

ANGLICAN STUDENTS' FELLOWSHIP OAU, ILE-IFE

REUNION 2025/ 50TH ANNIVERSARY

TOPIC: EVOLVED IDENTITY, ENDURING PURPOSE AND A LASTING LEGACY: THE JOURNEY FROM AYF TO ASF

Richard Olaniyi OGUNLUSI

Jeremiah 10:23 - O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walks to direct his steps.

Proverbs 20:24 - Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?

Preamble

I gained admission to the University to study Medicine in 1991 and I had an ambition to also become the President of the Student Union. I was intending to become a mover and shaker of the University. But God had His plans for me. The first week that I came into the University, around January 1992 I had the urge to attend fellowship even though I was yet to give my life to Christ. I located the venue of the Anglican Youth Fellowship by myself. And I decided to surrender my life to Christ. My personal inordinate ambitions disappeared. I started living for the Lord and monitoring my spiritual progress.

After I got born again, I was invited to another fellowship on campus. And I went for a whole session. I came back to AYF and restarted the Follow Up School/ Foundation School. I completed it this time and at the next choice which was just a few weeks after my graduation, I became the School Principal. I felt inadequate and I had to depend and rely on God. I used to go to the Sports Centre to pray at overnight every week. On one occasion, I had a vision that I would become the next President of the Fellowship and there are some other things that were not so clear then, some have come to pass, and I am still expectant. I could not share it, because I did not look like it. I was the smallest, the least and the last to join the fellowship of all that can potentially become the President. But about a year later it happened that I became the President. I was shaking and vibrating on the day of choice.

As the President in 1996, I got an invitation from the AYF of the Diocese of Ife to attend a National AYF Bible Study Conference at Owo, Ondo State. I decided to attend. I had the mind that it would give me an opportunity to see the leadership of the AYF and ask a question, "What is the plan of the National AYF for students on campuses? The baba was sincere and he said they have no plan.

The Formation of ASF

AYF University of Ife founded in 1975 was the first presence of Anglican students on any tertiary institution in Nigeria. The aim was to have a formidable and spiritual fellowships of Anglican Students in the higher institutions. The students are to serve as revival vehicle for the mother church and also to stand for excellence in academics.

The AYF Unife and also started AYF in Adeyemi College of Education. Later, we supported the establishment of Anglican Fellowships on campuses such as College of Education, Ila-Orangun, Esaoko Polytechnic, Federal Poly Offa, Federal Poly Ede, LAUTECH Ogbomoso

and University of Ilorin to mention a few. There was an Osun State Anglican Students' Campus Fellowship that brought together all the higher institutions in the state together in 1996.

Anglican Youth Fellowship was born out of a great need, a need for change in status quo and to make a difference. It is purpose based and purpose driven. The revival of the Anglican Church is central to the formation of the fellowship. History has it that in 1975 at the then University of Ife after the University was finally relocated to the present site from the Ibadan Campus. A group of Anglicans who were on campus felt the need for common identity and fellowship together. They started what became the very first Anglican fellowship in any higher institution of learning in Nigeria. Later on, an image and identity was cast for the fellowship: the vision became well defined and the mission was printed. The brethren were passionate for academic and spiritual excellence. Next to this is the issue of the revival of the Mother Church and the need for the members of the fellowship to find expression in the church as students and remain functional even after graduation.

The Journey From Anglican Youth Fellowship to Anglican Students Fellowship

The name of the fellowship was changed in 1997 to Anglican Students' Fellowship. The then Primate of the Church of Nigeria Archbishop Adetiloye summoned all Anglican Fellowships of different campuses to a meeting in April 1996. The purpose of the meeting was to bring all the students on the different campuses together under a common umbrella and to form a national body of Anglican Students. The need arose when the ASF in Uniben approached the Primate to become their Patron. The Primate then said he will prefer to have all the Anglicans on the different campuses come together and he will then become the patron. He asked the then Rev. Canon Olu Oshewa (now late Venerable Oshewa) to facilitate this move. We ultimately met on the 13th of June 1997 at a delegates meeting that was attended at the Archbishop's Palace in Marina, Lagos. A special task force was set up then to be chaired by the Canon Oshewa. Other members of the task force included the Presidents of Anglican Students Association of Nigeria, UNN Nsukka- Bro Earnest, Anglican Students Fellowships Uniben- Bro Emmanuel, University of Ado Ekiti- Bro. Abiodun Omotoso and AYF OAU- Bro. Olaniyi Ogunlusi, Ile-Ife. And the Rev. Dr. Kingsley Egwuonwu who was a serving Corper Doctor in Lagos State then. The mandate was to ensure that we get a common name that all will agree on. We were also to ensure that we have a constitution and ensure that the fellowship was inaugurated. The task force was to organize election and hand over to the first National Executive. We were also saddled with the responsibility of travelling to other campuses to sensitize them about the new move. The task force was able to achieve almost all these mandates.

Prior to this meeting, there were about 9 different names identified that different campuses Anglican fellowships answered: ASAN in Enugu, Nsukka and some schools in the East, ASF in Unilag, Unilorin, Uniben etc, there were many more schools answering ASF then, AYF was at Ife and Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, Anglican Campus Fellowship in a few schools, ACSF Anglican Communion Students Fellowship at Federal Poly Ilaro, EFAC in Schools in Federal College of Education Asaba and on some campuses in the East. The task force was able to harmonize all the names and came to the conclusion that ASF will be a more appropriate name to adopt nationally. AYF OAU played a very key role in ensuring the formation of the National ASF. The constitution of the AYF OAU then was the main material

that was used to draft the constitution of the National ASF. On the 7th of March 1998 the task force handed over to the first National Executives and the Draft Constitution was approved for general use by the delegates' Conference and signed same day. The National Fellowship was inaugurated in 1999.

