

# THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH NIGERIA EPISCOPAL AREA

Central Nigeria Annual Conference, North-East, Northern & Southern Nigeria Annual Conference



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## PRESS BRIEFING

Fellow Christians and Co-Workers in the Vine yard of God,

Members of the UMC, Nigeria Episcopal Area

Gentlemen of the Press,

Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen

I bring you Calvary greetings in the saving grace of God this Lenten period.

My attention has been drawn to misinformation peddling on social media and meetings in some quarters that required prompt response. Friends and Fellow Christians, if it were up to me, I would have kept mute to allow the rumor peddlers continue their gross disservice to the very cause we claim to stand for. But, the wounds and pains it cause the church and the entire Christian community as they constantly read about the UMC on social media and other platforms and its alarming effects dragged me to this action.

Friends, it is no longer news that our global church connection is plague by some debates globally over decades on whether or not to allow gay, lesbians or homosexual practice and ordination in the structure of our Church, the UMC. On this note I would like to start by saying:

1. As a bishop of the United Methodist Church, I reiterate that our unity is founded in our loyalty to Jesus Christ and the Holy Scriptures. In Romans 3:23 all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Jesus came to seek the lost and to save sinners; above all, to call them unto repentance.
2. Recently, there was a debate of separation of UMC over issue of homosexuality. Some group within the united Methodist church claimed that marriage should not only be between man and woman. But it can be between woman and a woman, or man and a man (homosexuality). The United Methodist Church has been battling with this issue since 1972
3. Just as it's in the case in every church- there are drunkards, idolaters, liars, cheaters, fornicators, adulterers, among other sins who coexist together until the coming of the lord of harvest. In the same way, the gays and lesbians have lived and continue to be in ministry of the church with other sinners, nobody say the church should be separated because of them.
4. In 2016 General Conference, the debate was tense as the self-avowed homosexuals seek ordination license and official

practice in the church against Para 341.6 of the UMC BOD 2016 edition. Equally important, they sought to change the language of some sections of the BOD that affects the Homosexuals. The issue was pushed to 2019 Special-Called session of the General Conference. It was thrown for voting in 2019 and votes were recorded- or taken in favour of traditionalist, meaning Homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore, they cannot be wedded or ordained clergy in the United Methodist Church.

5. In 2014 council of Bishops meeting, I was granted a press interview with the United Methodist communication. (See the link) [http://www.umnews.org/en/new/bishops pray-for-usamid-sexualitydebate](http://www.umnews.org/en/new/bishops_pray-for-usamid-sexualitydebate). In the interview, i was asked, if i would tolerate staying in the same church with the homosexuals. Because I preach during the last council of Bishops meeting that the concept of love emphasized is over flowing like water causing a lot of mess. As a United Methodist church bishop, and one of the custodians of our book of discipline. I replied yes I would be in ministry with everybody including gays, lesbians and homosexuals based on paragraph 161. F (2012 BOD) and Para 161. G of 2016 BOD which says:

“... We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbians and gay members and friends. We commit

ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons". This quote is also reflected in judicial council decision 702.

The words used in that interview are the language of our Book of Discipline. This does not show approval of homosexual practice. It may interest you to note that, the same book of discipline paragraph 304.3 of the 2016 BOD states that practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore, self – avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers or appointed to serve in the UMC. Paragraph 341.6 maintains that "ceremonies that celebrates homosexuals union shall not be conducted by our church and shall not be conducted in our church. "So, how is speaking the language of the Book of Discipline means affirming or approving the practice of homosexuality? The United Methodist Church in Africa has maintained a firm position that Homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. This remains my position.

6. Some groups after the 2019 special called session of General Conference in its bit to curb incessant protests by the homosexuals, they came up with plans to resolve the long standing issue of homosexuality, majorly:
  - i. The Christmas covenant plan. This is one church with restructuring plan which states that, we can operate as one church with contextual and regional practices. This

implies removal of incompatible languages in some regions, meaning marriage can be between two adult, we will be one United Methodist Church with different practices (with American church may remove the incompatible language and African Maintaining the sacred vow of marriage between a man and a woman). As a clergyman and a bishop who understands the operation of our church, I maintain that it is impossible to be one church yet preach different understanding of marriage. This is because we are a connectional church. It is therefore, not possible to be a global United Methodist Church that teaches and practices differently in America and Africa. This Christmas Covenant preached by some members of Nigeria UMC (see the link <http://christmascovenant.com/>). As a bishop I stand strongly in opposition to this plan, it tight and bind me to support homosexuality which am not, I urged all not to support Christmas covenant plan rather to support traditionalist plan.

