



**OKON UYA AT**  
**ISSUES IN HISTORIOGRAPHY,  
NATION-BUILDING AND THE  
AFRICAN DIASPORA**

**70**

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BUILDING AND THE AFRICAN DIASPORA**

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## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### IN THE LORD'S VINEYARD: OKON EDET UYA AND CHRISTIAN EVANGELISM

WINIFRED E. AKODA

#### **Introduction**

Professor Okon Uya's towering image as a celebrated scholar, a distinguished diplomat, highly respected and admired administrator, as well as his international repute is not in doubt. His contributions to the educational, intellectual and political development of Nigeria where he has nurtured several scholars and served the nation in various capacities are achievements that will definitely outlive him.

Ordinarily, a man should be satisfied with these feats. Yet, realising the imbalance in his life and understanding as a man endowed with wisdom, that, these achievements are transient and merely earthly glories, Uya knew it was time to subject himself not to earthly positions, powers or materialism, but to winning souls for the Kingdom of God. The Leaders Love Life Ministry aka Jesus Cares World Outreach is a Ministry and the channel through which this vision is being pursued.

In his book, *Pentecostalism in Nigeria: Calabar Experience 1970-95*, Essien A. Offiong asserts that most of the founders of the Pentecostal churches and organisations in Calabar claim to have been called by God through visions and revelations (2003). He cited founders of Redeemed International Calvary Mission, Rev. A. U. Inyang who was formerly of the Assemblies of God Church; founder of Truth

and Life Church, Rev, Dr Akwaowo O. Akwaowo and Christ for the World Mission International led by Rev. (Dr) Nicholas Eze amongst others. The case of the Leaders Love Life Ministry follows a similar pattern.

The vision to begin this ministry which Uya leads can be traced back to 2003 when on his hospital bed, he claims to have been called to serve the Lord. That year he was involved in a near-fatal motor crash on his way to the University of Ibadan for a distinguished lecture. This accident which almost took his life kept him in the hospital for many months and almost limbless. Uya's search for a solution to recover his limbs saw him travelling to South Africa which finally bore fruit as he gradually regained the use of his limbs. It was in Pretoria, South Africa, when he was in the hospital that he claims to have seen a vision where the walls of a building were falling on him as he tried to escape. In this vision, God asked if he knew why he was saved from the accident which nearly claimed his life. That same voice spoke to him saying "I saved you to come and serve me" (Oral Interview, Okon E. Uya, 5/7/2012, Calabar). Since he had been to important places, met and dined with the high and mighty men of the world, God told him to spread his message to those same people he had interacted with and those places he had gone to (Oral Interview, Okon E. Uya, 5/7/2012, Calabar). That year, Uya maintains that the Lord told him that, having met with leaders, kings and personalities like presidents, prime ministers and ambassadors, he was to proclaim the Word to those same personalities which other ministers would find difficult to approach. His acceptance of the will of God made him recover so fast that the estimated ten weeks he was to spend in the Pretoria hospital after surgery was cut short to two weeks to the amazement of the Doctors (Oral Interview, Okon E. Uya, 5/7/2012, Calabar). His legs had healed

remarkably well. The name of the ministry—Leaders Love Life Ministry which emphasises preaching the Word to leaders and producing leaders with good moral standing through the ministry's training programmes was communicated to him in that vision and the Bible passage, Philippians Chapter 2, verses 5-11 became the source of his Ministry (Oral Interview, Okon E. Uya, 5/7/2012, Calabar). Based on that biblical passage, Uya was to be a servant leader.

At this point, it is pertinent to note that before the founding of his Leaders Love Life Ministry, Uya had been in the Christian fold from birth and had contributed to church growth. Although he had never identified with full time evangelism, an area he avoided, the Professor could be likened to the biblical Jonah who resisted going on evangelical mission to Nineveh, but finally had to succumb to the greater will of God. The next section of the paper highlights his Christian background and his role in church building before the founding of the Leaders Love Life Ministry.

#### **Uya before the founding of Leaders Love Life Ministry**

Born into the Methodist Church and bred in a Methodist tradition, Uya had a catechist / lay preacher as a father and a mother whose family was of the same Methodist faith. It is not surprising that he had his primary education in a Methodist Primary School and because he was an outstanding student academically, was tipped to attend the prestigious Methodist Boys High School, Oron. He asserts that "big wigs like Barrister O. Ita, O. J. Eminue and S.S Ikon thought I should go to Methodist Boys' High Oron which was a destination for every intelligent Oron boy" (Oral Interview, Okon E. Uya, 5/7/2012, Calabar).

