

Orthodox Anglicans celebrate first Christmas in Uganda

By Davis Buyondo

Uganda's Orthodox Anglican Church (AOC), which was established in April this year, held its first Christmas service on Monday.

The service in Gayaza village in Kyotera district, led by Vicar General Rev. Cornelius Kateregga Bakubanja, attracted over 300 followers.

Bishop Maurice Odhiambo Ojwo of Ethiopia's OAC, was expected to preside over the service, but did not turn up due to "unavoidable circumstances".

In his message, Bakubanja thanked the congregation for turning up in large numbers to show their love for Jesus Christ. He advised the followers to turn all the challenges encountered in 2017 into great lessons to improve their lives in 2018.

He also implored all OAC

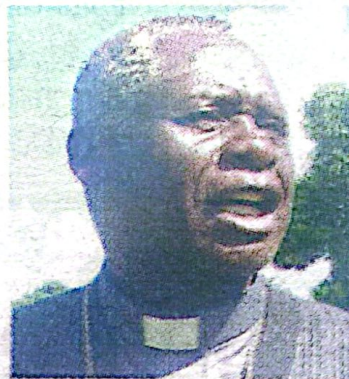
priests who were ordained this year and other leaders to serve God with diligence and help build the confidence of followers.

In an interview with *New Vision*, he said this particular Christmas service was held in the wake of constant criticism by a section of leaders from West Buganda Diocese of Church of Uganda, his former church.

"Even with the wave of confrontation from the other side (West Buganda Diocese), we have remained strong, until this day. We shall use Christmas to forgive all our rivals and return love like Jesus Christ did," he said.

He added that OAC is already registered with the Registrar of Companies and will soon offer holy matrimony and other services.

Bakubanja broke away from West Buganda Diocese



Bakubanja

diocese in April this year, after serving for over 36 years, and started the OAC, the first in Uganda.

He is remembered for putting up a stiff contest for the position of Bishop of West Buganda Diocese against the late Rev. Godfrey Makumbi in 2010, in which he emerged second.

The OAC started in the

United States of America, with its main headquarters in Northern Carolina. It was established in 1963 by Bishop James Parker Dees, who broke away from the Episcopal Church, following allegations of immorality and doctrinal errors.

According to the church's website, it believes that the Bible is God's Word written; the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are divinely inspired and contain all things necessary for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Its other beliefs are that the sacraments of the church are God's Word in action — baptism and holy communion are ordained by the Lord Jesus Christ for all Christians.

"The Apostles' and Nicene creeds are to be taught in the church and to be received by the faithful. Christian

marriage is a sacred bond between a man and a woman. The ordained ministry of the church is reserved to godly men," the church states on its website.

West Buganda Diocese reacts

According to Canon Samuel Mwesigwa, the West Buganda diocesan secretary, Bakubanja's resignation came as a surprise. He further explained that Bakubanja was left with only five years to his retirement.

"We actually excommunicated Bakubanja for his action and warned priests not to deal with him on any matter to do with the diocese," Mwesigwa noted.

Nevertheless, Bakubanja argued that nothing will change his decision since he was committed to his mission of serving in the OAC.