

The History of the United Missionary Church of Africa 1905-2020: Her Concepts, Manifestations, Challenges and Prospects

By

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Abstract

Duane observes that, when some people are making history, they are not concerned about it not realising that someday somehow "...in the far distant future, their descendants might be interested in an account of what they were doing... (hence), minutes of meetings are disposed off after a few years...or someone dies and the recipients of the 'stuff' either care nothing or know nothing about the importance of those old papers and pictures." (Duanne 1994-1995:2). "This is the situation with UMCA. When you talk of UMCA in some places in Nigeria, they ask: "What is the meaning of UMCA?" "Is it a new generation Church?" "Where is it?" "Is it different from the Anglican, ECWA?" etc." (Zaka 2021:195). UMCA as a denomination is one hundred and fifteen years in Nigeria today, but very little is known and written about the denomination with all her contributions to nation-building. The objectives of the study are: (i) to give a concise history of UMCA; (ii) to trace her history from formation to date; (iii) to identify the challenges militating against the growth of the denomination; (iv) to discover how other factors affected the activities of UMCA as a denomination; and (v) to highlight the prospects of UMCA as a denomination in KSSD. Data for this paper were gathered through interviews and participant observations, as well as through library consultations. The study is historical and descriptive in nature. One has to dig into historical activities and describe them in a graphic analysis. This work then assessed the important activities of UMCA and documented the significant contributions of the denomination. This is of ultimate importance for posterity in light of the present situations faced by Christians and Christianity in Nigeria at large. (Zaka 2021:195).

The Background of Umca

Five Church organizations were apparent in the history of UMCA. These are: The Anabaptists, the Mennonites, the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church, the United Missionary Church and the Missionary Church. However, the history of UMCA cannot be complete without the mention of Menno Simons and Alexander Woods Banfield though not a comprehensive discourse.

Menno Simons was born in 1496 near the North Sea in the little Dutch village of Witmarsum – Friesland in what is now the Netherlands. Little is known of his early life, but in his youth, he decided to train for the Catholic priesthood and entered a monastery. (Everek 1958:19). In 1524, Menno was appointed priest in a neighbouring parish. (Everek 1958:19). One day while he was celebrating mass during his first year as a priest, he thought that the bread and wine he was handling could not possibly be the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ struck him. In desperation he decided to search the Scriptures on this and other issues. He decided in 1536, to leave the Roman Catholic Church, was re-baptized and joined the Anabaptist movement in 1537. A few months later Menno was ordained as one of their ministers (Everek 1958:19),ⁱ and not long after that, he was made not only the founder of a new denomination as it were, but the leader of many scattered congregations of believers, and the name “Mennonite” (named after Menno Simons) gradually replaced that of Anabaptist. (Jost and Faber, 2002). Menno Simons died in Denmark in 1561. (Jost and Faber, 2002).

Alexander Woods Banfield was born in Quebec City, the capital province of Quebec, Canada, on Sunday, August 3rd 1878 to William Henry Banfield and Elizabeth Jane (Johnston) Banfield. At the age of 22, he was converted through the ministry of the MBC and gave his life to God to go to Africa as a missionary. (Fuller, 2001:14). To achieve this, he took up evening classes at the Toronto Bible Training Institute where he heard about the “burden of the Sudan” as it was then called. So, in 1901, Banfield was recruited (Fuller, 2001:10), into what was initially called “Africa Industrial Mission” and came to be called the Sudan Interior Mission, established with the goal of reaching the Muslim Hausas of Northern Nigeria. In recognition of Banfield’s activities in Mission work, Bible translation, and printing accomplishment, he was made a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society of London in 1928. (Everek 1958:238). At age 56 he suffered a stroke (Fuller, 2001:105), and on 22nd Nov., 1949, A. W. Banfield died at age 71 in his hometown, Wuestenfelde and was buried in the old Toronto cemetery called “mount pleasant.” (Fuller, 2001:106).

The Anabaptist as a movement was started on January 21, 1525 by Conrad Gebel, Felix Manz, and George Blaurock, along with twelve others who re-baptized themselves. (Jost and Faber, 2002). The Mennonites is a kind of re-branding of the Anabaptists group aimed at articulating and reviving the teachings of the early Swiss brothers. They were so-called after Menno Simons as highlighted earlier. The Mennonites do not have any official creed or catechism of which acceptance is required by congregations or members. However, there are structures and traditions taught as it could be found in the Confession of Faith. (Confession of Faith). Around 1860, This brought about a strong family or community solidarity which later became one of the features of Mennonitism. The spiritual kinship

resulting from this gave the group the name, “Brethren” and eventually they came to be called “Mennonite Brethren. (Jost and Faber, 2002).

The Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church was formed on December 29, 1883, following a series of mergers between the Reformed Mennonites and the New Mennonites (1875), the Evangelical Mennonites and the United Mennonites (1879), and the Evangelical United Mennonites and Brethren in Christ group (Swankites) in 1883. As Dennis observed, “the formation of the M.B.C. Church in 1883 was the result of a spiritual awakening that occurred throughout North America and ultimately pervaded the Mennonite Church in the late 19th century.” (Engbrecht).ⁱⁱ

The Church was later called The United Missionary Church from 1947 – 1969 and the name, “The Missionary Church” was adopted in 1969 following the merger of the Missionary Church Association founded by Joseph Ramseyer after he was dismissed from his former denomination and the United Missionary Church founded by Daniel Brenneman and Solom Eby. The Missionary Church is an evangelical Christian denomination of Anabaptist origins with Wesleyan, Pietist, and Keswickian influences. This implies that, Anabaptist was the name from 1525 – 1538, then it was changed to the Mennonites from 1538 – 1859; it became the Mennonite Brethren from 1859 – 1883; it was later called the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church 1883 – 1947; then called the United Missionary Church from 1947 – 1969; later called the Missionary Church 1969 – 1995 and finally the Evangelical Missionary Church from 1995 – present. (History of the Missionary Church).

Eusebius Hershey, who in 1880 heard the call to Foreign Service and gave up his life in mission service in Liberia, East Africa. Others have heard the call and so China, Africa, India, French Indo-China, Turkey, Palestine, and South America became hosts to United Missionary Church workers. (Everek 1958:233-235). The general conference of 1920, decided to co-ordinate the missionary work of the denomination, and the following year the United Missionary Society (UMS) was organized. (Everek 1958:238-240).

A Foreign Missions Committee was appointed by the Conference in 1889 which was instructed to find a mission field among the North American Indians and to look for suitable workers. Soon after, a regular mission committee was established, (although, various districts were sending their missionaries separately at this time). In October of 1900, the American Mennonite Brethren Mission Union was formed as an effort to unite the North American Mennonite Brethren Churches in a common cause of global mission. (History and Roots). The Mennonite Brethren in Christ Missionary Society (MBCMS)

became the United Missionary Society (UMS) in 1921, with Rev, Ira Sherk as the first superintendent in Nigeria. (Everek 1958:238).

As mentioned earlier, before the formation of the UMS, each of the MBC¹ District Conferences was sending its Missionaries as representatives of their home conferences to different countries of the world for evangelism without any central coordinating body. "...But by 1916, the idea of unified efforts at Foreign Missions resurfaced and gained fervency. Finally, the M.B.I.C. general conference of 1920 authorized the setting up of a Denominated Mission Board. As a result, in 1921, the United Missionary Society was formed..." (Everek 1958:233-235), with the following as their first officers: J. A. Huffman – President; Samuel Goudie – Vice President; C. I. Scott – Recording Secretary; A. B. Yoder – Corresponding secretary and C. N. Good as the Treasurer. (Bello 2013:34).

The Birth of the United Missionary Church of Africa

Anthony Woods Banfield was the first UMS missionary to Nigeria sent in 1905. He made early trips in 1901 under the auspices of SIM along with E. Anthony of Michigan, A. Taylor and C. H. Robinson both of the SIM stock. In April 1903, Robinson and E. Anthony became sick so they left Banfield behind to continue the work unfortunately he too had to return home on 17th Dec., 1904 due to attacks from "Black Water Fever" (Bello 2013:34).

As stated earlier, the United Missionary Church of Africa, was thus born in the fires of evangelism. Its founders and early leaders had a missionary zeal that could not be quenched. They believe in what is called A.B. Simpson's fourfold emphasis on Jesus Christ as Saviour, Sanctifier, Healer and Coming King; the Anabaptist concepts of community and brotherhood; the evangelical emphasis of the lost estate of mankind and redemption through Jesus Christ. (Bello 2013:30, Everek 239).

Banfeild came back to Nigeria as the official missionary of the UMS in 1905. (Erdel and Engbrecht 1938). Taking the parts of a complete wooden house with them which he erected on concrete pillars, hoping to keep out termites and other hazards, the Banfields sailed from North America on 27th August, 1905. They arrived in Port-Harcourt from where they sailed four hundred miles up the Niger River and finally reached their destination in a town called Shonga (Tsonga as sometimes spelt, but it means the same and may be used interchangeably) near Share town in present Kwara State – a place he had concluded would be his base from the first visit. While in Tsonga, he constructed a building for worship and preaching, but it would not be correct to say this was the first church in the UMCA, because there was no Christian congregation established there. Rather, the first

congregation was not organized until 1927, at Jebba.ⁱⁱⁱ Banfeild quickly began to translate the Bible and other Christian books into Nupe language. (Everek 1948:37-39)

In 1906, two new workers namely: Florence Overholt, and Cornelia Pannabeeker, were sent to join him in Tsonga. Similarly, in August 1907 two more missionaries joined Banfield. They are: Ira Sherk from Michigan (USA), who was barely 21years old and had taken a course on tropical medicine at Living Stone College England, and Emma Hostettler from Ontario (Canada), who was an experienced Mission Worker and had done church planting in Ontario and Manitoba. Using his medical expertise, Sherk, opened a simple dispensary and began to get attention of people in Tsonga with the help given in 1909. (Fuller 63). The UMS moved to Share in 1916-1917, and Igbeti in Oyo State in 1919-1920 from here they made advances in Yoruba land. (Fuller 43). The UMS then had a chance to go to Salka and Zuru, as soon as the colonial government allowed them to do so under a policy called the “policy of comity” which allowed the missionaries to freely go up to Northern Nigeria, an opportunity UMS explored. Thus, the UMS began a northern – focused – mission, and expanded westward, which the mission could attempt only after the World War II, when staffs were available.

