thanksgiving service by the Obio/Akpor Local Government Area to celebrate the former Governor, His Excellency, Nyesom Wike’s successful tenure of office.
- l. All Saints Cathedral, Rumuokwurusi on Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2023 for the baptism of the baby Jochebed Biobele – Child of Evang. Itekena Marshall and the churching of the mother, Mrs. Grace Marshall.
- m. Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Elingbu Parish, on Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> June, 2023 for Eucharistic worship.
- n. All Saints Cathedral, Rumuokwurusi, on Sunday, 18<sup>th</sup> June, 2023 for Fathers’ Day service and dedication of projects by the Cathedral CMF and MU/WG.

- o. St. James Anglican Church, Iriebe District, on Sunday, 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2023 for the Diocesan service of Induction of 59 men into the Diocesan Christian Men's Fellowship.
- p. Good Tidings Anglican Church, Rumuokwurusi, off Igbo-Etche Road, on Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2023 for Eucharistic worship.

### **3. Baptisms**

The underlisted infants were baptised by us:

- a. Twin babies (Victor Chibuikem & Valerie Chinazamekpere) - Children of Sir Engr. Victor & Dame Amaka Agu, on Sunday, 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2022
- b. Baby Praise Ngozichuku – Child of Rev./Mrs. Anointed Onyeme on Sunday, 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2022
- c. Baby Ohana Seember – Child of Rev. Terhembra & Mrs. Gloria Jov on Saturday, 24<sup>th</sup> December, 2022
- d. Baby Omehanama El-Marvel – Child of Rev./Mrs. Kingsley Imenwo on Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2023
- e. Baby Jochebed Biobele – Child of Evang. Itekena & Mrs Grace Marshall on Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2023.
- f. Baby Nneoma Elsy - Child of Mr. Charles & Mrs. Kelechi Egbu on Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2023.
- g. Baby Jasper Ikechi Best – Child of Rev. Best & Mrs. Charity Ekendia on Saturday, 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2023.

### **4. Weddings**

We rejoice with the following persons and their families on the occasion of their marriages:

- a. Mr. Lazarus Kpananwa (Bishop's Court staff) & Miss Mary Nwakor on Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> August, 2022 at All Saints Cathedral, Rumuokwurusi
- b. Postulant David C. Wopara (now Rev.) and Miss Sharon Mordi (daughter of The Ven. & Mrs. Charles Mordi) on Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 2022 at St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery
- c. Mr. Oyeniyi Abass and Miss Nneka Onwughara (Bishop's Commissary, Lagos) on Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2022 at Christ Church Cathedral, Marina, Lagos.

- d. Mr. Godwin Onyekwere and Miss Favour Nwafor (Diocesan Central office staff) on Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> September, 2022 at St. Mark's Anglican Church, Elemenwo District
- e. Mr. Arinze S. Ibekwe (Diocesan AYF President) and Miss Naomi Worgu on Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2022 at All Saints Cathedral Church, Rumuokwurusi
- f. Dr. Babatope E. Akinola and Miss Mildred Chukwumati (daughter of Ven. Chris Chukwumati) on Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2023 at St. Philip's, Oroigwe District
- g. Mr. Victor James Enemakwu and Miss Chizi Gabriella Orianwo, daughter of Mrs Angelina Orianwo on Saturday, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2023, at All Saints Cathedral Church, Rumuokwurusi

## 5. Dedications

We **dedicated** the following projects within the last one year:

- a. New **Church Building of St. Jude's Oginigba Deanery** on Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2022
- b. Modern **rest rooms/conveniences at St. Mark's Elemenwo District** on Wednesday, 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2022
- c. **Children's Chapel of Holy Name Anglican Church, Atali** on Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup> February, 2023
- d. **Church Digital signpost at St. Andrew's Rumuobiokani Deanery** on Sunday, 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2023
- e. A new **Church Bus by Great Shepherd, Mgbuesilaru Parish** on Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2023
- f. A new **Church Bus of Holy Ghost Church, Iriebe Housing Estate Parish, MU/WG** on Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> June, 2023
- g. A new **Parsonage Complex** built by the **Christian Men's Fellowship (CMF)** of All Saints Cathedral, Rumuokwurusi on Sunday, 18<sup>th</sup> June, 2023.
- h. **Cathedral Women's Office; 100 mattresses and cooling chest** for rent on Sunday, 18<sup>th</sup> June, 2023
- i. **New family residence of Sir Alex & Dame Patricia Orakwue** on Tuesday, 27<sup>th</sup> June, 2023
- j. **New 500-bed capacity students' dormitory** (named after Her Excellency, Hon. Justice Suzzette Eberechi Nyesom-Wike, wife of immediate past Governor of Rivers State, His Excellency Nyesom E. Wike) at **Archdeacon Crowther Memorial Girls' School, Elemenwo** on Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2023

- k. **A new Vicarage complex of the Chapel of Grace and Knowledge, ACMGS, Elelenwo** and a **100KVA** power generating set on Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2023
- l. A **digital Church belfry** at the **Anglican Church of the Advent, Rumuewhara Parish, Oroigwe** on Sunday, 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2023

## **6. Foundation Stone Laying**

We laid the foundation stone of the following projects:

- a. A two-storey parsonage building and staff residences at Church of the Advent, Rumuewhara Parish, on Tuesday, 24<sup>th</sup> January, 2023
- b. Church building of newly planted Holy Name Anglican Church, Atali, on Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup> February, 2023
- c. A new Church building of Ebenezer Anglican Church Trans-Woji Road being undertaken by the Diocesan Christian Men's Fellowship on Palm Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2023
- d. A two-storey staff residential complex of 12 flats at Archdeacon Crowther Memorial Girls' School (ACMGS), Elelenwo on Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2023.

## **7. New Church Christening**

We christened a new Church on Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup> February, 2023, the Anglican Worship Centre, Atali, which was planted by St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Rumuobiokani on Sunday, 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2021. The new name is **Holy Name Anglican Church, Atali.**

We commend St. Andrew's Rumuobiokani Deanery for their missionary spirit.

### **NEW CHURCH PLANT**

St. Jude's Church, Oginigba Deanery on Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2023 started nesting a new Church Station on a temporary site belonging to Dr. Bright & Dr. (Mrs.) Gloria Amadi at Wamadi Avenue, off Technical School Road, Madonna Estate, Iriebe.

This is a long-awaited news from the mother Church at Oginigba. We commend the Rector, the Deanery Council and Mission and Evangelism team of the Deanery for this great effort. We pray that the Deanery would carefully nurture this infant Church to maturity.

## **CHURCH ANNIVERSARIES, INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY CELEBRATIONS**

We celebrate and rejoice with the following churches and individuals on their anniversaries and other celebrations:

1. Priestly Ordination Thanksgiving & 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday of The Rev. Maduakona Paul Ezigbo on Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 2022
2. Elenwo Archdeaconry - 2<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary Celebration with One-Day Revival & Leadership Summit on Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2022
3. Our Saviour, Christ Anglican Church, Rumunduru - 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Thanksgiving on Sunday, 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2022
4. 80<sup>th</sup>/70<sup>th</sup> birthdays and 50<sup>th</sup> marriage anniversary of Sir Tony & Lady Uzo Onweluzo on Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2022
5. 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Collation/31 years Ordination Thanksgiving Service of the Ven. Emmanuel Anyasodo on Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> December, 2022
6. Anglican Church of the Passion, Odani, Elenwo - 12<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration on Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> December, 2022
7. Priestly Ordination/Golden Jubilee thanksgiving/Book launch by The Rev. Joseph Asonye on Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2022
8. The 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday (Golden Jubilee), 19<sup>th</sup> Wedding/20<sup>th</sup> Ordination Anniversaries Thanksgiving service of The Rev'd Canon Chieme Chimaobi on Sunday, 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2022
9. The Birthday/Retirement Thanksgiving Service of Hon. Justice (Mrs.) Grace Irikefe on Friday, 30<sup>th</sup> December, 2022.
10. 60<sup>th</sup> birthday thanksgiving services of Dame Patricia Orakwue on Tuesday, 30<sup>th</sup> May at the Bishop's Court Chapel of Refuge and on Sunday, 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2023 at All Saints Cathedral, Rumuokwurusi.
11. 60<sup>th</sup> birthday/26<sup>th</sup> marriage anniversary thanksgiving service of Mr. Gabriel Amadi on Sunday, 30<sup>th</sup> July at St. Andrew's Ang. Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery.
12. 85<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration of Elder Timothy C. Nwosu on Sunday, 30<sup>th</sup> July at St. Andrew's Ang. Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery.

We rejoice with these our brothers, sisters, fathers and mothers and several others of whom we are not aware of, for God's goodness and mercies upon their lives.

## **ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS**

We rejoice with the following and congratulate them heartily on their recent academic achievements:

1. Mrs. Chinyere E. Ebenezer, PhD in Crop Production and Physiology from the Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State.
2. Mrs. Peace Onuchuku, PhD in Analytic Chemistry from the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, Rivers State.
3. Sir Silas Ekezie, MSc in Environmental Economics from the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, Rivers State.

## **OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

1. Miss Chiji Emenike of St. Philip's Church, Oroigwe District Anglican Communion Brigade won the Miss Boys' Brigade Rivers State competition. We congratulate her.

## **NEW BABIES**

We congratulate the following on the arrival of their new babies:

1. Sir Engr. Victor Agu & Dame Amaka Agu – a baby boy and a girl
2. Dr. Chinenyeike & Mrs Kelechi Edmund – a baby boy
3. Rev. & Mrs Nelson Okocha – a baby girl
4. Rev. & Mrs. Anointed Onyeme - a baby girl
5. Rev. & Mrs. Michael Jov – a baby girl
6. Rev. & Mrs. Kingsley Imenwo – a baby boy
7. Mr. Charles & Mrs. Kelechi Egbu – a baby girl
8. Mr. Lazarus & Mrs. Mary Kpananwa – a baby boy
9. Evang. Itekena Marshall – a baby girl
10. Rev. David & Mrs Sharon Wopara – a baby girl
11. Rev. Best & Mrs. Charity Ekendia – a baby boy
12. Bro. Chika & Mrs. Chinomnso Amadi – a baby boy. This special baby came after ten years of marriage

## **OUR SORROWS**

We lost to death the following persons amongst others:

1. Madam Cecilia Enyili, mother and mother in-law of Mrs. Blessing and Rev. Canon Olufemi Igbamerun
2. HRH, Igwe Sunday Stanley Orji, father of Sir Tony Orji
3. Elder Theophilus O.E. Uche, father in-law and father of Rev. Canon Bright and Mrs Emmanuella Welekwe
4. Mr. Emmanuel Owhor, elder brother of Sir Barr. Bright Nda Owhor, Diocesan Legal Secretary 1
5. Mazi Ogbonnaya Ogundu, father and father in-law of Lady Barr. Sonia Worlu (our Legal Secretary 2) and Sir Engr. Sunny Worlu (DCMF President)
6. Chief Elder Christian O. Daniel of St. Andrew's Rumuobiokani, father of Sir Prince Chituru (Assistant Secretary, Evo Council of Knights) and Rev. Collins Daniel
7. Mrs. Beatrice Ihunda Daniel of St. Andrew's Rumuobiokani, mother of Mr Felix Daniel
8. Mrs Chioma Felix Otto – a Diocesan ACM Exco member and wife of Mr Felix Otto, a member of our Diocesan Investment Board
9. Barr. Bernard Dienye of St. Andrew's Rumuobiokani, husband of Mrs. Mercy Dienye and son of retired Ven. Frankline Dienye
10. Mr. Donatus Uzoma, father of Mrs. Nora Ejike (our Synod office staff)
11. Sir Godfrey Chukwuemeka Orianwo of All Saints Cathedral, former member Diocesan Board and husband of Dame Meg Orianwo
12. Madam Nwenenda Juliana Otto, member of St. Mark's Elenwo District
13. Ezinne Ngozi Philomena Chukwuma, mother of Rev. Frankincense Chukwuma
14. High Chief Linus Obasi, father of Postulant Alex Obasi
15. Dame Love Jeremiah Olewem, mother and mother in-law of Dr. Mrs Faith and Rev. Canon Ugochukwu Nwahaghi
16. Ezinne Monica Okwuchukwu Nwana, mother and mother in-law of Lady Dr. Njideka, member of our Diocesan Education Board and Sir Bishop Ebisi
17. Sir Chief Augustine Nnanta Odu of St. Andrew's Rumuobiokani, our elder brother
18. Queen Josephine Nne Utchay, mother and mother in-law of HRH, Eze Emmanuel, Paramount Ruler of Elingbu Town and Lady Dr. Ndidi Utchay (Chairperson, Bishop Elenwo Memorial Hospital Management Board)
19. Mrs. Catherine Onyekuruka, mother and mother in-law of Lady Dr. Ndidi Utchay and HRH, Eze Emmanuel, Paramount Ruler of Elingbu Town

20. Elder George Enyinda Amadi of St. Mark's Elelenwo District, father in-law and father of Sir Promise & Lady Blessing Eze Wodi

21. The Ven. Chris Chike Chukwumati, our Priest, Archdeacon of Trinity Archdeaconry and husband of Mrs. Augusta Chukwumati.

May our good Lord continue to comfort all members of their families, communities and His Church at large! Amen.