The first National Secretariat was supposed to come to OAU, but due to politics in the church, it was taken to St Paul's University College Awka.

We laboured by His grace to get the national ASF, twice I was involved in accident; one at Iyana Ipaja in Lagos, the other one between Oyo and Ogbomoso. But God is faithful none was fatal.

Notable Features of the Constitution of the ASF

Motto and Slogan- Arise, Shine! (Isaiah 60:1)

6. The Emblem- The ASF shall consist of the open Bible, The Cross, The Rising Sun and an Academic Cap all enclosed in a circle. The emblem shall be of ox-blood against a white background.

6:2 Meaning of the emblem- The Bible Represents the Word of God, The Cross represents the substitutionary death of our Lord Jesus Christ. The rising sun represents the motto of the fellowship (Arise, Shine!) The colours (Ox-blood against white background) represent sanctity through the washing of the blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ) The circle represents a global vision.

6:3 Summary: Christian students saved through the death of Christ, excelling in their academics and shining forth in the proclamation of the word of God to the whole world.

The Aims and Objectives

7.1.1 To bring Anglican Students together in fellowship for spiritual maturity and academic excellence

7.1.2 To create an atmosphere for Anglican students to be active in local churches while still students and to continue in the same after graduation

7.1.3 To reconcile people especially students to God through soul- winning.

7:2 Membership:

7.2.1 Membership shall be open to all students of institutions of learning

7.2.2 No member of ASF shall belong to any secret cult no matter the aims and objectives of such a cult

For the avoidance of doubt, the constitution of the ASF is unequivocal about what the relationship of the fellowship should be to the church. And I have copied directly the portion of the constitution that talks about this.

Section 9.2 ROLE OF THE ASF IN THE CHURCH

9.2.1 The ASF shall be the only recognized students' fellowship of the Anglican Church in educational institutions of all types and at all levels.

9.2.2 All Anglican students and their converts are expected to be members of the ASF. Where an ASF branch does not exist in a school, its Anglican students are expected to start one.

9.2.3 The members of ASF shall function actively within the chapel which caters for Anglican students in their institutions (wherever such chapels exist) but the ASF as a body shall be independent of such chapels. Where such chapels do not exist the ASF shall take measures to encourage the establishment of a chapel but shall remain functionally independent of such chapels irrespective of what roles individual members of the fellowship play in such chapels.

9.2.4 An ASF branch or unit may only be formed by students of a specific educational institution. ASF branches or units may not be formed in parishes or local congregations. ASF members wishing to continue fellowship while on holidays shall do so as members of other fellowships of the Anglican Church (e.g. AYF, EFAC, Brigade, Youth Councils, YM/WCA etc) Parishes may not establish ASF branches or units. The ASF is a school fellowship which is to be formed and run by students while in school

An Enduring Purpose and a Lasting Legacy

1 Timothy 4:1-end

The Church is in need of such vibrancy in the youths that know the Lord and understand the purpose of their call into the ministry. The church encourages the lay ministry even though you will be very restricted and limited as a lay minister in the church. But for effectiveness in the ministry, take note of the following:

1. **Seriousness with God, godliness and the things of God from campus.** The church is in need of such fervency and consistency. Be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord (Romans 12:11). Let no man despise your youth (1 Timothy 4:12)

2. **Assurance of calling.** See 2 Peter 1:10- Therefore, brothers and sisters, make every effort to be sure of your calling and election. For by doing this you will never stumble into sin. Be prepared for the work of ministry. Read books, biographies. Have ministry mentors that you can report yourself to or that you can be reported to. Sharpen your ministry skills, preaching, writing, prayers, people skill etc.

3. **Steadfastness and spiritual soundness in the ministry of the Church.** 1 Cor.15:58. Do not be afraid or intimidated by anything. Learn the traditions and liturgy of the church. Do not allow yourself to be despised as half baked. Keep your focus of Christ the One who calls you into ministry. Listen to His voice, recognizing the voice of the deceiver in preferment and sumptuous postings and do not listen to the strange voice. Avoid distractions as much as possible. **Christ must be honoured in all your ministries. Be passionate and enthusiastic about the things of the kingdom always.** Have respect and loyalty to authority in the church but do not be men pleasers. That way you will never please God. Love the brethren and aspire to be an example of the believers in all your conduct. Do not be in haste to make it or become famous. Let God show case you and be very patient. But utilize every opportunity for ministry as if it is your only opportunity; prepare well for every assignment; pray very well and **rely on the Holy Spirit.**

4. **Shunning immoralities** - do not let any scandal be said or heard concerning your ministry. Watch out especially for lust for women, men, money, fame, position and pride. See Ephesians 5:3,11

5. Manifestation of the kingdom power.

Conclusion

The AYF was formed deliberately and intentionally on the University Campus 50 years ago. At a point there was a change of name from AYF to ASF. The purpose remains enduring, the legacy is long lasting. There is a need to remain focused. You must not allow for distractions. You must be sure of your calling, be serious with God and be sound and steadfast in the work of the ministry. You must endeavour to shun all vices and immoralities. Keep manifesting the kingdom power.