

Cleric killed in botched kidnap by herdsman in Delta

From Sany Nemo, Asaba

AS churches the world over celebrate Easter, the Celestial Church of Christ, Breakthrough Cathedral, Delta North Diocesan headquarters, whose prophet, Most Superior Evangelist Steven Akpor, was allegedly killed by herdsman within the church premises along Ibusa-Ogwashi-Uku Expressway, in Oshimili North local government area of Delta State, are in mourning as they plan to move his family back to his Orogun community in Ughelli North local government area.

The late Akpor, who was in his 50s, was married with five children. The church patron, Barr. Peter Lotobi, who spoke on telephone, with *The Guardian* yesterday said: "We are mourning and in a meeting at the church premises, as we are concluding plans on getting police permit to enable us take the late pastor's family back to his community. It will make life easier for them to be with their immediate family who cannot come around due to the lockdown occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic."

A members of the church, Mr. Temitope, who was also a victim of the attempted kidnap, gave graphic details of how Prophet Akpor was killed by two gunmen at about 8:30p.m. on Good Friday, while members the congregation were appraising development at the church.

According to Temitope: "We were here with the late pastor and some church members, when suddenly two Fulani men came with rifles and ordered us to lie down, then our pastor got up and went into his room. They beckoned on him to come back but he ignored them. At that point, those of us lying down were matched into the bush and they ordered us to remove our garments and lie facing down. "As we were about complying, one of them realizing that they had left one person at the church again led us back to meet with the Pastor. When we got back, they again ordered us to lie down while one of them went to meet the pastor in the room. "Next we heard was an argument as the pastor refused to open the door. At that point the second one joined them and they started shooting inside from the window after they removed the net that was when we had the opportunity to escape into the bush. That was how they gunned him down from the window. Before police got there and took him to the General Hospital,

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Ibusa, he had given up the ghost."

A member of the church, who pleaded for anonymity, said: "Why officers at the police station located close to the church did not respond even with the gunshots that shook the entire area still baffles me. They chose to come when they had left. Sadly one of the officers even confirmed that they sighted someone with a gun".

When contacted the state Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Onome Onowwakpoyey, confirmed the incident, adding that they police have commenced investigation into the incident, and expressed hope that with the combined efforts of the police with the local vigilante on their trail, the suspects would be apprehended and brought to book.

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