

Review Article

## Harvest of Bishops in Nigeria Anglicanism: Diocese of Niger Delta North Experience, 1996-2021

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**Abstract:** Church growth can be internal, extension, and cross-cultural. Three critical areas to measure the viability of an ecclesiastical area are manpower, finance, and infrastructure. The Anglican diocese of Niger Delta North (DNDN) was inaugurated May 16, 1996 as the 53rd diocese in Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) with focus on missions and evangelism. To what extent has DNDN demonstrated viability especially in manpower development within twenty five years (1996-2021) of her mission work? The historical and descriptive methods were applied to unravel the task of this research. Data were collected from primary and secondary sources. The study revealed that Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) has harvested for the expansion of the work of God, thirteen bishops from DNDN within twenty-five years of her mission enterprise. Three were to shepherd the diocese, five lead extension dioceses which were birthed by DNDN, and another five for cross-cultural dioceses. Among these, two have been elevated to the apex ecclesiastical leadership position of an Archbishop. Thus, DNDN is a good ground for harvesting leaders for missions and evangelism in Nigeria and beyond. Downsizing DNDN rather than weaken her viability as some had feared, has increased her fruitfulness, growth and relevance to the community. These developments can be sustained and expanded through systematic teachings and intentional discipleship. Partnership with the extension and cross-cultural bishops and their dioceses are needed in church planting, human and material development. Further study on the inter-relationship between these dioceses will enrich Nigerian ecclesiastical history.

**Keywords:** Anglicanism, Bishop, Consecration, Diocese, Election, and Harvest.

## INTRODUCTION

Anglican mission started in Nigeria through Rev Henry Townsend at Badagry December 24, 1842; two months after Rev Thomas Birch Freeman of Methodism had reached the area September 24, 1882. The seed of Anglican faith was planted in Niger Delta region by Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther at the Island city of Bonny April 29, 1865. The Bonny mission was declared Niger Delta Pastorate (NDP) April 29, 1892 and became Diocese of Niger Delta (DND) January 1, 1952 with the See at Cathedral Church of Saint Stephen, Bonny.

Church growth can be classified as internal, expansion, biological, extension, and bridging. Attention of this paper is on the last two aspects of church growth. Extension or transfer growth is where new churches are formally and informally planted within the cultural area of an existing group and are gathered together into a new group or ecclesiastical entity. Bridging growth also referred to as cross-cultural mission is when the gospel is preached in a culture different from the mother church (Onu, 2020). There are two critical areas of growth in Anglicanism, namely; the development of new ecclesiastical entities and native agents to consolidate the mission work.

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The Diocese of Niger Delta North (DNDN) was inaugurated May 16, 1996 (Ascension Day), at Cathedral Church of Saint Paul Diobu, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The focus and direction of the diocese is missions and evangelism which is captured in the motto "Service to God and humanity". It is the 53rd Diocese in Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) and 4th to be created out of DND after Aba- January 9, 1972, Calabar-December 20, 1990 and Uyo-November 27, 1992. The Primate of Church of Nigeria, Most Rev. Joseph Abiodun Adetiloye presided at the inauguration service which featured the enthronement of Right Reverend Samuel Onyuku Elenwo, who was translated from residual DND (Onu, 2014). At inauguration, the Diocese comprised of the Cathedral Church of Saint Paul, Diobu and Archdeacons of Port Harcourt, Ahoada, Ikwerre, Etche, Ogoni, Eyo, Ikwerre South, and Eleme. The *Constitution of Church of Nigeria* (2020:45) herein after referred to as CoN provides that "a Bishop for any Diocese and mission may be elected from among the Bishops or Clergy of any Diocese of the Church of Nigeria or of any other Diocese in communion with the Church of Nigeria". The diocese has between 1996 and 2018 given birth to a number of Bishops. In pursuance of her mission, clergy and lay have been sent on foreign missions to Cameroon, Ghana, Madagascar, Philippines, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Italy, and Canada. The trust of this paper is to survey those harvested from DNDN to provide leadership as bishops in Church of Nigeria within Niger Delta North, extension and cross-cultural dioceses. The concept, consecration and functions of a Bishop are highlighted.

### Conceptual Clarifications

#### Harvest

The *Oxford Dictionary of current English* (2006, p. 416) defined harvest as "the act, process or period of gathering in crops". It is a season of joy and one of the happiest times of the year in Palestine that is marked with celebrations and religious festivals. In the context of this paper, it is the celebration of the process of electing clergy from DNDN into the bishopric ministry in the Church of God.

