

INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND UNIFICATION OF THE CELESTIAL CHURCH OF CHRIST WORLDWIDE COMMITTEE

1.0. THE COMMISSION

- 1.1 Celestial Church of Christ USA Diocese is part of one spiritual, worldwide, united and indivisible Holy Church with the mission of evangelizing the world through the proclamation of the Word - The Good News of the Messiah, Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God.
- 1.2 The USA Diocese National Convention is a biennial event which evaluates the current condition of the church and attempts to provide lasting solutions to identified challenges. Accordingly, the Diocese had, as part of the ongoing preparation for the National Convention scheduled to be held in May 2019 in Chicago USA, constituted a Committee: the Institutionalization and Unification of the Celestial Church of Christ Worldwide Committee, and charged it with the task of proffering recommendations aimed at unifying the different factions of the church. The outcome of the Committee's research, prior to the convention, will be shared with participants at the 2019 National Convention.

2.0 INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND UNIFICATION OF THE CELESTIAL CHURCH OF CHRIST WORLDWIDE COMMITTEE

- 2.1 The Institutionalization and Unification of the Celestial Church of Christ Worldwide Committee, as the name implies, was assigned the critical role of **ASSESSING THE SOURCE OF DIVISION IN THE CHURCH, GATHER USEFUL INFORMATION, DEVELOP STRATEGIES AND COME UP WITH IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR EFFECTIVE PROCESS TO INSTITUTIONALIZE AND UNIFY THE DIFFERENT FACTIONS OF THE CHURCH.**

2.1 Members of the Institutionalization and Unification of the Celestial Church of Christ Worldwide Committee

- 2.1.1 The members of the Committee are:
 1. L/S/S/E/S Olusola Odufuwa - Nigeria
 2. Superior Evangelist Tokunbo Soyoye – Europe
 3. MC Adedayo Pelote - North America
 4. Senior Evangelist Emmanuel Onwodi – Nigeria
 5. Superior Evangelist Victor Adewusi – North America

2.2 Meetings of the Committee

- 2.2.1 The Unification Committee had its first meeting on Saturday April 28, 2018 through Teleconferencing with five members representing Nigeria, Europe and North America. Subsequent meetings took place thereafter.

3.0 SOURCE OF DIVISION IN THE CHURCH

- 3.1 The Committee noted that there are currently about 6 clergies laying claim to the Pastor seat of the Church namely:
 1. Pastor Mobiyina Oshoffa (Appointed by the Trustees - Ketu)
 2. Pastor Orovboni (Appointed by Nigeria Diocese - Tejuosho)
 3. Pastor Omoge (Self Proclaimed - Akure)
 4. Pastor G.B. Shonekan (Self Proclaimed - Florida)
 5. Pastor J. K Owodunni (Self Proclaimed - Ijeshatedo)
 6. Pastor Adeogun (Appointed by Republic of Benin Diocese)
- 3.2 The Committee set goals and how to further work on creating a conducive atmosphere where all agitations can be tabled, discussed and decisions that will be in the best interest of the church, not individuals reached. Each member of the Committee set out to research into the origin of pastoral discord in the fold. Below is the history of pastoral claims in the church.
 - 3.2.1 It will be recalled that even during the lifetime of the Pastor Founder, there were some elements of discord from some groups, the likes of the Elesho group in Idi Oro and Woleader Johnson in Ipaja. However, none of those people ever refer to themselves as Pastor then, and that may be in our opinion, a deference to the fact that the Pastor Founder was still alive.
 - 3.2.2 The division became palpable after the demise of the Pastor Founder and subsequently Reverend Abiodun Bada was installed by the Board of Trustees as the successor. It was a decision that did not sit well with the then Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Baba Owodunni because according to him, the constitution stipulated, and

the Pastor Founder affirmed many times before his death that the Holy Spirit will be the one to choose his successor. Baba Owodunni who happened to be the Chairman of the Board of Trustees then took the Trustee and Rev. Bada to court. This step taken by Baba Owodunni opened the subsequent floodgates of many court cases regarding the Leadership and Pastoral position of this great church. Baba Owodunni's court case against the Board of Trustees and Pastor Bada was a protracted one and unfortunately for the church, the court ruled in favor of Baba Owodunni and directed that Rev. Bada should stop parading himself as the Pastor of the Church. From thence, the seed of leadership discord was permanently sown in the church and that seed is what has become an albatross up till today.