At the same time, Uya's father, showed great love and



respect for the Revd S. K. Okpo, a Methodist Minister and wanted his son to be like him. Unknown to them, the younger Uya had other plans. In 1955, he had read about Professor Eyo Ita in *The Nigerian Eastern Mail* for the first time and was inspired by this great educationist. He was thrilled at the thought of becoming a professor and that determination led him to Calabar where he sat for the entrance into the West African People's Institute (WAPI), Eyo Ita's institution (Oral Interview, Okon E. Uya, 5/7/2012, Calabar). His admission into WAPI led him into contact with Professor Eyo Ita and his father's hope of having a minister as a son was dashed until it manifested in 2005 when Uya became a Minister, not of the Methodist Church but of the Leaders Love Life Ministry.

Before then, Professor Uya lent a hand in church development through many ways: As Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Chairman in 1993, he assisted financially and ensured the completion of the Methodist Church, Ukuko, Oron, which was started in the early 1940s. Uya was also involved in the rebuilding of the Wesley Methodist Cathedral in Calabar where he planted the anniversary tree. After he left the Methodist Church in 1997/1998 because he "had grown spiritually beyond Methodism", he joined the Liberty Gospel Church and as one of the arrow heads of the church, played a major role in redesigning and completing its large edifice off Ndidem Usang Iso Road, Calabar (Oral Interview, Okon E. Uya, 5/7/2012, Calabar). Hence to a large extent, Uya's association with church growth and development was not a recent phenomenon. The full manifestation of this only occurred in 2005 when he founded the Leaders Love Life Ministry and became a full fledged Minister of God.

### **Origin and Growth of Leaders Love Life Ministry**

The origin of the Leaders Love Life Ministry dates back to 2005 when it's founder and president, Pastor Professor Okon E. Uya and his wife, Evangelist Dr (Mrs.) Ann Uya began an inter-denominational fellowship in the sitting room of their residence at 149 Parliamentary Road. This trend is common with new Pentecostal Church movements in Nigeria. Many new Pentecostal churches had their origin in the homes of the founding Pastor or in school halls. The Deeper Life Bible Church, one of the oldest but conservative Pentecostal churches in Nigeria, began in Pastor Kumuyi's residence known as Flat 2 at the University of Lagos Campus with 15 members (Gaiya 2001).

The Truth and Life Bible Church International also began in a two bedroom apartment in Calabar (Offiong, 2003). Nicholas Eze began his with a small assembly in a primary school in Ogoja before relocating to Calabar in 1977 (Offiong, 2003). The Bible Study/prayer group later metamorphosed into Leaders Love Life Ministry with few members in attendance. With the increase of its members, the group moved to the Paradise City Hotel where it received more members. While in Paradise City Hotel, the Leaders Love Life Ministry remained a fellowship with members attending only on Tuesday evenings (Oral Interview, David Imbua, 3/7/2012, Calabar). The Uyas were thinking of a more permanent location for the ministry considering that the Paradise City plays host to other activities like wedding receptions, club parties and the like. In this writer's opinion also, it would be impossible to register a ministry that could not provide a permanent accommodation with the Corporate Affairs Commission. Hence, Uya and Ann began the search for a permanent location where a place of worship could be erected. This did not come easy as the cheapest property they found went for three hundred thousand naira



(N300, 000) a year, despite the small size. On a Saturday morning when returning home from a Paradise City Fellowship programme, the Uyas suddenly noticed the space at the front of their residence on 149 Parliamentary Road. Professor Uya maintains that:

I stopped and told my wife to look left. We now saw that it was four times larger than the one we had seen for three hundred thousand naira (N300,000). We had some spare blocks left in our compound and used it for the building. In about four months, the work was completed (Oral Interview, Okon E. Uya, 5/7/2012, Calabar).