#### Bishop

Bishop in Greek *epískopos* or *episcopos* is a generic word. In Vulgate Latin it is *biscopus* and Old English *biscop*. The word means "superintendency, over-sight, and searching" in matters pertaining to the Church, the state, and the army. It means "an overseer, elder, chief pastor of a diocese, or pastor charged with the responsibility of spiritual leadership in a local church in New Testament times" (*Nelson's*, 1986). Christ Himself, is regarded as the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls (1Peter 2:25). In Anglican Communion, the bishop stands in the ecclesiastical hierarchy above the priest and below the Archbishop and the apex of the Church's hierarchical structure.

#### Functions of a Bishop

The qualities appertaining to the office of the pastor also apply to the bishop, who is the acknowledged head of the priests and laity. The diocesan bishop is the overseer and authorised leader of the people of God. He has the obligation to give an example of holiness, charity, humility, and simplicity of life. The Scriptures said; a bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behaviour, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil (1 Tim 3:2-7, NKJV).

In every way, he is to seek the promotion of the holiness of Christ's faithful according to the special vocation of each. The functions of diocesan bishops in a general principle of Anglican canon law are "to teach, to sanctify and to govern". He acts as president of the diocesan assembly and as chairman of diocesan executive bodies. In making diocesan law, he very often enjoys a power of veto. He also exercises visitatorial powers and resolution of conflicts in liturgy and admission and exclusion from church rites (Doe, 2003). He therefore has the grave responsibility of devoting himself to prayer and sacrifice for his people. He is the living and visible symbol, the centre and effective principle of unity, and of communal charity, and the visible point of reference in the faith community of the diocese, the last resort and bulwarks in matters of faith and morals in the diocese. What an honour and responsibility! Hence, as Cardinal Pie said;

If you ask me which is the virtue most proper to our condition, the characteristic mark of our calling, the answer is easy. The Sacrament of Holy Orders confers upon all who receive it, a certain measure of strength and a certain measure of endurance. The Episcopate which is the supreme culmination of Holy Orders is endowed with spiritual strength (Obuoforibo, 1997, p. 17 citing Roman Catholic Mission. Paris).

The office of a Bishop derives its authority from the apostles who, according to church teaching, designated the bishops as their successors. He is responsible for the administration of Communion and the preaching of the Word. Two duties reserved to the episcopal office are administration of the sacrament of confirmation and the ordaining of clergy (*Dictionary of Christianity in America*, 1990). A bishop in God's Church is called to be one with the apostles, to

proclaim Christ's resurrection and interpret the Gospel, and testify to Christ's sovereignty as Lord of lords and King of kings. He is called to guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the Church; to celebrate and to provide for the administration of the Sacraments of the New Covenant, to ordain priests, and deacons, and to join in consecrating bishops, and to be in all things a faithful pastor and wholesome example to the entire flock of Christ (*Book of Common Prayer*, 2017, p. 291). In large dioceses or in the case of a bishop hampered by age or disease, some or all of these duties may be exercised by suffragan, auxiliary or coadjutor bishops.

Normally, he ordains and appoints his priests and this is not a light matter. For St. Paul admonished; "I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying of my hands" (2 Tim. 1:6). Again, "Do not neglect the gift you have received which was given to you by prophetic utterance when the elders laid hands upon you" (1Tim. 4:14). He is bound not to lay hands lightly on anyone no matter the scarcity of priests in his diocese. So, ordaining somebody is a free choice and decision of any bishop, and he does it with full responsibility, for he ordains, not for himself, but for the Church and priestly apostolate.

The Bishop supervises activities of the local church. In a village community or a clan in the secular order, there is usually a head and there are his lieutenants. Because of his position, the village head receives many petitions and reports against one lieutenant or another and also commendations. He must handle them all with prudence, care and maturity. He may wish to lord it over the people. But this must not be so in the Christian community. Listen to what Christ said: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them...it shall not be so among you...the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:25-28; Mark 10:42-45; Luke 22:25-27). But as the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, is called the "Holy Father", father of the universal Christendom, so is the diocesan Bishop, the father of the people of God in the local church including the parish priests who are also called fathers in their parishes. The Pope however, is called the servant of the servants of God. The line-up therefore must be humble servants in the Lord. Bishop Fulton Sheen had once observed; "Being made a Bishop of a diocese binds one with the cords of grace and the cords of Adam to every priest and religious and to each of the laity" (Obuoforbo, 1997, p. 18).