As seen above, UMCA was formerly called the United Missionary Society (UMS) preaching stations. But at the first jubilee celebration in 1955, the indigenous Church called UMCA came into existence and was registered as a corporate body on 29th Sept., 1956 under the Land Perpetual Succession Ordinance, Cap 107 of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, with Registration Number 427. The names approved as Trustees were: “David Olufemi Kolawole, John Kolo Isa, and Philip Gujiya.” (Bello 60, Constitution of UMCA 2006:ii, UMCA Minsters’ Manual 2011:2). The following were later co-opted: Sule Magaji, Peter Kolo Audu, and Emmanuel Yakubu (David 2014:120). Today, following the demise of most Members of the Board of Registered Trustees (BRT), the denomination in 2013 decided to constitute a new BRT with the surviving member of the BRT as Chairman as follows: David Kolawole (Chairman), J. Y. Bello (Vice Chairman), and the following as members; Ishaya Bamaiyin, Julius Gana, P. Mendali, E. O. Aweda, B. O. Awesu, E. A. Oguntowo and J. T. Harman. (David 2014:127).

A turn over agreement meeting took place from 2nd – 4th Nov. 1977 and the resolution was taken on 22nd Nov. 1977. On 5th Jan., 1978, a special service to turn over the Church from UMS to UMCA took place at the United Missionary Theological College (UMTC) Ilorin, now called United Missionary Church of Africa Theological College (UMCATC)^{iv} Ilorin with three (3) central administrative officers and four (4) District Superintendents. UMCA therefore became an independent, indigenous Church, with the following as the first

central administrative officers: Rev. (Dr.) Jacob Bawa Isa as the first President, Rev. Samuel Adebayo Oloyede General Secretary, Rev. James Tswana Harman Treasurer/Vice President, And the four District Superintendents then were: Rev. Sule Magaji, Hausa District, Rev. Peter Kolo Audu, Nupe District, Rev. Joseph Adeyanju Adeyemi, Yoruba Kwara District, and Rev. Simon Adeyemo Adedokun Yoruba Southern District. The following were the representatives of the UMS, Allan Doner, O. L. Sherick, L. R. Sloat, A. E. Reifel, J. Walsh (Miss), E. L. Sloat (Mrs) and P. Sherick (Mrs). While James T. Harman, Samuel A. Oloyede, Joseph A. Adeyemi, Peter K. Ada and J. Walsh were the representatives from the UMCA. (David 2014:131-132).

For many years, the UMS in Nigeria had its headquarters in Jebba. But, in 1953, Ilorin, was chosen for the mission headquarters as it has remained to date. In 1955, the UMS marked the 50th anniversary of its work in Nigeria at which time the UMCA was officially incorporated. Presently, the UMCA is a well-organized body directed by Nigerians and recognized for its high standard of Christian living. (Constitution of UMCA 10-19). At the point of the departure of the Canadian Church in 1987, World Partners was formed as the official mission agency of both the Canadian and American Missionary Churches. Ten years later the alliance between the Canadian and American Church was officially dissolved while World Partners continued to serve as the mission agency for the Missionary Church of the United States. (Storms 1958:246).

The Turnover agreement reads thus:

This Agreement of Turnover is made this 5th day of January, 1978, by the persons appointed to represent the United Missionary Church of Africa and the United Missionary Society being the persons whose names are set out in the First Schedule to this Agreement.

Whereas:

- 1. The United Missionary Society and its predecessor, the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Missionary Society has been organized in Nigeria since 1905 and whose aims are to assist in the establishment of churches over-seas which shall maintain and spread the Faith, and*
- 2. Almighty God by His Holy Spirit has brought to himself a large company of believers in Christ Jesus in Nigeria, and*
- 3. These believers have gathered themselves together in local churches with their ministers and officers, and*
- 4. These churches have their Local and District Councils, it was believed to be the will of God that these local churches with their Councils be formally established as a branch of the Church Universal which Church known as the United Missionary Church of Africa was established and whose*

registered Trustees were registered as a corporate body with effect from 29th day of September, 1956, under Certificate of Incorporation No. 427, and

5. It is now believed there should be an autonomous United Missionary Church of Africa established in Nigeria whose responsibility shall include also that of the United Missionary Society, and

6. For this purpose the United Missionary Society has by this resolution of the Field Executive Committee Minute E 31 of their meeting held on 22nd Nov., 1977, appointed the persons whose names appear in Part I of the First schedule here to as its meeting of the Joint council held November 2 to 4, 1977, appointed the persons whose names appear in Part II of the First Schedule as its representatives to execute this agreement of Turnover and each resolution provides that executive by three quarters of the respective representatives shall be sufficient and binding.

NOW therefore THIS AGREEMENT WITNESSETH that the United Missionary Society and United Missionary Church of Africa by their representatives declare as follows:

1. United Missionary Church of Africa is hereby constituted and recognized as an equal and autonomous community of Christian believers joining in faith and heritage.

