



**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

23 December 2024

Press Conference Statement Issued By  
His Lordship Bishop Ande Emmanuel of  
The United Methodist Church of Nigeria,  
and The Districts Of Senegal and Cameroon  
At The United Methodist Church Antakiya, Kona District

Members of the press,

Good morning!

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and prosperous a new year in advance

It breaks my heart today that one of my responsibilities after recently becoming a bishop in The United Methodist Church is to lead the church and Nigerian people especially in the Village Munga Dossa through a shocking killing of Masoyi Elisha, a 27-year-old and a 2- and 4-year-old. In this season as we remember the birth of the Prince of Peace, we are not experiencing the peace and joy of Christmas because of these murders.

Sunday, the 15th of December 2024, when three United Methodists were senselessly killed, will be a day that is seared in our memories for the rest of our lives. Evidence points to people associated with the Global Methodist Church – the breakaway denomination - who entered a United Methodist Church in the Village of Munga Dossa and when they were asked to leave took out guns and proceeded in killing Mr. Masoyi Elisha and injured 10 others. Later, evidence indicates, that night people associated with the Global Methodist Church in Nigeria (GMCN)

returned and set fire to 11 homes, including one in which Abednago Abraham and his sister Beby Abraham were sleeping resulting in them perishing in the flames as they could not be saved.

On that day, a group of people associated with the breakaway Global Methodist Church against the law and the order of his Excellency, Governor Kefas Agbu attempted to forcefully unseal the Bwoi United Methodist Church in the Village of Bunkabu, Taraba State. They were resisted by the United Methodist members.

The 700,000 United Methodists in Nigeria, and the more than 7 million United Methodists around the world condemn this violent attack that has no place in the Church or our nation.

On the 22nd of November 2024, our interim Bishop wrote to the Global Methodist Bishops in Nigeria about the harassment, structural damage to United Methodist property and physical violence that was escalating in hopes that together we could reduce the tensions. We were disheartened that this letter went unanswered until four days after the tragedy in Munga Dosso. And we were disappointed and surprised to then be told by the GMC Bishops that their travel schedules were the cause of more than a 25-day delay that hindered our proactive efforts to establish peace.

We have called, and continue to call, United Methodists to remain peaceful. That if they are personally harassed or attacked, or witness others being attacked, to contact the police immediately, let your church leadership know, and pray for God to move through the situation. United Methodists are not to take the law into their own hands. Returning violence for violence is against the Gospel of Jesus Christ and United Methodist teaching.

While remaining peaceful, we will not let the sun go down on our anger. We call upon the leaders of the Global Methodist Church worldwide and especially the three Bishops of the Global Methodist Church in Nigeria to act justly and bring those who perpetrated this crime to justice. Just as we have condoned any retaliatory actions by our members.

It's important to note that all members of The UMC of Nigeria to whom sacraments are administered are under a duty to be law abiding and follow the laws of both The UMC and of the Nigerian government while also conducting themselves peacefully and orderly. At any point if a person from the UMC breaks the law or does not conduct themselves in a Christian manner, the church has mechanisms to ensure United Methodists account for their behavior. Likewise, The UMC partners with local authorities to ensure accountability, justice and healing also occur in civic matters.

While some trace the tension to a split within United Methodism in Nigeria at the end of July of this year, claiming it was because United Methodists outside of Africa were accepting homosexuality after the recent General Conference meeting in April and May, but the tension goes back much further.

United Methodists and the then governor of Taraba State Governor Danbaba D. Suntai were deeply concerned in 2012 when Bishop Yohanna was elected as the Bishop of Nigeria. Shortly after his election, some 300,000 United Methodists refused Bishop Yohanna's leadership and continued as United Methodist but not under the bishop's leadership. After 2020, another group of 100,000 or more United Methodists did something very similar. Later, more than 500 pages of formal complaints from hundreds of United Methodists were filed against Bishop Yohanna. Those complaints were on leadership abuses, not following the laws and discipline of the church, and financial malfeasance, Bishop Yohanna resigned from The United Methodist Church. Even in his departure, Bishop Yohanna and his followers did not follow the laws of the church for leaving the denomination even though he - and the breakaway group - were offered the opportunity to explore leaving the denomination using the guidelines provided in our Book of Discipline, the laws of the church.