### **Election and Consecration of Bishops**

Chapter XI: 41-43 of the *Constitution of CoN* (2020) provided that; "There shall be in each full-fledged Diocese and Missionary Diocese of the Church of Nigeria, the office of the Bishop. Every Bishop of Church of Nigeria shall be elected by the Episcopal Synod in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Canons and Regulations ... but such election shall not take effect until the same is confirmed by the Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate. In the event of the translation, retirement, death or any reason of permanent incapacity of a Bishop, there shall be elected a new Bishop soon thereafter". Canon VII:1, 2, 4 of CofN stipulated that:

At the earliest convenient time, after the confirmation of the election of a Bishop of the Church of Nigeria, the Primate shall proceed to consecrate and enthrone the Person so elected and confirmed. Every Bishop- Elect shall, before his consecration, subscribe to the Declaration set out in the Canons of Declarations and Subscriptions. The Primate and two other Bishops or, if the Primate be unable to act, the Dean of the Church of Nigeria and two other Bishops, shall be required for a consecration: provided that with the concurrence of the Church of Nigeria Standing Committee, the Consecration of a Bishop for the Church of Nigeria may take place in any other Province in communion with the Church of Nigeria and be conducted by the metropolitan of that Province.

The act of the consecration of the *Episcopus* is one of the divinest and most solemn order of mass or religious service and ceremony throughout the Christian world wherein the whole armour of God is transferred on to the bishop. On this occasion, the bishop receives his spiritual fuel and energy for the work ahead of him. In the words of Bishop A.W. Howells (Jnr) of Lagos (1955-1963), bishops are:

The band of spiritual descendants of the first group of Apostles through the laying of hands. Apostolic succession is not a relay race in which the baton of consecration is passed from one hand to another, but the gift of God will come to you (the Bishop) through the hands of the Bishops and will remain with you" (Obuoforibo, 1997, p. 21).

It is the occasion when the Archbishop of the Province, the Diocesan Bishops, Archdeacons and Clergy assembled at an appointed church "to bear witness" to the performance of a sacred rite. Leaders of other church denominations and of various religious sects and bodies are also often present. At such an hour, all differences in theology, philosophy, or liturgy are suppressed; one dominant note rings through the air: "And then, by men and angels, His name shall be adored and this shall be their anthem: one Church, one Faith, one Lord" (A&M 256). The importance of the episcopate is such that the Church of Christ seems not to exist when it is *nulle Episcopus*. This is Anglicanism and equally Catholicism in essence. In course of the service, a Bishop is reminded: that he is chosen by the people of God and the people also affirmed their trust in him by acclaiming his election; that a bishop in God's Church is called to be one with the Apostles, to proclaim Christ's resurrection and interpret the Gospel, and testify to Christ's sovereignty as Lord of lords and King of kings; that he is called to guard the faith, unity and the discipline of the Church; to celebrate and to provide for the administration of the Sacraments of the New Covenant, to ordain priests and Deacons and to join in

consecrating Bishops, and to be in all things faithful pastor and wholesome example to the entire flock of Christ; that with fellow Bishops, he will share in the leadership of the Church throughout the world. His heritage is the faith of the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles and Martyrs and those of every generation who have looked to God in hope; and that his joy will be to follow him who came, not to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.

A bishop-elect of CoN is obliged to make various undertakings, promises or oaths thus: **Consecration**, "I ... now to be ordained Bishop do so affirm and accordingly declare my belief in the faith which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the Catholic Creed and to which the historic formularies of the Church of Nigeria bear witness; and in public prayer and administration of the Sacraments. I will use only the forms of service which are authorised or allowed by the Canons". **Submission to Synod**, "I do also declare that I consent to be bound by the regulations of the Church of Nigeria and Canons which have been made or which may hereafter be made by the Church of Nigeria Synod or may otherwise have lawful effect in the Church of Nigeria". **Canonical Obedience**, "I do swear by Almighty God that I will pay true and Canonical obedience to the Primate of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) and his successors in all things lawful and honest". **Submission**, "And I hereby undertake to accept and immediately submit to any sentence depriving me of any or all the rights and emoluments appertaining to the office of Bishop, which may at any time be passed upon me after due examination by the Primate acting under the Constitution of the Church of Nigeria. I agree to exercise the said office of Bishop so long as may be required of me by the Primate and his successors. So help me God". **Allegiance to Christ**, "I confess before God and His Church that I am not a member of any Secret Cult. I also vow that I will never join any Secret Cult; and I owe allegiance to no other but to the Lord Jesus Christ; and that my loyalty to Him will always be absolute; total and undivided. If I go back on this Oath and Vow, I put myself under the wrath of God, in the Name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Amen". **Allegiance to God**, "I declare before God and His Church that I have never been a homosexual/ bi-sexual, and I vow that I will not indulge in the practice of homosexuality/ bi-sexuality: and that if after this oath I am involved, found to be, or profess to be a homosexual/ bi-sexual against the teachings of the Holy Scriptures as contained in the Bible, I bring upon myself the full wrath of God and subject myself willingly to Canonical discipline as enshrined in the Constitution of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion). So help me God" (*BCP*, 2017, p. 300-301).