It was on completion that members once again moved from the Paradise City Hotel to Parliamentary Road. The formal inauguration and dedication of the Ministry which had its theme, "Release them for the Master's Use" (Programme for the inauguration and dedication of Leaders Love Life Ministry, 2008) was attended by many church ministers within and outside Calabar. From Ghana through Benin Republic, Kenya and South Africa, ministers of God came in their numbers to honour Pastor Professor Okon Uya and his wife Ann Uya with their presence. The occasion which was chaired by Senator Major General (Rtd.) Ike Nwachukwu and Sir Dr. Edet Amana featured praise and worship, inauguration/dedication of the Ministry/Jesus Cares Fellowship, Dedication of the Ministry's Magazine/Launching of the Magazine, and Choir Ministration as the first part of the programme. With this development, the Ministry was set for growth/ evangelism. The Leaders Love Life Ministry which started with few members in the residence of the Uya's has grown to some hundred with branches in Calabar, Oron, Uyo, Eleme and Ghana. The church also has fellowship in Kenya, Swaziland and South

Africa (Oral Interview, Elder Romanus Ndubuisi, 1/5/2012, Calabar). These branches are encouraged through constant visits from the president, Uya and his wife, who is the Vision Coordinator of the Ministry.

The Leaders Love Life Ministry has been saddled with the task of soul winning, character moulding and leadership training. In a personal communication, the president of the Leaders Love Life Ministry has declared his stand on some aspects of Christian evangelism. For instance, he believes that a successful ministry is one that not only wins converts, but stabilises them through reshaping their character. In one of his Sunday services held on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2010, he taught his congregation that, character is an essential part of leadership and character failure is one of the reasons Christians are becoming less and less rather than more and more Christ-like. In a lecture delivered earlier in 1982, he emphasised character training along a Christ-like model. Uya applauded Missionary education for its emphasis on character training, stating that this type of education was synonymous with discipline and commitment to justice and fair play and that it "emphasised honest and dedicated service in whatever we do; total commitment and dedication to the pursuit of excellence; uncompromising resentment of such vices as indiscipline, indolence, hatred of our neighbours and mindless materialism" (Uya, 1982). As a product of this tradition himself, Uya, no doubt stands for these ideals which he constantly emphasises during his sermons. His concern about the role of the church in raising good and responsible citizens, exposing incidences of discrimination, exploitation, corruption, victimisation, social indiscipline, ethnic hatred and jealousy is well captured in a key note address which he presented in the First Love Foundation Conference in Akwa Ibom on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November, 2009. He perceives the

Church or the Body of Christ as the guardian of morality, the conscience of the state, and an important agent for unity and development. (Uya, 2009) and as such being responsible for character training – an essential element for good leadership. Uya's perception of a good leader, in line with the tenets of Christianity can be summarised as follows:

- (i) A leader should be a servant – leader (humble).
- (ii) A leader must promote the welfare and well-being of his followers.
- (iii) He must not see the opposition as an enemy.
- (iv) A leader must create a unified, corporate atmosphere.
- (v) He must inspire others and be efficient at his duties.
- (vi) He must confront problems positively, encourage response, be flexible, accommodating, forgiving, tolerating, and knowledgeable.
- (vii) A leader must be disciplined, free from ethnic hatred, jealousy and religious prejudice.
- (viii) A leader must be able to sacrifice and put others interests first.
- (ix) He must learn from the past mistakes of his predecessors.
- (x) He must set and achieve his goals, and build a teamspirit
- (xi) Christian leaders must identify with Christ, be focused, God fearing, dedicated and exemplary (Uya, 2009).

Professor Uya acknowledges the use of the media as a very

important instrument for the spread of the gospel but opposes the way anointed men of God use it for self promotion and edification. About televangelism, he decries the style of many new generation preachers (including gesticulations) which has become more important than the message (Word of God). Concluding on televangelism, Uya pronounces that "the Church of God is not for entertainment. The business of the Church is to build the Kingdom of God" (Oral Interview, Okon E. Uya, 5/7/2012, Calabar).

Commenting on miracle working by some churches, Uya insists that "the miracle of God was not made to advertise yourself, but to bring glory to God" (Oral Interview, Okon E. Uya, 5/7/2012, Calabar). He declares that, many living churches are involved in self promotion and many of their miracles cannot be sustained because they lack the Word of God and fail to teach same to the members. Since the promises of God are for those who do his Word, Uya argues that many are not taught the principles (the Word of God) in sustaining their miracles, resulting to healing that is short term (Oral Interview, Okon E. Uya, 5/7/2012, Calabar). He also abhors the increase in fake miracle workers. In his opinion, the body of Christ is troubled, and bedeviled by many challenges. These include Ministers of God who lay emphasis on the Gospel of prosperity to the "total neglect of holiness and righteousness which are the Biblical keys to real prosperity" (Uya, 2009); social groups springing up in the name of churches and promising instant solution to problems of poverty; false worship and heathenism; number of "spirititians" (i.e. men and women of God who attach themselves to the usually corrupt powers that be); and declining spirituality (Uya, 2009).

