

WEST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION
ELLEN G. WHITE-SDA RESEARCH CENTRE
Babcock University
PIONEER OF THE MONTH

As one of our publications, Pioneer of the Month brings to you from time to time, brief accounts of some of our Pioneers who have labored in God's Vineyard.

For this month we present a servant of God,



PASTOR GABRIEL OLADIMAJI AJADI SOLADEMI

(1926 -2017)

INTRODUCTION

This is merely a brief history of the life of a legend. Pastor Gabriel Oladimaji Ajadi Solademi, known as Omoosepaaro, because a comprehensive history of his life will cover nothing less than four volumes of a book. Pastor Gabriel Oladimeji Ajadi Solademi's life was filled with numerous achievements. Everyone around his home knew him as a valiant man, among family members, in the church of God and in the society at large. He, together with his wife are filled with the fear of God and this helped them to do all that is within their power to take good care of their family members, friends, church members and the children that God blessed them with. Pastor Solademi was an evidence of good virtues which he exemplified always.

FAMILY BACKGROUND/EARLY LIFE:

He was born in a village named after his father; Solademi's compound. It is located after Erunmu in Egbeda Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. His father was known as Akinnola Solademi, son of Farinu, a warrior who fought many inter-tribal wars. He had a wonderful mother known as Obitayo Asabi Ojerinde. She was the child of Ojerinde son of Akinrope; the younger brother of Agagagugu the first gate man of Agugu in the city of Ibadan.

No special date of Pastor Solademi's birth is traceable, but history had it that he was born during the time of Baale Oyewole and his mother had him on her back and trekked to the city of Ibadan when Mapo, Hall was officially opened. He was already born before Alesinloye, was established and before Eleluobo, was inaugurated as the Baale, of Ibadan, in the year 1930. As a result of this vague detail of his birth, Pastor was unable to register an exact date of birth when he started work as a Pastor in Seventh-day Adventist Church. From estimation, Pastor G. A. Solademi must have been born around 1926.

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND:

One day, Gabriel Oladimaji Solademi followed his father to Lalupon, Railway Station, which is today known as Erumun Railway station. It was on Wednesday, January 6, 1937. They went so as to register him as a student in Saint John's Anglican School. Afterward, he started his formal education on the 11th day of January, 1937. In December 1939, he witnessed the students of Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) School, Erunmu singing and dancing in commemoration of silver jubilee celebration of the arrival of the Church in Erunmu. As a child, he was carried away by their performance and threw away the bag of cocoa he was carrying on his head, he joined them in singing and dancing. When his father saw him, he reprimanded him, but Oladimeji boldly told

his father that he desired to enroll in SDA School and stop attending Saint John's Anglican School. Although his father initially declined, he later enrolled him in SDA School, Erunmu in January 1939. Oladimeji's first teacher in school was Dr. Nathaniel Fadae Aina (of blessed memories). Putting all sentiments aside, Gabriel was frisky and played while in school. It was as a result of this that he was unable to complete his education in 1944. He was always in one trouble or the other; like breaking a leg today, or having a fractured hand in record time. Eventually, he completed his primary education with a commendable result.

On February 6, 1953, he left Ibadan and travelled to Ihie in Eastern part of Nigeria to enroll as a student in the Nigerian Training College of SDA Church. There, he graduated with an outstanding result in the year 1954. However, before he travelled to Ihie in 1953, he was again posted to Erekusu Igboibini, close to the town of Okitipupa as a pioneer worker. He did not spend too much time there before he was again taken to city of Lagos in 1957 to get more training in the school of Evangelism. Some of his colleagues then included late Pastor Limejuice, Imebogwu, among other, from the Eastern part of Nigeria.

In the year 1959, he went to Bekwai SDA Seminary in Ashanti Ghana to further his training. With the help of God, he again completed his training with an excellent result; he returned home on the 10th day of January, 1961 and continued in the work of the ministry. In 1972, he went for higher studies at the Adventist College of West Africa (ASWA) now known as Babcock University, where he obtained a diploma in Religion and Theology.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE:

He got married to his heartthrob, friend and lovely wife Mojinyinola Rebecca on the 7th day of November, 1950 according to native and customary laws. God blessed them with six children; three boys and three girls. Elder Olusegun Solademi (Late), Elder Simeon Oludee Solademi, Shepherdess Modupe Oyeleke, and Mrs. Funmilayo Adetoyi, Deacon Gabriel Olademeji Solademi (Junior) and Dr. (Mrs.) Victoria Aja and to the glory of God, all of them are deeply rooted in God and in the doctrine of SDA church. If one is to write extensively on Pastor Solademi's family life, about two big books or more will be exhausted. But in summary, he had a very blissful and happy home. The amity, friendship and bonding between Pastor Olademaji and Madam Mojinyinla Sodemi are so rare; it is one that surpasses what you find in their generation between couples. Pastor Solademi respected his wife, valued, empowered, and honoured her in private and in the public. Aside his biological children, numerous siblings, relatives and non-relatives lived under his care. He was the Bale (Head of the entire extended family) of the Solademi, Ajao and Farinu families.