The Global Methodist Church continues to make false same sex marriage claims and mislead others in relation to The United Methodist Church of Nigeria and its bishops. Let me be clear: The laws of the West Africa United Methodist Church and the policies of The United Methodist Church of Nigeria **do not** permit same gender marriage or LGBTQ clergy.

It is true, just as with other denominations in Nigeria, that parts of the church practice things such as blessing and performing gay marriage where civil laws permit such weddings. But the denominations within Nigeria such as The United Methodist Church do not permit and do not bless same gender marriage and do not ordain gay clergy. In a recent statement by GMC Bishop, John Pena, he stated that in United Methodist Social Principles defines marriage as “between two consenting adults,” but what he did not indicate that it also says “between a man and a woman.” For Nigerian United Methodists, it is very clear, marriage is between two consenting adults who are a man and a woman.

We believe that this harmful and false rhetoric is a tactic by the Global Methodist Church to attempt to divide The UMC, and to divide the government and the people of Nigeria against The United Methodist Church. It is unconscionable that they would bear false witness. We call on the Global Methodist Church to stop their tactics of division. We also call upon the police, government agencies and elected officials not to allow misinformation and the GMC rhetoric to prejudice them against The United Methodist Church.

Today it is estimated that there are 200,000 Global Methodists in Nigeria and more than 700,000 United Methodists.

Bishop Yohanna and the breakaway group, which consisted of a number of leaders Bishop Yohanna put in place including treasures, took property, equipment and funds from The United Methodist Church. We still do not know what happened to pastors’ pension funds, mission funds and operating funds of The United Methodist Church. The Global Methodist Church will not turn over the records for us to conduct an audit. We call upon the police to investigate the taking of these funds and for government officials to hold the officials of the Global Methodist Church accountable. They have further given false information and committed forgery when they fraudulently used the signature of a United Methodist, without his knowledge or permission, to change the name of The United Methodist Church on the Corporate Affairs Commission Certificate. This is now costing The UMC of Nigeria valuable time and mission money as we work to return the rightful name of The United Methodist Church to the CAC certificate.

The United Methodist Church in Nigeria has committed to rebuild homes in Munga Dosso not only of United Methodists but any homes that were damaged during the December 15<sup>th</sup> attacks as United Methodists work to bring healing and peace to the village. We have begun to take offerings in our churches and invite anyone who would like to donate to rebuilding homes to contact The United Methodist Church of Nigeria.

We pledge to continue to work with the police and government officials so that the perpetrators of these crimes will be brought to justice.

We again extend an olive branch to the breakaway GMC leaders and their associates, to find ways together to promote peaceful co-existence between members of both denominations. We also make an appeal that they stop the forceful unsealing of UMCN properties as they did with the UMCN Secretariat in Jalingo, as such properties were initially sealed by the Taraba State Government, to avoid the breakdown of law and order.

We also wish to again appeal to the Taraba State Governor, His Excellency Dr Agbu Kefas to unseal UMCN properties, so that members of the church can return to their places of worship, as they now resort to worshipping in makeshift provisions.

We assure the Taraba State Government, of our prayers and cooperation in resolving the issues at stake.

Over the past 100 years, The United Methodist Church has made significant contributions towards the advancement of education, agriculture, rural developmental projects, medical work and social services in Nigeria. The United Methodist Church of Nigeria has been and remains a fervent supporter of peace, progress and development in the country. We are concerned by individuals who seek to hinder this continued humanitarian work and partnership with the Nigerian people. But we put our trust in The Lord, and God-willing, we plan to continue to serve the people of Nigeria for another 100 years and beyond.

We encourage all United Methodists to be bearers of light as we seek to bring glory to God while making disciples for Christ.

As we prepare for Christmas we are praying for silent nights where peace will prevail.

Bishop Ande Emmanuel

The United Methodist Church of Nigeria