



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF NIGERIA

MAKING DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD

Serving the People and Communities of Nigeria
North, Northeast, Central and Southern Nigerian Conferences



EPISCOPAL TEAM: BISHOP JOHN SCHOL, LEAD
BISHOP EBEN NHIWATIWA, BISHOP PATRICK STREIFF AND DAVID YEMBA

11 September, 2024

Dear United Methodists of Nigeria,

Affliction produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us. -Romans 5:3-5

God has a future with hope for The United Methodist Church of Nigeria. Praise the Lord!

Over the last seven weeks, because some leaders and churches left The United Methodist Church, we have faced challenges, even affliction. Yet you have endured, and your endurance has been a witness to the character of Jesus Christ that is in you, and it is producing hope in Nigeria and around the world. Praise God!

Thank you for your steadfast determination to honor Jesus Christ and work to advance the mission and ministry of God through The United Methodist Church.

Your endurance and hope has produced the following:

1. 33 million naira grant from UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief) to distribute food.
2. More than 70% of the pastors, laity and congregations have remained with The United Methodist Church.
3. We have begun conversation with the Southern Conference of United Methodist Church to reunite and work together to advance God's mission and ministry through The United Methodist Church of Nigeria.
4. The Path Forward Covenant conversations have begun to bring unity and future direction for The United Methodist Church of Nigeria.
5. Four annual conference sessions were held to elect new leadership for The United Methodist Church.
6. Forty-one district superintendents were appointed.
7. We raised or received commitments of 110 million naira for the continued mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church of Nigeria.

Together, our endurance produces character and fruit. Praise God!

But it has not been easy. Many are facing stiff winds of challenge from the food shortage, the government closing churches for fear of altercations and reports that the GMC is harassing our laity and clergy.

I have received reports that GMC leaders are going into our churches and declaring they are now GMC, and that the GMC has taken money from UMC bank accounts that were for pensions for our retirees, UMC mission work, and for our ongoing ministry. It is reported that the GMC is trying to

change the name of The United Methodist Church to the GMC and that GMC has been taking grain and money from local congregations. I have received reports that the GMC is spreading lies that Nigerian UMC leaders are promoting “homosexuality” and will force “homosexual” weddings in our churches. This is absolutely false. “Homosexuality” is against the law and The United Methodist Church is not asking us to break the law.

In the midst of harassment and falsehoods, your steadfast faith endures. We will continue to rise to be like Jesus Christ, humble yet calling out injustice, unifying rather than divisive, preaching salvation through God’s grace rather than relying on distortions. We know that many in the GMC are not aware of what their leaders have been doing. There are good faithful people in the GMC. Let us therefore pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ rather than wish them harm.

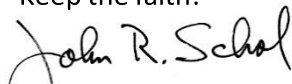
I praise God for the United Methodists of Nigeria. You are strong in your faith, resilient in the midst of challenges, and Christlike in your encounters with others. Praise God!

We will continue to stay on the path of Jesus and work on the issues that matter to the United Methodist witness and faith. We have organized 10 ministry teams to continue to move forward our mission and ministry:

1. UMCOR food distribution - Mr. Yusuf Usman Bitrus, Team Leader.
2. Assessment of all mission sites and how we will strengthen their mission and ministry – Rev. Dr. Eunice Iliya, Team Leader.
3. Leadership development to strengthen lay and clergy leadership for our congregations – Rev. Dr. Danladi Dikko, Team Leader.
4. Path Forward Covenant to unite people and create a future with hope for UMC Nigeria – Rev. Eli Sule Yakku.
5. Legal team to secure UMC property and assets – Rev. Ande Emmanuel, Team Leader.
6. Communication and technology to strengthen communication and set up communication centers in each conference – Mr. Babagida Ibrahim, Team Leader.
7. Unity team to reunite UMC Nigeria and the Southern Conference UMC – Bishop John Schol, Team Leader.
8. Pension to visit all retired clergy to see how they are doing and restore their pensions – Mr. Aliyu Makama, Team Leader.
9. Finance to re-establish our banking and financial systems – Mr. Edward Baraya and Mr. Luka Joshua, Team Leaders.
10. Government relations to strengthen our relationship with local and state governments – Mr. Sadiq Mbulo, Team Leader.

Together with God's help and deep UMC Nigeria faith, we move forward. Thanks be to God.

Keep the faith!



Bishop John Schol