- 3.2.3 One of the things that was discovered is that the initial composition of the Board of Trustees was filled with members from practically one clan, while the membership of the church transcend race, tribal and color. Personal grievances among the Board membership developed into partisan interests and subsequently, it degenerated into acrimonies, which is what we believed led the then Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Baba Owodunni, to revolt against the decision of the body he headed, and he eventually took them and their appointee to court.
- 3.2.4 While the wrangling was going on between Pastor Bada and Baba Owodunni in Nigeria, the Republic of Benin Diocese seized that unsettlement situation to declare Baba Agbaossi as a Pastor within their jurisdiction. It must be noted that the then President of Republic of Benin, President Kerekou, played a statesmanship role to unite Baba Bada and Baba Agbaossi and met with the two Fathers in Lome, Togo in 1988. Despite the unity meeting in Lome, neither of the two Fathers relinquished their position as Pastors. This was the beginning of the separation between the Supreme Headquarters situated in Republic of Benin and the International Headquarters situated in Nigeria.
- 3.2.5 The issue got complicated sometime in 1991 when Evangelist Shonekan who resides in Florida was granted limited authority by Pastor Bada during one of his trips to North America to incorporate the church in North America and become its Registered Agent. Evangelist Shonekan, unbeknownst to Pastor Bada and the Trustees, had his own hidden agenda to sideline Pastor Bada. He incorporated the church and illegally signed the incorporation paper as the Pastor of the Church. He solicited Pastor Bada to make him the Head of America Diocese and it was after the rejection of this request and the death of Pastor Bada that he rose up to lay claim to be the Pastor, thus becoming another court battle.
- 3.2.6 After the death of Pastor Bada, Baba Ajose who was next in line to Pastor Bada was chosen by the Trustees to become the Pastor, but fate dealt a big blow to the church with the death of Pastor Ajose just seven days after his installation as the Pastor.
- 3.2.7 At this stage, things became thorny because instead of the Board of Trustees to follow the guide they had used since the demise of the Pastor Founder by appointing the next in line, they bypassed that protocol and appointed the son of the Founder, Baba Mobiyina Oshoffa who was then the Head of Diocese of France as the successor to Pastor Ajose. This singular act threw the Nigeria Diocese into disorder and this led to the emergence of Baba Jesse Faction. Baba Jesse was installed as Pastor by a faction of Nigeria Shepherds and after the death of Baba Jesse, Baba Maforikan was installed. After the death of Baba Maforikan, that faction broke into two factions and that is where Baba Orovboni and Baba Omoge emerged from.
- 3.2.8 To worsen the already bad situation, one of the sons of the late Pastor Founder, Evangelist Tosho, who has been a Personal Assistant to Baba Mobiyina Oshoffa since his ascension as Pastor, woke up one day and with the support of some mischievous elements, declared himself a "unification pastor". According to some sources, he has since renounced his proclamation as a pastor and that is why his name is not featured on the "Pastors" List.

3.3 Contributory Factors to Divergent Pastoral Claims

- 3.3.1 We discovered that church leaders who are proclaiming themselves or others as pastors are doing it for selfish intentions and personal gains. The unrestricted access to church funds like anointment fees and pastoral returns from parishes makes the office so attractive and many unscrupulous shepherds who are benefitting from the

division and instabilities were also contributing in no small measures to the delinquencies. Lack of probity, accountability and corporate governance culture in the commissioning of our Pastoral appointment gives room for manipulative tendencies, which in turn allow every dick and harry to aspire or make it easy for them to pronounce themselves as pastors.

- 3.3.2 It is very interesting to note the existence of many groups who are working separately as units to find solution to this prevalent problem. However, because these groups are working as individual units, the cohesiveness and sense of purpose that will bring about a true and lasting solution remains elusive. Every group is of the notion that the other group is working for an interest group, hence there is lack of trust. Without trust and sense of urgency, the situation has persisted unabated.

4.0 UNIFICATION

- 4.1 There is no gain saying that the largest faction in all the factions that lay claims to having a Pastoral seat is Pastor Mobiyina Faction. It is clear that his faction controls four out of five important localities of the church beginning and strength, KETU, MAKOKO, KM 35 AND CELESTIAL CITY, IMEKO. This, in our humble opinion, makes it possible for this faction and put them in a magnanimous position to carry the burden of bringing about the evasive peace to the rest of the factions. It would be a monumental mistake on the part of Baba Mobiyina faction to think that because they have the largest numbers of accrued legacies they not need to worry about unifying the scattered bodies of the church. If there is any faction that should take a genuine lead on this mission, it is this faction because of their gainful position. Consequently, efforts should be made to prevail on Pastor Mobiyina Oshoffa to use his good office to initiate a well-intentioned peaceful meeting with the likes of Baba Owodunni, Baba Adeogun, Baba Orovboni and Baba Banjo.
- 4.2 Also, we believe that the USA Diocese is uniquely in an advantageous position to play a significant role in facilitating a PEACE RESOLUTION MEETING. Although we are aware that the Diocese recognizes Baba Mobiyina Oshoffa as Pastor, but that notwithstanding, the Diocese can use the 2019 Convention as a facilitating ground by inviting prominent members among the key opposing camps. Baba Owodunni, Baba Adeogun and Baba Orovboni and Baba Banjo are members that comes to mind. This could serve as an olive branch from the Diocese to create a conducive atmosphere to facilitate ground for future peace meeting. Most of our Babas are old and we are sure they do not want to go and meet the Pastor Founder in the world beyond as a divider of the church he left behind. The USA Diocese can take the lead by sending emissaries to them.
- 4.3 For us to have any meaningful talk about institutionalization, we must have a unified body and we cannot talk about unification as one church under one Pastor if we do not create the necessary path for peaceful atmosphere to discuss the modalities of achieving one through the other.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TOWARDS INSTITUTIONALIZATION

