

Partnership visit to Methodist Church Nigeria 16th - 21st January 2018

Aims

- To meet with MC Nigeria leaders to discuss partnership issues including new grant administration
- To meet with the Africa Methodist Council Co-ordinator – Archbishop Michael Stephens
- To review possible personnel support for MCSL from MCN
- To pre-arrange the MCB VP designate's visit to MCN in March 2018
- To attend the MCN convention at Ikot Ekpene, Akwa Ibom in Nigeria



Over 3,000 MCN ministers at the retreat at Ikot Ngwo in Akwa Ibom State - Nigeria

It was a long day of travel. I took the sea ferry from Freetown to Lungi International airport to be at the airport at 05.00 hours on Monday 15th January 2018 only to be impeded by the very dense fog caused the harmattan weather. Visibility was so poor delaying the departure time to 10.30 hours which caused me to miss my connection flight at

Accra. After several attempts at reconnecting, I eventually arrived in Lagos at 00.03 hours and at the guest house at 01.00 hours thanking God for His mercies.

Later on, I was at the Lagos Domestic airport as early as 09.00 hours departing for Akwa Ibom State to meet with MCN leaders at their minister's national retreat. I arrived at the Methodist Church Cathedral at Ukana Onul in Ikot Ngwo where over three thousands Nigerian Methodist ministers were at the retreat.

The MCN ministers retreat at Ikot Ngwo in Nigeria

MCN ministers assembled from Monday 15 – Wednesday 17th January for fellowship, reflection and conversations in preparation for the work ahead in 2018. The Prelate as Head of Church shared his vision, hopes and goals for the

new year as well as acknowledged possible opportunities and challenges during the year. Various leaders discussed national and local prevalent issues. There were dedicated intercessory sessions during which prayers against violence and intolerance within Nigeria and other countries were said. There was also prayer for the Church to make a difference and not be a sleeping giant.



As the largest Methodist Conference in Africa, prospects and challenges facing MC Nigeria were mentioned particularly the ongoing church growth in rural dwellings alongside dwindling numbers of members in urban places.

Prayers were also said for Methodist Church Nigeria Council responsible for governing Wesley University in Ondo as it is facing some challenges that require urgent attention. We pray the situation turns around for good. Lastly the 8th National Evangelism Convention was to commence later that day and a good turn out was expected.

The MCN National Convention at Ikot Ekpene township stadium – Akwa Ibom

The MC Nigeria national convention for evangelising Methodists was first held in 1994 at the Redemption Camp in

Bishop Akpan (ex-SALT student) with wife at MCN convention



Lagos led by the Prelate - Rev Dr Sunday Mbang. The second convention took place in 1997 and the third in 2000 at the same venue. Then Prelate Mbang challenged Methodists to host subsequent conventions on Methodist premises so the fourth one was held at Jesus College, Otukpo in Benue (in the midlands) in 2003. The fifth took place at Okigwe (Eastern Nigeria), at Scripture Union. Rev Dr Sunday Ola Makinde became Prelate in 2006 and upgraded the Department of Evangelism to Directorate of Evangelism and Discipleship in the constitution during his tenure. By 2009 the sixth convention took place at Methodist Theological Institute Sagamu, in Ogun State in Western Nigeria. There was a pause for six years after which the convention took place at Gateway International Stadium, Sagamu – Ogun state in 2015 led by the newly elected Prelate, Rev Dr Samuel Uche.

The 8th National Evangelical Convention organised by the Directorate of Evangelism & Discipleship took place at Ikot Ekpene, Akwa Ibom state – South Esatern region of Nigeria. The theme was *Strive for Peace & Holiness...* from Hebrews 12:14 and the guest speaker was Mr Gbile Akanni a renowned and respected evangelist raised as a Methodist and very popular among University Campus fellowships and young professionals. Methodists are expected to travel from all over Nigeria to Ikot Ekpene Township stadium from Wednesday 17th – Saturday 20th January 2018 for the event. It was my first time and very enlightening and enriching to witness the passion for Jesus. Topics for the evangelistic nights were

- Drink and eat without money – Isaiah 55: 1-2 by Prelate Uche
- Power belongs to God – Psalm 62: 11 by Sir Emma Oha
- New wine into new wineskins – Matthew 9:17 by Rt Rev Edeka Amuta



Rev John Shettima Chibok (an ex-SALT student) with Bunmi at MCN retreat

There were three business seminars scheduled

- Agriculture as a major business alternative for the church and nation
- Enlarging our financial base as a church
- Youth event – Raising champions for this generation

There were other events such as Morning tonic, bible study sessions plus few marriage seminars on different days.

Meeting with MCN Prelate Uche and the Secretary of Conference – Bishop Akinwale

I met with both the Prelate and SoC on Thursday 18 January 2018 at a convenient meeting room at Ikot Ekpene stadium. Below was the summary of our discussions

- I passed on the thanks from MCSL for MCN's role in repatrating Bishop Beah's body before his burial in Siera Leone. MCN also supported his widow who accompanied him for treatment in Nigeria before his death.

- Prior to the Ebola crisis, MCN had accepted to offer a specially skilled professional to assist MCSL with reviewing its failing assessment system. MCN is willing to assist if MCB agrees to the tripartite partnership.
- MCSL also requested ministerial and school exchanges between both conferences which MCN hopes to honour.
- We discussed the possible places the MCB VP designate could visit in March 2018 plus meeting MCB mission partners
- MCN had received an invitation to participate at EPM Benin roundtable discussions after the first year of reconciliation of both Methodist factions that split.
- I explained changes to MCB grant administration and its impact on future MCN annual grants. However new mission initiatives could still be favourably considered.
- MCN thanked MCB for the recent MOU sent from the MCB Conference office regarding MCN chaplaincy and asked for my assistance in managing their expectations.
- MCN requested my assistance in seeking an agribusiness consultant to help optimise the use of MCN non-performing land assets.
- MCN is still considering options for operating its dormant London account. Progress is required to enable endowment fund transfer.
- MCN is yet to forward possible participants for the Mission Hospital workshop scheduled for 2018 at Maua.
- Bishop Akinwale MCN SoC is expected to attend MCB Conference this year. He hopes to meet with to meet MCB senior leaders, MCN UK Fellowship members and other MCB guests.

8th MCN National Evangelical Convention at Ikot Ekpene township stadium in Nigeria



I had the opportunity to meet a few ex SALT students and NMA recipients at the venue during my visit. I attended a few seminars, met with the African Methodist Council Coordinator – Archbishop Stephens, and spoke with the MCN Prelate Emiritus - Mbang plus several others. Few ex-SALT students were now in position of leadership in the

church. The next day I flew from Ikot Ekpene back to Lagos and traveled back to the UK. It was a very fruitful though exhausting visit. It was incredible to return to snowy London after experiencing extreme hot weather conditions in Nigeria 😊. Our God is great.

Psalm 72 18-19 – Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only does wondrous things! And blessed be His glorious name forever! And let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen

