

## ECWA IN IGBOLAND: A MISSIONARY WORK IN ETITI LOCAL CHURCH COUNCIL

**Ifeanyi J. Okeke (PhD)**

Department of Philosophy/Religion,  
Alex Ekwueme Federal University,  
Ndufu-Alike, Ikwo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

[chilurumogu@gmail.com](mailto:chilurumogu@gmail.com)

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### **Abstract**

*It needs no further emphasis that when scholars and or authors talk about Church history, they are concerned in the main, two facts of a historical perspective of a religious event or a phenomenon. Research work abound of studies in the evangelization of a people, a country or a community in Africa and indeed West African sub religion. Beginning from the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the fertile ground support of the Berlin Conference of 15<sup>th</sup> November 1884 to 26<sup>th</sup> February 1885, where the partition of Africa was concluded, missionaries accompanied by their brother colonial masters from Europe invaded Africa with the bible on one hand and their economic interest on the other hand. Nigeria had a good share of the presence of both the colonialists and the White missionaries, leading to the presence on African soil, Churches like Roman Catholic, the Anglican, Presbyterian, Baptist etc. The SIM/ECWA was not left out in the struggle to show presence. They settled firstly in Northern Nigeria and gradually moved down to the south-east especially around Enugu, Aba, Umuahia and the old Etiti Province. The work is a historical survey of the coming of, and evangelization of old Etiti province by the SIM/ECWA; the first contact of the church with the people, the spread of the church and its present position in the area. It is an attempt towards the documentation of the activities of this church and further bring it to the attention and easy accessibility of scholars and students for the enrichment of new academic knowledge. It relies heavily on interviews, observation with little reference to documented sources bearing in mind that this work may have been the first attempt in this area in reference to the church and the people so studied.*

**Keywords:** ECWA, Igbo land, Etiti, Local, Council, Missionary, Church.

### **Introduction**

A lot of missionary activities were carried on in Africa beginning from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These activities were done especially by the missionaries from Europe.

Such missionary work includes that of the Church Missionary Society, the Sudan Interior Mission leading to the founding of Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) in Nigeria with the Headquarters in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria. Scholars and researchers wrote and are still writing and researching to increase the bulk of knowledge available to the reading public as well as the academic World. Today in what was originally known as Etiti Local Government Area, ECWA has joined other sister denominations like the Anglican and Roman Catholic in the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ especially towards the salvation of the soul of mankind.

### **ECWA in Nigeria**

The Evangelical Church Winning All (formerly Evangelical Church of West Africa) is one of the largest Christian Church denominations in Nigeria with about ten million members (Smith, Samuel, August 2017). The church is a partner church of the International Christian Mission Organization, Serving In Mission (SIM) formerly Sudan Interior Mission. According to (SIM) country profile, Nigeria, ECWA, was founded in 1954 when SIM related churches (initially in Nigeria) came together to form an Indigenous Body.

The Evangelical Church of West Africa was renamed 'Evangelical Church Winning All' because of the wide spread beyond its initial scope. It was as a result of ministry and the wide spread gospel of Jesus Christ in Africa by several missionaries which included Walter Gowans, Thomas Kent and Rowland Bingham who came from different parts of Canada and the United State of America in 1893 on what can be termed "evangelical suicide mission", a statement which was coined by Orji Chukwudimma Chukwudike because West Africa at that time, was known to be heavily infested by malaria and there was almost a 100% possibility that a white man will not survive it as they even called the West African region "The White man's grave (Oji, 2017).

These missionaries braved malaria and yellow fever to preach the gospel of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ under the auspices of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) and planted several churches as they preached along, and around mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, these churches became independent to carry on the gospel. According to Oji (2017), ECWA had the largest mission organization of any African church living up to its name 'evangelical'. It is also on record that the Evangelical Mission Society (EMS), her evangelical and missionary department had sent out about 1,600 missionaries.

There are currently more than six million members. ECWA had over ninety District Church Councils (DCCSs), thousands of Local churches (LCS), and hundreds of Prayer Houses (PHs). It started three theological seminaries: ECWA theological seminary, Igbaja which started as a School of Prophets in 1918, ECWA theological seminary Kagoro established in 1931 and Jos ECWA theological seminary in 1980. There are also eight Bible colleges and fifteen theological training institutes (Camps of the woods-ECWA-Archived from the original on 26-8-2006). ECWA medical department coordinates a wide network which includes four hospitals, a community health program with over 110 health clinics, a central pharmacy and the school of nursing and midwifery. ECWA is also involved in Radio, publications for outreach and discipleship, rural development, urban ministries, and cross cultural missions (ECWA -Archived from the original on 27-9-2007. Retrieved 9-4-2007)

### **The Area Known as and Called Etití LCC**

Etití Local Church Council today covers primarily the areas that were in the former Etití Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria. They include all that area and people that are located within the two Local Government Areas of Obowo and Ihitte/Uboma, Imo State. Ihitte/Uboma has its headquarters at Isinweke and having an area of 104 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 120,744 at the 2006 census. The postal code of the area is 472 ([www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)). Some of the towns and villages in Ihitte/Uboma LGA are; Amakohia, Amuzu, Umuezegwu, Umudibia, Ikperere, Umuejere, Umuihi, Amainyi, Umederim etc. On the other hand, Obowo LGA is also a Local Government Area in Imo State of Nigeria, formed during the Ibrahim Babangida administration on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 1989, with Its headquarters now at Otoko. The Local Government has about 22 autonomous communities which include Achara, Amanze, Umuariam, Umunachi, Ehume, Amuzi, Umuoke, Odenkume etc (uhuri.org). Obowo has an estimated population of 161,700 going by the 2016 projection and 98.12 km<sup>2</sup> area, 1,648/km<sup>2</sup>. Some of the Local Government towns and villages are Umuariam, Achara, Umulogho, Amanze, Umuagu, Ehume, Umungwa, Odenkwume, Alike, Awutu, Umuosiochie, Umuoke etc.

### **The Planting of The Church In Etití LCC**

Just as the church came to Nigeria by the instrumentality of the three missionaries from Canada and USA, the planting of ECWA in Etití Local Church Council could be traced back to the year 1966 when one Joel Agwomba came

back to his village (Umuariam Obowo) in today's Obowo Local Government Area with his family from Jos Plateau state due to the insecurity and threat of Civil War raging in the country then. With his family members then, Joel Agwomba started a family altar in his compound. This family altar later developed to a church at Umuariam Obowo and it later moved to Ikenanzizi. According to Francis Igwe who had direct conversation with Agwomba, the church also moved to Otulu (Mbaise), Nnarambia and Eke-nguru in Mbaise area. The church was able to reach these areas with the assistance of people like Rev. Israel Ezigbo, Rev. S.N.I Umune, Rev. James Ukaegbu, Rev. E.O. Onokala, Rev. W.O Madubuko and an American Evangelist Bro. Grimshaw.

Immediately after the civil war in 1970 Bro. Grimshaw of Sudan Interior Mission came from Jos, where ECWA had been established to assist Joel Agwomba in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Recall that ECWA had been established then in Jos. Bro. Grimshaw came down to Isinweke with his Caravan and in company of Joel Agwomba and a few others they started to evangelise at Oriegu, Aba branch, Odenkume, Ogboto- ukwu Obowo around Ikenanzizi suburbs. It could be recalled that Joel Agwomba came back from Jos with many ECWA published books and Christian tracks which he sold to families and schools around the area. The early converts of this first missionary work were Emmanuel Okorie of Umuihi (who was also known as Uju-nwankwere). The first ECWA was established/planted in Umuderim(Ihitte) which was originally the Headquarters of the Etitu Local Church Council. Later the Headquarters was moved to Amanyinta due to the refusal of Amakohia church to become the headquarters. It was from Amanyinti that the Church moved into Umuejere in September 1970. It was with the assistance of Bro. Grimshaw whose gospel van of Caravan were fully put to use that the gospel of Jesus Christ was spread and taken to places like Isinweke, Odenkume, Oriagu, Aba branch, where distribution of tracks and other religious books were increased to enhance the spread of the gospel. Other areas that were also touched included; Afo-achara, Ugwumabiri, Achingali, Ogbotoukwu, Umulogho, Ehume, Umungwa and many other places within the locality. According to Igwe (1999), when the team led by Grimshaw arrived at Isinweke a man called Mr. Emmanuel Okorie became interested in the gospel and later discussed with them on the need to change from their former church-The United Native African Church (UNA) to ECWA. This information was conveyed to ECWA headquarters Jos and they sent one Rev. R.O Onokola who was to proceed to Etitu for the establishment of the churches.

It is to be noted that Mr. Emmanuel Okorie was further encouraged to convert the UNA church to ECWA because he had earlier sojourned in Jos and from the knowledge he gathered there he was able to inform and convince his fellow members of UNA church of the SIM schools and hospitals which would be established for them if they cross over to ECWA.

On the delegation team from Etiti for the conversion of UNA Churches and members were people like Chief B.O. Ononeze and B.O Echenwure from Umederim; Bro. Daniel Dike from Lowa; Bro. Pius Okereke and Hycenth from Amakohia; Bro. Young Ukabiala from Amainyita; Bro. Emmanuel Okorie from Umuihi; and Bro. Michael Anyanwu from Umuejere. Thus on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of September 1970, the entire UNA within the area converted to ECWA marking a new spiritual emancipation and awakening in the lives of many religious adherents of old Etiti. The ECWA seemed therefore to have come by the invitation of many frustrated adherents of UNA Church who were eager to embrace a new church having suffered during the civil war without any assistance or relief materials from their parent's church in Nigeria. This move further influenced all areas of the then Provence (Area). It is therefore historical, that from the year 1970-1974, the area then known as Etiti Provence, including its neighbouring villages experienced a new religious move that had never been heard of in their lives. This spiritual awakening saw the uprooting and destruction of traditional worship items like sacred groves and shrines. The traditional festivals and ceremonies like Iwa-akwa, Mbom-uzo, Agbagwu, and traditional dances were not spared as they came under heavy attacks by the new church in town.

### **First Batch of Trained Pastors of ECWA Etiti LCC**

With the tsunamic entrance of ECWA into the area, it was not long before some of her indigenes started indicating interest in joining the church as clergy. This development prompted the sending of some indigenes the area to Bible schools for training. The first batch of such people included Francis Igwe, Shedrack Egemuka and Godday Ogoke (late). They were sent for training at Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) Bible College Aba (now Abia State). According to Francis Igwe (one of the first trained pastors), the trio began their training in the college on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of February 1971. The SIM Bible College was later to change its name to ECWA Bible College as a result of some unresolved issues it had then with the Nigerian government of that time. After the first batch also came the second

batch of trainee pastors which included Humphrey Iwueke, Kenneth Ononeze, Emmanuel Ezeagwala and Thompson Onyemечи. This batch reported to Aba Bible College in the year 1973. This batch also included Patrick Nnorom from Otulu Mbaise. This research tried to profile these early birds of pastors of the LCC and discovered the following facts:

- That Francis Igwe later became a Reverend of the church, became the Local Overseer of Etiti LCC between 1982-1987. He also worked and served in other locations of the church including Abakaliki, Umuahia and Ohafia before his retirement.
- Shedrack Egemuka was ordained a Reverend of the church, but he later joined a breakaway group known as Saviors' Evangelical Mission led by Rev. Onokala.
- Godday Ogoke after training as a pastor began his pastoral work at ECWA(church) komkom in today's Oyigbo Area of Rivers State. He later joined the breakaway group of Saviours' Evangelical Mission where he retired. After retirement, he came back to ECWA and served in different capacities before his death in the early part of the year 2021.
- Hunphrey Iwueke was ordained an ECWA pastor and rose to the rank of a Reverend. He served in various capacities both at the Umuahia DCC level, Etiti LCC and once served as a pastor in Umuejere church before his retirement.
- Kenneth Ononeze was latter ordained a Reverend of ECWA but he left later to found a Church known today as Winners' Celebration Chapel in Jos, Plateau State. He was also a onetime pastor with the Redeemed People Mission, Jos, Plateau state.
- Emmanuel Ezeagwala on the completion of his studies at Aba Bible College was ordained a minister of God under ECWA. However, he later joined a Break away Group Saviours' Evangelical Mission and rose to become her one-time General Superintendent after the retirement of its pioneer General Superintendent -Rev. Onokala.
- Thompson Onyemечи of Umuariam(Obowo) on completion of his training worked with ECWA. He remained in ECWA Church until he died in the year 2019.
- Patrick Nworom from Otulu Mbaise on completion of his training was ordained a minister of God in ECWA. Later he moved to overseas and rose to become a Professor in the Philosophy Department at Eastern Kentucky University.

### **ECWA Etiti Local Church Council Early Challenge.**

Like in every good intension, the new Church had to contend and indeed grapple with a heavy wind of destabilization that almost brought it down in the area just after its seeming planting and take off. On the 10<sup>th</sup> day of October 1974, Etiti Local Church Council was created to include churches in Umuderim, Amakohia, Umuchi, Lowa, Umuejere, Amariyinta, Umuariam, Ikenanzizi and Otulu. Umuderim was made its headquarters. A local overseer was appointed for the new council by the EDDC (Eastern District Church Council) with its headquarters at Enugu in the person of pastor Kenneth Ugodu who was to be wedded in three weeks after the inauguration of the new Etiti LCC. While pastor Ugodu was waiting to wed his wife before proceeding to Etiti, secret arrangement by some people from Etiti who were supporting Rev. R.O. Onokala who got his pastoral training in ECWA Bible College Igbafa, in December 1974 almost brought down the just emerging Local Church Council.

Rev. R.O. Onokala who vied for and lost the election to become the Churchman of the then Eastern District Church Council (EDCC) Enugu, apparently connived with some members of the new Etiti LCC area including people like Chief Benjamin Uwajumogu (Umuihi); Chief Benson Ononeze (Umuderim); Benjamin Echenwune (Umuariam), Francis Osueke (Amakohia), Dan Dike (Lowa) and many others to force himself on the new Etiti LCC as its first Local Overseer before the arrival of the already appointed pastor Ugodu (an indigene of Nsukka). Rev. R.O. Onokala through such a subterranean means and in utter disobedience and disregard to the directives of the authorities of EDCC Enugu forcefully resumed as the first<sup>t</sup> Local Overseer of the newly created Etiti LCC with its headquarters in Umuderim, Ihitte. Based on his refusal to obey the directives of the EDCC Enugu, Rev. R.O. Onokalu was disciplined by the Church authorities by way of suspension and instead of observing the suspension, he bolted away to found the Church known today as Saviours' Evangelical Mission with all the members drawn from the newly created Etiti LCC. The trouble created by this development could be better imagined than described. As could be expected, all the good plans of the young Etiti LCC were shattered and truncated as the LCC engaged itself in a turmoil of the struggle for survival and control by the two contending factions- the ECWA on one hand and the Breakaway Saviours' Evangelical Mission led by Rev R.O. Onokala on the other hand.

Divisions, struggles and scheming and intrigues became the other of the day in all the branches of the new Church. In Umuejere village, the breakaway was led by Mr. Michael Anyanwu and the Church divided into two, while a group remained with ECWA, the other group went with Rev. Onokala. In Amainyi Church, the division was three folds. While some members joined Saviours' Evangelical Mission, others went back to the UNA church, while a handful remained with ECWA. In Umuderim which was to be the headquarters of the newly created Etiti LCC, Onokala had a total take-over of all the members to Saviours' Evangelical Church and it accounted for the relocation of the headquarters of ECWA Etiti LCC to Amaiyinta when Amakohia refused to be associated with this problem, but instead opted to be independent. Lowa went back to UNA church. Amakohia later divided and some members went back to UNA church. Umuihi completely went to Saviours' Evangelical Mission and has no ECWA till today.

The intrigues, scheming, and conspiracies that took place during this period were such that could beat anybody's imagination. The breakaway group was busy lobbying, harassing and even using the law enforcement agencies to intimidate, harass and arrest members and pastors who seemed to be against them. Of a particular note was the one involving Rev. Francis Igwe of Amakohia Church. The Young Francis who was amongst the first set of pastors trained at Aba Bible College came home on annual leave. Some members of the breakaway group under Rev. Onokala approached him and persuaded him to join them. He was further promised a Volkswagon beetle among other gifts so as to persuade him to join. Rev. Francis rejected all the promises of enticement, stressing that he joined ECWA priesthood because of his miraculous survival during the Nigerian civil war and not for any financial or pecuniary gains. He told the lobbyists to try other people as he would remain with ECWA until he meets his creator. This response must have angered the lobbyists who wrote a petition to the police at Ishinweke alleging that the young Francis was an armed robber. A day before Francis Igwe went back to his station, the Police from Ishinweke arrested him on such trump up allegation and they were shocked to find out later that the petition was written and endorsed by the lobbyists who tried to persuade him join the breakaway group.

As fate would have it, Francis after the police investigation was freed as the petitioners could not substantiate their allegation. This incident increased not only the faith of Rev. Francis Igwe, but also the members of the new Etiti LCC

and they became more resolute to serve God in the Church. It is on record that while the problems were going on, EDCC Enugu appointed a new Local Overseer for the Church in the person of pastor Andrew Ugwuezi in an acting capacity. He was later to be replaced by Rev. S.M.I Umunne. This problem led to the loss of all Churches in Mbaise and Ehime areas. The Saviours' Evangelical Mission succeeded in getting Umuderuim, Umuihi, half of Amakohia, half of Lowa, half of Umuariam and Ikenanzizi while the other half of Ikenanzizi turned to Evangelical Church of Christ (ECC).

Later in Etiti LCC, Rev. S.I.M. Umunne was replaced by Rev. C. Egbo who was also replaced by Pastor Ezekiel Obi when Rev. Egbo left for USA. This crisis lasted from 1974 to 1980. Later it was the turn of Rev. W.O. Madubuko who was the Local Overseer of the when Owerri LCC was created. In 1981, the former Etiti LCC was sub-divided leaving four (4) Local Church Boards to form the new Etiti LCC. They are Amainyinta, Umuejere, Umuariam and Amakohia with a new Local Overseer in the person of Rev. Francis N. Igwe. The new LCC took off fully in the year 1982.

### **The Golden Era of Etiti LCC**

The term golden era in this work is used only to refer to the most flourishing and outstanding period in the history of ECWA ETITI LCC. This period could be located between 1982 and 1999. It was the period when Rev. Francis Igwe and Rev. Udogu were posted as the Local Overseers of the council. The Church went into Evangelism further in places like Abueke, Lowa, Umuihi, Isinweke, Aba branch, Amainyi, Umuejere and many more. New converts were won over by the Church in different branches or board as it were. It further witnessed the denouncing and renouncing of traditional worshippers and their declaration for the God of ECWA. There were such incidences as burning of shrines, destruction of traditional objects of worship like, Ofo, sacred items like Ishi njoku, traditionally prepared talisman for protection; native doctors embracing the gospel of Jesus Christ and the burning of their instruments of traditional medicine. The experiences were holistic, cutting across all the villages and towns as it were.

A particular incident took place in the Church at Umuejere village where a convert of the new ECWA was forced to bring out the family's Ishinjoku (a symbol of family traditional preservation object of yam harvest) which had survival ages for burning by the Church. Similar incidences were recorded in

Amainyinta, Amakohia, Umuariam, Ikenanzizi, Umuezala-duru Ikpoto etc. As could be expected, the Church challenged some traditional practices and warned her members not to partake in the celebration of the ceremonies or festivals again. Examples of such traditional practices which ECWA challenged were; the Iwa-akwa, Mbom-Uzo; age grade formation, masquerade festival, traditional dances and egbe nkwa. The converts were subsequently baptized into the new faith. This move was also resisted by the people as some converts held on to the practices howbeit discreetly. The traditional polygamous marriage system was also opposed by the new church.

In the year 1986, precisely, on the 27<sup>th</sup> day of June, the Etiti LCC held her first ever Local Church Council Conference at Amainyinta. In the same year on 31<sup>st</sup> day of August, Ikenanzizi Church which broke away during the crisis came back to ECWA. In a letter addressed through Rev Francis Igwe to ECWA Etiti LCB, members of trustee of Evangelical Churches of Christ, Umuezikwe Ikenanzizi Obowo dated 20 - 4 - 86, expressed their willingness to rejoin ECWA LCC. This brought the LCB member churches of the ECWA LCC to five.

Rev. Udogu became the local Overseer in 1987 and consolidating all Rev. Francis Igwe did. Rev Udogu was later transferred to Umuahia LCC as the District Church Secretary. Subsequently, it became the turn of Rev. Okoro Igwe. Later Rev. G. Ugbo; Rev. D. Chukwu; Rev. Francis Igwe came back in 1998 and under his leadership the Silver Jubilee of the Church in Etiti was planned and well executed.

### **Factors that influenced the planting of ECWA Etiti LCC.**

Taking a look or survey of the factors that aided the coming of and planting of the church in the LCC, Peter Ogbonna (2012) informed the researcher that during the Nigerian civil war which lasted over 30 months, while members of the Roman Catholic Churches around the neighbourhood were getting relief materials in form of cloths and food items, members of the UNA Church were getting nothing. In fact in the course of this research Pa Amos Anyanwu in 2010 informed the researcher that he had to claim to be a member of the Roman Catholic Church at Nkwodirimo so as to get what he called 'gari Gabon' to feed his pregnant wife shortly after the war because his own Church the UNA was not giving them any relief. Therefore, members of the UNA church opted for a change of Church and ECWA was readily on hand to be embraced by the people. This reason falls under economic factors and is in line with the views of Peel

J.D.U. (1968) who posits that the sociologists and anthropologists have cited two issues responsible for the people's change of religion as a response to deprivation, lack of social and economic needs which are the result of abrupt social change.

On this lack of relief materials during the war, Rev. Francis N. Igwe adds, “during the civil war, we members of the UNA church were not getting any assistance from the Church. Hunger was dealing with the people as the situation on ground did not allow people to farm, buy or sell. While Churches with foreign or outside connections were getting assistance in form of food supplies, drugs and clothing materials, UNA Church members got nothing. Therefore, when the war ended, they saw ECWA which had outside connections as a sure bet towards solving their needs of the moment.

Another factor that aided the planting of the Church in the area was the charismatic nature of the missionaries, the pastors and the overwhelming presence of the Holy Spirit which convicted the people of sin. Humphrey Iwueke a retire Rev. of the Church told the researcher in his house in Amainyinta that “One Idol worshipper in Amakohia at that time said ‘I have not seen such Church that stopped people from coming to his shrine to take power as a native doctor”. The traditional worshippers therefore were amazed that the presence of the Church had caused them great patronage and left them with no better option than to join the new Church.

The activities of the Scripture Union group (SU) in the area led by one Amos Nwokenna who later became the first and founding Bishop of Believers Gospel Mission Inc with Headquarters in Isinweke also aided the success of the new Church in the area. Stephen Okoronkwo informed the researcher that as the youth were busy going for evangelism in the area, the Scripture Union members were simultaneously having their activities in Ikperejere area and it was like a double edged sword against both the traditional worshippers and ordinary Church goers. This development aided and assisted the ECWA Church in the area to find strong footings.