In a convocation lecture, at the Logos Christian College, Calabar Centre, he admonishes would-be ministers to build up a Biblical culture which "demands teaching the word

undiluted, unadulterated, inspiringly, and convictingly" (Uya, 2009). Uya also charged them to uphold Biblical standards and values at all times, build up a culture of prayer, holiness, giving, heaven consciousness, discipleship, good neighbourliness and evangelism (Uya, 2009).

Discussing the role of women in the church, Uya proclaims, "The Work of God is for everybody. There are some things women can do better than men in the Church. Secondly, doing the work of God is by the spirit... and there are only two spirits- the spirit of God or that of Satan. Nothing in between. There is nowhere in the Bible where we see the spirit of women distinct from the spirit of men" (Oral Interview, Okon E. Uya, 5/7/2012, Calabar)". "I Am fully in support of women's Ministry and anyone doing the work of God", he declares.

Indeed, with the above words, Uya acknowledges five areas of ministries one can be called into as a born again Christian- they include-preaching, teaching, healing, deliverance and salvation. He insists that everyone is given the spirit to specialize in any one of these and concludes that his wife Ann for example, excels in deliverance while he (Uya) is best at teaching the Word.

In all, Uya has demonstrated in his sermons that obedience, integrity, and humility are important tenets a Christian should imbibe. Unlike some ministries he is adverse to a large congregation insisting that it is important for a Minister of God to have a personal interaction with his congregation. According to him "we want to be part of their lives and when your congregation gets larger and larger, you don't know them" (Oral Interview, Okon E. Uya, 5/7/2012, Calabar).

In his sermon of 15<sup>th</sup> March 2009, he preached against the attitude of indifference and lukewarmness as well as doubt which he refers to as "a big enemy to progress" Faith,

he declares, is the key to miracles, to salvation, to victory, to healing, to deliverances. Uya demands that the quality of our service to God matters as "God demands faithful loyal service from us and rewards such service" He castigates the eye-servants in the church stating that these do not attract God's favour to themselves as an important condition for God's favour is diligence.

In other messages, Uya beseeches his congregation not to expect a stormless journey through life as Christians. "The storms will definitely come but they shall also pass away and there will be great calm". His sermon on Sept 6, 2009 emphasised diligence and hard work as essential for all round success in life. This is not surprising for a man who has worked very hard to reach the peak of his career. He demonstrates further that, "a student... who would spend hours and hours praying without studying will certainly fail the examination; but prayers with study will guarantee success."

The Leaders Love Life Ministry has an evangelical arm called Jesus Cares World Outreach (JCWO) which lays emphasis on rural evangelism, a very unique but challenging aspect of the Ministry. The task of leaving urban areas to the rural areas, funds to sponsor rural crusades, converting rural dwellers many of whom are still attached to their traditional mode of worship, having to deal with household/ community shrines and other obstacles is daunting. Bishop Eneobong Ephraim of the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World aptly maintains that it is "an aspect of ministry that many churches and ministries run away from." (Programme for the inauguration and dedication, 2008). In spite of this, Uya and the Jesus Cares World Outreach have taken on the responsibility of spreading the Gospel to the unreached with particular interest in the rural communities (Oral Interview, Victor Ndum, 1/5/2012,



Calabar). Their duties here involve organising crusades, seminars and conferences.

In addition to working in the Lord's vineyard by preaching and teaching the Word of God to rural dwellers in order that they might be saved, Uya, his wife Ann and their ministers try to meet their physical needs. This is another area that gives the Leaders Love Life Ministry its uniqueness. According to Uya,

No one wants to be a failure, a mediocre or even just good enough. Everyone wants to be seen as the best in whatever he/she does the best cleaner, best teacher, best man or woman of God. We are inspired by the desire to outshine all our competitors, to be known as the expert in that particular field. (Jesus Cares World Outreach publication, 2010).