**AWARD OF DISTINGUISHED SERVICE STAR OF RIVERS STATE  
(DSSRS) BY THE STATE GOVERNMENT**

On Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2022, we joined several other eminent Rivers Citizens and Nigerians to receive the second highest State award – the Distinguished Service Star of Rivers State, DSSRS, from the immediate past Government of Rivers State ably headed by His Excellency, Chief Barr. Nyesom Ezenwo Wike, CoN, GSSRS, PoS Africa, Life Bencher.

Other notable recipients of this award from our Diocese and Communion include Hon. O.K. Chinda (now Minority Leader, Federal House of Representatives, Abuja), The Rt. Hon. Martin Chike Amaewhule (now Speaker, Rivers State House of Assembly), His Grace, The Most Rev. Dr. Blessing C. Eyindah, our Archbishop of Niger Delta Province (now Dean) and Bishop of Ikwerre, Bishops Clement N. Ekpeye (Ahoada), Solomon Gberegbara (Ogoni), Precious Okechukwu Nwala (Etche), Emmanuel Oko-Jaja (Niger Delta), Wisdom B. Ihunwo (Niger Delta North); The Ven. Dr. F.N. Akah, JP and The Ven. Dr. Richard N. Okpara.

We are immensely grateful to His Excellency, the former Governor of Rivers State, Nyesom Ezenwo Wike, for considering us worthy to be decorated with such a remarkable State award/honour.

We are equally appreciating him for recognising and upgrading some of our members in the Diocese and their traditional chieftaincy stools. These include HRH, Sunny Weli, Eze Elelenwo-Etor, whose stool was upgraded from third class to second. Their Royal Highnesses, Eze Sir Samuel Nyeche Ejims-Wopara, the Paramount Ruler of Rumuobiokani, Eze Sir T.O.A. Ejekwu, JP, the Paramount Ruler of Atali, Eze Godfrey Tata, the Paramount Ruler of Oroigwe and Eze Bright Akpunuonu of Rumuodomaya whose stools were recognised and upgraded to second class as well as HRH, Eze Sir Simeon Chidi Wokoma who

was equally recognised as the Paramount Ruler of Rumuokwurusi and his stool classified as third class.

We congratulate these and other royal fathers in the State who received similar recognitions and pray God to grant them a smooth and progressive administration of their respective domains.

### **RECENT CLERGY PREFERMENTS**

On Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2023, at the service of Ordination of a Priest and 8 Deacons held at All Saints Cathedral, Rumuokwurusi, we announced our preferment of the following Clergy men to higher priestly offices as follows:

#### **Archdeacons**

- i. The Rev. Canon Kingsley Ohajianya
- ii. The Rev. Canon Olufemi Igbamerun
- iii. The Rev. Canon Gospel Onuchuku
- iv. The Rev. Canon Chieme Chimaobi

#### **Honorary Canon of All Saints Cathedral, Rumuokwurusi**

- i. The Rev. Dr. Ebenezer Owbor

We congratulate these Archdeacons and Canon designate and wish them a very fruitful life of service to God and His Church. Their service of collation as Archdeacons and installation as Canon will hold at a date to be announced before the end of the year.

### **RETREATS, TRAININGS AND WORKSHOPS**

“Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other” – John F. Kennedy

“The single biggest way to impact an organization is to focus on leadership development. There is almost no limit to the potential of an organization that recruits good people, raises them up as leaders and continually develops them” – John C. Maxwell. Leadership therefore, requires a culture of continuous learning. This is how better and stronger leaders are created. Consequently, our office, with the Diocesan Council for Clergy, Laity of Continuing Education, organised the following trainings and workshops during the Synod year:

### **Orientation for newly elected Diocesan officers and appointees**

Following the election of some principal Diocesan officials and the appointment of others by Us at the First session of this Synod held last year at St. Michael's Anglican Church, Rumuomasi Deanery, we organised a 2-Day orientation for all those affected such as members of the various Boards, Committees, Directorates, Chaplaincies, Units, Bishop's nominees to Synod and Diocesan Board, etc. of our Diocese. This orientation was held from Thursday, 22<sup>nd</sup> to Friday, 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 2022 at All Saints Cathedral, Rumuokwurusu.

The 2-Day orientation offered us the opportunity to give intent to the electees and appointees and also an opportunity for them to learn about the duties and requirements of their respective offices and church ministerial callings.

### **Bishop and Diocesan ministers and wives January retreat**

In preparation for this year's Diocesan Rededication service, the Bishop with the Clergy, Church teachers and our wives, went on a week-long Beginning-of-the-Year fasting and prayer retreat with a mission empowerment and strategic training tagged "Catalyst course on world evangelisation: Empowered to multiply", from Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> to Friday, 27<sup>th</sup> January, 2023. This retreat/training was facilitated by the El-Rehoboth Global Leadership Foundation, Jos, in conjunction with our Diocesan Prayer ministry and the Mission, Evangelism and Church Planting Board. The programme was held in 3 venues: Emmanuel Anglican Church, Okporo-Iriebe Parish, Church of the Advent, Rumuewhara Parish and St. John, the Evangelist, Atali.

The Rev. Canon Timothy Olonade from the Diocese of Jos was the chief resource person at the retreat and also preached the Rededication Service sermon. He was accompanied by Rev. Paul Abdul.

### **Training on fight against sexual and gender-based violence**

Our Diocese was invited by the Lux Terra Leadership Foundation Headquarters, Abuja, to participate in its workshop/training for the Christian community stakeholders on the elimination of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in Nigeria. The training held from Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> to Saturday, 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2023 and we were represented by the Clerical Synod Secretary, The Rev. Dr. Ebenezer Owzor and Dame Akudo Nnadozie. The two participants ably delivered a report of the training to our Diocesan

leaders who gathered at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Contact of our 2023 Post Vestry Leadership training held at St. Andrew's Rumuobiokani on Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> April.

### **Post vestry meetings leadership training/workshop**

The 2023 Post Vestry Meetings leadership training/workshop for leaders across the Diocese was held in three phases with the theme, "Lifting up the name of Jesus through effective leadership" (John 12:32).

1. **First contact** was on Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2023 at St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery
2. **Second Contact** was on Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2023 at St. Michael's Anglican Church, Rumuomasi Deanery
3. **Third Contact** held on Saturday, 8<sup>th</sup> April, 2023 at St. Nicholas Anglican Church, Woji District

The training featured Bible study by The Rev. Canon Joseph Ofoegbu and the following talks:

1. "Discovering, Developing and Deploying your leadership abilities" by Dr. Kasarachi Innocent
2. "Elimination of Sexual & gender-based violence in the society" by The Rev. Dr. Ebenezer Owhor and Dame Akudo Nnadozie
3. "Servant Leadership Principles" by The Rev. Dr. E.C. Woko of the Rivers Baptist Conference
4. "We are Anglicans" Refreshing our knowledge of the Anglican Church: History, Beliefs & Heritage by The Ven. Emmanuel Anyasodo
5. "Lifting up The Name of Jesus through effective leadership" by Mr. Sylvester Chiemeka
6. "Dangerous Foxes in Church Leadership: Be Vigilant and watchful" by The Rev. Collins Daniel
7. "Church Leadership in Challenging Times: Preparing for tomorrow's Church" by The Rev. Dr. Robert O. Okparanta (President, Rivers Baptist Conference)
8. "A Glance into the new Diocesan Constitution) by Sir Barr. Nlerum Amadi (Diocesan Chancellor)
9. "Epilogue" by We, The Rt. Rev. Innocent U. Ordu, the Diocesan

We are grateful to Ven. Emmanuel Anyasodo, Rector, and the Directors of Studies, Canon Joseph Ofoegbu, Rev. Collins Daniel and Engr. Chiemeka of the **Council for Clergy, Laity Continuing Education** for their great efforts at planning and executing this special annual training programme.

### **ELMI International Christian Leadership Conference (ICLC) 2023**

The 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the International Christian Leadership Conference was hosted by the Evangelism, Leadership and Mission Institute (ELMI) at St. Paul's Cathedral, Garrison, Diobu, Port Harcourt, from Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> May to Friday, 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2023. The theme for this year's conference was "Leadership in turbulent times." The key speakers were the Very Rev. Prof. Chinedu Nebo and Prof. Jerry Gana.

The Archbishop of our Province, The Most Rev. Dr. Blessing C. Enyindah formally declared the Conference open and the Primate of All Nigeria also addressed the Conference. The ICLC has come to stay as a major annual provincial and Church of Nigeria programme targeted at developing the capacity of all in Church leadership.

We appreciate the Clergy and members of our Diocese who participated in this Leadership Conference.

The Diocesan Council for Clergy, Laity Continuing Education also hosted several sessions of the Bishop, Clergy and wives school as well as that for the Church Teachers and their wives. We commend them!

Our Evo ministers and wives attended and actively participated in the Niger Delta Provincial Clergy and wives Conference which was held from Monday, 3<sup>rd</sup> to Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> October, 2022 at St. Paul's Cathedral, Diobu, Port Harcourt.

**The Diocesan ICT Youth Empowerment Centre** successfully trained 27 candidates from 18 churches on Computer Appreciation, Microsoft Office packages and Graphics during the year. They graduated at the January 2023 Diocesan Rededication Service.

They also held a Diocesan Refresher Training Course in conjunction with the Diocesan Media & Communications Directorate on Cinematography and Church Media production on Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2023, with 34 persons in attendance.

We commend them for the trainings carried on so far and also charge our churches to act on the directive given to them by Us to regularly send and sponsor their willing and available youths to be trained by the Centre.

Several other retreats, trainings and workshops were held across the Diocese within the Synod year by the various Administrative Blocs, churches, major activity groups, ministries, arms and units. May we continue to reap bountifully the benefits accruable from these capacity building exposures!

## **DIOCESAN ACTIVITY GROUPS, UNITS AND MINISTRIES**

### **1. DIOCESAN CHRISTIAN MEN’S FELLOWSHIP (DCMF)**

We are very glad with the reinforcement/revivals being seen in the Christian Men’s Fellowships across the Diocese. We exceedingly commend the Executive of the DCMF led by Sir Engr. Sunny Worlu, the President-General, for all the unfolding positive developments within the Fellowship.

The Annual General Meeting and Diocesan Conference of the Diocesan Christian Men’s Fellowship - ‘**Rumuobiokani 2022**’, was held at St. Andrew’s Anglican Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery from Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> to Sunday, 18<sup>th</sup> September, 2022, with the theme “**If any man serve Me, let him follow me**” (John 12).

The Conference featured Bible studies, talks on the theme, the President-General’s address, **Induction of 116 new members** and the annual DCMF Harvest Thanksgiving Service **on Sunday, 18<sup>th</sup> September, 2022**.

In a Diocesan service held **on Sunday, 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2023**, at St. James Church, Iriebe District, We **inducted a total of 59 men** into the Diocesan Christian Men’s Fellowship.

- **Project**

On Palm Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> of April this year, we officially laid the Foundation Stone for the Ebenezer Anglican Church new Church building along Trans-Woji Road, being undertaken by the men of our Diocese.

We commend this great stride of our men and pray for divine assistance and willingness on the part of all men to bring the project to a speedy completion.

- **2023 Father's Day Celebration**

The Christian Men's Fellowships of our various churches celebrated this year's Father's Day with diverse activities from Monday, 12<sup>th</sup> to Sunday, 18<sup>th</sup> June. At the Diocesan level, a Couples Dinner was held on Tuesday, 13<sup>th</sup> June, at the All Saints Cathedral Hall for men and their wives from across the Diocese. The men of Rumuomasi Deanery hosted the event at which we were represented by The Ven. Alex Usifoh who ministered to the attendees. Father's Day thanksgiving services were held in all churches on Sunday, 18<sup>th</sup> June.

We thank the President-General and members of his Diocesan Executives as well as the other leaders and men from over 50 churches of the Diocese who paid us a Father's Day solidarity visit after their respective Father's Day thanksgiving services. We thank them immensely for the generous gifts presented to us.

May the Lord grant our men/fathers great increase in all their genuine endeavours in life! May the fire of revival continue to burn in our men until Jesus returns! Amen!

## **2. WOMEN & GIRLS MINISTRIES**

The Women ministry in their vivacity, covered much milestones as is in their manner. They held their annual conference, retreats, prayer meetings, outreaches to mention but a few.

### **a. RETREATS/CONFERENCES**

**Bishop/Clergy/Church Teachers' Wives:** Was held at St. Mark's (Anglican) Church, Elelenwo District, from Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> – Saturday, 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2022, with the theme "One thing is needful" taken from Luke 10:42. It featured Eucharistic Service, Bible Study and Talk on the Theme, prayers, interactive session, *etc.*

**Widows Fellowship:** The women held a Diocesan Widow's Conference on Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> to Sunday, 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2022, at Church of the Holy Spirit, Paraclete Deanery, Elelenwo. The theme was "As servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart" (Ephesians 6:6). The conference featured Talks on the Theme, Health, Bible Quiz, Interactive session and Craft, like Production of Liquid Soap, Air freshener, Toilet cleaner, *etc.*

**Diocesan Girls Guild (GG):** This held on Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> to Sunday, 26<sup>th</sup> August, 2022, at St. Nicholas' Woji District. The conference had the theme: "Preserved for a purpose

(1Peter 2:9). Highlights of the conference include: Crafts, making of liquid soap and air freshener, march-past, seminar, Bible Study, etc.

