



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, Southern UMC Conferences and Communities

EPISCOPAL TEAM:

BISHOP ANDE EMMANUEL, ELECT, BISHOP JOHN SCHOL, LEAD
BISHOP EBEN NHIWATIWA, BISHOP PATRICK STREIFF AND BISHOP DAVID YEMBA



16 December 2024

Dear UMC Nigeria,

This past Sunday, a group of people with weapons associated with the Global Methodist Church carrying weapons entered the Bwoi United Methodist Church in the Village of Bunkabu, Taraba State, Nigeria and shot and killed 27-year-old Masoyi Elisha and wounded ten others. Later, 11 homes of United Methodists were set on fire, killing two children ages 2 and 4 in one of the homes.

Sunday, the 15th of December 2024, will be a day seared into our memory for the rest of our lives. As your bishops, we are saddened and bewildered by the senseless murder of innocent people in the name of denominational loyalty.

Today, we grieve with the families and the United Methodists of Bunkabu. On behalf of the United Methodists in Nigeria and around the world, we offer our condolences to the Kefas family on the loss of their young children and the Filibus family who lost their son. We give thanks for their lives and pray as God receives them into the arms of mercy that they be resurrected into joy and everlasting peace.

We also call you as United Methodists to prayer. Pray for the families experiencing loss and hardship and the people of Bwoi United Methodist Church and its community. Pray for the healing of the minds, hearts and souls of everyone involved.

Be angry but do not sin. As bishops of The United Methodist Church, we are outraged that such an atrocity would occur among Christians, especially brothers and sisters who were once part of the same Methodist family.

On November 22, 2024 we alerted the Global Methodist bishops of Nigeria that tensions were escalating because of the split within The United Methodist Church in Nigeria. We asked the GMC bishops to encourage their members to be peaceful and responsible amid our differences. We received no response and are outraged about their inaction. Instead of fostering peace, GMC leaders have continued to post online slurs and mistruths about United Methodist leaders and The United Methodist Church.

United Methodists, we again call you to remain peaceful, humble, prayerful and vigilant in communicating. If you hear about something that may create tension, alert us as your bishops. Call the police if/when tension arises, don't engage in word or deed, refrain from personal involvement

and leave the matter to the authorities. Do not let the unjust actions of others deter you from reflecting Christ to the world.

We will not let the sun go down on our anger. We call upon the leaders of the Global Methodist Church worldwide, particularly the three Bishops of the Global Methodist Church in Nigeria, to act justly and bring those who perpetrated these crimes to justice. We further urge GMC members, at all levels, to put an immediate end to the violence and refrain from disseminating misinformation that fuels fear and disdain that can lead to violence. Likewise, we call our United Methodist members to be guided by integrity and respectfulness while working towards maintaining peace.

Unfortunately, in response to the shooting at Bwoi UMC, some GMC family homes were also set on fire. We do not condone retaliation and have admonished the United Methodists who did this in their anger. These individuals are now in police custody. The United Methodist Church in Nigeria will work with these GMC families to restore their homes. We hope the GMC will do the same for our United Methodist families. While they cannot bring back those who lost their lives, we call on the GMC to apologize and make restitution to the families whose loved ones were killed.

Do not give the devil an opportunity. United Methodists, as your bishops, we call upon you to love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. (Matthew 5:44) In this season, when we remember the birth of the Prince of Peace, let us become more like Christ. May your righteous rage be turned into acts of justice, mercy and witness to the birth and resurrection of Christ and the transforming power of God's grace. Pray for all of the Methodists across Nigeria. We must not let those we lost die in vain. May their youthfulness reignite our childlike faith in Jesus Christ, and may our wisdom over our many years as a church rekindle our passion to work to create a more just and better church and world.

In Christ,
Bishop Ande Emmanuel, Bishop Elect
Bishop John Schol, Lead Bishop