

HISTORY OF ST BARNABAS' ANGLICAN PARISH CHURCH, **MAFOLUKU**

The Preamble

One certain day in April 1973, a member of St Paul's Anglican Church, Mafoluku, Mr S. A. Adedeji, embarked on evangelism outreach during which he met one Mrs Susan Eneoma who he engaged in a discussion. The dialogue revealed that Mrs Eneoma happened to be an Anglican of the Igbo nation. She told Mr Adedeji about a preponderance of Igbo who also were Anglicans, but that their problem was not having a place to worship.

Thereafter, Mr Adedeji took Mrs Eneoma to one Brother Ogunleye, a top member of St Paul's Anglican Church, Mafoluku. Subsequent meetings were held in Mr Olaleye's residence during which the Igbo were invited to join the Yoruba in St Paul's, then located in Olaiya Street. Several other meetings were held among the Igbo representatives, Mr Olaleye, Mr Adedeji and Lay Reader Ogunleye. Afterwards, the Igbo started worshipping with them early in April, 1973.

Because of language differences, and for effective communication in worship using vernacular, a decision was taken to have two separate services – one for the Igbo and another for the Yoruba. Thus, the Igbo took their turn at 7am while the Yoruba had theirs at 9am every Sunday. The first service of the Igbo section was conducted on 22nd April, 1973, which makes it 50 years: that is what we are celebrating today.

EXPANSION

When it was discovered that the two hours allotted to the Igbo service was inadequate, worship centres shifted severally until the section berthed at St Paul's Primary School, Mafoluku. This was facilitated by Mr Olaleye, who was the head master of the school then. On 1st February, 1976, the first service was conducted in the school. The movement brought tremendous numerical growth to the fellowship, which necessitated the quest for a larger accommodation.

Given this challenge, the leadership then appealed to the authority of St Paul's for land space. Consequently, a parcel of land measuring 50ft X 200ft was magnanimously given to the Igbo Section by St Paul's on 20th September, 1979. Construction of a worship centre commenced on site same year, though it suffered a hiccup that led to stoppage of work, only to recommence early in 1980. The first

service on the site held on Easter Sunday 1980 and was conducted by the late Rev E. Ola Oyebanjo.

The following people functioned as the Church Committee chairmen:

- ❖ The Late Mr Nathan Ezechukwu 1973-1977
- ❖ Mr Christian Igwenagu 1978-1980
- ❖ Mr Levi Opara (now Retd. Venerable) 1980-1985
- ❖ Lay Reader Roland Anokam 1985-1987

By 1987, the congregation received her first resident Church Agent, Mr E. U. Okwu (now Retd. Revd Canon E. U. Okwu). He continued till 1991 when the first resident Priest, The Revd J. Ajideleola (now the Late Retd Ven Ajideleola), took over from him. At this point, the congregation was known as St Paul's 2.

RENAMING THE CHURCH

In 1992, the then Bishop of the Diocese of Lagos and the Archbishop of the Province of Lagos, The Most Revd Joseph Abiodun Adetiloye, under the unction of the Holy Spirit, citing Acts 13:1, 2, renamed St Paul's 1 as St Paul's, Mafoluku, while he renamed St Paul's 2 as St Barnabas', Mafoluku.

CHURCH DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSITIONS

The Revd Ajideleola saw to the finishing of the first place of worship and the Vicarage that is in use today. His successor, The Revd J. Olaifa, continued with the pioneering work of his predecessor. In 1998, the church received her third Vicar, The Revd Mike Nwangalaku (later the late Revd Canon Mike Chimedom). He became the first Igbo Vicar of the Church after the renaming.

His tenure witnessed the laying of the foundation of the present church building on 9th March, 2000, by the pioneer Bishop of the Diocese of Lagos West, The Rt. Revd Dr Peter Awelewa Adebisi now of blessed memory. Through his fatherly intervention, an additional 10ft X 200ft piece of land was given to St Barnabas' on 22nd January 2001 which the church sincerely appreciated. Also then, the members extended their appreciation to the Vicar of St Paul's, The Revd Abraham Odumuyiwa (now The Ven. Michael Adesina Abraham-Odumuyiwa) and the congregants for their great brotherly love.

Before his transfer out of St Barnabas' Church on 14th July 2002, The Revd Mike Nwangalaku had initiated and completed the design and conceptual framework of the building plan, ensured the laying of the foundation of the church building and took the building to the German floor with six pillars. During this time, Sir Mayor Joel Chiedo Nwachukwu served as the Building Committee chairman for a period of 10 years (1998-2008). He worked with a team of dedicated members from design stage to roofing.