**Sisters Forum (SF):** Worship without Walls (WWW) held on Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2022, at Daystar Anglican Church, Youth Parish, Rumuokwurusi and Diocesan Sisters' Conference at New Covenant Anglican Church, Eliminigwe Parish on Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> – Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> September, 2022 respectively, was organised by the Women's Ministry. These meetings focused on the theme: "Beauty of Holiness" - Psalm 29:2. It featured special Discussion sessions, Bible Study, Talks, Interactive session, etc. They also attended the National Sisters' Retreat held from Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> to Sunday, 8<sup>th</sup> January, 2023, at the Cathedral Church of St. John's, Ilorin, Kwara State.

**Diocesan Mothers' Union (MU)/Women's Guild (WG):** The 2022 Diocesan Women's Conference/Harvest Thanksgiving Service were hosted by Elemenwo Archdeaconry at St. Mark's, Elemenwo District, from Wednesday, 30<sup>th</sup> November – Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2022, with the Theme: "Serve one another in love" (Gal. 3:13; 1 John 4:11-12). The conference began with the service of admission into the Mothers' Union and Women's Guild on Wednesday, 30<sup>th</sup> November during which a total of **142 women were admitted into the Mothers' Union and 170 inducted into the Women's Guild**. Other activities included special training session for women leaders, evangelism/rally, special medical outreach/visitations, prayer and fasting, Bible Study, etc.

#### b. SPECIAL EVENTS

Other special events of the women within the Synod year under review include:

- **Women's World Day of Prayer** which was observed at all Administrative Bloc levels on Friday, 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2023.
- **Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary** observed on Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2023.
- **Mothering Sunday Celebration:** The 2023 Mothering Sunday Week of activities was specially and colourfully held in all Churches across the Diocese from Monday, 13<sup>th</sup> – Sunday, 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2023 with the Theme: "***The Christian Mother; Generous in Spirit***" (Acts 16:14-15; Romans 16:3-5a). Major activities to mark the week included: Diocesan women march-past, community/street cleaning, shop-for-free, outreach visits to old and sick members, wives of

retired/deceased Bishops and Archdeacons, special family time-out, among other activities at all levels of the Diocese.

c. PROJECTS CARRIED OUT/ON GOING/INVESTMENT

- **Garment Industry:** The Women Garment Industry presently with Twenty-six (26) apprentices, has improved greatly. Besides handling the sewing and monogramming of uniforms and beddings, they now have good Fashion Designers who make Traditional and English attires for any occasion as well as Ready-to-wear dresses. We call for patronage from our Diocesan community and friends.
- **Wafer Factory:** Very functional! They now have customers within and outside our Diocese and from other denominations.
- **Acquisition/Adult Education Complex** Centre building project is presently at the lintel level of the 1<sup>st</sup> floor. The women are trusting God for His provision towards a speedy completion of this project.

d. Special Missions

At the Synod of last year, we assigned the Christus Victor (Anglican) Church, Rumuokwurusu, off Igbo-Etche Road, to the Diocesan Women, as their new mission field. We commend them for accepting the mission mandate and quickly identifying with the Station in a number of ways. The Women were at Christus Victor on two occasions for missions: Sunday morning Evangelism/Worship with discipleship classes for new converts and others in the month of September, 2022, and a 3-Day Mission and Outreach from Wednesday, 26<sup>th</sup> – Friday, 28<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2023.

Other missions carried out by the women include a 2-Day crusade and medical outreach on Friday, 28<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, 29<sup>th</sup> October, 2022, where they attended to over 150 persons that live within the environs of the Church; a special Pre-Diocesan Women's Conference Evangelism and medical outreach at Berea Saints Anglican Church, Odani, a Church Station of St. Mark's Elelenwo District, in November, 2022; welfare/medical outreaches to our sister Dioceses of Etche, Ogoni and Northern Izon; support to many indigent members of our Diocese, especially women.

We deeply appreciate our women for their doggedness and resilience in obeying God's mission mandate.

### **3. ANGLICAN YOUTH FELLOWSHIP (AYF)**

We commend the leadership of the Anglican Youth Fellowship, past and present, for their efforts at growing and strengthening our ministry to the youths.

We are equally grateful to all our Diocesan Youth Ministry Chaplains – Rev. Collins Daniel and Rev. Kingsley Imenwo for their labour of love towards the activities of our Youth fellowship, including the Youth Corps members.

The AYF successfully held their statutory programmes of the Synod year – the **2022 Diocesan Bible Study Conference** with over **500** youths in attendance was held at Church of the Holy Spirit, Paraclete Deanery, Elemenwo, from Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> to Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> August, with the theme “Be Strong and Courageous” (Joshua 1:9), Annual General Meeting (AGM) from Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> to Sunday, 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2022, at St Michael’s Anglican Church, Rumuomasi Deanery. There were also periodic general meetings and combined worship and the 2023 National Youth Week/Exchange of pulpit which was observed in all churches from Monday, 1<sup>st</sup> to Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> May, under the theme: “The Born Identity” (Jeremiah 1:5), among other activities.

They also participated in all Niger Delta Provincial and Church of Nigeria-organised youth programmes such as the Joshua Generation International Youth Conference (JGIYC) convened by our Primate at the Moshood Abiola National Stadium, Abuja, from Monday, 10<sup>th</sup> to Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2023. The theme of the JGIYC was “Understanding the Time” (1 Chronicles 12:32). A total of **109** youths from our Diocese participated in the Conference. This is highly commendable!

We sponsored the Diocesan Youth President, Bro. Arinze Ibekwe, to the maiden edition of the All African Youth Congress which held at the Pentecost Convention Centre, Kasoa, Accra, Ghana, from 31<sup>st</sup> October, to 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2022.

From the above records of the AYF which is not devoid of challenges, we see that our youths are making steady progress, hence they need more encouragements from our Diocesan community to spur them to greater heights.

## **Anglican Corps Members Fellowship (ACMF)**

The Anglican Corps Members Fellowship (ACMF) is a fellowship for currently-serving corps members and ex-corps members who live or serve within our Diocesan community. Majority of them are resident at St Michael's Anglican Church compound, Rumuomasi Deanery, where we provided a lodge for them. Presently, the lodge shelters 18 serving and discharged corps members. During the Synod year, they maintained regular worship and other weekly spiritual activities at Olive Plants Anglican Youth Church, Rumuomasi, and paid periodic visits to our Diocesan Schools to empower the students with additional knowledge.

Our aim for setting up the ACMF still remains to bring together corps members from all over the country serving in our Diocese and offer them a platform for regular fellowship and service to God and the Nation.

The 2023 Diocesan AYF Bible Study Conference was held here at St. Philip's Ang. Church, Oroigwe District with the Diocesan Youth Synod from Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> to Sunday, 23<sup>rd</sup> July. The theme for the Conference was "Born Identity" (Jeremiah 1:5) while that of the Synod was "Jesus: Unique in all the World" (Philippians 2:5-11). Both gatherings of the youth featured Bible studies, talks on the themes, seminars and Quiz competitions.

The idea of a Youth Synod is to prepare the young ones early enough to assume leadership of the Church in the coming years.

Henceforth, all youth-related arms of the Diocese – AYF, SF, GG, Anglican Communion Brigade, the Choir, Band, Students and Youth corps members are to compulsorily constitute the members of the Diocesan Youth Synod.

All Chaplains and leaders of these Youth arms of the Diocese are to ensure the full participation of their members in the Youth Synod.

They are to further work hand in hand with the Diocesan Synod Planning Committee to achieve a successful annual Synod meeting of all our youths.

#### **4. Anglican Children's Ministry (ACM)**

We appreciate our Diocesan Children's Ministry Chaplain – The Rev'd. Best Ekendia and all the teachers across the churches for their continuous efforts in building up the spiritual lives of our children. May the Lord graciously reward them!

Our teachers and selected children participated in all trainings, conferences and meetings of the Anglican Children's Ministry held at the Provincial and National levels between July 2022 and June this year. Details of these can be found in the ACM report for this Synod.

Internal Diocesan activities were also held such as the Diocesan **Teachers Conference** which held from Thursday, 28<sup>th</sup> to Saturday, 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2022 with the theme: "Be Strong and of good courage" (Joshua 1:9, 1 Tim. 4:12), at St. Mark's Anglican Church, Elelenwo District, **Evo Children Rejoice** on Saturday, 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2022, at the Church of The Holy Spirit, Paraclete Deanery, Elelenwo with the Theme: "Rejoice that your names are written in Heaven" (Luke 10:20-21).

The **9<sup>th</sup> Diocesan Teen stars Conference** was held at ACMGS, Elelenwo, from Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> to Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> April, 2023 with the Theme: "**Jesus! The Name Above Every Name**" (Phil. 2:9). At the Conference, 80 teenagers reportedly gave their lives to Christ and 70 other children volunteered to join the labour force of the Children's Ministry. A total of **313** teenagers and **42** teachers were in attendance - an improvement on the **294** recorded in 2022.

The **2023 Evo Diocesan ACM Bible Quiz** held on Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2023 at Bishop Crowther Memorial Secondary School (BCMSS), Rumuobiokani. Woji Archdeaconry ACM took the first position with 24 points, followed by the Cathedral with 23 points and Rumuomasi Deanery with 21 points as first and second runners up. The 2023

**Diocesan Singing Competition** was also held on Saturday, 27<sup>th</sup> May, 2023, at All Saints Cathedral, Rumuokwurusi. Elelenwo Archdeaconry children's choir took the 1<sup>st</sup> position with 88.5 points, followed by Oroigwe/Eliogbolo Archdeaconry with 84.5 points and Oginigba Deanery with 69 points to take the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> positions respectively; and the Diocesan **A.C.M. Teachers Prayer Retreat** from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2023, and the 2023 Diocesan Teacher's Conference - 14<sup>th</sup> edition which held from Thursday, 22<sup>nd</sup> to Sunday, 25<sup>th</sup> June, at Anglican Church of Pentecost, Rumuogba Parish. The Conference theme was "Our Church, Our Children, Our Future" (Psalms 127, 128).

Our Diocesan Anglican Children's Ministry (represented by St. Philip's Oroigwe ACM choir) participated in the Niger Delta Provincial ACM Teachers' Conference Singing Competition held at the Diocese of Etche and took the 3<sup>rd</sup> position. We congratulate them.

In the spirit of the theme of this year's ACM Teachers Conference "**Our Church, Our Children, Our Future**" (Psalms 127, 128), we must endeavour to give our children the best of attention, be it at home, the Church, school or community, because the future of our society at these levels belongs to them. If we as Clergy, Church leaders, parents, teachers and political leaders give adequate attention to matters bordering on the general wellbeing of our children, we stand to reap the benefits of such investment in them as they grow up to become God-fearing and responsible members, citizens and future leaders of their families, Church and the nation.

## **5. DIOCESAN COUNCIL OF KNIGHTS**

We laud the Diocesan Council of Knights ably led by Sir Dr. Emenike Amobi for their continuous support to the Diocese in diverse ways.

To the glory of God, the Council hosted the 23<sup>rd</sup> Joint Council of Knights (JCK) Conference from Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup> to Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2022 at St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery, with the theme, "**Not to be served, but to serve**" (Luke 22:24-27). The Conference attracted delegates from several Dioceses across the country, particularly from Dioceses of the South-East, South-South and some parts of the North Central region of Nigeria. It featured early morning Holy Communion services with Bible studies led by The Rt. Rev. Dr. Stephen Fagbemi, Bishop of the Diocese of Owo at True Vine Anglican Church, Iriebe and Great Physician Anglican Church, Atali, Talk on the theme by The Rt. Rev. Manasses Okere, Bishop of

Ukwa Diocese, courtesy visits, voluntary fund-raise in support of the above 2 named churches of the Diocese amongst other activities. The Conference ended with a thanksgiving service on Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> November at which We took the pulpit.

The Most Rev. Dr. Blessing Enyindah, our Archbishop who presided over the Eucharistic service on Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> November at True Vine Anglican Church, Iriebe, represented the Primate of All Nigeria, The Most Rev. Henry Ndukuba, at the formal opening ceremony held later that morning at St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery.

We commend our Diocesan Council of Knights very highly for ably rising to the huge financial challenge of hosting the JCK Conference. They were equally given a handsome financial support by the Diocesan Board.

At the end of the Conference, our Diocesan President, Sir Dr. Emenike Amobi, assumed the position of the National President General of the Joint Council of Knights. In the same vein, our Diocesan Secretaries, Sir Derek Iyo and Sir Prince Chituru Daniel, assumed the positions of Secretary General and Assistant Secretary General respectively; Dame Ursula Nkiru Egege, the Financial Secretary, Dame Akudo Nnadozie, the Public Relations Officer and Sir Okechukwu Nyeche, the Provost Marshall. They shall serve the national JCK for a tenure of two years. We congratulate and wish them a very impactful tenure in office.

At the close of last year's Synod, the Evo Council of Knights in their manner for the past 10 years, empowered **22** indigent widows across the Diocese with the sum of 50,000 each to improve their existing petty trades and other small-scale businesses and at the 2023 Diocesan Rededication Service held at the Cathedral on Sunday, 29<sup>th</sup> January, the Council issued bursary cheques of N100,000 to each of the **38** indigent students of the Diocese in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, selected for the award.