National and International Crusades from Emmah Isong's to Reinhard Bonke's have been held severally in various parts of Nigeria, yet only very few ministries think of meeting the physical needs of the people they are ministering to. The Holy Book itself mentions the need to feed one's brother when hungry. The Leaders Love Life Ministry does not only attend to the spiritual needs of the congregation but meets their physical needs by giving away items such as clothes, salt, soap, free Bibles as well as solving the medical problems of their congregation. Romanus Ndubusi, a member, illustrates this point in these words -

We just came back from Nsit Ibom (Akwa Ibom State) last month (April) where we had a one week crusade. We gave out clothes, salt, and saw to their medical needs by de-worming both adults and children in the area. We went to Oron Local Government Area for a crusade in December 2011 where we gave out some items. In Cross River, we have been to Biase, Yakurr, Obudu, Abi, and Bekwarra for crusades. In all these

places, we have given out items according to the needs of the people. (Oral Interview, Romanus Ndubusi, 1/5/2012, Calabar).

In a goodwill message to the president and his wife, Asuquo Esu, a manager with First Alliance Pension & Benefit, noted how the Ministry has touched innumerable lives particularly in the rural community of the South South geographical zone of Nigeria. In his words:

Their style of evangelism is unique. They move into rural communities dangling enticing items; free copies of the Holy Bible, clothing materials, a variety of food items, free medical treatment and then, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. By this, they soothe the pains of the sick, the poor, the hungry and the deprived and leave behind a trail of fulfilled people, largely extricated from the clutches of traditionalism, idolatory and ignorance. These accomplishments, no doubt, stand Jesus Cares World Outreach out from the teeming crowd of contemporary ministries and give it a unique stamp of acceptance and relevance. (Programme for the inauguration and dedication, 2008).

Indeed Jesus Christ himself while on his missionary journeys ministered to both the spiritual and physical needs of his congregation. Spiritually, he preached the Word of God and received converts. Physically, he fed the Israelites as demonstrated in the feeding of 5,000 and in addition solved their medical problems through the healing of the sick.

The Leaders Love Life Ministry aims at bringing to the people the kind of ministry Jesus was involved in while on earth (Oral Interview, Victor Ndum, 1/5/2012, Calabar). Three things can be said to be responsible for the success and positive attitude of the rural people towards the Ministry. They include (1) satisfying the physical needs of the people which has already been discussed (ii) the

breakthrough /deliverance programmes that have been successful (iii) the charismatic nature of the leaders of the Ministry.

#### **Evangelism, Breakthrough/Deliverance Programmes**

- Nothing too Hard that God cannot Break
- Nothing too Big that God cannot Crush
- Nothing too High that God cannot Bring down
- Nothing too Solid that God cannot Melt
- Nothing too Soft that God cannot Harden
- Nothing too Deep that God cannot Reach
- Nothing too Wide that God cannot Cross

The above quotation taken from Jesus Cares World Outreach publication aptly conjures the image of a ministry that has a dogged determination to succeed amidst the vicissitudes of life. Its president, Okon Uya, is known by many as one who tries to achieve perfection in all he does. This image is not limited to his Christian calling alone. As a thorough bred academic, Uya in his quest for excellence had a distinction in his West African School Certificate (WASC), from the West African Peoples Institute (WAPI); graduated with a 2<sup>nd</sup> Class (Hons.) Upper Division from the University of Ibadan in 1966, schooled and made his mark in the University of Wisconsin, USA where he obtained his MA in 1968 and PhD in 1969. This was a rare achievement and one that "almost embarrassed the authorities of the famous University of Wisconsin, Madison (USA). No such record had been made in that famous American University in its then one hundred and twenty years." (C. Mgbada, in I. R. Amadi et al, 2005). Accordingly, the University of Wisconsin retained him as a visiting Assistant Professor of History that year and promoted him to the rank of an Associate Professor two years later. In 1972 at the age of 30, he was appointed

full Professor with tenure at Howard University at Washington DC (C. Mgbada, in I. R. Amadi et al, 2005).

It will not be an overstatement to maintain that Okon Uya carried along these remarkable academic attributes to his evangelistic call in the Leaders Love Life Ministry. He had adequately prepared himself for evangelism in the Lord's Vineyard by enrolling for and obtaining a Diploma in Theology from the Reverend Rex Fubara Manuel's Revelation Ministries School in Calabar. He obtained both his certificate of ordination and release in 2005 having sat for the examinations, and performed remarkably in the course. His wife and Vision Coordinator of the Ministry, Revd (Dr) Ann Uya was not left out as she prepared herself for the work by enrolling for and obtaining a Bachelor of Christian Counselling in 2007, a Masters and the Doctor of Divinity from the Logos University, Florida, USA in 2009. She was ordained a Minister in April 2008, although she had been Pastor since 2002. With these, they were set to launch themselves into the evangelistic ministry.