The introduction of dance, music and drums aided the Church to overcome initial challenges. The importance of this factor can be drawn from the nature of the traditional African who Metuh (1989) argues that is always dancing. The

people enjoyed the songs of the new Church and saw nothing different from the way they used to clap and dance in the traditional setting,

The Church carried a message, a hope and a better future for the people who just survived the civil war. ECWA preached that though all the wealth in this physical world be destroyed, their hope anchors on the sweet bye and bye, when all the saints shall gather at the river which represents heaven to celebrate and make merry again. One of the songs which the Church used widely during the early evangelization in Igbo language appealed to the people in this regard. Simon Okeke tried to sing it to the hearing of the researcher in the course of this work. The song goes like this, “A sina akwaturu ulo ukwu anyi nwere nu-uwa,, anyi nwere ebe obibi ka ya nma n’igwe” This if translated into English reads “even though our earthly mansions are destroyed, we have a better mansion in heaven”. This song draws the hearts of a people who just came out from the civil war, losing their loved ones and property in the debacle.

The youthfulness of the early pastors and the converts was a big factor that assisted in no small measure in planting the new Church in the area. Coming out from the Bible Colleges armed with fresh biblical and theological training which was complemented by the youthfulness of the early converts prepared a very fertile ground for the Church to take on a sound footing. The youths of the Church were eager to walk distances with their local horn speakers and tilly lamps and tracks, evangelizing the area. For the populace that just emerged from the vicissitudes of a civil war, there was no better moment to recreate, than the one created or made available by the new Church in town. Japheth Egwim of Amainyinta Church captured this factor.

Added to the aforementioned factors is the new Churches ability to make Christian books especially the Holy Bible and other Christian tracks available to the members and those that came out to watch them evangelize in the market place and other open places. From the ECWA Headquarters in Jos, Bibles were made available to members and new converts who were taught how to read and understand the Bible. Copies of the Igbo translation were made available while those who could barely understand simple spoken English were continuously taught how to read the English version of the Bible.

This feature was a big departure from what was obtained in other Orthodox Churches like the Roman Catholic and the Anglican Churches where only clergy

read out the bible content to the congregation and nobody could question the priest on whatever he told the people. Most converts of the Church and especially the youths saw this as an opportunity to know more about the religion and of Jesus Christ. The feelings amongst the early converts of ECWA were quite unprecedented. It was therefore under this environment that the ECWA LCC found quite favourable and it exploited the opportunity so provided to its utmost use.

### **Conclusion**

Reading through the work no doubt leaves everybody with the conclusion that the planting of ECWA Etiti LCC was more than an epoch event. Ranging from the activities and conditions provided by the civil war, to the crisis of the appointment of the first Local Overseer of the council to events that later placed the Church on a sound footing, all could be summarized as the pure and raw manifestation of the power of the gospel through the instrumentality of ECWA Church as against the forces of suppression and destruction which almost wiped out the presence of the Church from the area under review. It was indeed a battle fought and won by the gospel of Jesus Christ over and above the agents against the gospel of Christ. It will not be out of place to therefore conclude that ECWA Etiti LCC was a destined creation, that came, saw and conquered. Can any better description be offered by anybody else?

### **Recommendations**

It is the view of this work that to rekindle the spirit of Christianity and godliness in the land, the council under the leadership of Church should do the following:

- Go back to the zeal and test of the 1970s in preaching against social vices and materialism.
- Avoid bringing back the challenges it faced during the trial period.
- Energize their evangelistic drive with the help of the EMS to get to all parts of the area under review.
- Pastors and ministers of the Church should live with their families in their places of duty. This will no doubt encourage and enhance an effective pastoral work in the different branches of the Church.
- Care should be taken to profile the pastors who are assigned to the Churches within the council so that their lives would be exemplary to their congregation.

- More and continuous revival and outdoor preaching should be encouraged by the Church to win more soul for Christianity.

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