2. The doctrinal standards of the United Missionary Church of Africa are as set out in the Constitution.

3. It is the universal conviction of the United Missionary Church of Africa that the office of the Christian Ministry depends upon the call of God who bestows His gifts upon whom He will. Those whom the United Missionary Church of Africa recognizes as called of God and therefore receive into its ministry shall, when they have fulfilled the requirements, be ordained by the imposition of hands for spiritual endowment for the ministry and as expressive of the Church's recognition of the minister's call.

4. that provision shall be made through an agreed-upon Constitution for the establishment of an annual General Conference and the appointment of such Church Officers, Boards, Councils and Committees as a deemed necessary and that the General Conference shall be the final authority in the interpretation of the Constitution.

5. That the property now held in the name of the United Missionary Society shall be transferred to the United Missionary Church of Africa by vesting the property in such persons or bodies as may be designated for the purpose of holding the property of the United Missionary Church of Africa.

Signed and sealed at Ilorin this 5th day of January, 1978, by the appointed representatives set out in Schedules I and II of this agreement. (Merging Streams 1979:50)

From 1905 – 1955, UMCA had no constitution but used the Missionary Church of America based constitution and was controlled by field Superintendents and I. R. Sherk was the first Field Superintendent. Between 1956 when UMCA was registered to 1978 when the Turnover took place, UMCA used a draft Constitution by UMCA and the UMS and the UMCA Headquarters were the sole Administrators of the document. Between 1978 and 1990, the need for revision of the Constitution came up and so it was first revised in 1988,

after much debate on the contents which borders on ethnic sentiments and language problems, under the leadership of Bawa Salka and Jonathan Alabi Amao. From 1990 – 1996, UMCA used a kind of what Kolawole called Draft Implementation Formative Valuation of the Revised Constitution of 1988. (Constitution of UMCA ND 8-9). It was not until 2001 – 2006 that the UMCA has a Working Document as her Constitution due to the challenges highlighted earlier. (David 2014:125)

It is important to note that before the turnover, UMS had 14 Dispensaries, 17 elementary schools with three of such allowed to run full primary classes to standard 6, a Teachers' Training College, Bible Schools in Igbeti, Salka, Share, Tsaragi and Tungan Magajiya, and a Theological Institution in Ilorin. Some of the distinguished, gifted and dedicated indigenous workers and leaders who helped the missionaries to establish UMCA in Nigeria include: D. O. Taylor (the first UMCA ordained minister), Andrawus Nama, Nathaniel Jiya, and Abel Kolawole (a pioneer missionary to the Nupe people). (David 2014:125)

Contemporary UMCA

When the UMS Missionaries, came to Nigeria, they planted preaching stations and health centres to cater for the health needs of the people they went to. Therefore, each church planted had a dispensary too in the following order: Shonga 1905 (this one no longer exists), Jebba 1909, Mokwa 1911, Share 1919, Zuru 1925, Kpaki 1926, Share 1927, Tsaragi 1937 and Yelwa/Yauri 1937. (Bello 2014:51). The denomination also had UMS Hospital and Nursing School Tungan Magajiya established in 1949 which grew to be like a specialist hospital in the Northern region. (Bello 2014:35)

UMCA has the following Bible Institutions: Yoruba Bible School Igbeti established in 1942, Hausa Bible School established in 1951, Nupe Bible School established in 1951, Magajiya Bible School for further studies and qualification for ordination, the United Missionary Church of Africa Theological College (UMCATC) (Bello 2014:35), Ilorin established in 1956, and the Bible Correspondence Course in Jebba started in 1956.

In the 50s, UMS had 4 Primary Schools, namely, UMS Primary School Igbeti, UMS Primary School Jebba, UMS Primary School Zuru and UMS Primary School Share. She had UMS Junior High School Igbeti in 1958 and UMS Teachers' Training College Jebba in 1946 moved to Igbeti in 1947, then to Mokwa in 1961 and taken over in 1973. David Kolawole one of the early Principals said, Mokwa Teachers College as it came to be called, "...was rated as one of the best Grade III Colleges in Northern Nigeria during my tenure as Principal...." (David 2014: 47).^v

