

Partnership visit to Methodist Church Nigeria 25 November to 16 December 2019

Reasons for visit:

- To celebrate 90 years of ecumenism and 30th General Assembly of the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN) by representing JH - MCB SoC invited as the Special Ecumenical Guest
- Meeting with MCN leaders – the Prelate and Secretary of Conference to discuss partnership issues

The Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN) the Youth Assembly

There were more than fifty youths at the events organised by CCN Youth leaders at Hoare's



CCN Youths discussing Christians participation in politics

Methodist Cathedral, Yaba – Lagos. I attended a session on Christians participating in Politics. Why should Christians get involved in Politics? Several speakers shared their views and encouraged Methodist youths to participate in politics despite many challenging factors encountered.

First, they should start from the grassroots, seeking out issues of interest to them and those they wish to represent. There has to be concerted efforts to change the mind-set of many Nigerian Christians reluctant to join politics because of numerous barriers. It was explained that politics is not bad,

however many play dirty politics. Christians interested should examine how best to become a change agent that serve the community with the intention of making a difference. The youths interested in politics should be self- aware, portraying good character and enhancing participation at various levels starting at community level.

Politics started from the Church, by Christians speaking out against injustice, abuse, extortion, poverty and so on. Interested participants must understand their contexts, research history, know how the political system operate and then identify the gap you wish to fill. Politics encourage us not just to find faults but create solutions that transform lives and communities.

The Women Assembly of Christian Council of Nigeria (WOCN)

More than one hundred women from all over Nigeria met at Lagos for the Women. Among various topics, I heard the discussions on HIV and the Church. Women play key roles in the control of HIV spread particularly with increasing infection rates among children. Even though HIV has no cure yet, it can be effectively managed to avoid it progressing into full-blown AIDS. Sadly, it is a life sentence for those infected



and affected. Therefore, women should actively prevent mother-child transmission by undergoing HIV testing periodically to effectively manage life.

Women were also encouraged to stand alongside other women, especially where culture is unfavourable to them. Women were urged to unite to share good information, to fight against violence, to discourage bad cultural practices and create safe places for sharing and counselling. The Church should offer a good support system for infected and affected families struggling with stigma or related challenges. Nonetheless, confidentiality should be high on the agenda when desensitising people against HIV/AIDS stigmatisation.

Worse still, the HIV infection is said to be rising among married couples. Consequently, spouses may need to resort to the use of condom to arrest disease spread. There are still lots to do to overturn negative attitudes on the use of condom by married couples. In addition, many married women were encourage to undergo periodic HIV testing since most were unable to confront their husband because of financial reasons. This does not mean only men were perpetrators, as promiscuous women could also living with unsuspecting husbands could also spread the infection. This ultimate aim is to curtail new infections within families especially babies and raise a healthy young population.



CCN Women on a campaign march against violence

The Christian Council of Nigeria 90th anniversary celebration.

It was a long day, starting with a Bible study on Ephesians 4: 1-16 – the Call for Christian Unity. The theme was, ‘Maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace’. With many contributions from the floor, Prelate Uche of MCN shared that the cross embraces Christians from the East, West, North and South to work together in unity. We should celebrate unity in diversity, with each individual and denomination contributing as part of the body of Christ. Subsequently, we can all operate as a whole, promoting reconciliation at the heart of Christianity, thereby depicting Christ.

The All African Council of Churches (AACC) President – Bishop Arnold Temple (from MC Sierra Leone), in his keynote speech encouraged CCN members to engage in both evangelism and ecumenism. Evangelism is to share the good news with lost children and ecumenism is to maintain the unity in Christ. Ecumenism helps address socio-economic and political issues affecting communities of the nation. The Church should offer both ethical and moral guidance when engaging in state issues without taking sides. It should speak out the truth of God and engage in contemporary topics such as climate change challenges important to future generations.

There were special songs rendered, intercessory prayers made, messages from various heads of Churches and greetings from Ecumenical partners. There was a book lunch



Bunmi with Dr Yusuf Wushishi – Gen Sec of Christian Council of Nigeria

with celebrations later that evening. The next morning started with another Bible study and a session on the challenges of disunity within the Church. The zonal representatives and other officers shared their reports with action plans for future CCN events.

Meeting with Methodist Church Nigeria (MCN) leaders



Bunmi, Dr David, Prelate Uche, Elder Alao, Bishop Akinwale & Dcn Ronke

I met with Prelate Uche and the Secretary of Conference of MCN – Bishop Akinwale at MCN Connexional Office. We discussed various partnership issues including assisting IMGE (Equatorial Guinea Methodists). I also met with Dr David Cundall, the Coordinator of Nigerian Health Care Project (NHCP) at Lagos. David had visited various health-related centres in the country and had recently completed the training of Community health helpers in Eastern Nigeria.

NHCP works closely with both MCB Mission Partners – Dr Hans Van de Corput at the Royal Methodist Hospital and Mary his wife at the Children’s Home. NHCP aims to improve rural health service

delivery at Abia State particularly as Nigeria has been reported as having the worst poverty index globally.

I later had a meeting with the African Methodist Council leaders following the recent election of its officers in Kenya earlier in 2019. The leaders have been working on its constitution in addition to clarification of tasks for various roles. The President – Rev Ntombura, the Vice President – Bishop Boafo, with Rev Cobbah as the Treasurer made a courtesy call with Nigerian Methodist leaders accompanied by the General Secretary – Rev Awe. It was an opportunity to meet them collectively in Lagos and discuss common issues facing Africa Methodists requiring urgent attention.



Meeting of Ecumenical leaders – CCN, AMC & MCN Ecumenical Officer



Africa Methodist Council leaders meeting with MCN leaders in Lagos

Thank you.
 Dr Bunmi Olayisade
 Africa Partnership Coordinator
 December 2019