

## Lifeline

# Ripples over death, fetish items in church

- My enemies are at work, says church leader
- No, your ways are questionable – Residents



•Some fetish items found in the church



•Other fetish items

By WOLE BALOGUN

**T**he recent death of a man and the discovery of some fetish items in a church in Lagos are generating ripples. Residents of Puposola community in Alimosho Local Government Area are feeling uncomfortable with a church within the area after the body of a yet-to-be identified man that some people believed was receiving 'spiritual treatment' was found in a well near the church premises.

Not happy with the development, residents had mobilised to the church to express their anger over the incident. They wanted to unravel the cause of the latest death, as similar incidents had occurred within the church premises in the past. In the process, they made some shocking fetish findings, which reinforced their belief that the church might not be what it claims to be after all.

*Daily Sun* gathered that the deceased was alleged to be a mentally challenged person. He had been receiving some spiritual treatment from the leader of the church, (name withheld) before his body was found in the well recently.

Residents told our correspondent that the unknown man might have been pushed into the well by his assailant(s). They said they became suspicious about the strange development after discovering that the body in the well was that of one of the 'patients' of the pastor.

The residents alleged that it wasn't the first time people, allegedly undergoing spiritual treatment in the pastor's church, would end up losing their lives.

A member of the Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC), popularly known as Ojonakoku in the area, told the reporter that "the whole drama began last night at about 9pm when residents raised the alarm that some little girls, who had gone



•A horn found under the altar

to fetch water in the small well, found a lifeless body in it. If you examine that well properly, you will find out that it is shallow; it only provides water for bricklayers moulding blocks. When the alarm was raised, we held a meeting and decided that the landlord of the house where the small well is should report the matter to the police. We convinced him to do so and he agreed but when he was on his way to the police station, the pastor rushed to meet with him on the way and pleaded with him to perish the thought of reporting to the police. The pastor begged the man not to allow the matter go beyond the community because the family of the deceased had agreed not to make case on the development."

"When the landlord told us what the pastor said, we suspected foul play and as the community vigilante group, we had him detained and questioned. It was then that he revealed to us that the deceased was one of the mentally challenged people he used to treat in the church. We then recalled that it

wasn't the first time strange deaths, such as that, would be happening and virtually all were connected to him. I recalled there was an incident and we once invited the police; it was the death of one of his 'patients' in the church. Unfortunately, when the police came to meet with him, the matter was dropped. We learnt that the family of the deceased said they weren't going to contest the issue. I wonder if the pastor used juju to hypnotise the police and families of his victim(s). They just came and had a private meeting with him and walked away.

"But we have decided to pursue this matter to a logical conclusion. If he had not gone to meet with the landlord to persuade him not to report the matter to the police, people would have thought it was probably the night watchman around, who pushed the man into the well. That was why we immediately took the pastor to the police that day.

"When we went to meet with the pastor and ask him why he chose to stop the

landlord from reporting to the police, he said the deceased was a cross he was to carry and threatened to deal with whoever chose to intervene in the matter. He knew us quite well that we are members of the OPC vigilante but he has been avoiding us ever since he began the church some years ago. We once picked a quarrel with him because we caught him, placing sacrifices all about the community. When we confronted him, he said God is the father of witches, thieves and clerics.

"Residents of this area are afraid of him because of his weird ways; that is why you see them running away from his church. He has since been staying alone, not relating with anyone or identifying himself with the landlords' association. On many occasions, we had to pick quarrels with him because he didn't clean his compound; that was why the church premises remained so bushy.

"Actually the piece of land on which he built the church belonged to his late father whose burial site is also on the land. It was after his father's death that he took over the land. His father was a security man before his death.

"What remained strange to us was that we hardly noticed more than six people, as members of his church. We would take you to the church now for you to see his fetish house and church."

According to *Daily Sun* investigation, the church buildings allegedly owned by the pastor were two poorly built shanties. The interior of the bigger of the buildings contained items that showed that it could indeed pass for a church: A calendar that displayed a picture, depicting Jesus and his pierced heart, a set of three small drums, some plastic chairs and wooden benches, among others.

In the second but smaller building were some sacks. When they were opened, the sacks contained many weird, fetish items. There were cow horns wrapped with pieces of cloths of varying colours – red, black