

African-style Christianity booms in America

IRVING, Texas (AP) - On the 25th floor of a luxury office tower, a church most people have never heard of is planning to save America.

Its leaders believe Jesus has sent them to spread a difficult truth in the United States: Demonic forces are corrupting society and only spiritual warfare can stop them.

Call it the message.

The messenger comes from Nigeria.

The Redeemed Christian Church of God was founded in Lagos by men and women who were once the target of missionary work themselves. Now their church is one of the most aggressive evangelizers to emerge from the recent advance of Christianity across Africa, and their offices in the high-tech corridor of greater Dallas reflect the group's bold, entrepreneurial approach.

The Redeemed Church is part of a boom in African churches establishing American outposts. Jacob Olupona, a professor at the University of California, Davis, who compiles data on African congregations in this country, has found hundreds of examples in cities large and small.

"Anyone who writes about Christianity in America in the 21st century," Olupona said, "will have to write about African churches."

At the core of the shift are pastors from Nigeria. Over the last century, Christians in the West African nation have swelled from a tiny minority to nearly half the population, and its pastors have shown an exceptional talent for winning new believers abroad.

In the United States, the Redeemed Church is ahead of them all.

The church has opened more than 200 parishes in just over a decade, from Chicago to Atlanta to Washington and New York, and is training Americans of all races to help them reach beyond the African immigrant community. One of their largest congregations, Victory Temple in Bowie, Md., claims 2,000 members.

Fifty miles north of Dallas, the church is building a multimillion-dollar national headquarters and conference complex on more than 600 acres of farm land in rural Floyd, Texas. The site is modeled on the denomination's massive campground outside Lagos and is expected to draw thou-

sands of followers for marathon prayer meetings that are the hallmark of its worship style.

At the center of their North American push is a for-profit, satellite TV network, launched in December from

Dallas under the name Dove Media, which broadcasts sermons from the church's world leader Pastor Enoch Adeboye, between reruns of "The Dick Van Dyke Show" and "Bonanza." Dove hopes to attract viewers throughout

the continent who would not normally watch Christian TV.

"We didn't bring this church to the United States to be another Nigerian church," said Ajibike Akinkoye, chief executive of

Dove Media, in an interview in his Irving office. "We are afraid with the way things are going in the world and in America — allowing people to do what they like, creating their own religion and philosophy — those people

are going to pay for it. We don't want that to happen."

The United States, with its ever-expanding megachurches, influential evangelists and deep religiosity, seems an unlikely mission (See Religion, Page 6)

THE CLARK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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PARENT MEETING

REGARDING
RESTRUCTURING OF WEST MIDDLE SCHOOL

MONDAY, APRIL 3, 2006

TIMES: 11:00 A.M. & 5:30 P.M.

LOCATION: THE THEATRE

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LAS VEGAS, NEVADA 89106**

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