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SHARES VIEWS

Paul Osuyi, *Asaba*

Gunmen suspected to be Fulani herdsmen on Friday night stormed a branch of the Celestial Church at Ibusa in Oshimili North Local Government Area of Delta State where they killed the resident pastor, Stephen Akpor.

The deceased who was transferred from Calabar last year was said to be praying and counselling five of his members at the church, Celestial Church of Christ, Breakthrough Cathedral, Ibusa, Parish I, when the hoodlums struck.

They were said to have shot the pastor several times through the window which they forced open after failing to break the locked door.

The pastor's wife had to take cover while the shooting was going on.

Most Supreme Evangelist Isaiah George of the Archdiocese of Ughelli I, who raced down from Ughelli as a result of the incident, said his late colleague hailed from Orogun in Ughelli North Local Government Area of the state.

A member of the church, Mr Temitope gave a detailed account of the invasion, saying: "We were here in the church premises with the prophet 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 thing 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.

"He was gunned down through the window. Before the police got here and took him to the General Hospital, Ibusa, he died."

A patron of the church, Mr Peter Lotobi, who spoke via telephone, said as soon as he got the wind of the attack, "I got in touch with the police when I saw them around Kefas Road in Ibusa and alerted them about it, but before we got there it was already too late."

Meanwhile, one of the doctors who received the deceased at the Ibusa General Hospital, said the pastor was also stabbed after being shot, adding that he died as a result of the injuries he sustained from the stabbing.

When contacted, the police public relations officer in the state, DSP Onome Onovwakpoyeya, confirmed the incident, adding that the police had commenced an investigation into the matter.

She said the police and local vigilante were on the trail of the suspected hoodlums, expressing hope that the suspects would be apprehended and punished.