He further declares that: he is persuaded that God has called him to the office of a Bishop; to accept this call to be a Bishop, believing it to be the will of our Lord Jesus Christ; to as a shepherd and leader of His people faithfully fulfil this trust and obey our Lord Jesus Christ in his ministry; to believe the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ as taught in the Holy Scriptures, held by the undivided Church and declared in the Creeds; to devote himself to prayer, to reading the Scriptures, and to such studies as may deepen his faith and increase his love for God; to teach and proclaim the gospel of Christ and declare its meaning to the world; to accept the discipline of the Church and faithfully exercise authority within it; to be faithful in ordaining and commissioning those whom he believe God has called, and will constantly guide, support and courage them in their ministries; to strive to fashion his life and that of his household according to the way of Christ; and to for Christ's sake be gentle and merciful to all, and defend those who have no helper.

### **Bishops for Diocese of Niger Delta North Samuel Onyuku Elenwo**

Samuel Onyuku Elenwo opened the door for the harvest of bishops from DNDN when he was translated from DND. He was Diocesan of DND when the faithful of Port Harcourt, Ahoada, Ikwerre, Ogoni, and Etche Archdeaconries in one accord requested to be constituted into a diocese. The idea and humble request for expansion of Anglican frontiers in the Niger Delta region and Nigeria at large was greeted with resistance and misinterpretations between the "Riverine" and "Upland" members of the diocese. It was a pitiable situation for Bishop Elenwo who is a son of the proposed diocese as both parties "accused him of taking sides" (Obuoforibo, 1997, p.7). The strong desire and determination of the people drove them across many hurdles. Eventually, at the Provincial Standing Committee of CofN held at Kano, September 1995, the new diocese was approved. The residual DND insisted that Bishop Elenwo should go with his people. Authorities of CoN seeing the prospects in the emerging diocese decided to translate Samuel Elenwo from DND where he had faithfully served for fifteen years (1981-1996). Thus, on Friday April 21, 1996 the Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of all Nigeria, His Grace Most Rev Joseph Abiodun Adetiloye announced the election of Samuel O. Elenwo as Bishop of the new diocese. He posted a "Notice of Election for the Niger Delta North Diocese" dated April 13, 1996, at the West door of St. Paul's Church Diobu, Port Harcourt. Finally, May 16, 1996 (Ascension Day), the Primate assisted by over thirty Bishops inaugurated the Diocese of Niger Delta North (DNDN) at Cathedral Church of Saint Paul Diobu, Port Harcourt as the 53<sup>rd</sup> diocese in Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion). The Right Rev. Samuel Onyuku Elenwo was canonically translated and enthroned as the foundation Bishop; to nurture the young diocese which he midwived.

Samuel Elenwo born 1933, hailed from Okporowo in Ogbakiri clan of Emuoha Local Government Area (LGA) of Rivers State. His pastoral formation was at Immanuel College of Theology, Ibadan. He was ordained in 1957 by Bishop A.W. Howells of Lagos and installed honorary Canon of the Cathedral Church of Saint Stephen, Bonny 1978 by Bishop Yibo A. Fubara (Wotogbe-Weneka, 2000). He pastored Bishop Tugwell Memorial Church, Lagos (vicar),



Cathedral Church of Christ, Marina-Lagos (priest), St Cyprian's Port Harcourt (priest), and Our Saviour's Chapel, University of Port Harcourt (chaplain). He and his dear wife, Chinyere encouraged many young, zealous, and God fearing persons to express their calling and gifting in the work of the Kingdom both in DND and DNDN. He voluntarily retired December 31, 1999 and on June 17, 2008 he joined the Church triumphant.

### **Ignatius Crosby Ogboru Kattey**

Ignatius Crosby Ogboru Kattey was harvested in 2000 from the House of Clergy of DNDN to consolidate the foundational development and evangelisation work of Sam Elenwo. He was elected in February, 2000; though some persons who may have felt they knew the mind of God more than the Bishops of CoN presented initial resistance. The Alode-Nchia, Eleme born (August 23, 1948) holiness preacher, international evangelist, church planter, and detribalised Christian leader was consecrated June 4, 2000 at Cathedral of the Transfiguration of Our Lord, Owerri by Most Rev. Peter Jasper Akinola. He was enthroned as the second Bishop of DNDN June 7, 2000 at Cathedral Church of Saint Paul, Diobu, Port Harcourt.