Articles of Faith

1. *The Triune God: UMCA believes that the one and only God is Spirit, self-existent, infinite, personal, immutable and eternal in his being. UMCA believe in His perfect holiness, love, justice, goodness, wisdom and truth, omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. UMCA believes that God is the creator and sustainer of the Universe, and that He is eternally existence in three persons, one in substance and co-equal in power and glory, the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Ps. 137:7-10; Mal. 3:16; Jn. 4:24; II Cor. 13:14.*
2. *The Bible: UMCA believes that the Bible consisting of the sixty-six books of both the Old and New Testaments, given by divine inspiration, is inerrant in its original manuscripts and is the final authority in matters pertaining to faith and conduct. UMCA accepts the right and duty of personal judgment under the illumination of the Holy Spirit in the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. I Tim. 3:16; I Pet. 1:25; II Pet. 1:21.*
3. *Man: UMCA believes that man was created in the image of God but fell into sin and therefore was lost, and only through regeneration by the Holy Spirit can salvation and spiritual life be obtained. Gen. 1:27; acts 4:12; Rom. 3:23.*
4. *Jesus Christ and the Work of Salvation: UMCA believes in Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of God. He is fully God and fully man. UMCA believe in the truth of His teaching and His perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world which He offered once and for all in His death on the cross, His bodily resurrection from the dead and His ascension; His intercession and His coming again in power and glory. Jn. 1:18; 3:15; Tit. 2:1; Heb. 4:15.*
5. *The Holy Spirit: UMCA believes in the Holy Spirit as the third person of the God-head, and that through His illumination, conviction and regeneration, men are brought to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. He continues the work of sanctification in the lives of believers and preserves them for eternal life. Acts 1:8; Rm. 10:9-10; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 4:1; I Thess. 5:23; II Thess. 2:13*
6. *The Last Things: UMCA believes in the physical second advent of Christ, which is the hope of the Church, the source of her encouragement, consolation, and up-building for purification, holiness and inspiration for activity and service: the resurrection of the body and final judgment of all men, the eternal perfection and blessedness of the saved and the eternal punishment of the lost. Jn. 14:13; I Thess. 4:13-16; Heb. 12:5-8; Rev. 21:7-22. (David 2014: 47, Constitution of UMCA 2006:9-11).*

Doctrinal Beliefs

The Church is evangelical and as such accepts the infallibility of the Bible and its final authority in matters pertaining to faith and conduct, and believes that the Bible teaches:

1. *The Divine inspiration, authority and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures.*
2. *The right and duty of personal judgment in the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures.*
3. *The unity of the Godhead, and the Trinity of persons therein.*
4. *The total depravity of human nature in consequence of the fall and need of regeneration.*

5. *The incarnation of the Son of God, His atoning death and resurrection for sins of mankind and His mediatorial intercession and reign.*

6. *The justification of the sinner by faith alone.*

7. *The work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of the sinner, the purification and infilling of the believer.*

8. *The immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, the judgment of the World by our Lord Jesus Christ.*

9. *The Divine institution of the Christian Ministry, the obligation and perpetuity of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. (Constitution of UMCA 2006:9-11)*

On Spiritual Gifts, UMCA believes all that the Bible says about the person and work of the Holy Spirit. UMCA believes that every Christian has the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9 and 1Cor. 12:13); every Christian should be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). UMCA believes there is a special in-filling at first, but this must be renewed and kept up-to-date day by day. UMCA also believe that the Holy Spirit also gives spiritual gifts of Christians to help them perform various kinds of services. Some of the gifts, like healing, are miraculous, while others, like gifts of helps, mercy, giving seem more ordinary. They are all special abilities, for service given by the Holy Spirit.

UMCA would also want to note the following: The Holy Spirit decides which gifts to give to which Christian (Heb. 2:14; 1Cor. 12:11). Each Christian has at least one gift (I Peter 4:10 and 1 Cor. 12:7). There is no single gift to all Christians (I Cor.12:4-30) (Speaking in tongues is not given to every Spirit-filled believer: therefore, it should not be considered the necessary sign of being filled with the Spirit). The purpose of gifts is to build each other up in the body of Christ. (I Cor. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:12; I Pet. 4:10 and Eph. 4:11-12). The gifts must be used in a decent and orderly way. (I Cor. 14:23, 33, 40). The gifts of the Spirit can be controlled by the persons having the gifts (1 Cor. 14:28, 32).

On Speaking in tongues, UMCA believes it is a phenomenon which is characterized by spontaneous utterance of sounds in a language which the speaker has never learned and may not understand. This is done occasionally amidst deep emotional prayer mood, or in worship. So as a gift of the Holy Spirit the UMCA subscribes to this phenomenon to be used for the edification of the Church. (1Cor. 14). While we do not forbid the use of this gift in the Church, we caution that: Its use should be more in private devotion and less in public worship; we encourage that this gift be used orderly and decently as in 1Cor, 14:26-33. We encourage more manifestations of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in the life of the individual Christian than speaking in tongues (Matt. 7:20; 1Cor. 13: 1-3; Gal. 5:22- 23). We reject, however: That every believer must speak in tongues; that any believer should be taught how to speak in tongue, that speaking in tongues is a sign of regeneration or spiritual maturity.

Divine Healing: Divine healing is a direct act of God to make well and sound in the body, mind and spirit. UMCA believes in the healing ministry as it is mandated and exercised in the Bible especially in the ministry of Jesus Christ (2 King 5:14; 20: 1-7; Matt. 10:1; Mk. 3:13-15; James 5:13-16). As UMCA encourage the healing ministry, she has the following conditions: we should not look to man, Jesus is our healer. The only element to be used in healing is oil and should be used as a symbol only (James 5:14-16). Healing is freely bestowed by God and not to become commercialized in any way by the ministers. Medical healing does not counteract divine healing; both complement each other.

Deliverance Ministry: Deliverance ministry is aimed at setting the Children of God free from various forms of satanic attack, demonic oppression, wicked principalities and powers. While UMCA do not believe that all human problems are demonic and that Christians could be possessed by demons, she believes that Christians could be influenced and oppressed in different areas of life (material, physical, financial, spiritual, etc.) by demons. UMCA believe that the Lord who emphasized deliverance in His own Ministry (Luke 4:18, 40-41) has given the ministry of deliverance to the Church (Mark 16:17-18). The Ministry of deliverance requires among other things, godly discernment and specialized knowledge. Therefore, UMCA caution ministers not to assume that every Christian problem requires deliverance. Those who need pastoral help should receive counseling, encouragement, discipline, prayer support and deliverance in keeping with the actual causes of the need. (Smith 1979).