5.1 Trademarking and Branding the Church

- 5.1.1 The Committee has observed the need for the name and logo of the Church to be trademarked internationally. This will ensure that the express approval of the governing body of the church is sought by anyone or body seeking its usage and foster abidance to the Church's rules of corporate governance. Furthermore, the Church should be branded to guarantee its unique identity and influence people's perception of the Church. This is particularly important in order to correct the erroneous perception about the Church.
- 5.1.2 In view of the above, the Committee recommends that the services of world class attorneys, corporate governance gurus and branding experts should be solicited to salvage the name of the church - CELESTIAL CHURCH OF CHRIST.

5.2 Constitutional Review

- 5.2.1 It is imperative that the Celestial Church of Christ Constitution needs to be reviewed, particularly to provide the procedure for appointment of a Pastor and other pertinent issues which were, hitherto, not covered in the present Constitution. Furthermore, it is imperative that the Constitution of the Church takes into consideration the

global nature of the church in today's world.

- 5.2.2 Regarding the amendment of the Constitution, it is noted that *Section 184 of the Constitution stipulates that "The Pastor, by himself or on the recommendation of the Pastor-in-Council, may revoke, alter or add to any of the provisions of the Constitution". It is therefore recommended that the various factions are involved in the review of the Constitution to gain acceptability. The reviewers of the Constitution should include spiritually inclined, learned and well-versed Celestial people. Necessary steps should, thereafter, be taken to ensure that the Constitution is well executed to give the document the necessary backing of the law.

5.3 Dioceses

- 5.3.1 As at today, there are One Hundred and Ninety-Seven acknowledged countries in the world and no matter how small, big or number of states in a country, there is only one Head of State per country. Any country that wants to have two Heads of State will invariably split and there has hardly been any country that has split peacefully. The resultant effect of splitting is war and waste of lives. It is in this wisdom of thought, we recommend that each country be a Diocese unto itself with one Head of Diocese. A country with HOD should have a functioning Diocesan Council which should comprise of church workers and technocrats. A country should have at least Twenty-One operational parishes for the office of HOD to be created. If there is a vacancy created be it by death, resignation or removal of an HOD, the Diocesan Council of the Country will summon a meeting within 30 days of the vacancy and will recommend two or three eligible members to the Pastoral Council.

- 5.3.2 The Pastoral Council will, upon receipt of such recommendation as above, grade each eligible member submitted by his Diocese and make recommendations to the office of the Pastor and the Pastor will have the final say on who becomes the HOD of that country. There should be a Council of Head of Overseas Dioceses (HOOD). The Head of Diocese of Nigeria, Republic of Benin and Ivory Coast should be exempted from the membership of this council. The Council of HOOD should have at least 3 members of their council in the membership of the Pastoral Council. The HOOD should bear in mind when selecting the members to represent them at the Pastoral Council that membership to the Pastoral Council is a lifetime membership, except if the person is removed as HOD for any impeachable breach by the Pastoral Council and sanctioned by the Pastor.

5.4 Board of Trustees

- 5.4.1 The composition and process of appointing members as Board of Trustees need serious review. Celestial Church of Christ is no longer a Nigerian or Republic of Benin church, and as such, membership of the Board should span across prominent continents that have sizable numbers of parishes – namely Africa, Europe and North America. We are aware that there are parishes in South America and Asia, but they are still in the embryo stage. Accordingly, Europe and USA should have representatives on the Board. The Board of Trustees should be composed of well educated, well-travelled and business minded persons. It should comprise of women and men of integrity and should not exceed Eleven in number. Membership of the Board shall be for a period of 5 years and shall be renewable for two terms at the discretion of the Pastor.

- 5.4.2 It is recommended that the Pastor should not be a member of the Board, although the responsibility to appoint the Board Chairman shall remain solely with him. The Pastor can, however, attend all the Board of Trustees meetings as an observer. The Board of Trustees should be the Think Tank and policy originating body of the church with oversight power over the finances of the overall church. The Board of Trustees shall have no power whatsoever over the Pastor and the Pastor shall reserve the right to dissolve and reconstitute the Board at will, in consultation with the Pastoral Council.