We thank the Council for their consistency in this all-important outreach/charity venture.

The Council held their regular activities/Quarterly General meetings, One-Day prayer summit at the Church of the Holy Spirit, Paraclete Deanery, Elelenwo on Saturday, 24<sup>th</sup> September, 2022; attended the Niger Delta Provincial Joint Council of Knights Retreat at St. Peter's Cathedral, Isiokpo, on Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2023, and also held the Diocesan Council of Knights' Beginning-of-the-Year Retreat from Friday, 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2023 at St. Simon's Anglican Church, Okporo District.

The flagship programme of the Council, the Annual Charity/Welfare Luncheon for 2022 and 2023 were held on Saturday, 2<sup>nd</sup> July and Saturday, 24<sup>th</sup> June respectively.

We the Diocesan Bishop gave the word on these two occasions.

We thank God for His grace upon our Knights and Ladies and pray for His continued all-round blessings for every one of them and for the spirit of generosity and sacrifice on the part of every member of the Council in support of the overall ministry aspirations of the Diocese. We also trust that with the grace of God on the President and members of the Diocesan Council, the mission assignment We prayerfully gave them at last year's Synod towards The Great Physician Church, Atali and The True Vine Church, Iriebe will be faithfully executed.

## **6. DIOCESAN LAY READERS ASSOCIATION**

The Lay Readers of our Diocese have continued to play their part as pastoral support to the Clergy.

Within the Synod year, the Lay Readers Association carried out a number of programmes and activities such as the Lay Readers School on Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2022, at the Chapel of Grace and Knowledge, Elelenwo, with the theme, "Study to Equip Yourself for Service unto the Lord" (2 Tim. 2:15; Joshua 1: 8); the 2022 Exchange of Pulpit on Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> July and that for 2023 on Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> July; quarterly general meetings, annual Diocesan Lay Readers Conference at St. Andrew's Rumuobiokani Deanery from Friday, 9<sup>th</sup> to Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> September 2022 with the theme, "The Lay Readers and Service in God's community" (Romans 12:11), Retreat/Service of renewal of licensing vows at Holy City Anglican Church from Friday, 3<sup>rd</sup> to Sunday, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2023, with the theme, "Lifting high the name of Jesus." Lay Readers from St. Jude's Military Church, GRA, Port Harcourt, also participated in the retreat and service of renewal of vows of license. A Crusade with the Theme "Lifting up the Name of Jesus" was held on Tuesday, 14<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday, 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2023 also at Holy City Anglican Church, Rumuokwurusi.

We thank the Lay Readers Association for launching our last year's Synod address with over 5 million naira.

We commend the Diocesan President of the Lay Readers Association, Dame Meg Orianwo, and members of her Executive Committee for all their roles in the ministry of the Diocese. We commiserate with her and the children on the death of her husband

and father of the home, Sir G.C. Orianwo. May the Lord grant her entire family the consolation of His Spirit!

We are aware that a good number of our Lay Readers have since lost the much-needed fire and zeal for Church ministry and this is certainly not good for the growth of our churches. Those who are tired of continuing in office as active Lay Readers should quickly make their position known to us so as to enable us find more willing and suitable replacements for them. God's business must not suffer on account of anyone's apathy and lukewarmness.

## **7. ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL, DISCIPLESHIP, LITERATURE AND PUBLICATIONS MINISTRY**

The Diocesan Adult Sunday School, Discipleship, Literature and Publications Ministry led by The Rev. Canon Samson Okechukwu Abada has continued to play a very crucial role in the teaching and discipleship ministry of our Diocese. We remain very grateful to our Chaplains in this ministry and all our teachers and team of writers for their sacrifices in this area.

### **Diocesan Bible Week**

The Ministry as in other years, anchored the Diocesan Bible week of 2022 which was observed in all our churches from Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> to Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> December, 2022. The theme was **“The Bible: God's cure for life's ills”** (Ezekiel 37:4-5).

Members of the Adult SSDLPM have been instrumental in the packaging and publication of our yearly Evo Diocesan Adult Sunday School manuals and have remained significant contributors to the writing of the Bible Study manual of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion). Ahead of the 2024 publication, our Diocesan team of writers has since submitted the 2024 portions allotted to them for writing to the national body.

We have continued to approve and sponsor their participation in the Church of Nigeria Writers Workshop. They participated in the 2023 National Writers' Workshop hosted by the Diocese of Lagos at the Archbishop and Mrs Ephraim Ademowo Plaza, Bariga, Lagos from Tuesday, 21<sup>st</sup> to Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> March. The programme featured workshops, seminars and discussions on how to write a quality devotional, Bible study outlines and manuals for the Children Ministry, as well as review of the Church of Nigeria Hymnal.

The 2023 Adult Sunday School/Discipleship Teachers Conference was held at Bethel Church, Rumuibekwe Parish, from Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> to Friday, 30<sup>th</sup> June.

## **8. DIOCESAN PRAYER MINISTRY**

We thank the Diocesan Prayer Ministry Chaplains led by The Rev. Chukwuemeka Udeh, for severally calling out the Clergy, Church Teachers and their wives as well as the rest of the Diocesan community, to prayer. The Ministry faithfully mobilised us to occasional Diocesan family vigils, and prayer convocations to which not so many in the Diocese responded.

Members of the Ministry also took part in the Church of Nigeria National Prayer School/Leadership Training and Retreat for all National Officers, Provincial Coordinators and Diocesan Prayer Chaplains, which held from Monday, 3<sup>rd</sup> to Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> October, 2022, at the Diocese of Enugu North.

Despite the efforts being made to engage us in this Diocese in the place of prayer, a good number of us, Clergy and Laity, have continued to be cold and indifferent to this critical area of our Christian life and calling. The result is that we are suffering many disadvantages. This has to change!

How do we hope to survive as individuals, families, Church and Nation amidst life's difficult situations, such as poverty, petulance, sickness, disaster, death and decline in spirituality and Church growth, if we continue to overlook the subject of prayer? In prayer, we acknowledge God's supreme dominion over us, as our Creator and Father; our absolute dependence on Him, as His creatures and children; and His supreme excellence.

Our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, was unique and outstanding in His prayer life:

*“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed”* (Mark 1:35 (KJV));

*“And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground”* (Luke 22:44 (KJV));

To the extent that His disciples pleaded with Him to teach them how to pray:

*“And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples”* (Luke 11:1; KJV).

This meant that they were willing to learn and be like Him.

The leaders and members of the early Christian Church were equally strong in prayer. We can draw from the examples of our Lord Jesus and those of the early Church.

D.L. Moody said: “Every great movement of God can be traced to a kneeling figure.”

Corrie Boom wrote: “When a Christian shuns fellowship with other Christians, the devil smiles. When he stops studying the Bible, the devil laughs. **When he stops praying, the devil shouts for joy.**” John Wesley on his part, wrote: “God does nothing but by intense prayer, and everything with it.”

We charge every member of the Diocese who has over time fallen asleep in this critical matter of personal, family and/or group, Church and Diocesan calls to prayer, to quickly wake up and ensure that the devil is denied the opportunity to shout for joy.

We charge everyone in this Diocese: When next the Spirit of God prompts you to pray or uses a family member, a brother or sister, your group or Church leader where you worship or the Diocesan Bishop through the Prayer Ministry to call you to a prayer encounter with God, please do not drag your feet or resist outright, such a call. Do all you can to answer such a call to prayer duty.

May the Lord refire our individual, family, group, Church and Diocesan prayer altars in Jesus name! Amen.

## **9. MUSIC MINISTRY**

The celebration of the St. Cecilia - Patroness of music - Day took place on Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2022 at St. Andrew’s Church Rumuobiokani Deanery. This event featured teachings done by Engr. Dr. George Iwo, on the life of the matriarch, renditions from eight administrative blocs present as well as Guest Choirs from St. Cyprian’s Church,

Port Harcourt and Holy Trinity Church, Rumuapara, in the Dioceses of Niger Delta and Niger Delta North respectively.

The Diocesan Music Ministry began the year 2023 with a retreat for all members on Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup> February, 2023 at St. Nicholas' Woji District. The theme was "Lifting up the Name of Jesus: The Role of the Music Ministry."

### **Children Singing Competition (Finals)**

The 2023 edition of Diocesan Children's Singing Competition took place on Saturday, 27<sup>th</sup> May, 2023 at All Saints' Cathedral, Rumuokwurusi, with seven choirs representing some of the administrative blocs of the Diocese participating.

Winners at the competition are as follows:

St. Mark's Elelenwo Archdeaconry Children's Choir - 1<sup>st</sup> position with 88.5%

Oroigwe Eliogbolo Archdeaconry Children's Choir - 2<sup>nd</sup> position with 84.5%

St. Jude's Oginigba Deanery Children's Choir - 3<sup>rd</sup> position with 69%.

We congratulate these victorious children choirs for their exceptional performances. We have invited them to minister in this Synod.

### **2023 Diocesan Adult Choir Singing Competition**

As part of activities to mark the 14<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our Diocese, the Music Ministry hosted the Finals of the Adult Choirs Singing Competition on Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 at the All Saints Cathedral, Rumuokwurusi, with nine Church choirs participating.

In the words of the Diocesan Music Chaplain, The Rev. Canon Ozioma Iheanetu, the objectives of the singing competition are:

- i. **"To lift up the name of Jesus** in keeping with our Diocesan theme for this year;
- ii. **Enhancement of the singing skills of the choristers**, as the competition was organised to improve their knowledge of music and performance in their various churches;
- iii. **The winning of trophy** that encourages them to go the extra mile in their preparation, thereby increasing their skills."

At the end of the competition, the competing Church choirs performed thus:

- a. **First position** – St. Mark's, Elelenwo District Church Choir with **81.8%**
- b. **Second position** – Bethel Church, Rumuibekwe Parish Choir with **79.8%**
- c. **Third position** – All Saints Cathedral Choir with **77.9%**
- d. **Fourth position** – Bethany Church, Pipeline Rumuokwurusi Choir with **72.6%**

- e. **Fifth position** – New Covenant, Eliminigwe Parish Choir with **71.5%**
- f. **Sixth position** – Holy Ghost Church, Iriebe Housing Estate Parish Choir with **68.9%**
- g. **Seventh position** – St Nicholas, Woji District Church Choir with **68.3%**
- h. **Eight position** – Our Saviour Christ Anglican Church, Rumunduru Choir with **60.2%**
- i. **Ninth position** – Church of the Passion, Rumuodani-Elelenwo Choir with **50%**

We congratulate St. Mark’s Elelenwo District Church Choir for emerging the overall best choir in the Diocese for this year and the other churches for their participation and genuine efforts at winning the coveted trophy.

It has been severally reported to us that some choirmasters for reasons best known to them, have continued to deny their Church choirs the opportunity of participating in the singing competition of the Diocese. Choirmasters are engaged to improve the singing skills of their choristers and participation in singing competitions is one of the many ways to achieve this. We are very displeased at this report. Priests of all churches and their Church Councils are to ensure that this ugly situation does not persist. Choirmasters who continue to disobey our directives in this regard should be shown the way out. They were not engaged to work against the growth of the Diocese in any way, not even through their deliberate effort at stagnating the growth of the Church choirs committed to their charge. Enough is enough!

We appreciate the roles of our Music Chaplains, The Rev. Canon Ozioma Iheanetu and The Rev. Amoson Ijah and pray that God enables them, with the Lay leadership of the Choir and Band, to continue to give higher and life-impacting services to the Diocese.

#### **10. MINISTRY TO ROYAL FATHERS, CHIEFS, ELDERS & RETIRED CLERGY**

This Ministry which has The Rev. Canon Samuel Ejekwu and Rev. Gift A. Chukwumati as Chaplains, is saddled with the task of providing spiritual guidance to traditional leaders, royal fathers, elders, chiefs and retired clergy in Evo. Within the year, a number of these revered community and Church fathers were visited for prayers and exhortation.

This Ministry also organised a leadership summit for them on Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> May, 2023 at St. Jude’s Anglican Church, Oginigba Deanery under the theme: “Awake! Leaders; in times like this, with godly zeal and passion” (Judges 6:12).

We expect to see more ministry activities by the Chaplains in the coming year.

## **11. ANGLICAN COMMUNION BRIGADE (ACB)**

In the year under review, the ACB carried out a number of programmes and activities such as a Mega Crusade from Thursday, 1<sup>st</sup> December to Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2022, at Living Waters Anglican Church, Eliogbolo, with the theme, “Arise and Re-build through God” (Nehemiah 2:18); first quarter combined worship and meeting on Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> April, 2023, at the Anglican Church of the Pentecost, Rumuogba Parish; 1-Day Leadership Retreat on Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2023, at Great Shepherd Anglican Church, Mgbuesilaru.

