

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF NIGER DELTA NORTH

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Abstract

The need for the documentation of the development and growth of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7-11) in the Diocese of Niger Delta North has become essential to equip the church leaders. Bishop Samuel Onyeukwu Elenwo laid the foundation for the understanding and the manifestation of the gifts in the Diocese; Archbishop Ignatius Kattey created more platforms for its operation; while Bishop Wisdom Ihunwo has continued in the footsteps of his predecessors. Furthermore, other instruments of evangelization such as The Great Anglican Team, Sunday School Ministry and Scripture Union played prominent role in the development of Spiritual gifts in the Diocese. It is therefore recommended that the Diocese should document the history of the development of Spiritual gifts and place them in her library, strengthen institutions that encourage the ministry of the Spiritual gifts, consciously organize regular seminars and conferences on Spiritual gifts. Lastly, the diocese should identify those so gifted to teach and impart the gifts and motivate them to function.

Keywords: Development, Spiritual gifts, Niger Delta North Diocese.

Introduction

The Diocese of Niger Delta North has spanned twenty-eight years from its inauguration in 1996. The Diocese has since this epoch-making event witnessed the tenures of three bishops—Bishop Samuel Elenwo (1996-1999), Archbishop Ignatius Kattey (2000-2018), and the present Bishop Wisdom Ihunwo (2018 till date). The Bishops have one thing in common. It is the recognition of the importance of Spiritual

gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7-11) in their respective ministries or episcopacy and its development among the clergy and laity for the growth of the diocese. Briefly in what follows, we shall consider the meaning and purpose of Spiritual gifts, the origin of the Diocese of Niger Delta North, the development of Spiritual gifts under the episcopacy of the above-named bishops and the propagation of the Great Anglican Revival Team (GART) among others.

Conceptual Clarifications

Development:

The process in which someone or something grows or changes and becomes more advanced (Cambridge Dictionary). The development of Spiritual gifts in the Diocese will consider its various phases from the inception of the diocese to the present.

Spiritual Gifts:

The term Spiritual gifts derive from the Greek words *charismata* (gifts) meaning expression of grace and *pneumatikon* (spiritual) meaning the expression of the spirit. Therefore, they are God-given graces (special abilities, offices, or manifestations) meant for works of service, to benefit and build up the body of Christ as a whole (Fairchild, 2020). According to Towns (1995), they are described as a skill or ability that enables each Christian to perform a function in the body of Christ, the church with ease and effectiveness. Flynn (1985) asserts that spiritual gifts are extraordinary endowments bestowed by the Holy Spirit undeservedly on believers as instruments for Christian service and church edification (pp. 20-21). They are capacities of believers to express and communicate the knowledge and power of Christ for the purpose of edifying the church (Packer, 2005). In short, they are Spirit-given ability for Christian service. The gifts considered are word of wisdom, word of knowledge, gift of faith, gifts of healings, workings of miracles, discerning of spirits, different kinds of tongues, the interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:8-10).

The Purpose of Spiritual Gifts

The purpose of charismatic gifts is primarily the edification of the whole church (1 Corinthians 12:4-7; 14:12), and secondarily, the conviction and conversion of unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:21-25; cf. Romans 15:18f.).

Diocese of Niger Delta North: Origin

The Anglican Diocese of the Niger Delta North like other Anglican dioceses elsewhere can be traced to the Church of England which began in 1534 through the Parliament's passage of the Act of Supremacy and made the King the Supreme head of the Church of England (Pruitt 2018, Emmanuel 2002, Orij 2005, Wotogbe-Weneka 1997). In Nigeria, specifically, it began through the missionary efforts of Henry Townsend and missionaries of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) when they arrived at Badagry in 1842 and Samuel Ajayi Crowther in 1846. In fact, it was the Reverend Samuel Ajayi Crowther who laid the foundation of the Niger Mission in 1857 (Wotogbe-Weneka 1997). Later, after many years, the Niger Delta Diocese was created out of Diocese on the Niger in 31st December, 1951 and was inaugurated on 1st January, 1952. Thereafter, the Diocese of Niger Delta North was created out of Niger Delta Diocese on 29th September, 1995 and was inaugurated 16th May, 1996 as the 53rd Diocese in the Church of Nigeria (Onu 2014).

