Pastor Luka Tambaya Daniel (1943 – Till Date)

Pastor Luka Tambaya Daniel was born in 1943 to the family of Mallam Malaika Daniel Rabakaya and Mallama Peninnah Anafam Rabakaya in the village of Ukam, near Kayarda in the Local Government Area of Lere, Kaduna State of Nigeria. He lost his mother early in life. However, his father cared for him with the help of his grandmother. At the age of five (5) his parents joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church from the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) now know as the Evangelical Churches of West Africa (ECWA).

HIS EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION: Pastor Tambaya Daniel had no privilege of early education. He started schooling at the age of ten at the Jengre S.D.A Primary School, near Jos, Plateu State, Nigeria. He was industrious and a hard working pupil in the Primary School, as well as one of the best students to complete his education in 1958. He was also baptized that year. He needed secondary education and efforts were made, but there were many financial constraints. Therefore he decided to go into commercial education, where the tuition was less. In 1959, he left for Zaria where he attended a typing institute for two years. It was a unique experience for a young man leaving home for the first time in search of further education and personal advancement. This first attempt was successful.
The Lord blessed his efforts and at the end of the two years, he became one of the best copy typists. The quest for higher education was top most in the mind of Tambaya. He needed more education for a fulfilled life and to be more productive. To Tambaya, education is a tool needed to be of better service to humanity and the Master. He decided in September 1966 to study more and that was the time he left Bukuru for Adventist College of West Africa (now Babcock University) in Ilisan-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria. He kept the light burning academically. He related to people of other tribes, races and nationalities freely. He was a committed child of God who devoted most of his time to Church activities. He belonged to a number of singing groups which included:

- The "Ministerial Quartet,
- The King's Ambassadors (A musical band led by Pastor Herman Bauman)
- The Collegiate, and
- The College Choir."

He completed his ministerial certificate courses in 1970, and continued with his degree programme at the same Institution. Within this period, Daniel was involved in the politics of the Students’ Association. He was later elected the president of the association. Shortly after his election, there came an urgent plea from the school administration requesting him to join the administration as the senior prefect. He relinquished his presidential post and accepted the appointive position of the senior prefect of the school. Daniel performed creditably well in every sense of it with all seriousness, sincerity, humility and honesty. He graduated in 1974 with a B.A Degree in Theology.

It is very interesting to note that one of his uncles Pastor Silas Rabakaya, a retired minister of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, influenced him positively in becoming a Gospel minister. He was encouraged by his people to come home and serve his Church. He came without any hesitation and was offered an employment in the North Nigeria Mission with headquarters in Bukuru in 1961. He did his best, but as a young man, he felt that the work was not motivating enough. Therefore, he resigned and went back to Zaria the following year, where he obtained another job. There he did not forget his God. He followed his Lord daily and when passionate appeals repeatedly came for him to return to Church work, he consented. Before the end of 1962, he left Zaria and came back to Bukuru early in January 1963, where he joined the mission again as an office secretary. Since that time, Luka Daniel has taken up his cross and served successfully in various capacities and places around the world.

In those days, employers visited our campus before graduation and posted people to their various stations on completion of their studies. The North Nigeria Mission offered him an employment and he was posted to Jos as a pastor where he ministered for two years from 1974 to 1976. While in Jos, Pastor Daniel made his indelible marks on the life of the Seventh-day Adventist Church members and also its infrastructure. During his tenure, the church board and district council jointly and successfully worked to bring pipe-born water into the compound in Jos. In addition, they began the construction of the church annex or children’s
department of the church. They equally landscaped the hitherto swampy compound with gravels and cement. The church choir was also reorganized and strengthened, to the extent that in 1975, they became the first SDA Church choir to sing on television in North Nigeria. While serving as a director, he had time for witnessing, and had time to conduct seminars for Muslims. In addition, he personally supervised the construction works of some building projects on the Bukuru headquarters compound.

**HIS HIGHER EDUCATION AND ORDINATION:** At the end of the two years of service, Pastor Daniel decided to further his education, this time, with the singular objective, on how to reach the Muslims. He left Nigeria in 1976 for Loma Linda University for Middle Eastern Studies. Pastor Daniel completed his course work at Loma Linda University, USA and left for Cairo, Egypt, at Al-Ahzar University where he had his fieldwork. He came back to Nigeria in 1978 at the end of his M.A degree programme and was elected the Director for Sabbath School, Lay Activities, Voice of Prophecy and Bible Correspondence School in the then North Nigeria Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with Headquarters in Bukuru, Plateau State. The brethren saw in Luka Daniel the sense of responsibility and dedication. He was ordained into full gospel ministry in 1979, at the Seventh day Adventist Church, Jengre.

**HIS MARITAL LIFE:** Pastor Daniel kept in touch with his sweet fiancée back at home in the North. At the end of his second year in the college, he married Miss Rifkatu Yacub on July 14, 1968. The Lord has blessed this union with a son, Danjuma Dauda and two daughters, Miriam Iya and Penninah Talatuwa.

![The Family Portrait](image)

Pastor Daniel and his family
**HIS MINISTERIAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS:** As the director for Sabbath School, he was involved in the translation and printing of the Sabbath School quarterlies into the Hausa Language. He got himself engaged in revising and the printing of Hausa hymnals, as well as the reproduction of God's Answers in the Hausa language. One needs to mention the positive roles he played in the upbringing of Adventist Men's Organization and Adventist Women’s Ministries in the then North Nigeria Mission to an enviable position. These two organizations made soul winning activities their main goals - and as a result the North Nigeria Mission led in their out-reach assignments during Harvest 90 evangelistic thrust.

**ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES:** In 1979, shortly after his ordination, he was elected the Secretary of the Mission and later in 1981; the work of the treasurer was added to it. This servant of God obtained wisdom and strength from the Lord throughout the period of his leadership in both offices. In spite of heavy responsibility, he had time to commune with God and was at peace with his fellow human beings. One of his achievements was the construction of the Bukuru Church building. Through the help of God and the ministry of Pastor Daniel, with the support of some missionaries and faithful members, the compound became a center of attractions. He led out in the erection of the president's house when he was the secretary/treasurer, which is one of the best edifices in that compound. This compound was gradually changed from the home of miners to a Sanctuary of the saints of the Most High God.

Meanwhile, there was a change of guard in the Nigeria Union Mission Headquarters in Lagos as Pastor Anderson, the President, left on a permanent return to his homeland, Denmark. Pastor Caleb O. Adeogun, who was then the secretary of the Seventh-day Adventist, work in Nigeria, was elected the President of the Union. With the vacuum created, there was a need to fill the position of a Secretary and pastor Daniel was elected in 1984 as Union Secretary. While serving as the Secretary, he made it a point of duty to conduct a public crusade in a Mission or Conference annually.

He worked successfully for about six years as the Secretary of Nigeria Union Mission, after which he was elected the President of the same Union in 1990. The Lord blessed the Nigerian Union Mission during his tenure. The new team hardly stayed at home. They were busy working in one field or the other all the time. As a result The Union under his leadership was blessed with an increase in membership.
ESTABLISHMENT OF INSTITUTIONS: Many new districts were added, and some new institutions were established. Such institutions established during the period of 1990 to 1995 included:

- Adventist Seminary High School, (now Babcock University High School) Ilishan Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria
- Adventist Secondary Technical School, Owerrinta, Abia State
- Hyde Memorial Secondary School, Jengre, Plateau State,
- The Ubakala Clinic, Umuahia, Abia State,
- The Adventist Hospital School of Nursing, Ile-Ife, Osun State was re-opened.
- North West Mission was also established.

The Nigeria Union Mission Field was charged with the Spirit of the Lord during the quinquennium. More ministers were ordained and many were trained for better service. In 1995, at the General Conference Session held in Utrecht, Holland Pastor Daniel was elected the President of the Africa Indian Ocean Division [AID] now West-Central Africa Division. He and his family moved to Abidjan and continued with their leadership responsibilities from there.

SHEPHERDESS RIFKATU DANIEL: This success story of Pastor Daniel will not be complete without mentioning the role Shepherdess Rifkatu play in helping to lift the prophet’s hand while in active service. Being a nurse by professional training, her services are in high demand. As a Nursing Sister, she would have been earning a high amount of money and allowances if she had opted to work for the government. Rather, she forsook all in order to stay with her husband. While in Lagos, Nigeria, Mrs. Daniel made her services available. She is a loving mother who had time for her children. She is very bold to call sins by their names. Shepherdess Rafkatu gave Pastor Daniel a wholistic supported. From the days of his studies to now she has stood beside this man of God. She is indeed a virtuous woman. They struggled together to make it in life. What a lesson for the young women of our day to emulate. One needs to praise the Lord for Pastor Daniel and his family.

RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION: He devoted some of his time to writing series of tracts, titled "Understanding" The series includes: "The mystery of our religion", "Is God one or three" "Do the Qur'an and Bible agree?" and "Mohammed and Jesus are brothers", In addition, Pastor Daniel made Workers' Manual available to all Church workers.

ACCREDITATION: Pastor Daniel's administration made serious plans to have two Union Conferences in Nigeria before the end of 2005. Pastor Daniel could be considered a man of destiny and a man of actions. Interestingly enough, it was during his tenure as AID President that the Adventist Seminary of West Africa [ASWA], obtained a charter from the Federal Government of Nigeria to operate a private University as Babcock University. On May 10, 1999, at the NUC Headquarters, Pastor Daniel received the certificate of accreditation on
behalf of the proprietors of Babcock University. With the accreditation, he became the first Chancellor of Babcock University. This could be considered one of his greatest achievements in office as a leader.

Pastor Daniel raising the Accreditation Certificate from the NUC, May 10, 1999.

Pastor Daniel flanked on the right by Prof. Alalade and on the left by Dr. Ola during Babcock University Alpha Graduation Ceremony on May 18, 2003.
TESTIMONY ABOUT PASTOR LUKA DANIEL: In the WAD Adventist Review of March 2004, the Editor Jean Emmanuel Nlo Nlo described Pastor Daniel thus: “The man is of an Olympian calm, methodical, hardworking, skillful, and links humour with seriousness. He is a good trainer and a skilled teacher and endeavors to satisfy the curiosity of his hearers whenever he has the chance.”

CONCLUSION: In summary, just as the Psalmist says, "Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build." One can then say that Pastor Daniel is unassuming, ready to accept any responsibility offered and constantly making researches. The words of the wise man, Solomon is true: "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men."
Pastor Daniel flanked by other leaders from WAD and the two Unions during the celebration of the 90 years of existence of the SDA Church in Nigeria

Sources:

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