At the Beginning-of-the-Year Retreat that was held on Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup> February, 2023 at All Saints Cathedral, Rumuokwurusi, new officers were elected. They are:

- 1) Anyanwu Chinemerem Anthony – Co-ordinator
- 2) Ihetu Iheanyi Promise - Deputy Co-ordinator
- 3) Chukwukerem Chiaka Happiness - Secretary
- 4) Wachukwu Joshua Hachimerum - Assistant Secretary
- 5) Okekem Promise Sopuruchi – Public Relations Officer
- 6) Amadi Rita Homachi - Financial Secretary
- 7) Weli Peace Osnaruchi - Welfare 1
- 8) Ezeokoli Uchenna Ebube - Band Leader 1
- 9) Chukwuemeka Ajere - Treasurer
- 10) Oroma Amadi - Welfare 2
- 11) Ipori Favour - Band Leader 2
- 12) Destiny Amadi - Prayer Leader 1
- 13) Samuel Amadi - Provost/Protocol 1
- 14) Violet Ogan - Provost/Protocol 2
- 15) Okafor Emmanuel Chinonso - Bible Study 1
- 16) Owen Albert Sopuruchi - Bible Study 2
- 17) Stanley Orji - Trainer 1
- 18) Obidinma Chukwunonso - Captains Forum Chairman
- 19) Emmanuel Mgbечи Mmesoma - NCO Coordinator
- 20) Bright Nnodi - CSO 1
- 21) Kanu Chigozie Emeka - CSO 2
- 22) Moses Oluchi Gerald - Sports 1
- 23) Eleto Daniel - Sports 2
- 24) Jude Onuchabor - Project Officer 1
- 25) Aaron Chidinma Johnson - Project Officer 2

We dedicated the newly elected officers on Sunday, 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2023.

We congratulate the newly elected officers of the Brigade as well as members of our Diocese who were elected/appointed into various positions at the State and Local Government levels: Dame Loretta E. Enwezor as the State Vice-chairman, Interdenominational Affairs/Social welfare; Sir Chief Raymond Elenwoke as the State

Vice-chairman Projects/Investments and Sir Chukwuemeka Awanye as the New Obio Akpor Battalion Council Chairman.

We are grateful to the Chaplains, The Rev. Canon John Chinda and The Rev Christian Gabriel and commend them for all their efforts towards making this ministry to the boys, a strong and viable one.

We have gone through the reports submitted to Synod by the Diocesan Lay leaders and Chaplains of the other Diocesan Chaplaincies, ministries and units such as Family Life & Home Fellowship, Industrial, Business/Workplace, Body of Professionals, Lay Workers, Guild of Stewards, Public and Private Secondary Schools, Clergy and Church Workers Children, etc., and wish to state that we are impressed with the efforts of most of these groups.

While we applaud the leadership and members of the various Diocesan activity groups, we wish to charge them to do more in making a full proof of their ministries. Building up the spiritual lives of members of the groups and using such groups as outreach units for soul-winning, should be the primary concern and goal of all those called to take up positions of leadership in these arms and units of the Diocese. Each arm or group in the Diocese exists to impact the lives of members of the Diocesan community and make a clearly visible and commendable difference. Anything short of these, will definitely not be pleasing to God and will not help the overall advancement of His kingdom agenda which we are pursuing in Evo. As we had earlier said in this address, those who have lost the zeal, passion and fire for purposeful and progressive ministry and are unwilling to have that fire rekindled, should take a bow out of such leadership roles and make way for others who are ready to run with the baton they receive.

## **12. PRAYER GROUPS OF MEN, WOMEN & YOUTHS**

These Prayer groups were set up at all Church levels to encourage every parishioner of our Diocese to be actively involved in the ministry of interceding and caring for one another within the group and particularly to focus on the specific prayer mandate and ministry role assigned to each group. In the last one year, we have noted with satisfaction the struggles and efforts of the Co-ordinating Chaplains, The Ven. Chidi S. Worgu and Ven. Chimaobi Chieme, some Diocesan Coordinators, Supervisors and leaders of these Prayer groups of men, women and youths at building and strengthening these groups which have greatly and positively impacted on their mission. We commend these Chaplains and Lay leaders!

We have equally noted with much displeasure and concern that some others among the leaders have failed to rise up and fully embrace their roles in this area of our Diocesan ministry. We charge them to wake up from their slumber and brace up to the challenge of their ministerial offices.

Every member of the Diocese - male, female and youth - is mandatorily required to belong to a Prayer group in his/her local Church and actively participate there in the monthly and other periodic activities of such groups. We cannot overemphasise this. The Clergy, Church Teachers with their wives are hereby charged to aggressively sensitise their members on this and prayerfully assign every parishioner to a Prayer group. This will help them fully satisfy the requirement for full and active membership of the Church and Diocese.

On behalf of Synod, We thank the various Prayer groups for their financial support at the past synods and harvest thanksgiving services of the Diocese and churches. We pray that God will continually rain down His abundant blessings on the leaders and all faithful and supportive members of these groups.

As announced by Us at the reading of our Synod address last year, the **39 men, women and youth** Prayer groups of our churches which are regrouped at the Diocesan level into **11** will be jointly serving as the **Chief Launcher** of our today's Synod Address and Charge. These groups have been adequately sensitised and challenged to cheerfully take up this task as a service to God and His Church. We are hopeful that they will perform creditably and surpass the efforts of the groups that did so in the past years. May the grace of the Lord abound unto all members of the Prayer groups which incidentally includes all of us!

## **BOARDS, INSTITUTIONS, DIRECTORATES AND COMMITTEES OF THE DIOCESE**

### **1. Diocesan Education Board and Schools**

To the glory of God, our three Diocesan Secondary Schools - Archdeacon Crowther Memorial Girls' School (ACMGS), Eledenwo, Bishop Crowther Memorial Secondary School (BCMSS), Rumuobiokani and Woji Town Word of Faith Group of Schools (WTWoF), Woji, have continued to excel in their performances, thus lifting the image and glory of our Diocese.

We thank Sir Victor Dania, Chairman of the Board and members of the Diocesan Education Board for their commitment to the pursuit of our mission in the area of education. We are equally very grateful to and heartily commend the principals and staff of the three schools for their resilience amidst several challenges. The Education Board and the management and staff of our schools have continued to exercise commendable administrative and managerial governance of the schools, ensuring high spiritual, moral and academic standards.

The Education Board also oversees the fast-emerging Parish schools in our Diocese, ensuring that they meet stipulated Diocesan and Government guidelines/standards.

- **Our Three Diocesan Schools**

The combined (Secondary, Primary and Nursery) student and pupil population of our schools presently stands at 1,676, a decline compared to 2021/2022 academic year's figure of 1,738.

We are hopeful that improved academic standards, trainings of our staff and our ongoing infrastructure upgrades, will lead to improvement in the population.

- **Performance in External Examinations**

We commend our students who scored over 200 marks from the recent JAMB/UTME examinations. The highest at **ACMGS** was **296**, **BCMSS** - 293 and **WTWOFGS** - **282**, though a decline of the Jamb results of last year.

The schools are currently running curricular aimed at preparing candidates for the Scholastic Aptitude Test, SAT. 8 Students from each of ACMGS and BCMSS registered for the examination.

- **Infrastructural Development**

To the glory of God, we are pleased to inform this Synod that work on the ultra-modern 2-storey dormitory complex at Archdeacon Crowther Memorial Girls School, Elemenwo which foundation stone was laid on Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2019 by the immediate past Primate of All Nigeria (Anglican Communion), The Most Rev. Nicholas Okoh has been successfully completed. The massive dormitory project meets global standards and current educational realities. It contains **39** students and **6** Prefects room suites, **5** Hostel Mistresses flats, **1** hall, **2** stores, **1** tuck shop, fire alarm as well as CCTV systems.

We named this dormitory complex after a worthy Old Girl of the school, Her Excellency, The Hon. Justice Suzzette Eberechi Nyesom-Wike, DSSRS, wife of the immediate past Governor of Rivers State, His Excellency, Chief Barr. Nyesom Ezenwo Wike, CoN, GSSRS, PoS Africa, Life Bencher.

The dormitory complex was formally commissioned on Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 by His Excellency, the Executive Governor of Rivers State, Sir Siminalayi Fubura, GSSRS who was represented by Her Excellency, Prof. Mrs. Ngozi Nma Odu, the Deputy Governor and dedicated by Us in the presence of Her Excellency, Hon. Justice Suzzette Eberechi Nyesom-Wike, The Rt. Hon. Martin Chike Amaewhule, DSSRS, Speaker, Rivers State House of Assembly who chaired the occasion; Prof. Prince Chinedu Mmom, JP, DSSRS, Commissioner for Education, Rivers State; Barr. (Mrs.) Inime Aguma, Commissioner for Social Welfare and Rehabilitation; Ven. Dr. Fyनेface Akah, Chairman, Rivers State Universal Basic Education Board; Dame Hon. Chinyeru Agbara Esq (JP), Vice Chairman, Obio/Akpor L.G.A.; Mrs. Emojevwe Ariolu, wife of the Obio/Akpor L.G.A. Chairman and HRH, Eze Dr. Amb. Sunny Weli Chuku, JP, Eze Elelenwo-Etor, some other Evo traditional rulers, the Clergy and other members of the Diocesan community, staff, students, parents/guardians and Old Girls of ACMGS Elelenwo.

The cost of putting up this project put at a total of **Three Hundred and Twenty Million Naira** was entirely borne by the Diocese of Evo in partnership with the Archdeacon Crowther Memorial Girls School. We give thanks to God. We are immensely grateful to the Chairman, Sir Victor Dania and Acting Chairman, Prof. Nnamdi Ekeocha of the Diocesan Education Board, other members of the Board, as well as Prof. Joy Ugwu, Chairperson, Dormitory project dedication committee and all members of her committee for their outstanding contributions and roles towards the completion of the dormitory project and the planning and execution of the commissioning and dedication ceremonies.

May the Lord greatly reward their labours and much sacrifices.

### **2023 Children's Day Celebration**

The Diocesan Schools assisted by the Diocesan Sports Ministry, organised a joint 2023 National Children's Day celebration on Saturday, 27<sup>th</sup> May at Bishop Crowther Memorial Schools, Rumuobiokani.

The celebration featured march-past, dance competition, Bible recitation, drama and talk show. At the end of the day's event, the participating schools recorded the following results:

1. Archdeacon Crowther Memorial Girls School ACMGS, Elemenwo – 1<sup>st</sup> Position for the Secondary and Primary categories,
2. Bishop Crowther Memorial Schools, Rumuobiokani – 2<sup>nd</sup> Position
3. Woji Word of Faith Group of Schools, Woji – 3<sup>rd</sup> Position

The only participating Parish school, St. Nicholas School, Woji came fourth in the Primary category.

We charge the Clergy whose churches own schools to ensure that such schools actively participate in this annual outing and other joint activities of the schools of this Diocese.

### **Special Donations/Support**

#### **Archdeacon Crowther Memorial Girls School, Elemenwo**

- ◆ The former Rivers State Governor, His Excellency Nyesom Ezenwo Wike (CON, GSSRS, PoS (Africa), Life Bencher), completed the rehabilitation of the road and drains on the Elemenwo School Road, and gave a grant of **N500 million** for the further upgrade of the school.
- ◆ For the 6<sup>th</sup> year running, the North America branch of ACMGS Elemenwo Old Girls has again donated bursaries worth **N50,000** to each of the **53** SS3 Students.
- ◆ The 1972 Set renovated the Biology Laboratory, while the 1982 set carried out reconstruction and beautification at the School Gate to mark their 50<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> graduation anniversaries respectively.
- ◆ The National body has resumed work on the Chapel project, preparatory to the celebration of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the school scheduled for later this year.
- ◆ The Abuja Branch visited and distributed sanitary items to every student.
- ◆ The PTA also donated a fenced and well-equipped Children's playground for the Nursery/Primary Section.

#### **Bishop Crowther Memorial Secondary School, Rumuobiokani**

- ◆ Sir Victor Dania, Chairman, Diocesan Education Board donated Lawn Tennis rackets.
- ◆ Sir Godfrey Nnamdi Oluabunwa and the BCMSS Old Boys Association donated Trophies for Inter-House Sports competitions.

- ◆ Mrs. Nneka Ojiakor from Canada donated play equipment and kiddies' books for the Creche.

### **Woji Town Word of Faith Group of Schools, Woji**

- ◆ The WOFGS PTA donated **9** all-in-one E-learning computers for Secondary School classes.

We deeply appreciate all the donors for their continuous show of love and pray that the good Lord will bountifully reward them.

### **2. Bishop Elenwo Memorial Hospital**

Bishop Elenwo Memorial Hospital (BEMH) located at the premises of Bishop Crowther Memorial Secondary School, Rumuobiokani, is saddled with the mission of providing quality, sustainable and affordable health care services to the general public in a manner that reflects our Diocesan Christian ministry of caring for the whole person – body, mind and spirit. Within the year under review, BEMH with a staff strength of **21**, tried as much as possible to provide quality health care services to all who visited the Hospital in the areas of general consultation, laboratory investigations & diagnostic tests, hospitalisation, annual physical examination, antenatal care/delivery, general surgeries, accident & emergency services, eye clinic, x-ray, scan, drug prescription and dispensing, etc.

Within the Synod year, the Hospital attended to a total of **1, 531** patients, conducted **223** ultra sound and **4** x-ray tests.

Notwithstanding the challenges being faced by the hospital, it has continued to grow steadily, hence we encourage our Diocesan faithful and others to continue to patronise the services of the hospital to meet their peculiar health needs and to enhance the hospital's service to the community.