Fundamental Principles

In principle, UMCA set in place for herself the following objectives:

1. To advance Christian knowledge and practice through the establishment and operation of churches, schools and medical institutions and other services.
2. To provide places of worship and fellowship where God is praised, His word is proclaimed, people receive Christ as Saviour and Lord, believers are instructed, prayer is offered, discipline and love are exercised, and the ordinances are administered.
3. To obey the Great commission of our Lord so that through evangelism and missions, new believers may be gathered into new churches.
4. To foster spiritual unity and cooperation with Christian believers of other denominations.
5. To own personal properties, real and personal.
6. To establish companies, to deal in the sale of religious and other educational books, stationery and other items.
7. To invest in such other financial undertakings that can help in the propagation of the Gospel.
8. To prepare people for heaven; and
9. To take the gospel to all unreached people in Africa and the world. (UMCA Ministers' Manual 2011:21-25)

Organizational and Administrative Structure

Before delving into the study of the organizational structure of UMCA, it is expedient to look at the definition. Structure is “an arrangement or organization, the way in which parts are formed into a whole. Something formed of many parts.” (Bello 72-72). From inception, the early leaders of U.M.C.A adopted the Semi-Episcopal form of Church Government and so, the administration and work of UMCA as a denomination was directed by five denominational boards, each of which is responsible to the General Conference. They are the General Board, Foreign Board, the Church Extension Board, the Publication Board and the Coordinating Educational Board who meet twice a year. Like her mother church UMC, UMCA government operates on three levels, namely: The General Conference, the District Conference and the Local Church Conference. The line of authority as can be seen in the diagram (appendix 2 and 3), is in ascending and descending order. All the various levels have to be passed through before an instruction or otherwise is given. Also in the descending order, the decisions have to go through the levels to the actual level at which the decision is to be conveyed.

The General Conference meets annually representing the entire denomination, departments, institutions and agencies; approve major policy decisions affecting any part of the denomination; consider recommendations from boards, general officers, departments or District Conferences; to serve as the final arbiter in the interpretation of the denomination’s constitution and adjudication of problems of major consequences which have not been satisfactorily resolved on lower levels; and to transact all businesses not otherwise provided but as it would affect the growth and unity of the denomination. (Global anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopaedia Online)

This conference made rules relative to changes in discipline, procedure of organizations directly responsible to it, where necessary, it makes bye-laws for its government in accordance with the provision of the constitutions and actions of the General Conference, and delegates authority to proper personnel expected to carry out these or other functions. The affairs in each District are directed by the Church District Superintendent (CDS) (formerly called the Presiding Elder) for an initial period of four years. (Constitution of UMCA 2006:17-28)

And the Local Church Conference At this annual meeting, the officers of the church are expected to give reports or account of their stewardship to the entire church, and make recommendations to the District Conference. Similarly, it carries out the recommendations of the General and District Conferences in matters that concerns them and affects the unity

and growth of the denomination and her local fellowship group. (Constitution of UMCA 2006:30-32)

Growth and Expansion of UMCA

As stated earlier, Banfield came in 1905, in 1909, he went to Jebba and laid the cornerstone of the church on 3rd January, 1910. Then the Mission station formerly belonging to the C.M.S was occupied on Jan. 1, 1911 at Mokwa by United Missionary Society. In 1916, the mission was permitted to locate a mission in Share; in 1919 a large one was established in Igbeti, and by 1921, the Nigerian Government opened some parts of Northern Nigeria to missions, which led to the opening of a new mission at Salka, the beginning of work among the Kamberis. Zuru was the first UMS mission station in Northern Nigeria and it served the Northern Churches at that time, it was opened in 1925 and in 1937 another station was opened at Yelwa. In about 1947, a main station was opened at Tugan Magajiya. From the above listed major stations, the Church began to grow to other parts of the country. According to Crampton, by 1977, UMCA has 100 Churches 15,000 members in attendance each Sunday service. (Kaufmann)

Present Membership Status

At the turn over on 5th Jan., 1978, UMCA had four (4) District Superintendents. Namely: Andrawus Nama (Arewa/Northern District), Simon Adeyemo Adedokun (Southern Districts), Joseph Adeyanju Adeyemo (Yoruba Kwara/Ilorin District), and Peter Kolo Audu (Nupe District.) This grew in January 1988, to 7 Districts, namely: Agwara / Ya'uri District, Central District, Chapel District, Kontagora District, Kwara District, Northern District and Southern District. It grew to 15 Districts in 2000 and presently, UMCA has 31 Districts and 2 Area Councils directly under the Headquarters. (see appendix 1)

From the diagram in appendix 1, presently, UMCA has: 812 Pastors (excluding Church Planters all over the Denomination), 1,089 Churches (excluding Preaching Stations), over 122,931 members, (UMCA Update 2017) in 31 Districts and 2 Area Church Councils; and spread in 14 States of the Federation and the FCT. Interview: Bawa)^{vi} It is also important to mention that about 172 Missionaries served in this denomination from 1905 to 1999.

