

Steadfastness in serving the Lord

Interview with immediate past President of NCFI – Mr. Musa Faruk Yisa

NCFI Web-Editor: *Good morning Sir. It is my pleasure to meet with you on behalf of Nupe Christian Fellowship website communications for this interview.*

Mr. Musa F. Yisa: Good morning. You are welcome and it is my pleasure to be with you.

NCFI Web-Editor: *Sir, kindly give us a little of your background such as in education, and work experience.*

Mr. Musa F. Yisa: Thank you very much. My name is Musa Faruk Yisa, and I am a native of Patigi. I started my formal education in SIM Primary School in Patigi. From there, I proceeded to Igbaja Teacher's College, which was one of the SIM Teacher's Colleges in the northern part of Nigeria. After that, I thought for two years in SIM Local Education Authority (LEA) School, as the government had taken over schools in the area. I then proceeded to take up appointment with the Minna-Kagara L.E.A in Niger State and thought in the former St Michael's Primary School. Thereafter, I proceeded to Advance Teacher's College, Sokoto for my National Certificate in Education (N.C.E), where I studied History and Geography. After the NCE I thought for a brief period, then proceeded to Ahmadu Bello University. I graduated in Education and Political Science as my major teaching subject.



I did my national youth service (NYSC) in Minna, Niger State. And then, although my preference was to start a different profession rather than teaching, I had to heed to a call from the Jima-Doko Community Development that started a new Secondary School. The Community requested me to be the Principal to establish the school. Consequently, The Ministry of Education, Niger State, then loaned me to the Jima-Doko Community. I was the Principal of the school from 1981 to 1988. Thank God, though there were different difficult challenges, I was able to graduate the first set of students.

By 1988 I secured another appointment with the Directorate for Social Mobilization (MAMSA). I worked at the Headquarters, in the Political Education Department. The work

was one of the most rewarding job I ever had. Having read Political Science as a major subject, that assisted me in carrying out the responsibilities. The job afforded me a lot of opportunities to travel round the country and to meet many people that I would have never met in my life.

After the work at MAMSA I had the opportunity to serve in the Implementation Task Force of the People's Bank of Nigeria. We set up the Bank's branches in Kwara, Niger and the FCT. Having completed the task at the People's Bank, I got employment with the Nigeria National Assembly in the Research Department. I eventually became the Director of that Department, which comprises of research, library and computer science. It was another challenging job. We did a lot of travel, training and research work in Nigeria and outside the country. My job at the National Assembly afforded me the opportunity of visiting foreign parliaments and interacting with several Legislators. It was a great experience.

I retired from the National Assembly as a Director. That is all I can say about myself in summary.

NCFI Web-Editor: *You had a solid education background and a diverse work experience. As at the time that you became the President of Nupe Christian Fellowship International, what made you to present yourself as the candidate for election as the president of the Fellowship?*

Mr. Musa F. Yisa: Unfortunately, I did not present myself for election as President of the Fellowship. I was approached and asked if I will like to serve as the President of the Nupe Christian Fellowship. The brethren then nominated me for the election. Let me tell you that my initial response was no, I can't do it because I felt I was not close to the administration of the Fellowship. The closest I was to the Fellowship then was that I was the Chairman of the fund raising committee. And all I did was to mobilize funds for the fellowship. I just felt that was enough for me. Having meetings, convening events and approaching people for resources for the Fellowship was okay, I felt.

But, when a decision was taken by some brethren, who were very close to me and they approached me, I said well, if it is God's choice let it be. Though, during the election I didn't want to be present in the hall, those who nominated me virtually requested that I should come with them to witness the election. I had never witnessed or participated in the election to any offices in Nupe Christian Fellowship. I didn't know what it takes for somebody to be elected as a President of Nupe Christians Fellowship. The elections were conducted and I was elected unopposed for the Office of the President of NCFI.

NCFI Web-Editor: *Thank you. When you became the President and until you finished your tenure, and you have now handed over to somebody, what do you consider as the purposes of the Church that Nupe Christian Fellowship fulfilled among Nupe People?*

Mr. Musa F. Yisa: By the grace of God during our tenure, I wouldn't call it my tenure because I was not doing it alone, the Lord helped us and continue to so even today. One, to work seriously with the NCFI branches to encourage greater activities of evangelism. Yes, the branches before then were doing evangelism, but they were not very active. We found ways of encouraging each of the branches to do effective evangelism. I think that was good for Nupeland and also for the Churches.