The Diocesan Hospital Management Board should do all in its powers to engage the services of a qualified and competent Medical Director to fill up the presently existing vacancy. Furthermore, the Board should ensure that all categories of staff at BEMH faithfully render the services for which they were employed.

### **3. Diocesan Investment Board**

The Diocesan Investment Board has been responsible for the general management of all our Diocesan business outfits with a view to generating more revenue for the Diocese.

Analysing the different units of the Board, we can say that the **Printing Press** is doing appreciably well in spite of its manifold challenges which we are doing everything possible to address, even with scarce resources.

Operations of the **Diocesan Farm** at Atali are also yielding results. The Investment Board has started harvesting and selling some of the mature farm produce.

Work on the farm house has been completed with 3 resident farm workers employed to both work there and protect it from thieves. Other achievements at the farm include:

- Installation of water system with the procurement of 3KVA Generator for supply of light and pumping of water.
- Ongoing building of the Piggery house
- Digging of 4 earthen ponds for fish farming

Business in the **Books, Stationery and Vestment Shop** is steadily progressing and we are trusting God that when the shop relocates down to the old Cathedral Church building for easy access, it will enjoy increased patronage. We hereby direct the Cathedral Standing Committee to speed up work on the modification of the old church building for which we released the requested funds in 2022 prior to the hosting of the meeting of the Church of Nigeria Standing Committee by our Diocese.

Commercial activities in the **Evo Transport Company** have not been particularly impressive. We charge the Investment Board to do more in this area in order to attract the much-needed patronage and revenue for the Diocese.

**Work on our Evo Printing Press and Event Centre building** at Rumuobiokani has been completed by the Diocesan Projects Committee led by Sir Promise Wodi. We appreciate the efforts and labours of members of the Committee.

We are now in the process of equipping and furnishing the outfit. Eight Hundred (800) chairs have been procured at the cost of Eleven Million, Four Hundred and Forty Thousand Naira (₦11,440,000.00). Also, Air conditioners and Television screens have been installed. A few more necessities will be shortly be procured and installed. Hopefully, the Event Centre will be fully operational before the end of this third quarter of the year. We look forward to the patronage of the Centre by members of the Diocese and others for their social events.

**Company Registration:** The following companies under Evo Investments are now fully registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission through the help of our Diocesan Legal team. They are:

- a. Evo Printing Press Ltd
- b. Evo Farm Ltd and
- c. Evo Transport Company Ltd

We commend the Diocesan Legal Secretary, Sir Barr. Bright Nda-Owhor, for his services in this regard. The efforts of the Diocesan Investment Board chaired by Sir Gilbert E. Chuku, including the monitoring and protection of our landed properties against encumbrances, are equally appreciated and commended. We look forward to the Board generating more revenues for the Diocese from all our investment portfolios.

#### **4. Directorate of Civic and Political Affairs**

The Directorate within the year under review enlightened groups in the Diocese on the importance of complying with the Federal Government directives on the National Identity Registration Exercise, update of the voter's register and the collection of their personal voter's card.

They sensitized members of our Diocese on the need to know their polling units before the election dates and to also participate fully.

The National Directorate appointed Us as the State Coordinator of the Church of Nigeria (CONAC) Election Monitoring and Observation Group. We met severally with members of this Directorate from our sister Dioceses in Rivers State and together we monitored the 2023 General elections across the state.

## **5. Directorate of Social Welfare**

This Directorate has as its vision, to reach out in love and with the word of God to people with diverse needs, sharing Christ's ministry of healing and reconciliation. Within the year, the members carried out a number of programmes and outreaches.

The Directorate on behalf of our Diocese and in partnership with the Office of the Archbishop of our Diocese and other Dioceses, reached out to some Dioceses in our Province which were affected by the heavy and devastating flood of last year. They carried out their Christmas season feeding programme 'On the highways outreach', in some parts of Obio Akpor, Eleme, Port-Harcourt and Ikwerre Local Government Areas on Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2022, with the theme "Beautiful Surprises". They also visited with Us, the Port Harcourt Correctional Centre on Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2023, and also the Rehabilitation Centre at Iriebe with cooked food and drugs on Saturday, 27<sup>th</sup> May, 2023.

These outreaches were made possible through the freewill donations received from some churches, individuals and groups of our Diocese as well as through financial approvals from the Diocesan Board. We deeply appreciate all such donors at different times of need. May the Lord respond to you when you call upon Him. Amen.

We commend the leadership of the Directorate, ably headed by Lady Bibian Nnoli, for all their services and pray for more of God's blessings, direction and protection upon them.

## **6. Sports Council**

The Diocesan Sports Council has Sir Enyioma Onuoha as Chairman; The Rev. Canon Hosanna Naenwi and Rev. Moses O. Anyatonwu as Chaplains. In the course of the Synod year, the Council effectively carried out the following activities:

### **Diocesan Schools Inter House Sports Competitions**

The Diocesan Sports Ministry partnered with and officiated at the 2023 Inter House Sports Competitions of two of our Diocesan Schools - Bishop Crowther Memorial Schools, Rumuobiokani on Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup> February, 2023, and Word of Faith Group of Schools, Woji, on Tuesday, 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2023, and this year's National Children's Day joint celebration by all our Diocesan and Parish schools.

### **Mothering Sunday Week of Activities Match Past:**

The Council collaborated with our Diocesan Women to successfully organise a March-Past Competition between the various Women Prayer Groups of the Diocese as part of activities of the 2023 Diocesan Mothering Sunday Week. This was held on Monday, 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2023.

At the end of the competition, Hannah Prayer Group (Pink Colour) came first with 83 points; Lois Prayer Group (Green Colour) came second with 78 points while Esther Prayer Group (Orange Colour) came third with 78 points.

The Chairman of Obio-Akpor Local Government Area, Hon. Barr. George T. Ariolu; the Member representing Obio-Akpor Federal Constituency in the House of Representatives, Hon. O.K. Chinda and the Member representing Obio-Akpor Constituency and House Leader (now Speaker) Rivers State House of Assembly, Hon. Martin Chike Amaewhule as well as Mr Chidi Amadi, Chairman, People's Democratic Party, Obio-Akpor, graced the occasion with Us and Mama Evo; Mrs. Chinyere U. Ordu, JP, FCAI.

The Sports Council is hereby commended for organising a weekly aerobics and football training for the Clergy and Church teachers to help them keep fit.

The Council also hosted the second edition of the Diocesan Clergy Inter Archdeaconry/Deanery 5-Aside football competition from Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> to Monday, 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2023.

At the end of the competition, the combined team of Rumuomasi, Rumuobiokani and Oginigba Deaneries took the first position, Eledenwo Archdeaconry came second while the joint team of the Cathedral, Trinity Archdeaconry and Paraclete Deanery took the third position.

We acknowledge with gratitude the family of Late Cyprian A. Amadi, Diocesan CMF, Sir & Lady Bright Ndah Owhor, and Chairman of the Evo Clergy Association, for their donations of trophies in support of the competition.

### **2023 Children's Day Celebration**

The Diocesan Sports Council assisted the Evo Diocesan Schools in organising a joint 2023 National Children's Day celebration on Saturday, 27<sup>th</sup> May, at Bishop Crowther Memorial Schools, Rumuobiokani.

## **7. Bishop's Advisory Committee on skills acquisition and economic empowerment**

Our Diocese seeks not only to raise members who are strong spiritually, but also those that are physically and economically empowered to prosper (3 John vs2).

The Bishop's Advisory Committee on Economic Empowerment is presently training **49** persons in different skills such as tailoring, automobile repairs, catering, laundry, etc., at different training locations within and around the Diocese.

A good number of these trainees are reportedly doing well. Those of them undergoing training in catering are also preparing to sit for the National Diploma examinations.

A lot is needed for this ministry to thrive. Given the worsening economic situation in the country leading to high unemployment rate and even loss of jobs, there is therefore now the great need for us as a Diocesan community to continue to do all within our powers to support the economically weak and equip those willing to acquire skills in their chosen areas to enable them become self-employed and financially self-supporting. We therefore call on all and sundry to key into this noble ministry of our Diocese by donating both in kind and/or cash to enhance the operations of our Advisory Committee on skills acquisition and economic empowerment.

We commend Dame Priscilla Nosiri - our Chief Adviser on Skills Acquisition and Economic Empowerment - and her team, for the great work they have been doing. May the Lord continue to strengthen their hands at work.

## **WEEKLY FINANCIAL (10% & 15%) REMITTANCE TO THE DIOCESE IN 2022**

### **AWARDS TO BEST PERFORMING CHURCHES AND GROUP**

#### **Category A (15%) For the Cathedral, Deanery churches and St. Nicholas, Woji**

**1<sup>st</sup> Position** – St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery with a total remittance of **N28,820,121.71**, an improvement on their 2021 performance of **N24,735,668.13**.

#### **Category B (15%) District Headquarters churches**

**1<sup>st</sup> Position** – St. Mark's Anglican Church, Elelenwo with a total remittance of **N6,201,609.39** a drop from performances of 2021 - N6,588,564.10 and 2020 - N6,806,104.30.

#### **Category C (10%) Parish churches:**

**1<sup>st</sup> Position** – New Wine Anglican Church, Okporo, with a total remittance of **N3,262,182.36**, an improvement on their 2021 performance of N3,207,601.93.

#### **Category D1 (15%) Stations**

**1<sup>st</sup> Position** – St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church, Atali, with a total remittance of **N612,395.00**, an improvement on their 2021 performance of N528,550.00.

#### **Category D2 (10%) Station churches (Stations under the Archdeaconries):**

**1<sup>st</sup> Position** – Anglican Church of the Passion, Elelenwo, with a total remittance of **N1,008,271.09**, a drop from performances of 2021 – N1,046,564.07.

#### **Category E (10%) Worship Centres:**

**1<sup>st</sup> Position** – Anglican Worship Centre, Interlock, Iriebe, with a total remittance of **N310,950.00**, an improvement on their 2021 performance of N49,790.00.

**Category F (10%) Diocesan Activity Groups:**

**1<sup>st</sup> Position** – **MU/WG (Women’s Work Office)** with a total remittance of **N7,688,660.00**, an improvement on their 2021 performance of N3,919,735.26.

We commend these churches and the Women ministries of our Diocese for their performance. The Lord greatly reward them!

**SOME OUTSTANDING DONATIONS ACROSS THE DIOCESE**

We appreciate all such donations made by individuals, groups and families in a number of our churches to address some of the critical needs of those churches.

We thank:

- The Cathedral Knights for their **1 million Naira** support to Our Saviour Christ Anglican Church, Rumunduru.
- Hon. Justice Iheanyichuku & Mrs Happiness Wodi of St. Mark’s Church, Elelenwo District for building and donating to the Church, modern rest rooms/conveniences
- The Church Teacher of Living Waters, Eliogbolo, Mr. Felix Obidi and family who equipped the ICT Department of the Church.
- Sir & Lady Promise Wodi of St. Mark’s Anglican Church, Elelenwo for their donation of a Toyota Camry car to the Church
- The Rivers State Government under His Excellency, Nyesom Ezenwo Wike, for the donation of the sum of **50 million Naira** to All Saints Cathedral, Rumuokwurusi in January and the sum of **500 million Naira** in April this year towards the infrastructural upgrade of our Archdeacon Crowther Memorial Girls School, Elelenwo
- An **anonymous member of the Diocese** for the payment of the sum of **20 million Naira** towards the ongoing effort to acquire a permanent site for the Anglican Church of the Beatitudes, Harmony Estate, Rumuokwurusi with a strong pledge to offset the outstanding balance.

- **Sir Ugem Rogers** who donated an **18-seater Toyota Hiace Bus** to Great Shepherd Church, Mgbuesilaru Parish, and the sum of **20 million Naira** in support of the Parish CMF towards the expansion of the Church building.
- **Mr Okechukwu and Dr. (Mrs) Aleruchi Nodi** of Church of Advent, Rumuewhara Parish for the donation of a Digital Belfry to the Church.

We acknowledge, appreciate and commend several other individuals, families and groups whose notable, sacrificial and outstanding donations and support at different times as contained in the various Synod reports of this year greatly contributed to the spiritual, administrative, material and infrastructural growth of the Diocese, their churches and groups. May the Lord grant them all round increase and abundant prosperity in all their life's endeavours!

### **DIOCESE OF EVO NEEDS YOUR HELP!**

Our gathering here in this Synod offers us, Your bishop and Chief under-shepherd, the fresh opportunity to inform you of the several areas that the Diocese will need your personal and groups interventions to enable us achieve our set goals.

A few months ago, we sent our preachers during our Diocesan Endowment Fund Sunday to every Church to minister and also canvas for funds to help us address a number of challenges facing the Diocese.

This exercise, we regret to say, did not attract the kind of response we desired. There is hardly any area of need that was addressed fully by those who made pledges. This is why we are now making a fresh appeal to everyone here and to all members of our Diocese to consider stepping in to relieve the Diocese of the many burdens she is presently carrying. We need funds to:

- Support our students in theological institutions
- Acquire new machines and other items of need for our Diocesan Printing Press  
E.g., Kord, DI, Laminating, Banner and Binding machines, etc.
- A 150 KVA generator for the joint operations of our Press and Event Centre
- Operational vehicle for the Printing Press
- Other Event Centre and the new ICT/mini-Conference room needs include: computers, projectors, television screens, media/video conferencing equipment (microphones, speakers and cameras)
- Cash donations towards the purchase of permanent site lands for two of our Churches

- Cash/material donations towards the building of our new Bishop’s Court as we intend to convert the present one to our Diocesan Secretariat.

