



*As one of our publications, Pioneer of the Month  
brings to you from time to time  
brief accounts of some of  
our Pioneers who had laboured in  
God's Vineyard.  
For the month of March,*

*we present a servant of God,*



## LATE PASTOR JACOB DIJI OWOLABI

(From 1918 to November 10, 2015.)

### **EARLY LIFE:**

Once upon a time, a couple from Oke-Ila Orangun, Pa. Owolabi Alade - a traditional Chief of Obaafa Isale Compound and Madam Ibidunmoye Ajoke from Oba'le's Compound was expecting another baby. On the due day, the delivery process fairly went smoothly, but the baby was dormant and refused to cry out as expected. The new mother, who had experienced seven other deliveries before this strange occurrence in 1918, was embittered. At the right time, an elderly woman came in and assisted in the delivery process. This "human angel" skilfully spanked the baby and that brought about the cry of joy. Then the joyful news of the delivery was announced while neighbours and relations shared the joy. The special baby was named 'Diji Ayinla. His father, a traditionalist like many others of his days, was a polygamist. The little 'Diji Ayinla Owolabi grew up in a large family. No wonder, he became a lover of people.

**EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND:** He was about three years old when the Seventh-Day Adventist Church Missionaries came to Oke-Ila in 1922. In the usual practice of the church, the Missionaries started a Primary School shortly after their arrival. The young 'Diji, who had developed great interest in education as a result of the activities of School pupils he witnessed in Ora-Igbomina (a neighbouring community), joined others in 1937 at Oke-Ila SDA Primary School. Exceptionally brilliant, 'Diji successfully covered within one year what took other pupils three years. He studied along with Mr. Stephen Ogunsakin and Adeniran from Ipoti Ekiti. The qualified pupils, including the intelligent young 'Diji, proceeded to SDA Primary School, Oke -

Bola Ibadan for their Standards five and six from 1942-1943. From 1950-51, Jacob D. Owolabi had another opportunity to join some of his colleagues for further studies in Ministerial Training at the Nigeria Training College, Ibe in East Central part of Nigeria. Others in the group were IK. Olufemi, Samson Majolagbe J.E. Adewoye, Amos. A. Alao Moses O. Olayemi, to mention but a few.

**FAMILY LIFE:** While teaching in Ikun-Ekiti, handsome Diji got married to a beautiful former classmate of his, Miss. Olaitan Idowu Ajike Odedeji on April 14, 1949. His marriage was blessed with five female children and two male. They are: Mrs. Comfort Moji Bamidele, a retired Nurse, Mrs. Elizabeth Bose Falade, a retired Teacher, Mrs. Dorcas AAbayomi, a retired Teacher, Mr. Joseph Owolabi, a Business Tycoon, Mr. Samuel Owolabi, Administrator, BUHS, Mrs. Esther Arinola Adetunji, Administrator BU. And Mrs. Serah Tundun Olaniyan a public Health Officer. Late Pastor Diji J. Owolaabi had many grand children and great grand children as well as adopted children.

### **WORK EXPERIENCE:**

The vibrant Jacob Diji Owolabi began his career as a Teacher and Evangelist on February 4, 1944 in SDA Primary School, Igogo Ekiti. He was transferred to teach in Osi-Ekiti, Kwara State and served from 1947 - 1948. He then served as an assistant Head Master under Mr. K. Olarinmoye in Ikun-Ekiti from 1948 - April 1949, along with Mr. S.O. Owolabi, Mr Oyerinde and Mr Adeoye. In April 1949, the newly wedded couple was transferred to continue the ministry of impacting the lives of growing pupils in Ayetoro-Ekiti. After this ministerial Training, Pastor J.D Owolabi was fully employed as a Minister of the gospel. In this work of soul winning, he, along with his beloved wife, Madam Mariam Olaitan Ajike Owolabi served in the following places:

Omuo-Oke Ekiti from 1952 - June 1955

Erunmu from July 1955 - Aug 1956

Yaba, Lagos from Aug. 1956 - April 1958

Erunmu from April 1958 - May 1959 (He had his ordination into the gospel ministry along with Pastor D.K Omoleye and A.I Dogo on February 3, 1959).

