

Nigerian Preacher Brings Evangelical Fire to Ukraine

✖ Every Sunday, thousands of worshipers crowd into an arena here for a rollicking evangelical Christian service. A choir and rock band belt out gospel tunes in Russian. People sing along and clap and shimmy in the aisles. They dash up to the stage for a chance to grab the microphone and declare how their new faith has changed their lives.

It is as if a Sunbelt megachurch had been transplanted to Kiev, birthplace of Slavic Orthodoxy, land of onion-domed cathedrals and incense-shrouded icons. But the preacher at the podium has little if any connection to the United States. Could there be a more unlikely success story in the former Soviet Union than the Rev. Sunday Adelaja, an immigrant from Nigeria who has developed an ardent—and enormous—following across Ukraine?

From his start with a prayer group in a ramshackle apartment soon after the Soviet collapse two decades ago, Mr. Adelaja has built a vast religious organization under the banner of his church, Embassy of God. He has become one of Ukraine's best known public figures, advocating a Christianity that pairs evangelical tenets with an up-from-the-bootstraps philosophy found in religiously oriented self-help books. (Several of which Mr. Adelaja has published.)

Read the rest of this story in the New York Times.