Pa Solademi was blessed with numerous grandchildren. The genealogy of the righteous shall be blessed.

Religious Background

Pastor Solademi was born into a family that practiced traditional religion. His parents worshiped Eegun, Orisa Oko and Ifa. All through his studentship at SDA Centre School, Erunmu, his father did not allow him to be baptized, his father later became a member of CMS Church. In the year 1938, he and Thomas Olanipekun Adigun proclaimed their status as member of CMS church. It was until 1942, that Pastor Oladimeji Solademi was able to get baptized in to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

WORK EXPERIENCE:

After Pastor Solademi's wedding, he became the overseer of SDA Church in an area in Erunmu the year 1951. It was while at this, that Alhaji Yesufu the elder brother of Karimu employed him as an account clerk in a cocoa produce organization in Odo-Oba, Ibadan. The story of the life of Pastor Solademi is not complete without reference to Dr. N. F. Aina. In 1952, Dr. N. F. Aina took him to Lagos to attend the burial ceremony of the father of the then Iyolode of Mushin. Dr. N. F. Aina took Pastor and Mr. Folayan, a native of Ipoti Ekiti to attend the burial ceremony. On the second day of their arrival in Lagos, Dr. N. F. Aina asked Pastor if he remembered him telling him to venture into ministerial work in 1943.

Shortly after they returned from Lagos, Dr. N. F. Aina wrote an application on behalf of Pastor and brought it to be signed. Dr. N. F. Aina then took the letter to Oke-Bola to J. J. Hyde. An interview was later conducted in order to elect someone to pastor the SDA Church in Ihie which Pastor was unable to write. However, Pastor Dare and J. J. Hyde had cause to visit Erunmu. They met Pastor and his wife carrying gravel into the church premises. They asked after the other members of the church and Pastor Solademi told them they were yet to arrive. Pastor Dare then told J. J. Hyde that Pastor Solademi was the candidate who had missed the exam earlier. Thrilled by what he saw, J. J. Hyde decided that Pastor need not write any exam, not an interview to qualify to serve in Ihie. That was how Pastor was elected as an Evangelist to serve in Ihie in January 1953 and this inaugurated his ministerial journey in the SDA Church. Pastor earned four pounds as his first salary which was synonymous to eight naira at that time.

The Places where Late Pastor Solademi Served as a Pastor

1. **Eastern Nigerian Conference:** Pastor Solademi served as a student pastor in Okpuala Ngwa II and Amaorji (Eastern Nigeria).
2. **Igbobini:** He was posted to Igbobini Island in 1955. He was there till August 1956. God used him during his stay there to convert the families of Eregare, Egbele, Fauga and other.
3. **Okitipupa:** Pastor worked in okitipupa from 1956 till 1957. Here God used him to organize open-air crusade. The families of Paul Osagie, Omuogbo, Oguosin, Ogbe and Four Ikale people were converted from during the period.
4. **Abeokuta:** Pastor was elected from the school of Evangelism in Lagos to go to Abeokuta in 1957. There was an outdoor preaching and afterwards, Baba was retained in Abeokuta

and he served there till January 1958. It was from here that he went to the seminary in Bekwai Ashanti, Ghana. He suffered a lot in Lagos. He was duped and thrown into the river by thieves. His wife was very ill at that time due to pregnancy.

