

Nigeria offers evangelistic door to reaching rest of Africa, national Baptist leader says_112204

November 19, 2004

Posted: 11/19/04

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By John Hall

Texas Baptist Communications

The evangelistic “door” to Africa is waiting for Texas Baptists to help turn the knob and open it, a Nigerian Baptist leader insists.

Nigeria is the only nation in Western Africa with a significant number of Christians, noted Tunde Taiwo, stewardship director for the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

Taiwo is on study leave at Baylor University's Truett Seminary through a cooperative venture involving the seminary, the Texas Partnerships Resource Center of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

Nigerian Baptists have started ministries in Mali, Benin, Liberia and the Ivory Coast.

"If there's any way Africa and West Africa will be reached, Nigeria is the door," he said.

Where Nigerian Baptists are supported adequately with prayer and resources, Christianity is spreading quickly, Taiwo said.

Southwestern Nigeria, where Southern Baptist mission work took root more than 150 years ago, is primarily Christian. Baptist leaders are making inroads in other parts of the nation, he noted.

But the rapid growth is viewed by some Nigerians as a threat, Taiwo said. The nation is deeply divided religiously-50 percent Muslims and 40 percent Christians. Muslims are most commonly found in the north, and Christians are most common in the south.

Christians in the north frequently experience persecution as a result of their beliefs, Taiwo said. Fundamentalist Muslims burned down the only Baptist seminary in the north.

The plight of Nigerian Baptists further is compromised by a lack of resources. They need nearly everything, including books, leadership materials, finances, training resources and medical supplies.

"We don't have books," Taiwo said. "We don't have CDs. We don't have literature. We have nothing."

Any of these items can be turned into ministry opportunities in Nigeria, Taiwo said. Medical clinics can serve people. Literature can be used for training believers and spreading the gospel.

Texas Baptists can help through the relationship developed through the BGCT Texas Partnerships Resource Center, Taiwo said. Prayer, mission

teams and financial support from the state can enable further growth in Nigeria.

Texas Baptists can play a key role in expanding God's kingdom in a largely non-Christian continent, as Nigerian Baptists seek to start ministries in every African country.

"The prospects are high for church starting and ministry," he said. "We just don't have the resources."

For more information about the Nigerian partnership, contact the BGCT Texas Partnerships Resource Center at (214) 828-5181.

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