In expanding his episcopal ministry, he was elected and proclaimed Archbishop May 23, 2009 at Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity Lokoja, and presented at St Paul's Cathedral as the third Archbishop of Ecclesiastical Province of Niger Delta May 27, 2009 to oversee thirteen dioceses. On January 13, 2013 at Cathedral Church of Holy Trinity Asaba, Most Rev Nicholas D. Okoh pronounced him as Dean, Church of Nigeria. Together with Beatrice his wife, they faithfully expanded the frontiers of the DNDN through mission and evangelism nationally and internationally. He christened a congregation after his predecessor; Bishop Samuel Elenwo Anglican Church, Rumuokwuta; and birthed the dioceses of Ahoada, Ogoni, Etche, Ikwerre, and Evo. Archbishop Kattey meritoriously retired from active episcopal ministry August 23, 2018.

### **Wisdom Budu Ihunwo**

The incumbent of DNDN, Wisdom Budu Ihunwo was in born December 27, 1976 in Rumuola, Aparia in Obio/Akpor LGA of Rivers State. He attended St. Paul's College, Awka; was made deacon July 3, 2005, ordained priest December 2, 2006, preferred honorary Canon February 2012, and Archdeacon 2015 by Most Rev. Dr I. C. O. Kattey. Wisdom served at Immanuel church, Igbogo Road, Choba as ordinand/deacon (June 2004-Jan 2006), St Paul's Cathedral- priest (Jan 2006-Aug 2009), Good Shepherd Church, Ada George, Rumueme-vicar (Aug 2009-Feb 2012), Emmanuel church, Okoro-nu-Odo Deanery-Rector (March 2012-Aug 2017), and St. Paul's Cathedral Port Harcourt-Archdeacon-in-Residence (Aug 2017-April 2018); including Chaplain to diocesan women's ministry (2017 to 2016) and chairman-Foreign Mission and Evangelism Commission.

Rt. Rev. Wisdom Budu Ihunwo was elected into the episcopacy April 2018, consecrated June 3 at Cathedral Church of All Saints' Onitsha, and enthroned third Bishop of DNDN August 23, 2018 by His Grace Most Rev Nicholas D. Okoh, Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of All Nigeria (*Order of Service for the Enthronement*, 2018). Together with Mercy Oluchi his wife, they are solidifying the future of the DNDN.

### **Bishops for Extension Dioceses**

#### **Clement Nathan Ekpeye**

The idea for creation of new dioceses out of DNDN is rooted in the presidential address of bishop Elenwo delivered at the third session of the first synod May 17, 1999. In the eight year of her existence, DNDN began to give birth to the first diocese of DNDN in confirmation of her extension growth process. The Archdeaconries of Ahoada, Omoku and Upata were constituted into a diocese which was approved at the CofN Standing Committee meeting held at Ilesha, March 9-13, 2004. To establish the approval, Clement Nathan Ekpeye then Archdeacon of Tai was elected. Born July 1, 1954 at Odiabidi in Ekpeye Kingdom of Ahoada East LGA; Clement had his pastoral formation at Trinity Theological College Umuahia. He was made deacon July 18, 1993 and ordained priest July 17, 1994 by Bishop Samuel Elenwo under DND. The Anglican divine also preferred and installed him honorary Canon of St Paul's Cathedral, Diobu-Port Harcourt April 6, 1997 respectively. Bishop Kattey appointed Clement Administrator of Tai Archdeaconry April 10, 2009 and Archdeacon November 2, 2003. He and his wife Edna, faithfully pastored the congregations of St. Patrick's Edeoha, St. Paul's Ahoada, St. John's Ihuowo, Holy Trinity Rumuapara, St John's Ndele and Holy Trinity Norwa. The mantle of shepherding the new diocese fell on him and was consecrated July 25, 2004 by Primate Peter J. Akinola at Cathedral Church of the Advent, Life Camp, Gwarinpa Abuja (Onu, 2014). Two days later, July 27, he was enthroned Bishop of Ahoada Diocese at Cathedral Church of Saint Paul Ahoada.

#### **Solomon Sungagelo Gberegbara**

The Archdeaconries of Ogoni, Gokana, and Tai were brought under one leadership in 2007 as Missionary Diocese of Ogoni. The Ven. Solomon S. Gberegbara was elected to nurture the first missionary diocese of DNDN. He was born 1960 at Deken, Gokana LGA. He attended Trinity College Umuahia, was made deacon 1989, ordained priest 1990, preferred honorary Canon 1997 and appointed Administrator 1999 by Bishop Elenwo. His collation as Archdeacon

came 2004 by Bishop Kattey at Holy Trinity Church Choba. He impacted lives of many faithful with Stella his wife at St. Peter's Yeghe (1989-1990), Gokana District Superintendent (1991-1993), Vicar- St. Stephen's Alode (1994-1995), Holy Trinity Nchia (1996-1997), St. Michael's Omoku (1998-1999), Holy Trinity Choba as Vicar/Administrator of Akpor Archdeaconry (Dec 1999-June 2000), All Saints' Rumuokwurusi as Vicar/Administrator of Evo (June 2000-Aug 2001), Vicar, St. Simon's Deken (Oct. 2001-Oct 2004), and Rector, St. Peter's Rumuepirikom (Oct. 2004-March 2005). The Rt. Rev. Dr Solomon Gberegara was elected and consecrated Bishop March 13, 2005 at Cathedral Church of the Advent, Abuja. His enthronement and inaugurating of Missionary Diocese of Ogoni was March 16, 2005 at Cathedral Church of All Saints, Bori (*Order of Service for the Inauguration*, 2005). Later in 2012, he obtained Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree in Religious Studies from the University of Port Harcourt.

