

ST. MARTIN'S CHURCH, AKPAA 1 AKPAA/OSOKWA ARCHDEACONRY

The Good News reached Akpaa 1 in 1913. It was first introduced by Nwagbara Nwokocha Nwaogu of Akpa Amiyi village who was converted by Opobo Oil Traders in 1912. At first he worshipped at Iyi Igoni Waterside. He later joined the Obete group in 1913 with whom he brought the mission home to Akpaa.

At the same time Nwachukwu Ihemeje and Isaiah Ekpekor Ukaegbu of Akpaa had received their own conversion at Abayi Waterside from the Cookeys of Opobo. Just as Nwagbara did, Nwachukwu Ihemeje brought the church to his father's compound at Umuncheagu village. By 1915, these two Christian churches existed in Akpaa in the name of Christ Army Church. Before long the two churches in Akpaa left the home of their founders and settled at a central point in Umuohia village and were known as Akpaa 1 and Akpaa 11 respectively.

After the destruction of idols in 1915 and 1916, church attendance was no longer in secret. New converts were added to the two congregations. Kanu Nnadede of Ohambele was given to Akpaa 1 and John Aja to Akpaa 11 as their respective teachers. Converts worshipped in different churches on alternate Sundays. The same hut used for worship was also used for school. The pioneer pupils were Benjamin Adioogu, George Oti, James Eronwu, Lazarus Adibele, Thomas Akwarandu, Daniel Nwosu, and Pepple Nwosu.

Rev. Dolphin conducted the first Baptism service in 1917. Those baptized included Nwagbara Nwokocha, Nwachukwu Ihemeje, Dorathy Nwokocha, Nwaugo Ihemeje, Isaiah Ekpeko Ukaegbu and others. These converts were strong in their faith in God.

The first strong persecution came from the Okonko secret cult. Isaiah Ekpeko was one of their members, an Okonko instrumentalist. With their conversion, Christians no longer paid their respect to Okonko. During the midnight service on December 31, 1918, they played its secret, the Njije Okonko. The Okonko secret society took the Christians to court. They were found guilty and the following were imprisoned: Ishmael Nwaekwe, Zaccheaus Ditte, Robert Olikpe Akwarandu and Isaiah Ekpeko Ukaegbu. An elder, William Asoha reported this incident to Rev. A. O. Okiya at Owerinta, who reported the matter to Bishop

A.W. Howells I. The latter reported to the District Officer at Aba, and the Christians were promptly released. Their release weakened the power of Okonko and left Christianity to wax stronger and stronger.

The two churches however continued their separate identity with occasions of physical combat. In 1919, the two teachers were replaced with Okongwu and Obiefuna for Akpaa 1 and Akpaa 11 respectively. The two teachers worked for peace and unity and had the differences of the churches settled by the elders of Umuohia village, namely Nwita Orji, Nwogwugwu Ugorji, and Erondu. The two churches agreed on amalgamation. They requested for land and were given the present site of the church, 'the Ajo Ohia or Bad Bush with its dreaded Osi Aku, feared as a killer to any person who approached it. The Christians in their faith and zeal cleared the Osi Aku, uprooted its stumps, built a thatched mud house for church and school without any incident, on it a church was erected and dedicated in 1928.

Other Churches such as RCM, SDA, and others came into Akpaa from 1928 but none rocked the foundations of the Anglican Church as much as the prophetic movement of the 1930's in SDA. When the movement collapsed, most of its members returned to St. Martin's Church. The morale and the numerical strength of the church was boosted.

In 1951, a school master, Sir S.A.I. Ekpeko proposed the need for a more befitting church building. For two years, the people rejected his suggestion until he donated some bags of cement for the project. Other members followed and donated cement and blocks. The Nigerian Civil War delayed action. But the building committee headed by S.A.I. Ekpeko and J.N Nwagbara worked hard. At the end of the Civil War, work commenced with the support of S.E. Achilihu, S.A.I Ekpeko, V.W. Ahuekwe, and J. Nwagbara . the foundation of the new church, which accommodates more than 2000, which 300,000.00 was laid in 1977 under Rev. J.N. Ukaoha and Catechist E.O Nwogbe and builder Paul Nwanganga. It was made a parish headquarter in 1984. The new church building was dedicated in 1992 by Bishop A.O. Iwuagwu.

The following workers served in the station: Catechist Nwoko, S.F.A. Onuoha, Rev. S.B.A. Egbulefu, John Onuoha, Ven. J.W. Achagbue, Rev. James-Ekeleme, Rev. A.U. Nwankwo, Rev. Canon E.N. Agugua, Yen. Paul Ohome, Rev. Elele Chikezie, Rev. Canon Samuel Baaba, The Rev Canon Solomon O.I. Kanu and presently Rev Canon Innocent Nwogwugwu. The Church and school of St. Martin's Akpaa1 had produced outstanding leaders in various fields of endeavour. They include Sir S.A.I. Ekpeko, I.C. Nwagbara, Chief Dennis Nwankpa who donated freely to the Church-Water bore-hole, Band, Big Gate, pews, Fans, Cushions worth million naira. Patrick Ochiegbu, M.O. Ikpe, Catechist Kanu (late). Rev. Solomon Kanu, Rev. Nwogu (late) and Rev Ikpe. Chief S.C. Adindu, G.A. Egwere, Emeka Adiele, A.N. Nnabugwu,

J. Erondu, G. Ahuekwe and Michael Nduagba (late), to mention a few. It is a leading church in the Archdeaconry.

ST. CLEMENT'S CHURCH OSOKWA (1917)

In 1917, Frank Agunya Onyengwa of Umuobiloha brought the Good News to his people. At Igoni Waterside, he came into contact with Opobo oil traders. In 1918, a church branch was opened at Okpuala Ukwu and Robert Eronwu looked after it as a local helper.