Osi-Ekiti, Kwara State from May 1959 - February 1967 (While serving in Osi, Pastor J.D. Owolabi was also the Manager (Overseer) for all SDA Primary Schools in Kwara State such as Osi, Omu-Aran, Shao, Oke-Oyi and Okutala).

Erunmu from 1967 - September 1975

Ila Orangun from 1975 - September 1990 where he officially retired as a Pastor. However, due to his unalloyed commitment, diligence and thoroughness, both the District and West Nigeria Conference appealed to him and his wife to extend the service and complete the then ongoing Church and Pastor's house building projects.

### **SPECIAL ROLES PLAYED:**

Two of the teachers who positively impacted on the life of young Diji and built on the religious and Educational foundations laid in the preceding years were Mr. J. Oyelakin from Ipoti-Ekiti (1942) and Mr. I. B. Apata from Ilesha (1943). Their earning to live a committed and practical Christian life made this young man to decide for baptism in May, 1943. This religious rite was conducted by Late Pastor Isaiah Balogun in SDA Church, Oke- Bola Ibadan.

A man of God and of his people, Pastor J.D. Owolabi was the first SDA Pastor from Oke-Ila. On behalf of his beloved community, he served as a member of the police Community Relation Committee for Oyo State from 1984-1991 and For Osun State from 1991-2013. He was a committed member of the Bible Society of Nigeria since 1975. He served as the Treasurer for Oke-Ila Progressive Union for about twenty years along with their respective building Committees. He worked closely with Late Architect Adekunle Babalola who "carried out" the architectural designs for both Oke-Ila and Erunmu Church buildings. In this connections, the roles of Elders Funmilayo and James Kilanko (from Erunmu) and those of Elders D. A. Abolarin, S.F. Osundina and David Kolawole (from Oke-Ila) cannot be forgotten.

Pastor J. D. Owolabi was an ideal Historian, whose memory was undaunted with old age. In his life time, he could present dates and other details of events that took place decades ago. He was an embodiment and encyclopaedia of knowledge in all ramifications. A man of sound Spirituality who studied, preached, and lived the Bible. An ideal fund raiser, Baba was skilful in persuading, encouraging, and challenging people not to shy away from responsibilities. In this regard, he was highly gifted in leading people to do what they are reluctant to do but finally do it with great joy and appreciation. In recognition of his commitment and selfless services to God and humanity, he was honoured by Oke-Ila Orangun Parapo along with other community leaders on December 25, 2014. Commenting on the multifaceted developmental roles of the Octogenarian during the occasion, the Orangun of Oke-Ila, Oba Adedokun Abolarin, described Pastor J.D. Owolabi as THE MADELA OF OKE-ILA ORANGUN.

#### **RETIREMENT DAYS:**

In April 1990, the couple finally retired from service and left for their home town, Oke-Ila Orangun. Pastor Jacob 'Diji' Owolabi, was a man of many crowns in the church of God, in his community and in the family. He was an ideal Pastor Teacher who successfully applied the two skills and characteristics. A truthful, courageous and forthright man, Baba J.D. Would always "call a spade a spade and not a big spoon". Without fear and favour, he would not mix issues with personalities hence, an ideal judge and justice of peace.

The death of his beloved wife, Madam Marian Olaitan Ajike Owolabi on December 31, 2014, was a great blow to this giant of faith. Without questioning the wisdom of God for the painful event, he surrendered all to the will and wisdom of his Creator, Saviour and Master that they had both served for decades. After a brief illness, the brave soldier of the cross peacefully bowed in death on November 10, 2015. This happened in the home of his eldest child, Mrs. Comfort Moji Bamidele - where he spent his last few weeks. With mixed feelings on that fateful evening, she, along with her siblings witnessed the passing away of their beloved father for whom they cared till the last moment of his life.