It is true that the ultimate goal of Pentecostal churches/ ministry is evangelism (Offiong, 2003). This involves spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ and winning converts for the Kingdom of God. Offiong recognises three methods of evangelism namely Saturation Evangelism, Crusade Evangelism and Body Evangelism. Some/all of these methods are used by Pentecostal churches to 'harvest' souls. The first, Saturation Evangelism, involves evangelism through the distribution of gospel tracts, inspirational literatures, radio and television ministry. Crusade evangelism is another method of spreading the Word through Tarry Nights, Revival Crusades, Conferences, Conventions, Congress and Seminars. According to Kent Hunter, Crusade evangelism involves a mass gathering of people assembled by the church or a Pentecostal

organisation for the purpose of delivering the message of the Gospel (Hunter, 1973). The third kind of evangelism, Body Evangelism, includes the morning cry i.e. early morning street preaching, education and person to person evangelism.

The Jesus Cares World Outreach (JCWO), an arm of the Leaders Love Life Ministry is largely involved in Crusade evangelism with less emphasis on the other two kinds although saturation evangelism (only through the Leader's Love Life Ministry publications) come in handy to highlight activities of its evangelistic crusades. The Ministry's publications, *Miracle Passport* and the *JCWO Magazine* serve this purpose. Prayer sessions, evangelism, breakthroughs, deliverance and healing programmes have been conducted. The public destruction of items belonging to satanic powers like shrines, household idols, charms, poisonous traps have also been carried out by the Ministry. It is interesting to note that evidence abound in all these as pictures in the Ministry's publications attest to these activities.

One feature of the Leaders Love Life Ministry in crusade evangelisation is the method of carrying along other churches when these programmes are held. Before such crusade commences, the Ministry informs all the churches in the locale of their mission and through the instrumentality of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) solicits their support in carrying out the crusade (Oral Interview, Romanus Ndubusi, 1/5/2012, Calabar). As earlier stated, the Leaders Love Life Ministry had no intention at the onset to plant churches in the rural areas. This reason may be responsible for its acceptability by other churches in those localities. Usually, after evangelism and winning converts, the latter are distributed to the various churches in those areas. This practice was modified however when some communities, excited not only by their evangelisation and

deliverance programme, but by their true love of 'feeding the hungry' and 'clothing the naked', demanded that the ministry be planted in their area. Thus it was that the people of Eleme demanded for a branch of Leaders Love Life Ministry (Oral Interview, Victor Ndum, 1/5/2012, Calabar). In Ghana, a small church community handed its sovereignty to the Leaders Love Life Ministry (Oral Interview, Okon E. Uya, 5/7/2012, Calabar). Today the Leaders Love Life Ministry can boast of a full fledged branch in Ghana (Oral Interview, Romanus Ndubusi, 1/5/2012, Calabar).

Evangelical crusades organised by the Jesus Cares World Outreach are numerous and their effects are revealing. For instance, the Jesus Cares World Outreach's crusade in Nko, Yakurr Local Government, led to the denouncement of idols in Nko land and the acceptance of Christ which witnessed a victory march held to dismantle altars (Jesus Cares World Outreach publication, 2010). A victory march, the anointing of Mkpani chiefs and the destruction of evil shrines were the main features of the evangelical crusade held in Mkpani, Yakurr Local Government Area of Cross River State. Similarly, the Ikun Crusade in Biase Local Government Area witnessed the handing over of Ikun land to God, the dismantling of objects that depict idol worship and a victory march (Jesus Cares World Outreach publication, 2010). In Ukuko and environs in Oron, idol worship was wiped out, and the land was handed over to God in July 2010. In Ochun community of Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State, the Jesus Cares World Outreach team dismantled /destroyed an ancient shrine located at the centre of the market said to be the reason behind its peoples' misfortune (Jesus Cares World Outreach publication, 2010). Everywhere they went the Jesus Cares World Outreach team left a legacy behind them. From Echumuofena through Assiga, Obudu and Bekwarra, they evangelised, distributed



free bibles, salt, rice etc, destroyed poisonous traps, deadly charms and shrines, conducted healing and deliverance programmes and won converts for God's kingdom.