### **Okechukwu Precious Nwala**

In 2007, DNDN birthed two dioceses. First was Missionary Diocese of Etche comprising Etche and Omuma Archdeaconries. The Reverend Canon Okechukwu Precious Nwala who then was at Cameroon mission field under DNDN was harvested to shepherd the new missionary diocese. He hailed from Ulakwo 11 in Etche LGA, born November 17, 1971, and was theologically formed at St Paul's University College Awka. He was made deacon July 18, 1999 by Bishop Sam O. Elenwo while Bishop Kattey ordained him priest January 28, 2001, preferred and installed him honorary Canon February 1, 2006 and December 2, 2006 respectively at St Paul's Cathedral Diobu which lifted the ministerial status of him and his wife Precious Onyinye. He went on foreign mission to Cameroon in 2002 where he planted four churches (Kattey, 2007, p. 119). He served as vicar-St. Andrew's church Tiko, South West Cameroon; Chaplain to the Resident Bishop of Cameroon, and Chaplain to Cameroon Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion (CEFAC). He was elected into the episcopacy January 11, 2007, consecrated March 4, at Cathedral Church of the Advent, Gwarinpa, Abuja (*Order of Service for the Inauguration*, 2007). On March 19, 2007 Precious was enthroned as Bishop of Missionary Diocese of Etche during the inauguration service of the new Diocese at Cathedral Church of Saint Matthias Okomoko/Egwi, Etche.

### **Blessing Chinyere Enyindah**

The faithful of Ikwerre, Ikwerre South, and Ikwerre North Archdeaconries started meeting July 27, 1999 and November 21, 2001, they made an application to DNDN for creation of Ikwerre diocese. It was followed with consultations, mobilisations, and inspections. Finally, at the General Synod of CoN held February 7, 2007 at Holy Trinity Cathedral Sokoto, the Diocese of Ikwerre was approved (*Diocese of Ikwerre since 2007*, 2017). On whose head shall the mitre shall appear was the next issue? The Episcopal Synod held Sunday March 4, 2007 at Cathedral Church of Advent, Gwarinpa Abuja decided to harvest the Ven. Blessing Chinyere Enyindah, Archdeacon of Ikwerre, Secretary DNDN Clergy Association and on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He was born November 16, 1962 as sole survivor of premature triplets in Omerelu, Ikwerre LGA, became born again in 1979 through the SU where he also served as Traveling Secretary and Acting Regional coordinator. He received the rite of confirmation 1981 and was theologically formed at Trinity College Umuahia. Blessing was made deacon 1996 and ordained priest 1997 by Bishop Elenwo. In 2002, Bishop Kattey preferred him Canon and collated him Archdeacon on his 40<sup>th</sup> birthday, November 16, 2002. In partnership with Precious his wife, they pastored at St Paul's Cathedral; St Stephen's Rumueme- Vicar; St Luke's Egbeda-Vicar; St. Barnabas Elekahia-Vicar; St. Nicholas Woji- Vicar; Holy Trinity Norwa- Vicar/Archdeacon, Tai Archdeaconry; and St. Peter's Isiokpo- Vicar/Archdeacon of Ikwerre Archdeaconry (*Order of Service for the Inauguration*, 2007).

Blessing was consecrated Bishop April 18, 2007 at Cathedral Church of the Good Shepherd Enugu by Most Rev Peter J. Akinola and on April 20, 2007 he was enthroned pioneer Bishop of Ikwerre Diocese at Cathedral Church of Saint Peter Isiokpo during the inauguration of the diocese. Responsibility increased for Blessing Enyindah when he was elected and presented fifth Archbishop of Niger Delta Province July 11, 2021 at Cathedral Church of Saint Peter, Asaba, Delta State.