The Development of Spiritual Gifts in the Diocese

a. Bishop Samuel Onyeukwu Elenwo bishopric (1996-1999)

Bishop Samuel Onyeukwu Elenwo was the pioneer bishop of the Diocese of Niger Delta North (DNDN). His episcopacy began on the 1st March, 1981 as the Bishop of Niger Delta Diocese after the retirement of Bishop Y.A. Fubara in December 1980. At the creation of the Diocese of Niger Delta North, he was elected as the pioneer Bishop on 22nd March, 1996 and resumed after the inauguration of the Diocese on the 16th May, 1996 (Ascension Day) (Elenwo Oforu 2018, Bishop Samuel O. Elenwo 9th Annual Memorial Lecture 2018). The Episcopacy of

Bishop Samuel Elenwo in both dioceses witnessed tremendous growth as result of his spiritual disposition. He was outright in declaring his convictions that within the fellowship of love that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are properly manifested and utilized (Niger Delta Diocesan Synod Report, 1989). This culminated in full blown outpouring of the Holy Spirit when he organised the first ever revival crusade in the Diocese from 11th – 14th March, 1993 at the Ultra-Modern (now Alfred Diète-Spiff) Civic Centre, Port Harcourt with Rev. Dr. Uma Ukpai (Wotogbe-Weneka 2000). Furthermore, Wotogbe-Weneka asserted that Bishop Elenwo allowed the Holy Spirit to operate in all his churches by encouraging Pentecostalism and its outward manifestations and this endeared him to the people.

The instruments that enabled the spiritual awakening employed by him were the Lambeth Declaration of the decade of evangelism, Sharing of Ministries Abroad (SOMA), Great Anglican Revival Team (GART), and Anglican Sunday School. These are briefly discussed as follows.

i. The Decade of Evangelism

According to Wotogbe-Weneka (2000) Bishop Elenwo's zeal for aggressive evangelism is in accordance with the mandate of Lambeth 1988, a ten yearly all Anglican Bishops Conference. The 1988 Conference held in London had declared the decade 1988-1998, a decade of evangelism. This decade of evangelism was the Lambeth Conference resolution 43 which states that,

"This Conference, recognizing that evangelism is the primary task given to the Church, asks each province and diocese of the Anglican Communion, in co-operation with other Christians, to make the closing years of this millennium a "Decade of Evangelism" with a renewed and

united emphasis on making Christ known to the people of his world" (The Anglican Communion Office, 2005).

As a result, Bishop Elenwo brought together spirit filled and dedicated individuals, who championed the course of evangelism and revival movement within the length and breadth of the Diocese, and inaugurated the "Diocesan Council on Mission and Evangelism" among whom were Chief C.E. Okpara (Chairman), Dr. Dima Denni-Fiberesima (Vice Chairman) and Rev. Canon I.C.O. Kattey (Secretary) (Wotogbe-Weneka 2000).

ii. Sharing of Ministries Abroad (SOMA)

Sharing of Ministries Abroad (SOMA) was specifically formed in the late 1970s as an international organization for the cultivation of charismatic renewal amongst leaderships within the global Anglican Communion (Maiden 2017). SOMA sends missionaries abroad for short-time missions for the spiritual renewal. The term renewal refers to the relational process of personal, individual, corporate, intentional, proactive and continuing challenging encounter and relationship with the Holy Spirit. One of the ways of the renewal is the equipping for ministry (SOMA UK 2021). Bishop Elenwo in order to fulfill his dream for spiritual awakening alongside Anglican tradition invited a team from SOMA UK in 1993 led by Rev. Paul Bayes. They organized retreat for the clergy, seminars and crusades (Wotogbe-Weneka 2000).

iii. Great Anglican Revival Team (GART)

Great Anglican Revival Team (GART) was formed in 1993 during the Bishopric of Bishop Samuel Elenwo. Bishop Elenwo allowed this team to operate under the guided influence of the Holy Spirit within the context of the events of the Pentecost Day

during the apostolic age (Wototegbe-Weneka 2000). Ogbonda (2021), in his research dissertation, found out that GART ranked third as 14% of respondents favoured it as instrument for the development of spiritual gifts in the Diocese.

iv. Sunday School Ministry

Bishop Samuel Elenwo knew the role of the Sunday school in actualizing his dream spiritual awakening. He stated categorically that Sunday school is the responsibility of the clergy and laity. And it is the greatest instrument for evangelism and as such participation should be taken seriously by all (Synod Report 1998). Furthermore, in the Anglican Communion, the charismatic movement in the Niger Delta region is connected to the mission and vision of Bishop Samuel Elenwo. It can be noted that during his confirmations there are manifestation of the spirit of God, who showed the zeal for the work of God. Again, Anglican Sunday School ministry played dominant role in the development of spiritual gifts in the Diocese as 30% of the respondents attested to it (Ogbonda, 2021). Furthermore, Johnson (2012) confirmed the role Sunday school played as he observed that the young graduates filled in the Holy Spirit from higher institutions were ready squad for the formation of the Sunday school ministry.

b. Archbishop Ignatius Kattey bishopric (2000 – 2018)