Each one of us should allow God to use him/her to address any of these areas of serious needs. Income to the Diocese from weekly remittances by Churches has continued to be on the decline. The freewill, sacrificial interventions of good-spirited and generous members have been an agelong way of attending to the ever-increasing areas of need in every Christian organization. This practice must not be overlooked here in our Diocese. As the Lord has blessed or blesses you, please remember to sacrificially respond to this call to support and help the Diocese tackle her numerous needs. Let us be motivated by the following scriptural injunctions:

*“Every man according as he purposeth (decided) in his heart, [so let him give]; not grudgingly (reluctantly), or of necessity (under compulsion): for God loveth a cheerful giver” - 2 Corinthians 9:7 (KJV),*

*“I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive”- Acts 20:35 (KJV),*

*“As every man hath received the gift, [even so] minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God”  
- 1 Peter 4:10 (KJV).*

## **CRUCIAL POLICIES TO NOTE**

### **1. Burial of deceased members**

By the Provision of our newly approved Diocesan Constitution, the burial of any deceased member of our Diocese shall from henceforth take place within and not later than a period of 90 days. Our Priests are to ensure that in fixing the funeral date of a deceased member, no already-determined major programme of the local Church or Diocese suffers.

### **2. Special Offerings in aid of special needs and Diocesan missions**

With the approval of the Diocesan Board, every Church or Station of the Diocese is to compulsorily take an offering at every Sunday service of the whole congregation and week day thanksgiving services by individuals, families, groups/organisations respectively, to support the special ministries and missions of our Diocese. The week day services (outside of Sundays) will include but not limited to weddings, baptisms, churching/thanksgiving of women after child birth, birthday/marriage anniversaries celebrations, memorial services and such other special and occasional services.

Proceeds from these offerings are to be channeled in response to requests from needy Dioceses and Mission fields, demands/directives from the Primate's and Archbishop's offices to address critical needs outside the annual budgetary provisions. To ensure compliance, every Church has been assigned an annual target to meet at the end of the year. Those who fail to meet their target will have to pay the balance as a debt to the Diocese.

We therefore advise all ministers with their church leadership to give the required attention and priority to this matter.

### **3. Refreshment Sunday**

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Bread of life. He has promised in His word that he who comes to Him shall never hunger. As we partake of Him through the Word and Sacrament, we also need to be physically refreshed in the Church from time to time. Consequently, we hereby charge every Church in our Diocese to from henceforth observe at least 4 Sundays of the year as Refreshment Sundays. These should include Mothering Sundays and Father's Day.

On these and the other chosen Sundays, the Church should provide after-service lunch for all worshippers in the manner of Jesus who fed the multitudes on two occasions after ministering to them spiritually by the lakeside and in the region of the Gerasenes, in the region around the Decapolis.

Members of the local Church can volunteer to sponsor this programme as the Lord has graciously blessed them and following in the example of the generous impulse of the Lad who had five barley loaves, and two small fishes. (Read Mark 6:35-44; 8:1-9; John 6:1-14).

Great miracles and abundant blessings await churches, individuals and families that respond to this charge in faith.

## **ECUMENICAL MATTERS**

Our Diocese has actively participated in the activities of the two main Ecumenical bodies in the State – the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN).

We appreciate The Ven. Okechukwu Owhonda and members of the Diocesan Directorate of Ecumenism, Interfaith and Inter-Diocesan relations for their readiness and consistence in taking part in the programmes of the aforementioned Christian

organisations, including the Women's Wing of the Christian Council of Nigeria (WOWICCN).

### **Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN)**

The Christian Association of Nigeria, Rivers State branch, now has a new Chairman in the person of a former State Chairman of the CCN and head of the African Church in the State, The Most Rev. Dr. D.B. Kaladokubo. Other members of the new State Executive are: The Rev. Sunday Okhifor – Vice Chairman, Very Rev. Fr. Michael Akere, Esq – State Secretary, Senior Pastor Prince Godwill – Assistant Secretary and Rev. Joseph Okoh – Treasurer.

They were inaugurated on Tuesday, 29<sup>th</sup> November, 2022, at the State Ecumenical Centre, Port Harcourt.

Appointment of Directors for State issues, Legal, Youth, Women, Education, Ecumenism/Interfaith and Public Relations have since been made by the new State Chairman.

Towards the 2023 Governorship election in the State, the Christian Association of Nigeria organised a 1-Day fasting and prayer summit for all Christians in the State on Thursday, 16<sup>th</sup> February at the Ecumenical Centre and also an interactive session with candidates of the various political parties vying for the office of the Executive Governor of Rivers State on Tuesday, 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2023 at the Presidential Hotel, Port Harcourt. The event attracted a large number of Church leaders and politicians in the State including some of our Evo clergymen and Lay members.

By the grace of God, We, your Bishop served as the Chairman of the Committee that planned and hosted the session on behalf of the State CAN.

We are immensely grateful to some members of our Diocese – Sir Rex Yakpogoro, Dr. Kasarachi Innocent, The Ven. Alex Usifoh and the Cathedral Guild of Stewards for their very outstanding support and contributions towards the success of the interactive session.

### **Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN)**

We have continued to chair the State chapter of the second ranked Ecumenical Body within the Rivers State CAN, the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN). We thank God for

helping and guiding us through the activities of the Council. Activities of the Council over this period under review of which members of our Ecumenical Directorate played active roles include the 2023 Rededication Service held on Sunday, 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2023 at the First African Church Mission, Aggrey Road, Port Harcourt, the Quarterly prayer and fasting meetings of the Council, the State Standing Committee meetings one of which was hosted by St. Michael's, Rumuomasi Deanery on Tuesday, 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2023, the hosting of the South-South General Assembly of the Council held at Banham Methodist Cathedral, Aggrey Road, Port Harcourt from Tuesday, 28<sup>th</sup> to Thursday, 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2023 and in all the activities of the State CCN Week which held from Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> to Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> June, 2023.

We thank all our Clergy and members of the Ecumenical Directorate who participated in the outreaches of the Anglican Communion to the Priesthood Orphanage, Elemenwo and Compassion Centre, Nkpogu, on Friday, 19<sup>th</sup> June, 2023, on behalf of the State CCN as well as in the Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> June Exchange of pulpits with other denominations. We equally appreciate the churches of our Diocese that played host to visiting ministers from other denominations who came on the exchange of pulpit.

At the National level of the CCN, we participated in the 31<sup>st</sup> General Assembly and 93<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary celebrations which was hosted by the Anglican Communion from Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> to Saturday, 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2022 at St. Andrew's Basilica Enugu, Diocese of Nike with the theme: "Christ's love compels us" (1 Cor. 5:14).

At the General Assembly, a new National President was elected. He is The Most Rev. Dr. David Onuoha, Bishop of Okigwe South and Archbishop of Ecclesiastical Province of Owerri. We congratulate and wish him a successful tenure in office.

### **NIGER DELTA PROVINCE**

Provincial Council and Mothers' Union Executive Committee meetings were held and hosted as follows:

1. Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2022 at the Diocese of Ogbia. The theme was "Take heed how you build" (1 Corinthians 3:10).
2. Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> and Thursday, 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2023 at St. Cyprian's Church, Port Harcourt, Niger Delta Diocese. The theme was: "Godliness with contentment" – 1 Timothy 6:6).

### **CHURCH OF NIGERIA**

## **1. Hosting of National Church Programmes in 2022 and 2023**

Our Diocese was privileged to host the following gatherings of the CoN and some of her groups

- Our Chapel of Grace & Knowledge, ACMGS, Elemenwo was the venue of the **Church of Nigeria Senior Clergy Wives Retreat** hosted by the women of our Niger Delta Province from Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> to Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> August, 2022. We commend the women of our Diocese led by the Bishop's wife/Principal of ACMGS, Mrs. Chinyere U. Ordu, the Diocesan women's Chaplain, The Rev. Canon Samuel Obialor and the Parish Church Council of CGK for providing the financial support and enabling environment for the Province to play host to the retreatants.
- **Joint Council of Knights Conference** from Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup> to Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2022 at St. Andrew's Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery
- Consultative Conference on Mission for Directors of Missions from the 55 Dioceses of the Joint Councils, East of the Niger from Monday, 10<sup>th</sup> to Wednesday, 12<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 at St. Andrew's Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery and Church of Nigeria Missionary Society Strategic Conference and mobilisation for the Diocese of Eyo for aggressive missions/evangelism from Wednesday, 12<sup>th</sup> to Friday, 14<sup>th</sup> July, 2023.

## **2. Standing Committee Meetings**

Within the Synod year, two meetings of the Church of Nigeria Standing Committee and National Mothers Union Executives were hosted by:

- i. The Diocese of Abuja from Monday, 12<sup>th</sup> to Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2022 at the National Secretariat of the Church of Nigeria, St. Mathias House, Gudu, Abuja. The theme was "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done" (Matthew 6:10) and
- ii. The Diocese of Kubwa from Monday, 13<sup>th</sup> to Friday, 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2023 at the Cathedral Church of St. Bartholomew, Kubwa. The theme was "Watch and pray: Godly disposition when kingdoms rage" (Matthew 26:40-41).

Our Diocese was fully represented at both meetings.

## **3. Divine Commonwealth Conference (DIVCCON) 2022**

To the glory God, our Diocese participated in the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of the annual Church of Nigeria Divine Commonwealth Conference (DIVCCON) which held at the National Christian Centre, Abuja from Monday, 7<sup>th</sup> to Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2022 under the theme: "**At the Name of Jesus**" (Phil. 2:10).

The Conference which featured worship, talks, Bible expositions, seminars, prayer and deliverance sessions had one of our own, Mrs. Ijeoma Anagbogu, speak in the seminar on marriage and family life.

Our Diocese had a total registration of **954** persons, the highest amongst all the participating Dioceses. Consequently, we were declared winner of the trophy (**1<sup>st</sup> position**) for the best mobilised Diocese for the Conference. This was achieved to the glory of God after several attempts by our Diocese in the previous conferences where we had taken the 4<sup>th</sup> once and 2<sup>nd</sup> position twice.

We thank the DIVCCON Co-ordinators, ably led by The Rev. Canon Samuel Fedigha, for their commitment and zeal towards the task given to them.

This year's DIVCCON will hold from Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> to Friday, 10<sup>th</sup> November, at the same venue and we charge our Diocesan faithful to register, travel to Abuja and actively participate in the spiritually enriching National Conference. Churches and groups are equally charged to register and support those members of their Church who are willing to attend the Conference but are not financially able.

#### **4. Advent Sunday 2022 and Saint Matthias 2023 Collections**

Our Diocese joined the others in the Church of Nigeria to observe the two Sundays of special offerings and 100% remittance to the National Church – the 2022 Advent Sunday on Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> November, and that of Saint Matthias Day/Anniversary of the Inauguration of the Church of Nigeria held this year 2023 on Sunday, 14<sup>th</sup> May.

For the Advent Sunday collection, we raised and remitted a total sum of **₦6,000,000.00** and **₦6,370,676.44** for Saint Matthias Day.

#### **5. Episcopal Matters**

##### **i. Annual Bishops and wives retreat**

The 2023 edition of the annual Bishops and wives retreat was held at the Archbishop Ephraim Adebola & Mrs Oluranti Ademowo Resource Centre, Bariga, Lagos State, from Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> to Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> January, under the theme **“Diligence in serving the only true God”** (John 17:3-4). We were out of the country during the period of this retreat and so were unable to fully participate in the proceedings due to ill health.

##### **ii. New Bishops**

- a. The Rt. Rev'd Benjamin A. Enwuchola, Bishop of Otukpo Diocese
- b. The Rt. Rev'd Isaac A. Adeniji, Bishop of Ilaje Diocese
- c. The Rt. Rev'd Prince C.C. Anyim, Bishop of Isuikwato-Umunneochi Diocese

These were all consecrated on Tuesday, 13<sup>th</sup> September, 2022 at the Cathedral Church of Advent, Diocese of Abuja.

- d. The Rt. Rev'd Adewale A. Adebisi, Bishop of Oke Ogun Diocese, and

- e. Rt. Rev. Nixon A. Enekeme, Bishop of Niger Delta West.

These two were consecrated on Sunday, 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2022 at St. Thomas Cathedral, Diocese of Badagry.

### **iii. New Dean and Archbishops**

- a. The Most Rev. Dr. Blessing Enyindah, Archbishop of our Province and Bishop of Ikwerre Diocese was elected the new Dean of the Church of Nigeria
- b. The Most Rev. Dr. Michael Olusina Fape, Bishop of Remo was elected Archbishop of the Province of Lagos, and
- c. The Rt. Rev. Timothy Yahaya, Bishop of Kaduna Diocese was elected Archbishop of Kaduna Province

Their election took place on Tuesday, 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2023 and their formal presentation will hold on Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> August, 2023 at the Archbishop Vining Memorial Cathedral, Ikeja, Lagos West Diocese.

We specially congratulate our Archbishop of the Niger Delta Province, now Dean-elect of the Church of Nigeria, The Most Rev. Dr. Blessing Enyindah, other newly elected Archbishops and Bishops and wish them well in their ministries and new roles.