National Leadership Profile

The under listed are the presidents that handled the affairs of the denomination, after it was handed over to the indigenes (Nigerians).

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Revd. (Prof) Jacob Bawa Isa Salka | Jan. 1978 |
| 2. Late Revd. Jonathan Alabi Amao | June 1980 – Dec. 1991 |
| 3. Revd. (Dr) James Tswanya Harman | Jan. 1992 – Dec. 1998 |

4. Late Revd. (Dr) Peter A. Ishola	Jan. 1999 – Dec. 2004
5. Revd. (Prof) Jacob Bawa Isa Salka	Jan. 2005 – Dec. 2006
6. Late Revd. Ishaya Noma	Jan. 2007 – Dec. 2013
7. Revd. Peter Olanrewaju Awojobi (acting)	Feb. 2014 – Dec. 2014
8. Revd. (Dr) Moses Tswanya	Jan. 2015 to date

At the point of the departure of the Canadian Church in 1987, World Partners was formed as the official mission agency of both the Canadian and American Missionary Churches working to assist the Nigerian Church of UMCA. Ten years later the alliance between the Canadian and American church officially dissolved in the form of a merger. The new partners, having taken each other's measure for many years, produced a solid and remarkably fruitful union called the World Partners which emerged as a powerful force for missions linking the two countries together. (Dennis). The World Partners continued to serve as the mission agency for the Missionary Church of the United States to oversee and assist her mission fields around the world in form of partnership as the word connotes. To date the relationship with the world Partners has remained cordial as they come visiting on invitations or to render assistance in any form and there are still alliances with the World Partners on issues that affects the denomination. An example was when assistance was needed to revive the UMS Mission fields in Sierra Leone and Liberia due to the aftermath of their civil wars in 2008 and 2011 respectively. (Dennis).

Prospects of the United Missionary Church of Africa

Since UMCA stands for the truth and preaches a balanced Gospel that is aimed at the "Total Man" the Denomination has great prospects by taking advantage of the opportunities below:

1. Take advantage of programs like Conferences, Crusades, Outreaches, etc. When you go around the cities of this country, you find the streets, walls and fences of buildings littered with postal, banners and handbills inviting people for one program or the other. It has become obvious that the Church to some has become a business venture, and avenue to milk and sap unsuspecting individuals of their hard-earned resources, through hypnosis, gimmicks and other ungodly ways. Since UMCA stands and preaches the truth, and knowing fully well the yearnings of the people for the word of God as could be seen everywhere and every time a program is called for or advertised; the denomination can take the initiative of moving in with the power of the word to get more and true converts to Christ.
2. Political instability all over the world: The political situation in the country and the world at large is no longer news. Particularly in this nation, the social and print Medias are today awash with unfortunate and disheartening events following preparations for

and the aftermath of elections. Many are apprehensive of politics and the voting process in the country. UMCA as a church should take this opportunity to instill the fear of God into the people to know leadership is a calling and responsibility to both God and man. Similarly, it can only be given by God.

3. Poverty and Economic Recession biting hard on the masses: According to the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), recession can be defined as “a significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy, lasting more than a few months, normally visible in real gross domestic product (GDP), real income, employment, industrial production and wholesale-retail sales.” (5 Things Nigerian Need to Know). This is majorly caused by inflation which is a general rise in the prices of goods and services over a period of time. The love of Christ shared at such a time as this could be real remedy bringing respite to the populace. Many are into so many dubious activities in trying to make ends meet, thereby endangering themselves and those around them. Promiscuity, robbery, lukewarm attitudes to the things of God are clear evidences of the present situation around the country. UMCA can cash on this opportunity to meet the people at the point of their needs through empowerment programs, giving of soft loans, visiting the poor and needy, widows and orphans with food stuff and so on.

4. Outbreak of diseases: Diseases are at times natural disasters and humans can also be causative agents. In all these, man needs relief if not total deliverance from this plague. The case of Ebola, HIV/AIDS, different kinds of Cancer, just to mention a few constantly plague the human race. Owing to the fact that Jesus promised healing and succor to those who believe in Him; if UMCA can key into the prophetic ministry and gifts of the church, inroads will be made to reach out even to the unreached. Remembering that even the founding fathers of the denomination used medical outreach as one of their fastest and most effective method of evangelism.

5. All Institutions of Biblical Training owned by the denomination: Being blessed with so many Bible Schools and a Theological College, UMCA can take advantage of these to both raise man-power for her ministry and others and also use it as a source of additional income to sustain the denomination at large (through school fees, etc.).

6. Presence of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs): The menace of Boko Haram, Fulani Herdsmen and other ethnic and religious clashes have rendered many homeless and turned them to refugees in their home land. These developments led the government to set-up Camps to muster succor to these affected individuals including children. However, knowing the nature of people saddled with the responsibility of distributing relief materials, and the economic hardship in the country, these people are most times left without proper care and so are exposed to all kinds of humiliations, hardship and even diseases. UMCA can harness her human and material resources to meet the needs of these ailing population which will invariably bring them to Jesus.