Archbishop Ignatius Kattey was born in 1948 at Alode-Nchia, Eleme. He became born again Christian through the ministry of the Scripture Union (SU) in 1971 and remained an ardent member of the fellowship (Onu, 2014). He was one of the persons that championed charismatic movement in the episcopacy of Bishop Elenwo. He was elected, consecrated,

enthroned bishop in 2000 and built on foundation already laid by his predecessor, Bishop Elenwo (Onu 2014). In his maiden synod presidential address, he stated categorically:

The overall goal of our tenure is to consolidate our church development and evangelization with a view to bringing all our members, clergy and laity, to a personal faith in Christ and commitment to him, in sincerity and without hypocrisy. To help members live exemplary lives. To assisting members to understand fully the gospel of Jesus Christ and to accept and live out the whole Scripture preparing them for God's kingdom. To evangelising the unchurched in and outside our Diocese through missions and evangelism. And the implementation plan was through discipline, intercession, church planting and training (Synod Report, 2000 p. 52).

Again, as an evidence to consolidating on his predecessor, he asserted that the Diocese recognises the unique work done by the Great Anglican Revival Team (GART) in the area of evangelism and missions. He noted that their specialised courses are run on leadership, Church renewal, missions and evangelism. He enjoined the clergy and laity to participate in the GART trainings (Synod Report, 2000).

To buttress his insight on the person of the Holy Spirit and His gifts, during his presidential address in the 2006 synod report he posited that "After the apostolic days, less importance was given to the Holy Spirit. He is the 'Another Comforter' John

14:16, the Great Teacher and Guide, John 16:13, the Great Prayerlist and Interpreter of signs, Romans 8:26,27.... Today as in the apostolic days, He baptizes with fire and people speak with tongues.”

c. The Bishopric of Bishop Wisdom Budu Ihunwo (2018 till date)

In his maiden synod address, he acknowledged effort of Bishop Elenwo in the phenomenal growth attained by the Anglican Communion during his episcopacy arguably remains unequalled. Also, for his predecessor, Archbishop Kattey, Bishop Wisdom Ihunwo noted that he (Kattey) is a man who always wants to see the young ones grow in ministry. And to summarize his burden for revival, he opined that:

No revival in history ever took place by accident. But God responded to the burden for revival in the hearts of men and women who occupied the place of prayer, sought God’s face sacrificially until the heavens opened up. Beloved, we need a revival. The burden for revival and holiness in the Church has led many in the past to occupy in the place of prayer, we must do so again. The burden for possessing lands for God led many to occupy in prayer for certain territories. Our burden for the business of God's Kingdom should lead us into prayer and fasting, so that we can become fruitful in our missionary assignments (Proceedings of Synod 2019 p. 43).

Bishop Wisdom Ihunwo has encouraged the manifestation of Spiritual gifts in the diocese. These gifts are imparted to communicants and other members of the church during his confirmation services. The prominent among the gifts are the gifts of

tongues, gifts of prophecy, gifts of healing among others.

d. Scripture Union (SU)

Majority of the respondents (36%) confirmed that Scripture Union was the bedrock for the development and growth of the spiritual gifts in the Diocese of Niger Delta North (Ogbonda, 2021). Johnson (2012) averred that Scripture Union brought young people to a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ and they became effective tools in various Christian Churches. Also, Archbishop Ignatius Kattey was born-again in 1971 through the ministry of the Scripture Union. He was zonal representative of his area as well as secretary to the Port Harcourt pilgrim of the Scripture Union. It was actually these young men that influenced the Anglican Sunday School Ministry.

Conclusion

The importance of Spiritual gifts for evangelization cannot be over-emphasized. The tenure of Bishop Samuel Elenwo in the Diocese of Niger Delta North laid the foundation for the understanding and the manifestation of the Spiritual gifts. He manifested them as well as encouraged those manifesting it. Archbishop Ignatius Kattey was one of those encouraged during the time of Bishop Elenwo as priest to function in the gifts. Therefore, when he became the Bishop, he created more platforms for the operation of spiritual gifts within the Diocese. Bishop Wisdom Ihunwo as the product of Archbishop Kattey is not lagging behind the spread and understanding the spiritual gifts. The Great Anglican Team, Sunday School Ministry and Scripture Union played prominent role in the development of spiritual gifts in the Diocese.

Recommendations

This paper recommends that:

- a. The Diocese should document the history of the development of spiritual gifts and place them their library.
- b. The Diocese should strengthen institutions that encourage the ministry of the spiritual gifts.
- c. The Diocese should deliberately organize seminars and conferences on spiritual gifts.
- d. The Diocese should identify those gifted to teach and impart the gifts and motivate them to function.

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