- ii. Another plan is the protocol of Reconciliation and Separation through Grace. This was a suggestion by group of traditionalist/progressive who maintain the Wesleyan teachings and tradition led by Late Bishop K. Yambasu. This group did not claim to send sinners

away from the church, neither do they say, they are saints as purportedly claimed by some individuals on the social media. These groups of the traditionalists otherwise called the conservatives, the progressive according to this plan all agree on separation. Progressive will retain the name UMC, the traditionalist will come up with a name as result of separation. Also a plan of handling properties was also developed.

If the gracious separation of the protocol plan passes the floor of the General Conference come 2022, we will not be a part of UMC that will change the language of the Book of Discipline to accommodate same-sex marriage and ordination. At that point, maintaining our conservative Christian identity will take precedence above the name UMC. Brothers and sisters, the issue of homo sexuality is not the problem of America but the problem that affect all humanity.

It is biblical issue. When we stayed in Ministry for decades without affirming official practices and ordination in the church. Nobody threatened to leave on pretext that those practicing same-sex marriage are sinners and we cannot coexist. Moreover, it is not yet time to make noise as the general conference did not yet hold and the protocol of separation has not yet

been passed. But as a bishop, I need to inform my people ahead of what is happening and that does not mean some group should assume my position as a Bishop. In case the protocol plan passes, some of us who truly believe in traditional, evangelical bible teachings; who maintain our African values and ethics and who uphold the Christian teaching will cease to be a part of a church that claims being traditionalist in Africa and progressive, USA and elsewhere, this is what Nigerians call double standard. (Non-Homosexual in Africa but Homosexual in another part of the world)

7. Again, it becomes expedient for me to debunk the fake information saying that I have already exited the United Methodist Church by reason of my attendance in the meeting of traditionalists including bishops, clergy and laity to determine if we stay in the UMC when homosexuality is celebrated in our church. It is true that Nigeria Episcopal area resolutions maintain a firm position against Homosexuality for over five sessions.

It was on this note, I was invited to attend the meeting of the group of traditionalist which provides new possibilities for a vibrant church, deeply grounded in scripture, the core teachings of the Christian faith and our warm-hearted Wesleyan distinctiveness. The meeting came as the result of the

protocols set by the different groups which was led by Late Bishop John K. Yambasu. Attending the meeting does not mean bringing new denomination ahead of the passage of the protocol plan in 2022, General Conference. I am sure the decision to embrace a new Global Methodist Church would be a collective decision.

As we await the General Conference decision in 2022. I remain a Bishop of the United Methodist Church and continue to steadfastly support its ministries.

Again there are rumors in circulation that I have joined another denomination. Yes, I will be part of the denomination that will emerge as a result of separation comes 2022, if the provisions against homosexual are removed in our Book of Discipline. I will not be a life Bishop. There is no document to that effect.


The rumors have been spread by ambitious Episcopal Candidates. As a Bishop, I know that I have tenure. The emerging denomination has not yet been passed by the General Conference. As UMC members, Bishop, clergy we are going through pain and suffering. Just as Christ suffered during Easter. Yet Christ gave us hope by rising from the death, I call on all to rejoice. The UMC through Christ will get through the crises and pains just as Christ rose in victory. Amen.

On money, no Twenty Five Million (\$25,000,000.00) US Dollars was given to me.



In conclusion, I called on all United Methodist Church members to remain calm, peaceful and pray for God to lead us through this current challenge. On this note, the Episcopal area is urged to embark on prayers and fasting as from 29<sup>th</sup> Mach, 2021 to 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2021. The Lord be with you all.

Peace!

 24-03-2021

Signed