5.5 Pastoral Council/Celestial Cardinals Council

- 5.5.1 The Committee took time to study the Catholic process of appointing a Pope and we recommend that it should be studied further by Celestial Church of Christ. We believe that the process of appointing a Pope is holy spirit inclined despite the elective method. They have College of Cardinals and Celestial Church can create something in that line among our morally eligible, highly spiritual and Bible inspired leaders. It can be called PASTORAL COUNCIL or CELESTIAL CARDINALS COUNCIL and its composition should be at least twenty-one (21) in numbers, but not more than Forty-Nine (49).

- 5.5.2 In the event of the death of a sitting Pastor or resignation due to health or other reasons, the Council will gather together within 7 days after the interment of the deceased Pastor in person at Celestial City, Imeko to begin 21 days Fasting and Prayer Sessions without coming out of the conclave. It is in the process of this fasting and prayer assembly that they will conduct the election and elect one of themselves through the guidance of Holy Spirit to become the new Pastor. Any member of the Pastoral Council/Celestial Cardinals Council should be eligible to be elected by his Pastoral Council peers to the Pastor seat.
- 5.5.3 We recommend that at least three eligible members from the Head of Overseas Dioceses Council, as recommended by them, should be part of the Pastoral Council/Celestial Cardinals Council. Also, the HODs of Nigeria, Republic of Benin and Ivory Coast should be automatic members of the Pastoral Council/Celestial Cardinals Council. Three Members from the Board of Trustees, as decided by them, should also be members of the Pastoral Council/Celestial Cardinals Council. The Pastor, as the Chairman and Head of the Pastoral Council/Celestial Cardinals Council, will have the sole power to fill any vacancy that arises from the Council, provided that at no given time should the membership of the Council exceed 49. The Pastor shall not be a voting member of the Council but shall possess the power to nullify any decision of the Council. Once elected by his peers as the Pastor, the Pastoral Council/Celestial Cardinals Council cannot remove him from office. The Pastor is the Chairman and he Chairs all the meetings of the Pastoral Council. No member of the Pastoral council can call for a meeting of the council without the express consent of the Pastor
- 5.5.4 This Pastoral Council/Celestial Cardinals Council should not be confused with the current Pastor in Council Committee. We recommend the discontinuance of the Pastor in Council Committee because it is basically a dormant committee and its essence unfelt by the church at large.

5.6 Appointment of Pastor

- 5.6.1 The office of the Pastor is the highest spiritual office that is attainable in Celestial Church of Christ. It is, therefore, of utmost importance that the appointment to this office must spelled out in an unambiguous manner that will make it clear to all members of the church worldwide the process to choose one when the need arises. The provision of the current Constitution of the church and as pronounced by the Pastor Founder while he was alive dictates that the "Holy Spirit" will determine who will ascend this very important position when it becomes vacant, either by death, resignation or renunciation. The Committee recognizes, acknowledges and affirms the incontrovertible dominance of Holy Spirit as the greatest gift and guidance that God gave Celestial Church of Christ over all other denominations and we have no intention in any way, shape or form to diminish its supremacy and importance in the pastoral appointment process. However, it is the opinion of the Committee that this provision as stated in the current constitution and pronounced by the late Pastor Founder should be modified to protect the integrity of the appointment process.
- 5.6.2 Accordingly, we recommend that in the event of the death of a sitting Pastor or resignation due to health or other reasons, the Pastoral Council/Celestial Cardinals Council will gather together at Celestial City, Imeko in person within 7 days after the interment of the deceased Pastor to begin 21 days of Fasting and Prayer Session without coming out of the conclave. A member of the Pastoral Council/Celestial Cardinals Council who arrives late shall not be allowed to participate in the conclave once the door is closed. It is in the process of this fasting and prayer assembly that the Pastoral Council/Celestial Cardinals Council will conduct the election and elect someone amongst themselves, through the guidance of Holy Spirit, to become the new Pastor. The member with the highest number of supports among the members present at the conclave will become the Pastor. Any member of the Pastoral Council/Celestial Cardinals Council should be eligible to be elected by his Pastoral Council/Celestial Cardinals Council peers to the Pastor seat. The Pastor is the Supreme Head and his words is final on all administrative and spiritual matters affecting the church.

Respectfully Signed and Submitted on this day, Monday December 10, 2018:

Sup. Evangelist Victor Adewusi – Committee Chairman – North America
 MC Adedayo Pelote – Committee Secretary – North America
 Sup. Evangelist Tokunboh Soyoye – Europe Delegate
 Snr. Evangelist Emmanuel Onwodi – Nigeria Delegate
 L/S/S/E/S Sola Odufuwa – Nigeria Delegate

References:

*Celestial Church of Christ Nigeria Diocese Constitution 1980