Recommendations

1. This paper recommends identifying some of the Pastors who could not do proper pastoral duties and encourage them to take up teaching appointments or get them involved in certain church responsibilities like: Administration, Evangelism, etc.
2. The denomination should reach out to donor agencies, her sons and daughters, and even those who have benefitted in one way or the other from her kind gestures, to share her challenges and seek for support or assistance to do more to better KSSD. This may mean reviving the "Arewa Sons' and Daughters' Forum" which seems not to be effective today.¹⁰ The Total Youth Visioners who are initiators of the UMCA Old Arewa Youth Conference should also be incorporated in to this forum because they are also sons and daughters, and beneficiaries of the kind gestures of UMCA.¹¹ Similarly, the denomination should organize programs like "Award Night" where individuals who have been contributors to the growth of the denomination would be honoured to serve as an encouragement to them and which would spur others to follow their examples.
3. UMCA should form cooperatives, empowerment schemes and avenues to help her pastors and even members to be self-reliant.
4. The Church should start schools, cybercafés, internet facilities, hospitals, clinic, pharmaceutical stores, industries, business opportunities, extra-curricular activities, sports and recreation, vocational training, skill acquisition centres, cooperatives, libraries, extra-mural classes, and business ventures like Guest Houses,¹⁵ or seek for more ways to raise funds for her activities to reduce the burden of contributions and too much offerings on the members.
5. The Church should change her approach and attitudes in evangelism and missions. The researcher recommends the following strategies on evangelism: One on one strategy, House-to-House strategy; Visitation strategy, Open Air strategy, Tract strategy, Prison Ministry strategy, Tent Making strategy.
6. The church should offer scholarship to Pastors in the seminaries or Bible Schools.
7. UMCA should explore the availability of ICT to advertise the denomination and so that scholars and the general public could access information on the denomination,
8. UMCA should have the correct and proper records and statistics of her staff and assets for record purpose and for posterity. This will also bring about administrative convenience.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the UMCA like her foster sister, The United Missionary Church had a definite evangelical theology of Armenian and Wesleyan character which is officially set forth in doctrines and discipline of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church. In addition to the standard evangelical doctrines, it teaches entire sanctification as a second work of

grace after justification and regeneration, but also growth in grace and the possibility of sin and restoration after justification. As to ordinances, baptism is for adults and by immersion only; open communion is practiced, also washing of the saints' feet. The premillennial position in eschatology was held. Non-resistance, nonconformity in dress, and the laying aside of needless indulgences were also a part of the teaching. With these rich values, the country is ripe enough for the activities of UMCA to bring in more people to the Christian fold.

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ⁱ cf. Lynn Jost and Connie Faber. Family Matters: Discovering the Mennonite Brethren. Kindred Production, 2002. <http://mbconf.ca/home/about-us/our-story/Mennonites>. 17/4/2016.)

ii cf. Timothy Paul Erdel, Illinois Mennonite Heritage, *The Missionary Church: from Radical Outcasts to the Wild Child of Anabaptism*. <http://missionary.church/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/MarriageMemoryMission1>. 17/4/2016. cf. History of the Missionary Church 1883-1983 – One hundred Years of historical distinction. <https://www.mcusa.org>. (cf. C. Henry Smith, *The Mennonites and Their Heritage*, (Indiana: Bethel Publishing house, 1950), 69). 17/4/2016.

iii Back in Canada, in addition to speaking passionately about the need of the Gospel in the Sudan, Banfield got married to Althea Priest on 1st March 1905. He was ordained at the Church in Souffville, Ontario, and with his wife returned to Nigeria later in 1905. (For them to be allowed to get married however, Althea had to resign her “dedication” – similar to ordination, as a female evangelist which is in line with the rules of the city mission workers society. Even to date UMCA do not believe in the ordination of women.)

iv The college was initially called United Missionary Society College (UMSC), until 1978, when the missionaries handed over full administration to Nigerians, then the name became United Missionary Theological College (U.M.T.C). In 1997, the name of the college was changed to United Missionary Church of Africa Theological College (UMCATC).

v The College which was first established in Jebba was initially called United Missionary Society College (UMSC), until 1978, when the missionaries handed over full administration to Nigerians, then the name became United Missionary Theological College (U.M.T.C). In 1997, the name of the College was changed to United Missionary Church of Africa Theological College (UMCATC). The College affiliated to the University of Ibadan for B.A. Religious Studies and Diploma in Religious Studies. The college has a correspondence status with the Accrediting council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA) and they have applied for Accredited States, which is yet to be granted. The college is also affiliated to the University of Ilorin for Diploma in Religious Education. Some of the graduates are holding prestigious professional positions in national universities, while many others are in leadership position in different church denominations both in Nigeria and abroad. Some of them are, Paul Vincent (in New York, USA), Prof. S.O. Abogunrin, Prof. A.O. Abe, Rt. Rev. Gbonigi, and Prof. M.F. Akangbe (in Nigeria), and others.

vi This according to the General Secretary of the Denomination (Rev. David C. Bawa) and the unfaithfulness of some District Superintendent is far below the expected membership of the denomination. (Interview on 29/2/18).