A service of thanksgiving to God to celebrate our Archbishop's election and presentation as Dean, Church of Nigeria will hold on Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> September, 2023 at St. Peter's Cathedral, Isiokpo.

### **iv. Retirements**

The following Bishops have retired from the active ministry of the Church:

- a. The Bishop of Ilaje - The Rt. Revd. Fredrick Idowu Olugbemi
- b. The Bishop of Ogbia - The Rt. Rev. James Oruwori
- c. The Bishop of Uyo – The Rt. Revd. Prince Asukwo Edet Antai

We congratulate these Church fathers who have laboured so actively over the years in the service of God's Church and pray that they enjoy good health and a well-deserved rest in their retirement.

### **v. Deaths**

We regret to inform the Synod of the death of the following serving and retired Bishops of the Church of Nigeria:

- i. The Rt. Rev'd Jolly Oyekpen - Bishop of Akoko-Edo
- ii. The Rt. Rev'd David Obiosa - Bishop of Ndokwa
- iii. The Most Rev'd Humphrey B. Olumakaiye - Bishop of Lagos
- iv. The Rt. Rev'd Jonathan S. Bamaiyi - Bishop of Katsina
- v. The Most Rev'd M.S.C. Anikwenwa - Retired Bishop of Awka
- vi. The Rt. Rev'd Rufus Okeremi - Retired Bishop of Ife-East

May the Lord grant the comfort of the Holy Spirit to members of their families as well as their respective Dioceses. Amen.

## **6. Annual Church of Nigeria Conference of Chancellors, Registrars & Legal Officers**

The 12<sup>th</sup> edition of the annual Church of Nigeria Conference of Chancellors, Registrars and Legal officers was held from Monday, 31<sup>st</sup> July to Thursday, 3<sup>rd</sup> August, 2023 at the St. Matthias House, Gudu District, Abuja, National Secretariat of the Church of Nigeria. The Conference theme was “Ebenezer: Hitherto had the Lord helped us” (1 Samuel 7:12).

The Conference is organised every year to acquaint Diocesan legal officers with the developments in the church and their roles and responsibilities to their various Dioceses.

At the request of the National leadership of our Church, our Diocese financially assisted in the staging of the Conference.

## **GLOBAL ANGLICAN FUTURE CONFERENCE (GAFCON)**

The Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) tagged "GAFCON IV" was held from Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> to Friday, 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2023 at the Kigali International Conference Centre (KCC), Rwanda under the theme "To Whom Shall We Go?" (John 6:68).

The Gafcon movement is a global family of authentic Anglicans standing together to retain and restore the Bible to the heart of the Anglican Communion. Its mission is to guard the unchanging, transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ and to proclaim Him to the world as well as to checkmate distortions in Anglican worship and practices anchored on the Holy Bible.

The focus of this years' Conference theme was the attention to the constant primacy of God through His words as contained in the Bible. Christians were enjoined to always reference the Bible as a standard and proclaim its unchanging truth even in a changing world.

The Conference featured choral and colourful cultural performances, Holy communion services, meetings, worships, prayers, Bible expositions, plenaries, talk on the theme as well as seminars.

The Conference was attended by Us, The Rt. Rev. Innocent U. Ordu, JP, DSSRS, Mama Evo, Mrs. Chinyere U. Ordu, JP, and the Legal Secretary, Sir Barr. Bright Nda Owhor.

## **RIVERS STATE**

From 29<sup>th</sup> May this year, a new administration was ushered into the revered Brick House, the Seat of Power in Rivers State. However, before we begin to interface with the new administration, let us say a word to the immediate past administration.

We congratulate the outgoing Governor, His Excellency, Chief Barr. Nyesom Ezenwo Wike, CON, GSSRS, POS-Africa, Life bencher, on the completion of his term of office as the Executive Governor of Rivers State. Honestly, we can say without fear that it was God that brought His Excellency into office. We are convinced too that it was God who gave him the wisdom to steer the state unto the heights we witnessed during his tenure.

We wish to thank His Excellency for the love, friendship and support to us as a Diocese. Through his interventions in our synods, 10-year Anniversary celebrations, hosting of Church of Nigeria programmes, our educational and infrastructural projects, to mention a few, His Excellency showed love and exemplary commitment as a brother to us as a Diocese. We use this medium to thank His Excellency for answering our plea to rehabilitate and reconstruct the Archdeacon Crowther Memorial Girls' School, (ACMGS) Road, Elelenwo. His prompt response on that road ameliorated the suffering and inconveniences suffered by pupils, students, parents and staff of the school in no small measure. We pray that God grants him good health as he takes a deserved rest after 8 years of governance.

We congratulate His Excellency, Sir Siminalayi Fubara, GSSRS, and his beautiful wife, Lady Valarie on your assumption of office as the Executive Governor and First Lady of our dear state, Rivers State, at this time. We believe that your coming into office at this particular point in time in the history of the state, must be divinely-ordained. This is taking into cognizance the factors and issues that attended your process of nomination and election by the good people of Rivers State. We also know that God, who in His infinite wisdom and mercy, chose you above every other candidate, must have a reason and an assignment for you. Our sincere prayer for you therefore, is that the same God will fill you with wisdom, insight, strength and grace to deliver on this mandate, to bring Him glory and honour to His name, in the state.

In the same vein, we congratulate all other Evo Faithful who were successful at the last general elections in the State. Specifically, Hon. O.K. Chinda for emerging the Minority

Leader at the Federal House of Representatives. This is an honour well deserved. We congratulate The Rt. Hon. Martin Amaewhule on his emergence as the Speaker of the Rivers State House of Assembly. We also congratulate Senator Allwell Onyesoh, for his emergence as the Senator representing our Rivers East Senatorial District at the National Assembly. We pray God to grant all of them the grace to make life better for the long-suffering Nigerians, particularly in our State, who elected them into office.

While we commend the last administration in the State for the giant strides it recorded in the area of infrastructural development, we want to advise the current administration to focus on other areas of need. In fact, before our advice, we must say that the administration has convinced us that it is ready to work. In this regard, We commend the Executive Governor of our dear Rivers State for the launching of the laudable Port Harcourt Ring Road Project which traverses six Local Government Areas and which we are convinced, will in no small measure, decongest roads in the various localities within Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor Local Government Areas, open up Eleme, Okrika, Etche and Ikwerre LGAs to further development as well as provide mobility for the efficient movement of people and goods.

This Ring Road will also serve as a bold effort aimed at connecting Rivers people together and fostering greater unity among them. Most importantly, it will be of immense significance to domestic, social and economic development of the State ultimately.

The above notwithstanding, we strongly believe that there is need to invest in human capital development, especially of Rivers youths who litter every cranny of the State. An investment in these young ones will surely reduce crime and criminality in our society and also empower them to contribute positively to the development of the State. In a similar vein, we appeal to His Excellency to consider employing more of these youths, especially those of them who are qualified and have the requisite skills. We consider it a waste of funds and human capital for these youths to go to school and yet beg to survive. The State owes it as a duty ensure that this generational waste does not occur. Another area of interest for us is the welfare of workers, and most critically, the welfare of those workers who have dedicated the most productive part of their lifetime to serve the State and retired. We appeal to this administration to quickly address the numerous complaints of these Senior citizens so they can enjoy the fruits of their committed service to the State and humanity. His Excellency should also consider

massive but appropriate investment in Agriculture, taking into cognizance the rising cost of food and living in the country today. We cannot come from Rivers and lack food! God has graciously given us a clement environment to thrive in agriculture and we consider it an anomaly to buy food from those who wish they have the agriculturally-conducive environment we have in the State.

An equally critical area of concern to us is the State of the internal/link roads within our Diocese and other parts of the State. Such places include roads within but not limited to: Pipeline Rumuokwurusi, Iriebe, Okporo, Oroigwe communities in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area and those in Oyigbo Local Government Area. Most of these internal roads are crying out for urgent government attention. Attending to them will greatly relieve those living in these areas of their present sufferings and hardships.

Finally, we appeal to His Excellency to come up with strategic/clearcut policies and measures that will ensure the all-year round cleanliness of Port Harcourt (our erstwhile Garden City) and other cities and communities in Rivers State. We are not comfortable with the poor environmental condition of our State. This can change and Rivers State will gradually grow to become one of the cleanest States in Nigeria.

As a Church, we assure His Excellency of our continuing prayers and unflinching support for his administration. We are certain that the hand of God will always direct him and that He will not allow His Excellency to fail.

## **NIGERIA**

The long expected Presidential elections have come and gone. Winners and losers have been declared. While the declared winners have assumed office, those who lost have headed for the Election Tribunals which is currently sitting as the accusations and counter accusations, fly from both camps.

From our personal observations and experiences as accredited election observers, we state categorically that the general conduct of the last elections left a sour taste in the mouth. The tales of intimidation, harassment, physical violence and disenfranchisement of bona fide Nigerians because they are deemed to come from a particular section of the country or are adherents of a particular religion, is a time bomb that has the potential to further destroy the already weak cords that hold us together as a nation. The tacit connivance of security agencies in this show of shame

seems to show that we have learnt nothing from the very fearful dimensions of the #Endsars protest in the recent past. The very damning reports from International Observers on the last Presidential election and the very feeble and puerile attempt by political agents to vilify the writers is akin to an attempt to deny the obvious. One thing is clear, the last election is an affront to Nigerians and does not justify the humongous amounts given to INEC to deliver results that will approximate the true choice of voters in the elections.

However, despite the above, we advise as follows:

1. Whether as losers or winners, Nigerians should resist the urge to take laws into their hands, no matter the degree of provocation;
2. Members of the Presidential Election Tribunal must be allowed absolute independence to hear petitions and arguments and deliver transparent and informed judgements based on the evidence before them and in accordance with the extant laws of the land. We choose to consider the nuances coming from the grapevine as to the subtle and not so subtle attempts to arm twist and intimidate the Learned Justices into delivering verdicts that have been procured through the back door, as mere fake news because we must all realise that no one has a monopoly of violence or raw power;
3. Their Learned Justices at the Presidential Election Panel must know that right now they have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to keep a date with history and write their names in gold. While we must quickly state that we do not hold brief for any political party, neither do we have a preference for any, we must state that the verdict we expect must not only be legal, transparent and fair. We do not want a judgment that is rich in technicalities and empty in extant realities. The will of the long-suffering Nigerians should not be taken for granted!

Finally, whoever ends up as Nigeria's president for the next four years, must never in any way copy the immediate past administration of Muhammadu Buhari. The case of blatant nepotism and ethnicism and flagrant bias in appointments into public offices must be a thing of the past. The Tinubu administration or any other that the Supreme Court might clamp on us must set out at once to heal the religious and ethnic divisions that the Buhari regime left behind. Never before in our history as a nation, has this country been so polarized on all fronts. Treading the same path will be an invitation to anarchy. This country has survived for long through the grace of God; our leaders must not overestimate our resilience.

## FUTURE SYNOD HOSTS/VENUES

S/N	YEAR OF SYNOD	HOST	DIOCESAN CHIEF LAUNCHER
1	2024	Evo Diocesan Schools	Bishop's Nominees and Diocesan Synod Planning Committee Members
2	2025	Rumuobiokani Deanery	Diocesan Officials and Anglican Traditional Rulers & Chiefs in Evo
3	2026	Okporo/Rumuogba Archdeaconry	The Bishop's Court
4	2027	St. Jude's, Oginigba Deanery	Diocesan Council of Knights
5	2028	Elelenwo Deanery/ Archdeaconry	Diocesan Women Ministries-MU/WG
6	2029	Iriebe Archdeaconry	Diocesan CMF
7	2030	Church of The Holy Spirit, Paraclete Deanery, Elelenwo	Diocesan AYP
8	2031	All Saints Cathedral, Rumuokwurusi	Diocesan Clergy & Wives
9	2032	Woji Archdeaconry	Diocesan Lay Readers Association

### CONCLUSION

As we bring this address to a close, we wish to once again appreciate everyone of you for making out time to attend this Synod and for your active and robust participation despite the sad mood we are in.

We thank you for identifying with us over these years and for the various forms of services and support you have given to the Diocese. We are grateful!

Thank you also for your prayers and patience in sitting and listening to us deliver this address. May the Lord always pay attention to you in Jesus' name.

And now, to Jesus Christ, the Faithful Witness, the Firstborn from the dead, and Ruler over the kings of the earth,

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and made us kings and priests to His God and Father...,

To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might forever and ever! (Revelation 1:5-6; 5:13).

+Innocent Evo

Your Bishop and Chief under-shepherd,

Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> August, 2023.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1**

Diocese of Evo Resolution

### **Appendix 2**

Diocese of Evo Communique

### **Appendix 3**

Communique of the Standing Committee of the CoN- Abuja

### **Appendix 4**

Pastoral Letter from the Standing Committee of the CoN- Abuja

### **Appendix 5**

Episcopal Retreat Communique

### **Appendix 6**

Communique of the Standing Committee of the CoN-Kubwa

### **Appendix 7**

Pastoral Letter from the Standing Committee of the CoN-Kubwa

### **Appendix 8**

GAFCON IV – The Kigali Commitment

### **Appendix 9**

History of the Church in Oroigwe culled from 2011 Synod Address