### **Innocent Uchechukwu Ordu**

The fifth clergy to be harvested was to grow the group of churches constituted as Diocese of Evo that was created in a special circumstance. The struggle for its creation went a long way during which "many waters passed under the bridge" (*Order of Service for the Inauguration of Evo Diocese*, 2009, p.6). The Standing Committee of CoN held at Ile Ife approved the creation of Evo March 12, 2009. The Episcopal synod met Friday May 22, 2009 at Lokoja and elected Ven. Innocent Uchechukwu Ordu. He was born August 3, 1961 at Rumuobiokani in Obio/Akpor LGA. He had his theological education at Trinity College, Umuahia. He was made deacon July 16, 1995 (at Bethel Church, Amadi-Ama), ordained priest August 11, 1996, and preferred Canon October 23, 1999 by Bishop Elenwo. His collation as Archdeacon July 27, 2002 was by Bishop Kattey. He and his wife Chinyere (daughter of Canon Ngaha) had impactful pastoral ministry as Curate-St. Andrew's Rumuobiokani (1995-98); Vicar-St. Andrew's Rumuobiokani (15/01/98 - 17/09/2000); Vicar-St. Peter's Isiokpo/Administrator/Archdeacon of Ikwerre Archdeaconry; Rector-St Mark's Elelenwo Deanery (Aug 17, 2000- Jan 7, 2007); and Rector-St Peter's Rumuepirikom Deanery 2007 in addition to extra-parish responsibilities. Innocent was consecrated Bishop July 12, 2009 at St. Peter's Church Yenagoa, Bayelsa State (*Order of*

*Service for the Inauguration of Evo Diocese*, 2009). July 13, 2009 the Right Reverend Innocent Uchechukwu Ordu was enthroned Bishop of Evo July 13, 2009 during the inauguration of the diocese held at Cathedral Church of All Saints' Rumuokwurusu.

### **Bishops for Cross-Cultural Dioceses**

#### **Isaac Enenibiyo Orama**

Isaac Enenibiyo Orama was the first to be harvested from DNDN for cross-cultural episcopal ministry. He was born December 6, 1956 to Venerable Jason and Mrs Delicent Oruma of Basaubiri Nembe, Bayelsa State. He married Grace Lucy, daughter of Archdeacon Manilla. When it became clear that he would walk in the steps of his father and father-in-law, he proceeded to Trinity Theological College Umuahia and later in 2011, went to Crowther Graduate Theological Seminary, Abeokuta for advanced theological Studies in Divinity.

Isaac, a seasoned pastor, teacher, and missionary was made deacon July 17, 1994, ordained priest 1995, preferred Canon April 6, 1997, and collated Archdeacon in 1999 by Bishop Elenwo. He pastored St Matthew's Nkpogwu-Curate/Vicar/Administrator, Port Harcourt Central- pioneer Archdeacon, St. Peter's Yeghe- Vicar/Archdeacon of Ogoni (2000-2002); Holy Trinity Nchia- Vicar /Archdeacon of Eleme (2002-2004); and Rector, St. Andrew's Rumuobiakani 2005- 2006 in addition to other offices including chairman, Clergy Association and Diocesan Missioner. He was elected September 26, 2006 and consecrated a Bishop November 26, 2006 at Cathedral Church of Advent, Gwarinpa Abuja. On December 1, 2006 he was enthroned as second Bishop of Diocese of Uyo at Cathedral Church of All Saints' Uyo, Akwa Ibom State (Ojo, 2003).

#### **Sosthenes Ikechukwu Eze**

On creation of the Missionary Diocese of Enugu North in 2007, the House of Bishops located an Electrical/Electronic Engineer and mission-minded clergy from DNDN, Ven. Sosthenes Ikechukwu Eze for the episcopal office. He hailed from Ovoko-Enugu, born February 27, 1961 and became born again May 1978 through SU. His theological formation was at St Paul's College Awka. Sosthenes was made deacon June 1997 and ordained priest 1998 by Bishop Elenwo. He was preferred Canon July 2002 and collated Archdeacon November 16, 2002 by Bishop Kattey. He served with his wife Achugaonye Chukwunenye at New Covenant Oroabali (Deacon/Curate); New Generation Faith Diobu (Curate, 2000-2001); St. Michael's Rumuomasi (Vicar/pioneer Rector, 2001-2003); Nkpogwu Deanery (Rector, 2003-February 2007); and Administrative Assistant to the Bishop (2000-2002) among other extra-parish functions. He was consecrated Bishop March 4, 2007 at Cathedral Church of Advent, Abuja and was canonically enthroned pioneer Bishop of Enugu North Missionary Diocese during the inauguration service on March 16, 2007 at Cathedral Church of Saint Mary Ngwo.

#### **Fred Anga Nyanabo**

The Right Reverend Fred Anga Nyanabo born May 7, 1948 at Okrika was ordained by Bishop Elenwo. He and his wife Ibiene was appointed pioneer chaplain of DNDN Family Life Resources Ministry in 2000. Bishop Kattey seconded him to the Diocese of Abuja in 2001 following the request of Primate Akinola who later preferred him Canon. In search for a shepherd for the newly created Missionary Diocese of Northern Izon, he was harvested and consecrated a bishop May 14, 2008 at the Cathedral Church of Saint James the Great, Oke-Bola, Ibadan. On June 5, 2008 Fred Anga Nyanabo was enthroned pioneer Bishop of Northern Izon at Cathedral Church of Saint Mark Kaiama, Bayelsa State.