The foundation members included Johnson Amachaghi, Paul Nwogu, Moses Njoku, Monday, Dickson Ekpendu, LazarusOfonne, Enoch Erondu, Joseph Nwadinu, Ukamunna Dick Ahuruonye, Grace Nwaghagi, Christiana Odoemela and Sarah to mention a few.

In the year 1919, the converts increased in number. They preached against the ills of society such as killing of twins. They destroyed idols and therefore created obstacles to the spread of the Gospel. The unbelievers attacked the Christians. As a result of distance, some converts were worshipping at Ahiafor Umuobiloha. Each group built a place of worship with mud and thatched roof.

In 1922, the believers at Osokwa faced another strong opposition from the unbelievers. But Mr. F .A. Agunya persisted. He was in charge of the two stations, and service was on rotatory basis. In view of situations arising from distances, it became necessary to amalgamate the two churches.

This was achieved in 1932 when Amaogwugwu family in Amankwu donated the present site known as "Nzu" one of the thickest forests in Ngwaland. There was neither road nor path leading to the center, the land or village. The teacher struggled to open a linking road. He received much pressure from the people of the land. He finally succeeded the church was fully united in 1940. The church progressed over the years and had its own school. Through the efforts of church members, the present concrete structure was erected.

In 1991, Bishop A.O. Iwuagwu granted a Parish status to Osokwa. Rev. Friday Nwogu was posted as its Parish Priest, Rev. Canon Samuel Baaba Spurred the people up. The church was renovated, electrified and beautified for the worship of God. Then Rev. Canon Azu and Rev. Canon B.N. Ihejirika have both worked to promote the mission of the church at Osokwa. .

The Church had produced eminent men and women such as Rev. Canon E.O. Ufomba, Dr. N. Nwaghaghi, Sir Sunday Dinna, Hon. Mgbeahuru to mention a few. The church is growing from strength to strength on Mgboko Road, it is a growing Church.

ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH UMUOBILOHA OSOKWA (1996)

St. Michael's Church Umuobiloha Osokwa was founded on January 1 1996 by Lay Reader Marcus Ojinka Kanu. It was a breakaway church from St. Clement's Church Osokwa. Marcus Kanu had been a strong member of St. Clement's Church. He was a Lay Reader and sometimes the treasurer or Financial Secretary of the Church. At a point misunderstanding arose between him and the committee. He therefore decided to found a new congregation in his village which is miles away from Osokwa Church. His aim was that the church at Umuobiloha would be a feeder to St. Clement's church. But the issue was not properly handled. St Clement's church was not ready to have another Anglican Church in Osokwa than St. Clement's members who followed him and supported him with their families were Obioma Agunnyo, Moses Osu, Goodluck Nwaohia. Rose Egesie,

Catherine Ojinka and Stella Dinnah M. Kanu, the founder of the church died six months after. He urged his followers to work harder and see that another Anglican congregation is planted in Osokwa as a way of expansion. His followers including his widow Mrs. Kanu are very fervent in their zeal.

One Enyeribe, member of Cherubim and Seraphim came out to lead this congregation. He offered his own land for a church site. Obioma Agunyo had earlier got five bundles of zinc from Bishop Iwuagwu. But soon after, Enyeribe disclosed his plan to move the church to Cherubim and Seraphim. The group led by Obioma Agunnyo refused the move. He and his wife drove the church away from his land. The believers had to go back to the dilapidated Umuobiloha village hall.

The congregation at present is a mustard seed. St. Clement is not ready to care for it. Umuobasi Amavo Archdeaconry is also reluctant to travel so far, and the church was directed to Rev. Canon Baaba and the parish of Akpaa to take charge of the place. The present leaders of the church are Moses Osu, Obioma Agunnyo, Mrs. Goodluck Nwobia, Catherine Ojinka, Promise Onyebuchi, Uwaoma Uzoije and Mrs. Kanu, the wife of the founder of the church.

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, UMUNPATAAMANKWU

In the year 2006, it was decided at the Parish Church Council that a Church be planted at, Umunpata-Amankwu sequel to this, the Vicar, Rev. Canon L. A. Nwogwugwu moved into action. On Sunday 11th February 2007 the first service was held: It was conducted by Rev'd Canon L. Nwogwugwu and the sermon was taken by Rev. Canon Emma Asiegbu. Not less than 9 people worshipped on the first day. This service took place at Urntlbchyllc;lg- Hall. We thank Mr. Chinyereze Amanze, Mrs. Comfort Esiaba, Ezenwoko Alozie, Cecilia Uruakpa, Sam Ochieze etc, who braved the planting of the church.

The Parish did not relent in negotiating for a permanent site. On 2nd Dec. 2007, they moved over to the site there, they celebrated their first Adult Harvest.

ARCHDEACONRY WORKERS:

ST. MARTINS AKPAA 1

Ven. Emmanuel C. Onwunli
Rev'd Chika Amaefula
Mr. Felix Ajaegbu

ST. CLEMENT'S OSOKWA

Rev'd Kelechi Elele

CHURCH OF RESURECTION, OKPU ALA UKWU

Cate. Solomon Ihedinambu.

ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH UMUOBILOHA OSOKWA

Mr. Victor Marizu

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, UMUNPATAAMANKWU

Cate. John Ugorji.