EVENTS 2011: All in the Name of God

Contributed by Augustine Adah
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The year 2011 was dotted with several religious activities which impacted on Nigerians both negatively and positively. While millions of Christian faithful all over the world trooped to places of worship on January 1, to express their gratitude to God for sparing their lives to see the New Year, it was a tale of woes for members of Victorious Christ Church, located in the London Cikin area of Maiduguri, Borno State. On that day, some gunmen suspected to be members of the dreaded Boko Haram attacked and set the church ablaze. Before embarking on the burning, they shot sporadically into the air to scare away people. The church had existed for about 20 years before it was burnt. The incident and other bombings in the country necessitated the meeting of Muslim Rights Concern, MURIC, in Lagos, on January 2, 2011. The group expressed displeasure over the spate of insecurity in the country. Ishaq Akintola, director of the organisation, who urged the security agents to bring the perpetrators of the heinous crime to book, also appealed to the government to find out reasons behind the bombings so that a permanent solution could be proffered. Succour came the way of the people of Oke-Koto community in Agege, Lagos State, in the month of February. The Latter Rain Assembly, LRA, visited the area and donated some facilities meant to equip the Oba Sani Komolafe Memorial Youth/ Sports Centre. The church also organised seminar on human capacity development. The donation was part of the church’s corporate social responsibility. Tunde Bakare, general overseer of LRA, was represented at the occasion by Christian Ike, a pastor of the church. The month of February also witnessed the commissioning of the newly built Wesley Cathedral of the Methodist Church of Nigeria, Archdiocese of Lagos. The building was commissioned by Babatunde Raji Fashola, governor of Lagos State. Fashola commended the building committee and members of the church for completing the edifice. Ola Makinde, prelate of the Methodist Church of Nigeria, attributed the success to consistent prayer and the determination of members. Lazarus Muoka, general overseer of the Lord’s Chosen Charismatic Revival Ministries, during the Easter celebration, appealed to Christians to use the occasion to reflect on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ made to save mankind. He stated that if they amended their ways and surrendered their lives to Christ, they would be sure of getting to Heaven at the end of their sojourn here on earth. Samson Makinwa, pastor of Kingdom of Light Ministries, Idimu, Lagos, described Easter as an event that establishes Christianity. Success Academy for Youths, SAY, a programme organised by Deeper Life Bible Church, DLBC, took place in the month of August. The programme was aimed at inculcating moral discipline in youths in secondary and tertiary institutions. Participants were given tips that would make them successful in life. The holiday programme was held simultaneously across the 36 states of the federation and Abuja. William Kumuyi, general superintendent of the church, ministered through satellite in the four days event. The month of September was a period of sober reflection for members of Christ Apostolic Church, CAC, as Elijah Olusheye, pastor and president of CAC worldwide, and three other pastors of the church were arraigned at the Federal High Court in Ibadan, Oyo State, by the federal government for forgery. Those arraigned alongside with Olusheye include Johnson Olabisi, Gideon Okegwemeh and Abdul Hakeem Muhammed. Valerian Okeke, Catholic Arcbishop of Onithsa Ecclesiastical Province in Anambra State, celebrated his 58th birthday with 850 inmates of the Onitsha prisons in October. Okeke, who had spent over N10 million to rehabilitate and furnish structures within the prison in the past, urged the inmates not to be faint-hearted but to be hopeful because God cares for them. He promised to facilitate the construction of a Skills Acquisition Centre for the inmates to enable them resettle peacefully after serving their prison terms. The 35th Islamic Conference of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jammat Women was held in Ile-Ife, Osun State. Okunade Sijuade, Ooni of Ife, declared the conference open in October. The four days event was held at Oduduwa College, Ile-Ife. It featured free medical screening for Ile-Ife and other neighbouring communities. In the same month of October, the women group of the Nasrulla-hi-I-Fathi Society of Nigeria, NASFAT, Lagos State chapter, organised a special prayer session for Nigeria’s unity and peace. The special prayer event which was attended by hundreds of Muslim faithfuls was held at Alausa mosque in Ikeja, Lagos. In pursuance of the vision to reach every part of the country with the gospel message, the Lord’s Chosen Charismatic Revival Ministries held a revival crusade in Yenagoa, Bayela State. The programme with the theme: There Cometh One Mightier Than All, was organised to bring salvation, sanctification, Holy Ghost Baptism and breakthrough to people of Yenagoa, Mbiama, and other neighbouring towns in Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers states. It took place at the Melford Okilo Memorial Hospital, Mgbi, Yenagoa. The crusade attracted hundreds of people both Christians and non Christians alike. Lazarus Muoka, general overseer of the church, stated that he had a mandate to win 10 billion souls for the kingdom of God. Global Success Ministry held its convention entitled: Power As Never Before at Alao Bus stop, Amuwo- Odofin, Lagos. Chima Okereke, pastor of the church, stated that the convention was organised to bring salvation to sinners, deliverance to the oppressed and breaking of yokes. The airlifting of Nigerians who performed the Holy Pilgrimage to Mecca started on November 10, after the celebration of Muslim festival of Idel-Kabir. Pilgrimage to Mecca is one of the five pillars of Islam. Household of God Church held its Karis Award in December. Emmanuel Okala, the legendary Green Eagles’ goal keeper was the 16th recipient of the award at the occasion. The award instituted in 1995 by Chris Okotie, general overseer of the church, was aimed at giving recognition to individuals who outstandingly served the nation in their endeavour. Okala, who was elated by the gesture described the day of the award as the greatest day in his life because the award came from people outside the football family. Reinhard Bonke, German evangelist and founder of Christ for All Nations, CFAN, visited Ughelli, Delta State, December 7, for a gospel crusade. The two-day crusade also featured a ministers’ conference. Bonke has organised several crusades in almost all important towns in the 36 states of the federation. He has the vision to turn Africa to Christ. Some officials of Christian Association of Nigeria, CAN, Bauchi State branch, were

at the Government House, Bauchi, to pay Christmas homage to Isa Yuguda, governor of Bauchi State. Lawi Peter Pokti, chairman of CAN, Bauchi State, commended Yuguda for his untiring effort in maintaining peace in the state despite the activities of Boko Haram. Pokti also commended the governor for sponsoring about 390 Christians to Jerusalem pilgrimage in 2011. The activities of the year ended on a sad note with the bombing of St Theresa Catholic Church, Madalla, Niger State, December 25, by Boko Haram. More than 40 people lost their lives in the incident while many people sustained injuries.