5. **Benin City:** He served in Benin from 1961 till March 30, 1964 as a pastor and God greatly used him there.
6. **Ile-Ife:** He served here from April 1964 till March 1966 as a pastor, chaplain, preceptor and a teacher in SDA Nursing School. It was during this period that he was ordained in February 27, 1965.
7. **Ibadan:** He worked in Ibadan for two years (March 1966 – April, 1968) at the time he served as a pastor in Oke-Bola and a school manager for the SDA Primary Schools in Oke- Bola, Onipasan and Foko. Most importantly, open air crusades were organized by Pastor Solademi and Pastor Fiber, and they converted a remarkable number of souls for God.
8. **Ikirun:** He was transferred to Ikirun in 1968 as the area head to replace Pastor Mojolagbe. He was shot there thrice while preaching in an outdoor crusade because it coincided with the festival of the worship of Irele; an idol in Ikirun. At the third shot, the gun flew out of the hand of gunman and broke in two. Baba stretched up his hand and reached out for the half of the gun. The half was still with him until he passed away. All thanks to God for protecting him from the bullets. Pastors and evangelists faced so many trials and persecutions at that time. During his service at Ikirun, the mission president at that time leveled allegation against him for building a mission house without obtaining proper permission. He was censured for nine months and recalled, after nine months they discovered that the punishment was unjust and underserved. He got encountered and strong support during the trying times from elder Ephraim Osundina (Iwalewa) and his friend Mr. Owolabi Oladunjoye. His service in Ikirun is a period in his pastorals journey that cannot be written off. Based on these experiences, Baba advised ministers of God that the work of ministry is like a farmer who goes to the farm and gets injured by a thorn in his palm and feet. Such a farmer is not expected to get angry and forsake his farm. No one having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. Therefore, a minister of God must not allow any trial or persecution to derail him or discourage him from doing the work of God.
9. **Adventist College of West Africa (ACWA) Ilisan-Remo:** While schooling here, he served as a farm manager in ACWA and as a chaplain for Ijebu prisons. God assisted him in saving the souls of several prisoners.
10. **Enugu:** He served here for just three months.
11. **Ibadan:** He was transferred again to Ibadan in the year 1973 and served there till September 1975. He served as a Lay Activities Director for the then West Nigerian Mission when his childhood and intimate friend Pastor Johnson Ajagbe Adeniji was the president. He participated in several open air crusades which Doleman and Brook organized in Lagos and he interpreted for them. While others declined working in Lagos because of the

meager salary, he continually offered to work there because he felt that nothing must hinder God's work. He was never fearful; because he knew the greatness of the God he served. He served in Lagos from September 1975 to 1983. He initially served as the head of Yaba District from September 1975 to December 1976 and he built the church in Apapa and Munshin. In 1977, he was voted in as Director of Sabbath School and Lay Activities for the entire SDA Church in Nigeria. He consequently started work at the SDA Headquarters in Maryland Lagos and served there till 1983. His office was subsequently moved to the Union office at Ile-Ife. While here, one of the conferences in the European Division invited him to conduct a public crusade/evangelism and attend to other activities in Finland, Poland, and Denmark, and other countries of Scandinavia, he was on this assignment for some months. Baba had course to travel widely within and outside including attendance at the General Conference Sessions in the USA.

12. Calabar: In January 1986, he was transferred to Calabar to serve as the President of Cross River Mission of Seventh-day Adventist Church. It was while at this that he became ill with a disease that could not be cured in Nigeria. He was flown to Kenya for treatment. The illness was so much that he was unable to see afterwards, but God remained faithful through it all and never for once allowed the devil to take the glory. Calabar to Ife the third time to serve as the head of the area. It was while at this, that he was advised by medical doctors to retire from service. He then retired on March 31, 1987.

By the grace of God, Baba served in God's vineyard for 37 years and 3 months. He and his family never for once regretted that he and wife devoted their all in the service of God. Although, he never had all the glitters of this world, but with the help and mercy of God, he and his entire house continuously observed favour from God in all their endeavours.

Outstanding Achievements

- To the glory of God, Baba started off as a pagan, and later a member of CMS, but to the glory of God majority of his family members, both nuclear and extended are now members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
- Several other souls aside his family members were also converted into the SDA with the help of God.
- Baba saw the building of several churches in different location.
- Igbibini Island – Using wood, clay and leaf, the SDA church in Igbobini was built in 1955. His wife played a key role in making this a reality.
- Okitipupa – In 1956, he and his wife started building the church. They evangelized a lot and Mr. Abioye, a teacher was of great assistance.
- Abeokuta – During his time here, he saw to the completion of the church.
- Munshin – During his service, he started and completed the building of the church
- Apapa – He started the foundation and completed the church.
- Yaba – He saw the donation of the building of the church.

- Maryland – He started the foundation of the church and saw the construction to an appreciable level before he was transferred.
- Osogbo – He started the foundation and roofed the church before he was transferred.
- Ikirun – The building of the church was completed during his service there.
- Benin City – In his time in Benin, he purchased Ehaguare Memorial School after several upheavals and built the church on the same land. The SDA church is still there till date.
- Ijora – A small church was created and is today called “Afemai.”
- IkekeAla – He started and completed the construction of the church.
- Ile-Ife – Church branches were constructed in Ajebamdele, Eleweran and Ita Oja during his service in Ile-Ife.
- Uyo – He saw to the laying of the foundation of the SDA Church in Uyo.
- Ejide – A small church was erected here.
- Koloko – He was part of the people who built the church in Koloko before he became a pastor.
- Ilesha - While at Ile-Ife, he saw to the laying of foundation of the SDA Church in Ilesha, with the help of Mrs. Olaolu (of blessed memory).