Similarly, we had challenges within the Nupe Christian Community then. The churches appealed to us as leaders to see to the crisis that was coming up as a result of the activities of some of the new Ministries that were coming into Nupe Land. Some of those cases were causing division among the churches and among Christian families. The Lord helped us to resolved the challenges.

We earnestly prayed and were aware that God knows those who are His own. God knows those who are doing His job and God knows those who are doing the evangelism the way He wants it. And so, we intervened and we were able to arrest the situation, especially the issue of disunity and tension among the denominations, and in families. The intervention brought peace in the churches and communities.

Thirdly, the NCFI relationship with all the denominations became a very powerful weapon that united all the churches. For example, when there is a conference of UMCA they often invite a Pastor or a clergy from another denomination within the Nupe Community to preach. It shows the cooperation we had among the churches and particularly the Committee of Heads of denominations, under the abled leadership of Bishop Jonah Kolo, who is the Bishop of Bida Diocese, Anglican Communion. The NCFI collaborates, partners, and works with the Committee of Heads of Denominations on programmes, internal and external challenges, and communicating with Nupe Christians. There is now peace and true fellowship among the churches and Nupe Christians, with all working together.

NCFI Web-Editor: *Your team achieved a lot from what you have said. What do you consider as your biggest joy in serving the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ through Nupe Christian Fellowship International?*

Mr. Musa F. Yisa: My biggest joy today is the fact that, though I'm nobody, I came from a humble background and God choose me to be the leader of a fellowship group of all the

Nupe Christians in Nigeria and abroad. Who am I? And God also used us not me alone, our team to achieve a lot of things during our tenure. I feel fulfilled after leading the Fellowship for a period of peace and progress among Nupe Christians for about Nine (9) years. I never thought that God will find me out and say lead the Nupe Christian Fellowship International.

When I started as President I was a bit worried because of the big challenges and difficulties confronting Nupe Christians. But the Lord God helped us with ideas to improve the services and activities of NCFI. God strengthened and gave us courage to contact and talk to people and professionals who have the interest of the Fellowship at heart. These people came to our aid and that is responsible for all that we have achieved. So, my greatest joy is that I served the Nupe people and got maximum cooperation. The Lord used us to move the fellowship from where it was then as a national to where it is today, as an international Fellowship.

NCFI Web-Editor: *We know that in serving people, others may influence you. Tell us about a person that had mentored you or somebody that impact on your life as a Christian leader?*

Mr. Musa F. Yisa: This is a big one. You know as one is growing up, definitely in life, you will come across a lot of people that might have impacted on you positively. And it is very difficult for me to say I will now come up with only one person that was responsible for mentoring me. And ascribe what I'm today to the influence and the mentoring of that one person. But I will say that I came from a very humble background and two people were very instrumental to making me what I'm today. These were my late mother and my late uncle. These are the people who brought me to Christ; into limelight, trained me and taught me the word of God. So, if I want to ascribe whatever I'm today to anybody apart from God, it is to my mother and my uncle.

NCFI Web-Editor: *People know you today as a Bible scholar, can you kindly explain to us the strategy you use in consistently studying the bible or reading the bible and praying?*

Mr. Musa F. Yisa: Thank you, my approach to Bible study has always being on characters. I love picking a character in the Bible like King David and study him critically. How he started his life and how he ended up. Then, I will pick another person, though he or she may not be the character that many people will even want to bother about. I pick people like Samson or Paul. I prefer studying such people because I learnt a lot about them and then compare my life with such people.

However, given the opportunity I also like to impact on people through the studies by way of teaching and not sermon. Sermonizing has little effect on people's life today. Anytime I am invited to any church or any group and asked to preach, I say yes, but I have not come to preach but to teach. It is because I must have learnt something which is worth impacting on people. I study characters and applied the lessons learned to my life and in turn want to impact it to others through teaching. I am a professional trained teacher, a great advantage in impacting on other people. With regards to prayers I follow the biblical teaching to pray without ceasing. I pray all the time and everywhere I am.