In a message to the Uya's formal inauguration / dedication of the Leaders Love Life Ministry, Dr B. E. Ebiekpi acknowledged the role of Uya in evangelism and says about him:

Today he is an ordained Pastor. He is taking the Goodnews, the Gospel of Lord Jesus Christ to the rich, the influential, the highly placed and educated as well as the poor, the underprivileged and the down trodden. Today, Pastor Uya goes to the gutters of this country to minister to the spiritual, physical, mental, material and the financial needs of the gutter dwellers. Today, he is happy and proud to be identified, addressed and called Pastor, despite all his high profile and titles (Programme for the inauguration and dedication, 2008).

Indeed, Uya is working very hard to carve a niche for himself in the Ministry of the Lord which is fast becoming competitive. In spite of this and smooth as it looks, Uya's Leaders Love Life Ministry is faced with various challenges.

### **Challenges**

The Leaders Love Life Ministry has in its seven years of operation, been plagued with various challenges. It would require financial prowess to organize constant evangelical crusades in rural areas. In the words of the Resident Pastor, Victor Odum, "each crusade may take us over two million (N2, 000, 000) to fund especially as we need Bibles, clothes, soaps and salt amongst others, to be distributed. Since we do not have any assistance from external sources, we have to task ourselves for that (Oral Interview, Victor Ndum, 1/5/2012, Calabar). Romanus Ndubuisi further strengthens the assertion with these words, "the bulk of the money used

in funding crusade comes from the president and his wife, and few partners who keep identifying with the ministry as well as members" (Oral Interview, Romanus Ndubusi, 1/5/2012, Calabar).

Similarly, in one of its publications, the Leaders Love Life Ministry had asked for support from the public and identified their needs to include- crusade bus, instruments, basic needs for rural dwellers, money and prayers (Miracle Passport, 2011).

In organising periodic programmes such as the Tarry Night which takes place every last Friday of each month and the 'War Against' which holds every last weekend of the month, a lot is put in place to successfully coordinate these programmes. These include public adverts through handbills and bulk texts messages, as well as face book and twitter. It is also necessary to constantly send reminders to people through these channels some of which require funds (Oral Interview, Victor Ndum, 1/5/2012, Calabar).

The Leaders Love Life Ministry has a school of Ministry where pastors are trained and ordained and leaders are brought up under this platform. The challenge of attempting to mould people and transform their lives for the better is demanding because of the various backgrounds of the people involved (Oral Interview, Victor Ndum, 1/5/2012, Calabar). A lot of academic work is undertaken in the school to nurture good leaders.

### **Activities /Sections of the Leaders Love Life Ministry**

#### **Activities:**

The Leaders Love Life Ministry designed various activities which span almost all days of the week. These activities are meant to keep its members spiritually alive and morally disciplined. They are as follows:

- (i) The Sunday Service: This is designed to empower its congregation spiritually and begins with Sunday School classes (for children and adults) between 8 and 9a.m. The main service which commences at 9a.m ends between 11.30a.m and 12 noon. The President and the Vision Coordinator take turns in ministering to the congregation when they are not over seeing other branches. In their absence, the pastors are in charge. The Word of God, praise/worship, music and testimonies are the main features of the service.
- (ii) Tuesday Fellowship, Tagged Tuesday's Miracle/Deliverance Service, begins at 5pm and consists of Worship Service and deliverance.
- (iii) On Wednesdays between 7a.m -9a.m, a healing programme tagged "Pool of Bethesda" is held for the sick and those with various challenges in their physical and spiritual life. This programme takes place in a pool where it is believed that on stepping into the pool of water provided for the purpose, all forms of illnesses both physical and spiritual would disappear. According to the JWCO publication, "the pool of Bethesda is a place of testimonies, breakthrough, success, good health, long life and burial ground for the Goliath of your life" 2010.
- (iv) The Discipleship Training course is held every Thursday from 6p.m. This is a training programme for members, especially new converts, and is designed to build them up spiritually. It runs for about 2 months. Every member is expected to go through this training in order to become a church worker or earn some responsibility /leadership position in the ministry. The programme is specially meant to build leaders.
- (v) Saturday is dedicated to choir rehearsals and workers meeting. Aside the above, a monthly programme tagged "War Against" the enemy is held in the last weekend of

every month at 5p.m. This is a deliverance programme held from the last Friday of the month through Saturday and Sunday morning where it is rounded up with church service (Oral Interview, Romanus Ndubusi, 1/5/2012, Calabar).

Other programmes like Crusaders are held every three months and involve the holding of evangelical crusades in rural areas, urban areas and other countries of Africa (Jesus Cares World Outreach publication, 2010).