The Revd Barr Chudi Obi (now The Ven. Dr Chudi Obi) took over from The Revd Mike Nwangalaku on 15th July, 2002. His tenure of 5 years and 3 weeks recorded the following achievements:

- Erected the remaining pillars and decking
- Took the physical structure to roofing stage
- Roofing completed by 1st week in May 2006
- Procured some of the windows
- Ratification of the building documents

At this stage when the financial strength of the church was waning, Bishop Adebisi released intervention fund of ₦2 million to assist in the roofing project. The Church will continue to remember him for good.

On 7th August, 2007, The Revd Canon E. U. Okwu returned to duties, this time no longer as Agent but as Vicar. He worked relentlessly till 30th July, 2010 within which he accomplished the following:

- ✓ Moved the church services upstairs
- ✓ Fortified and expanded the Altar
- ✓ Started work on the gallery
- ✓ Tiling of sanctuary floor, gallery floor and part of the General Hall
- ✓ Installation of window glasses, including Altar stained glass

The Revd (now Ven.) Chiedu Ekpunobi took over from The Revd Canon Okwu on 30th July 2010. He achieved the following milestones:

- Completed the tiling of the sanctuary and tiled the entire ground floor
- Special ceiling of the church building roof

- Marble effects on the pillars of the church
- New choristers and church pews
- All electrical, plumbing and sanitary works
- Construction of suck away
- Interlocking bricks
- Redesigning of the entrance gate and the gate house
- Construction works, which included, but not limited, to Wardens' office, chancel steps, Vicar's, Choir and Vestry wardrobes
- Hand rails in the church
- Repainting of the Vicarage
- General painting of the church building
- Installation of most doors
- Dedication of the church building

It is on record that from inception up till 2011, for the first time, the church has had three (3) clergymen who served as curates under The Revd Ekpunobi as vicar.

They are:

1. The Revd (now The Ven.) Chamberlain Oguzo
2. The Revd (now Canon) Godfrey Ikechi Orji
3. The Revd (now Canon) Mike Nnanyelu Asomugha

Reverends Orji and Asomugha were posted as deacons and ordained priests while serving in St Barnabas'.

OTHER HONOURS ROLL

The Lay: This write-up is replete with those who served in various capacities and those who contributed immensely to the continual growth and development of the church of God. Among them is Prince J. N. Okoli, who functioned briefly as chairman of the Building Committee. Also, Chief G. O. D. Ene, who was severally chairman of the reconstituted Building Committee. His team saw to the completion of the church building. The professional input of Sir Ngozi Nwachukwu is worthy of mention and remembrance.

There were others who contributed to the building of the church. Among them were the Churchwardens at different times – Sir Henry Ugbaja, Mr Cyprian Okechukwu, the Late Evangelist Justine Emedosi, Brother Ikechukwu Okoh, Chief Melford Ukauwa and Mr (now Lay Reader) Christopher Unegbu.

The Clergy: Right from the old Diocese of Lagos to the new baby, the Diocese of Lagos West, a couple of Archdeacons who supervised the church played major and fatherly roles. They are:

The Late Ven. Reuben Olubanjo Oshewa (then Archdeacon, Ikeja Archdeaconry)

The Ven. Ezekiel Dahunsi, then Archdeacon of Ikeja Archdeaconry (later The Rt. Revd and now Retd. Bishop, Diocese of Idoani)

The Ven. James Olusola Odedeji (then Archdeacon of Oshodi Archdeaconry, Diocese of Lagos West (now The Rt. Revd. Dr James Olusola Odedeji, Lord Bishop, Diocese of Lagos West)

The Ven. T. O. S. Ayodele (then Archdeacon, Oshodi Archdeaconry). The church building was completed and dedicated in 2011 during his tenure.

Another change of shepherds took place on 11th May, 2013, with the exit of The Ven. Chiedu Ekpunobi and the coming of The Revd (now The Ven.) Joseph Ogbonna Agomuo as Vicar of the church.

While he was the incumbent at St Barnabas', The Revd Agomuo was preferred a Canon of the Cathedral on 28th June, 2015.

Some of his landmark projects include:

- Connecting water to residents of the community under the social responsibility programme he initiated
- Starting a school named Child of Encouragement Nursery and Primary School in the hall under the Vicarage
- The Media Unit to enhance projection of hymns and readings during service
- Acquisition of a bus to facilitate movement of the clergy and lay to Archdeaconry and Diocesan events as well as use for church matters

On 9th April, 2018, another change of baton took place as The Revd Chukwudi Ibegbu succeeded then Revd Canon Agomuo.