NCFI Web-Editor: *As a Christian leader you are aware that we are in an environment of great difficulties of being a Christian, especially in the northern part of Nigeria. As the immediate past President of Nupe Christian Fellowship International, what are the challenges that you faced or Christians are facing and what is your secrets of overcoming those challenges?*

Mr. Musa F. Yisa: I find this questions very useful because of the experiences in the past, and the experiences going on today, particularly in the north of Nigeria. Though, we are in a Muslim dominated environment, one of the things we have to do as Christians is that we should not retaliate as much as possible. I am not saying that if somebody brings a knife and wants to cut your head you should not defend yourself. Christians have to defend themselves against the insecurity in our environment. Nevertheless, in our attitudes and reactions we should not retaliate. We should also be diplomatic our evangelism activities. Times are heard, things are very difficult, the environment is hostile to Christian activities. But prayers and Godly approach can do much better than making noise, as if we are in opposition. Rather than cause problems we can show love and compassion to our people. These are my ways of overcoming the hostile environment

NCFI Web-Editor: *Related to the issue of hostile environment is the fact that our country Nigeria today is facing a series of challenges such as insecurity, rampant poverty and corruption. What is your take on these challenges and advice for young people?*

Mr. Musa F. Yisa: Let me start by saying that while we were growing up as young men there were ways of honesty and hard work. But the values of those days tend to have changed to the values we have now. Today, the society itself is full of evil and many evil practices. We are talking about kidnapping, banditry, armed robbery, herdsman attacks and endemic corruption in high places. These things were not there in those days. One can travel in the night to any place and will not be thinking about armed robbery or kidnapping when we were young. But today traveling has become a great risk. A major cause is that everybody and the young people in particular are looking for money by all means.

The desires of yesterday are not the desires of today. Everything now is about money, but the one thing that is to be of concern to everybody and particularly Christians is what should be the position of our young people. Do young people have to do things in the wrong way before they become what they want to be in life? No, we have seen young people, who have struggled, work hard and even read and come out well. But there are many who want to get rich overnight and live expensive lives. Our government needs to take greater responsibilities. And religious leaders have to be honest and take some responsibilities too.



On the issue of corruption, people are put in authority where they see money to steal. Such thieves deserve reformatory punishment. But, we see that individuals steal billions of Naira, and the ones indicted are being tried for ten to fifteen years. And finally such a person is often set free. The questions others or young people have is, if the indicted corrupt official is set free to go away with billions of naira, why can't I go away with thousands? So, government has the responsibility to sincerely take the lead, and people in responsibility position should lead in dealing with corruption.

Look at what is happening at the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). There is money in the Commission, yet that part of the country is said to be the most undeveloped in the country. So, all the money that have been pump into that place where has it gone? The case of NDDC is good reflection of what is happening in the entire country. It is all about embezzling, misappropriating and pocketing the people's or public money and not for development. So, my advice to the youth is that they should not follow the way of corruption but imbibe hard work, trust God and it will be better for them.

NCFI Web-Editor: *From the development trend of the NCFI over the years, would you consider the it as a vibrant Fellowship today? What makes it vibrant?*

Mr. Musa F. Yisa: Yes, to a certain extend NCFI is a vibrant Fellowship. A journey of one thousand miles begins in a day. I know that Nupe Christian Fellowship is not where it was ten years ago. Time may not permit us to enumerate where it was then and where it is now, but those who have being close to the fellowship know it is vibrant. It is vibrant because today we have more people taking various types of responsibilities of the Fellowship. There are people in charge of evangelism, physical development, social

responsibility, fund raising, prayers, Nupe Literature and youth empowerment just to mention a few. I am glad each team is doing its work well, with the youth actively engaged.

So, the Lord helps us to energize the whole machinery of the Fellowship. We have the Heads of Denominations actively involved. And the professionals involved in the various responsibilities work to obtain results. We have people who give their resources voluntarily both in kind and funds. May God bless them. By the grace of God, the NCFI will continue move us forward in serving our people and humanity generally.

NCFI Web-Editor: *Finally, if you say we will move forward, how will you then see the Nupe Christian Fellowship International impacting on the future of Nupe people in this 21st century?*

Mr. Musa F. Yisa: Despite the challenges ahead, if it gets to stage that every Nupe Christian will realize that he or she is a member of the Fellowship and needs to do something for the progress of evangelism in Nupeland, we will better serve the Nupe people. As it was from the beginning the Fellowship can be the voice of the Nupe People for the good of Nupe Land. As a voice the Fellowship can expand God's kingdom in Nupeland. And work with various denominations in synergy to support new converts. My final word, is that as Nupe Christians we must work as a team to the glory of God.

NCFI Web-Editor: Thank you very much. We are very glad for sparing your time for this interview. We pray that God will bless you and what you have said will be useful to our people in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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