Finally, the Festival of Increase is a programme that celebrates Vision Co-Ordinator, Revd (Dr) Ann Uya's birthday on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August. It is also a day for celebrating the gift of life and children, dedication of miracle babies and "opening of wombs" for conception and delivery (Jesus Cares World Outreach publication, 2010). It also features the ordination of Pastors and leaders. (Jesus Cares World Outreach publication, 2010). With regard to the former (pastors), these are trained in the School of Ministry which is run on Saturdays. The year 2008 witnessed the ordination of graduates of the Leaders Love Life Ministry School of ministry in various categories. Pastor Victor Odum was ordained a Pastor; Brothers Unwana-Obong Akpan, Emmanuel Bassey, Emmanuel Okon, Sisters Esther Takun, Jennifer Ogar, and Jane Utokanandu were ordained Assistant Pastors and Sister Jacenter Ugbe was ordained a Deaconess (Programme for the inauguration and dedication, 2008).

### Sections

There are various sections in the Ministry. These include: *The Prayer Wing*: Their function includes assembling every Thursday (7pm) for prayers in order to pray for the sustenance of the Ministry. It is made up of about 15 people and led by Pastor Victor Ndum.

**Drama/Choreography:** This group is saddled with the responsibility of acting periodic plays that teach moral values. They function whenever there is a major event but meet on Saturday evenings at 5p.m. The section is a breeding ground for talents and is also a form of evangelising through plays.

**The Choir:** made up of about 10 members with Sister Umele as head, meet on Thursdays and Saturdays (5p.m) and after service on Sundays. Members are charged with the responsibility of keeping the church alive with melodious hymns during church services. The choir boasts of modern equipments such as the guitars, drums and keyboard and add colour to services especially on Sundays and Tuesdays.

**The Ushering Department:** It maintains order during services and welcomes new members. It is made up of 5 persons who work simultaneously to ensure order during services especially among children and ensure that guests are seated comfortably.

In addition to the above, organisations like Men's Fellowship, Women's Fellowship, Youths and Children Fellowship exist. These organisations hold their week annually, when they organise and display to the church their skills and talents. During this week, they are charged with preaching the word and conducting the service as a whole (Oral Interview, Victor Ndum, 1/5/2012, Calabar).

### Conclusion

In its seven years of existence, the Leaders Love Life Ministry has impacted positively on the life of its members by developing their spiritual life and attending to the physical needs of the congregation. Uya and his wife are constantly engaged in building member's spiritual life

through teaching and preaching of messages and other monthly programmes. Known for preaching the Word of God undiluted, Pastor Professor Okon Uya has also transferred the disciplined attitude he is known for in academics to his ministry. One of his pastors maintains that in Leaders Love Life Ministry "there is no room for laxity" (Oral Interview, Victor Ndum, 1/5/2012, Calabar). By his status as a man widely read, widely travelled the length and breadth of the world, Okon Uya is highly respected by his members. Members agree that in spite of his busy academic and public service schedule, the celebrated professor has a great influence in the day to day running of the ministry. His greatest strength, they maintain, is that he has a listening ear and is always there for members when he is available. This has endeared him to his members who refer to him as Daddy and his wife as Mummy.

In addition to the above attributes, Uya is known to be gender sensitive and this has manifested in his ministry. Women play significant roles in his Ministry as they can aspire to be pastors and church workers. Revd (Dr) Mrs Ann Uya, Professor Uya's wife, shoulders a lot of responsibilities in the Ministry as the Vision Coordinator. A dedicated woman of God, gives hope to the hopeless, prophesies, prays and counsels the congregation. Through the instrumentality of the president, Pastor Professor Okon Uya and the Vision Coordinator, Revd Dr (Mrs) Ann Uya, the Leaders Love Life Ministry has played a great role in the physical lives of its congregation. As a Ministry that cares, they have been able to render moral and financial assistance to members who are faced with challenges such as accommodation, school fees, family disputes and bereavement.

Okon Edet Uya is widely known in academic circles as a professor who has contributed to scholarship through the publication of various scholarly works and the nurturing



and mentoring of various scholars. Yet his contribution to spiritual growth through Christian evangelism until now has received little attention. Although this paper demonstrates that his full ordination as a Minister of Christ came later in his life time, he has demonstrated expertise in the field of Christian evangelism. The central theme of his Ministry-building up the character of people based on the character of Christ- is an area few ministries emphasise and is worthy of emulation especially in this era when moral decadence and corruption are on the increase in the Nigerian society.

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