On assumption of duties, Revd Ibegbu (now The Revd Canon) Chukwudi Ibegbu embarked on institutional reforms in liturgical worship and administrative procedures. In addition, he embarked on several projects that stand the church on good pedestal. Among these are:

- Tackling poor lighting of the premises, the vicarage and the church building
- Fixing the hitherto problematic 25kva diesel generator and restoring it to optimal performance
- Adding a new 8.5kva Sumec petrol generator to the energy supply system
- Restoring all air-conditioners in the church and vicarage to life
- Replacing the dilapidated sanctuary ceiling with POP
- Hanging of chandeliers on the POP
- Replacement of the worn-out rug with fresh one from the sanctuary to the West Door
- Got two (2) vacuum cleaners to be used in cleaning the rug
- Repainted the general hall on the ground floor, the offices and conference room as well as the stairway to the inside of the vicarage
- Mounted plywood doors on the open wardrobes in the Vicar's office and the Vestry
- Erected a more-prominent signboard at the entrance to the church building with two additional others mounted atop the belfry
- Did fresh architectural drawing that carved out 2-bedroom apartment from the existing in which the original 4-bedroom wing was rearranged with two stairways
- Obtained a Technical Report on the structural audit by a Lagos State-licensed engineering firm, because of non-existing structural drawing before the erection of the vicarage
- From the Technical Drawing, did a structural drawing for the redesigned architectural drawing
- Erected three (3) mini-CCTV with solar gadgets and a smaller non-solar one
- Purchased a digital organ with accompanying UPS that replaced the old keyboard. The organ is being dedicated today by the Lord Bishop of the Diocese of Lagos West, The Rt. Revd James Olusola Odedeji, *PhD*.
- Towards the 50th Anniversary celebration, the church building was completely painted, the fence work renovated with a new gate installed

The church of God is really marching on and the gate of hell shall not, and will never prevail on her, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

WARDENS TILL DATE

1. Mr E.C. Ozurigbo
2. Mr Christian Onyekwere
3. Mr James Opara
4. Mr Moses Arua
5. Mr Ikechukwu Okoh
6. Mr Justine Emedosi (Late)
7. Mr Cyril Okechukwu (Late)
8. Mr Ogbunigwe
9. Mr Melford Ukauwa
10. Mr Innocent Orjiako
11. Mr Joel Ononiwu
12. Mr Amandiame
13. Mr Noel Eleonu (Late)
14. Mr Mike Nwokeafor
15. Mr Chima Sunday
16. Mr Sunday Ajagba
17. Mr Christopher Unegbu
18. Mr Chinedu Ezeh
19. Mr Ben Nwachukwu
20. Mr Chikezie Nwobiara
21. Sir Charles Ibegbu
22. Mr Okechukwu Onuabuchi
23. Mr Felix Obisike

VERGERS TILL DATE

1. Mr Ndukuba Edmond
2. Mr S.K Ibeh
3. Mr Ohurogu
4. Mr Augustine Nwala
5. Mr Ikechukwu Igbojionu
6. Mrs Ogechukwu Oleka
7. Mrs Ogonna Onyeali
8. Mr Arinze Okafor
9. Mr Christian Oragui

10. Mr Chuks Ogwume
11. Mr Nnaedozie Nwachukw

LAY READERS TILL DATE

1. Mr Levi Opara (Now Retd. Venerable)
2. Mr Rowland Anokam (Late)
3. Mr Christian Igwenagu
4. Mr Emmanuel Osuagwu
5. Mr Emmanuel Ibeh
6. Chief S.J Adiele (Late)
7. Mr Peter Ehiogu
8. Mr Chibuzor Nwachukwu
9. Mr Chinedu Ezeh
10. Evang Promise Udochukwu
11. Mr Chris Unegbu
12. Mrs Priscillia Nwachukwu (Late)
13. Mrs Sophia Okoro
14. Mr Augustine Ejikeme
15. Mr Ahamefula Adiele (Now Revd)
16. Mrs Blessing Alaegbu
17. Barr Chijioke Ngoka
18. Mrs Oge Ekpunobi (Then the Vicar's wife)

MUSIC DEPARTMENT

- 1a. Mr Levi Opara (1st Choir Master)
 - b. Mr Ifeanyichukwu Nwobiala (Asst. Choir Master)
- 2a. Mr Okechukwu (Music Director/Organist)
- 3a. Lay Reader Chibuzor Nwachukwu (Choir Master)
- 4a. Mr St Christopher Amaechi (Music Director till date)
- 5a. Late Mr Ifeanyi Ezeafurukwe (Choir Master)
- 6a. Mr Polycarp Ebere Nwosu (ACA) (Organist till date)
- 7a. Mr Ifeanyi Agbanike (Choir Master)
- 8a. Mr Ugochukwu Igbojionu (Choir Master till date)

ALL THE MEMBERS OF ST BARNABAS' THAT BECAME PRIEST

1. Ven Ebere Uhie
2. Ven Joseph Agomuo
3. Rev Canon Dr. Benjamin Okere
4. Rev Canon Joseph Iloba
5. Rev Canon Samuel Ukwe
6. Rev Canon Christian Ifesie
7. Rev Emmanuel Anokam
8. Rev Ahamefula Adiele