RETIREMENT DAYS:

After his retirement, he participated in the building of the church in Agugu in Ibadan. This is because Agugu is the family clan of his mothers and he was greatly cherished in his mother’s family. He also directed the building of the second church in Erunmu. He was more interested in building churches than building missionary houses. He saw to the laying foundation of just two missionaries. The first was in Ibioto in Ibiobio and the second in Ikoti-Esian.

Several pastors have been introduced and ordained in the SDA church through the contributions of pastor Solademi, of them are pastor Eregare (of blessed memory), Moses Ajao, late S. A. Adesina, among others. He also put Dr. J.O.U. Odiase on the path of ASWA (Adventist Seminary of West Africa). Aside this, he was a mentor to several people and pastors in the SDA and in the society at large.

With the help of God, Pastor Solademi baptized so many people. He organized several burial services and naming ceremonies. He conducted 141 wedding services/ceremonies while he served in God’s vineyard.

All thanks to God that Pastor Solademi never regretted working for god before and after he was ordained as an SDA pastor.

The success and testimonies of Pastor Sholademi is not complete without due reference to his wife. Rebecca Mojinyinola. She is a virtuous woman, a help meet and in times of affliction,

she remained supportive and in the care of children. She was strongly involved in his ministerial journey and never wavered in the times when trials and persecutions were severe.

Pastor Solademi's advice at all times to pastors is that each occupation has its own challenge, so also is the work of ministry, but for any pastor who must succeed at it, such a pastor must always remember that the work is unto God and not unto man. One should not expect reward from man, but from God who called one to serve.

The Bible says a man who goes about his work diligently will stand before kings, and not just mere men. Prophet Zephaniah admonishes us as children of God to embrace the virtue of humanity again Zephaniah admonishes pastors to love what God desires and learn what God teaches. These three characters as postulated by the prophet Zephaniah are crucial requirements for any pastor who desire to succeed. These virtues helped pastor Solademi in successfully serving in God's vineyard for 37 years and 3 months.

CONCLUSION:

To the children, Pastor Oladimeji, Gabriel Ajadi Omoosepaaro Solademi was the father many people never had, an epitome of honesty, integrity, discipline, hard work, tender-heartedness, love and compassion. He was a great preacher, the Apostle Paul of his generation whose vivid illustrations and symbolism remained fresh in the memory like the parables of Jesus.

Source: Retrieved from Biography (burial program Thursday, February 13, 2017)
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PHOTO ALBUM