#### **Chidi Collins Oparaojiaku**

The Right Reverend Chidi Collins Oparaojiaku of Obazu Mbieri, Imo State was born in 1960. The mandate preacher of the gospel had his pastoral formation at Trinity Theological Union College Umuahia, was made deacon July 16, 1995 and ordained priest the next year by Bishop Elenwo. Bishop Kattey collated him Archdeacon July 27, 2002 not long after his installation as Canon. He and his wife, Joy Oby had pastored St Paul's Cathedral Diobu-priest, St Matthew's Nkpogwu-Rector, Chapel of Redemption RSUST Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt-Chaplain, and Rector, St Andrew's Deanery Rumuobiokani. He was elected Bishop of Missionary Diocese of Ohaji/Egbema and consecrated May 14, 2008 at Cathedral Church of Saint James the Great Oke-Bola, Ibadan. The inauguration of the diocese and his enthronement as the first Bishop of Ohaji/Egbema took place June 6, 2008 at Cathedral Church of Saint Peter Umuokanne-Ohaji, Imo State.

#### **Emmanuel Okwuchi Oko-Jaja**

The Right Reverend Emmanuel Okwuchi Oko-Jaja hailed from Opobo and was born May 9, 1965. He had theological formation at Trinity College Umuahia; was made deacon 1997 and ordained priest 1998 by Bishop Elenwo. He was installed Canon in 2002 and collated Archdeacon 2003. He loyally served with his wife Chinyere as curate/vicar, Etche South District; vicar, St Philip's Oroigwe, Cathedral priest, vicar, St Andrew's Rumuola, vicar, New Generation Faith, Diobu and Archdeacon, Port Harcourt West Archdeaconry, and St. Paul's Cathedral as Archdeacon in 2005. He was first chaplain to Bishop Kattey and later, chairman Clergy Association. Emmanuel Oko-Jaja was elected into the

exalted office of a bishop January 2010 while at Cape Town, South Africa with some faithful of DNDN including this author for “Biblical Worldview Seminar”. His consecration as Bishop took place February 21, 2010 at Cathedral Church of Saint Paul Diobu. On February 28, 2010 he was enthroned as second Bishop of Diocese of Niger Delta West at St Luke’s Cathedral Nembe, Bayelsa State.

### Concluding Remarks

The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) has harvested from DNDN thirteen Bishops within 25 years (1996-2021). The translation of Samuel Onyuku Elenwo from residual DND to nurture DNDN which he midwived has made him ‘father of Bishops of Diocese of Niger Delta North’. Thus, “all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom 8:28). Papa Elenwo had prophetic insight, encouraged and recruited workers for revival. The leadership of his successor, Archbishop I. C. O. Kattey was the manifestation era. He provided free playing ground for many to express ministry, after consolidating what was on ground, he launched the diocese out through foreign mission. The incumbent, Bishop Wisdom Budu Ihunwo is solidifying the gains of the diocese through investments and institution of endowment for clergy training.

Five clergy were harvested to grow the extension dioceses which emerged from DNDN between 2004 and 2009. Another five were harvested for cross-cultural episcopal mission at Uyo, Enugu-North, Northern-Izon, Ohaji/Egbema, and Niger Delta West. Among the thirteen apostolic fathers, eight (Elenwo, Ekpeye, Gberegbara, Nwala, Enyindah, Ordu, Eze, and Oparaojiaku) were foundation bishops, one (Emanuel O. Oko-Jaja) was consecrated at the Cathedral church of Saint Paul, Port Harcourt, two (Ignatius C. O. Kattey and Blessing C. Enyindah) have been elevated to the apex ecclesiastical office of an Archbishop while three (Samuel O. Elenwo, Isaac E. Orama, and Fred A. Nyanbo) had joined the church triumphant. These developments revealed:

- i. That DND is a good ground for harvesting of church leaders for missions and evangelism in Nigeria and beyond.
- ii. That downsizing of the diocese rather than weaken her viability as some had feared, has increased her growth and relevance to the community.
- iii. That the diocese is healthy in spirituality, active and foremost in mission world over.

The above developments should be sustained and expanded through systematic teachings and intentional discipleship. There will need for partnership with the extension and cross-cultural bishops and their dioceses in areas of church planting, human and material resources investment.

Nigerian ecclesiastical history will be enriched through further studies on the inter-relationship between these dioceses.

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