Source: Extract from Biography (burial program March 10, 2016) as written by  
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**Ellen g. White-SDA Research Centre's**

**Mailing Address: PMB 21244 Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria**

***E-mail: [egwsdarc@babcock.edu.ng](mailto:egwsdarc@babcock.edu.ng); [egwsdarcbu2014@yahoo.com](mailto:egwsdarcbu2014@yahoo.com)***

***Director: Adelowo Felix Adetunji, Ph.D. Tel.: +234 8033705097; 80720290189***

***Research Assistant: Chinwe Comfort Chinanu-Akpuh, Tel.: +234 8034969753***

***Principal Administrative Officer: Oyewole Akintunde, Tel.: +234 8028347214***

# PASTOR JACOB DIJI OWOLABI

## Photo album





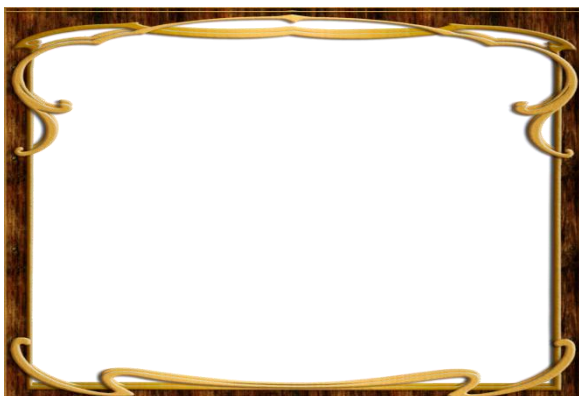


**JACOB DIJI OWOLABI @ TENDER AGE**

**BABA, AN ICON**



**BABA WITH PASTORS, ADEWOYE & SHOLADE**





**BABA & PASTORS OLOMOJOBI AND MAKINDE**



**BABA WITH HIS AFRICAN QUEEN**



**YOUTHFUL DIJI IN ACTION**



**BABA & GREAT GRAND CHILDREN**



**BABA AND PASROR MAKINDE**



**BABA, CELEBRATING AT ONE OF HIS DAUGHTER'S WEDDING**

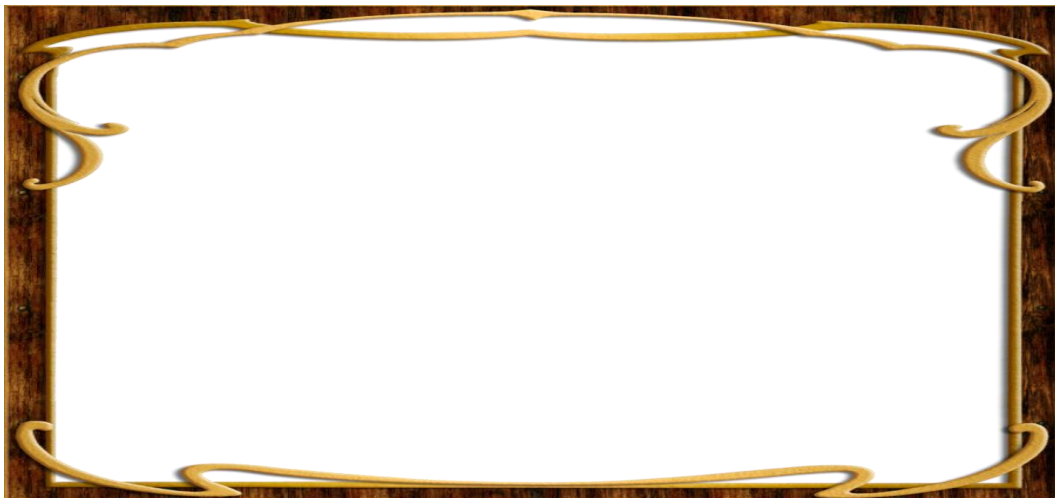




BABA WITH ONE OF HIS ERUNMU BAPTIZMAL CANDIDATES



BABA WITH MEMBERS OF OKE-ILA SDA CHURCH



BABA'S SENTH FORTH AT ERUNMU IN 1975





BABA'S FAMILY AND THEIR FAMILY FRIENDS FROM ERUNMU



BABA CELEBRATING BOSE, THE GRAND DAUGHTER ON HER



**BABA, PASTORS D. K. OMOLEYE AND A. T. DOGO WITH THEIR QUEENS DURING THEIR ORDINATION IN 1959**