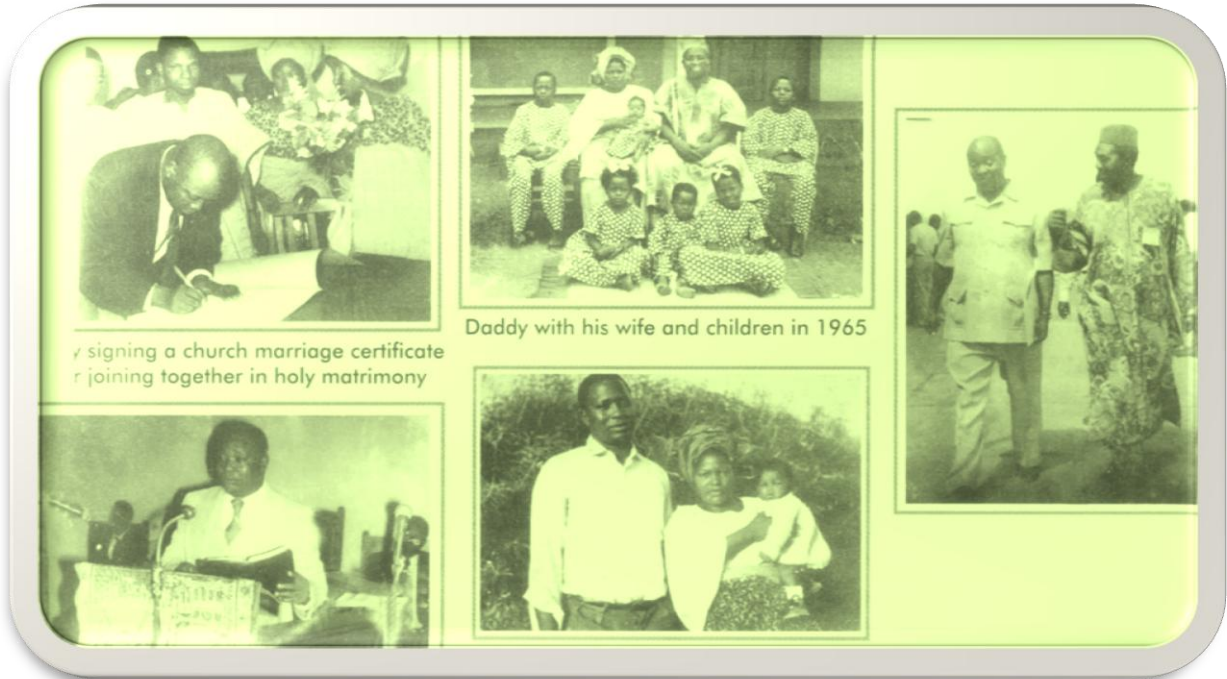
Pastor Solademi at retirement



During Baba Solademi Birthday



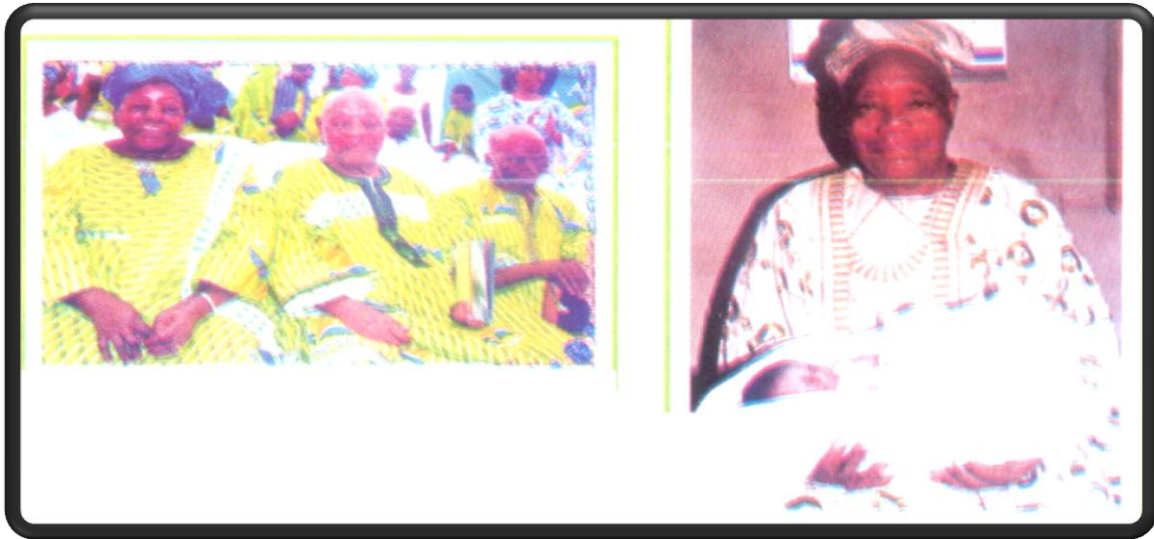
Pastor, Eld. Ogundare and Eld. Osundinao left; Daddy and Mummy Right



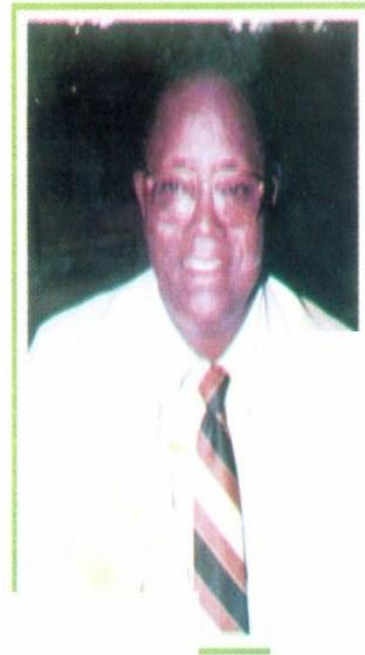
Daddy signing a church marriage certificate
for joining together in holy matrimony

Daddy with his wife and children in 1965

Daddy and Mummy at different occasion



Pastor Solademi, His Shepherdess and Joel Awoniyi, at the SDA Church's Centenary celebration in Nigeria.



Pastor and Mummy in celebration of one of their daughters

Daddy conducting Communion service in a church

Pastor Solademi at lunch time left and His parents' artistic impression right





Daddy at his first grandson's wedding



Daddy and family at Dele's wedding in 1983 conducted by Pastor J. A. Ola



Pastor
Wedding



and Shepherdess Solademi at Pastor's niece

Celebration of Daddy's ASWA Achievement with Mummy