

AFRIGO

Encouraging the Church in world mission

Volume 7, Issue 4

STORYTELLING IN MISSIONS ITS HIDDEN POWER



The Storyteller,
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AFRIGO is a publication aimed at raising awareness, mobilizing, training and inspiring churches and individuals in Africa towards global mission.

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Cover photo: The Storyteller, a painting by Kathleen A. Wilson, portrays the Griot, whose traditional role has been to preserve historical narratives, oral traditions, and genealogies in West African societies. See more of Ms. Wilson's artwork at www.kathleenawilson.com.

The views expressed in the various features in this magazine are not necessarily those of the publisher.

Stock photos are occasionally used. Pseudonyms are used when there are security concerns.



GREAT STORIES STIR GREAT ACTION

BY RAY MENSA MENSAH

Several mission stories have impacted me personally, including one about a missionary who led 903 radical Muslim jihadists to Christ as he obeyed the Lord and went to serve where his colleague had been previously martyred. The other is Samuel Alexander Bill, the Irish missionary. He responded to the call to Nigeria when no one gave him a chance to survive the “white man’s grave.” He ended up serving for over 50 years. The Qua Iboe Church, the fruit of his missionary work, now has thousands of local assemblies with over two million members.

As I write this editorial, I have spent the past three weeks sharing mission stories at several meetings with ministry partners. I have thus seen their power to activate God’s people for Great Commission action. Many people at those meetings recounted how they felt stirred up by the testimonies from the mission field. Praise God!

If a church or mission agency reports that 50,000 people came to faith in Christ Jesus, behind those numbers are the stories of how real people encountered Christ and the transformation they experienced in their lives. The impact then quadruples from just statistics to “stories of hope” or “great mission stories.”

The Bible is said to be 75 per cent stories or narrative, 15 per cent poetry and 10 per cent letters, concepts and ideas. The story of David and Goliath for instance has impacted generations. The Gospels are great mission stories of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the book of Acts is filled with mission stories of the apostles as the Holy Spirit worked through them.

Likewise in our generation, there is the story of Mary Steele from the UK, who spent over 50 years in Ghana and translated the whole Bible into two Ghanaian languages: Konkomba and Bimoba. I can go on with the stories of:

- Dr Solomon and Leticia Aryeetey from Ghana who served in Mali and reached numerous Fulanis for Christ.

- Drs Joshua and Joanna Bogunjoko from Nigeria who served with their medical careers at SIM’s Galmi Hospital in Niger. He is now the first African SIM International Director.
- Reuben Kachala and his wife Elizabeth, who served in India.
- Tshepang Basupi from Botswana and his wife Queen who have been mobilizing the Church in Africa and currently serve as the Southern Africa Regional Directors of the Africa Inland Mission (AIM).
- My colleague Samuel Afrifa serving among the unreached Mamprusi people in Ghana, who has seen many Muslims and animists come to Christ with several churches planted. They all have great stories to tell that time and space won’t allow here. Many people have become believers or have been

**Behind those numbers
are the stories of
how real people
encountered Christ.**

called to missionary service through the biographies of gallant soldiers of Christ. I challenge and encourage the African mission movement and friends from the Global South to accurately document what the Lord is doing and to find creative ways to share the testimonies and impact of their work*. These stories will first of all, bring glory to God, lead many to Christ and be used by the Lord of the Harvest to raise many new workers for the remaining task. Let’s follow the biblical example of Dr. Luke: “In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven” (Luke 1:1-2). And let us widely share “great mission stories!”

*Visit AfriGO’s Facebook page to read stories of African missionaries posted every Monday. You may also send your mission stories to managingeditor@afriGO.org.

Ray Mensa Mensah is the Executive Director of OneWay Africa and also serves as President of the Ghana Evangelical Missions Association (GEMA). He is passionate about the total mobilization of churches for missions where every member is involved in the Great Commission. ray@owm.org

CALLED: NASIRU SAIDU



Photo: AIM Stories

THE COST OF A VOICE

AS TOLD TO MERCY KAMBURA

I lay on the floor, knees to my chest and my hands shielding my face, as my brother whipped me with a tree branch. I did not retaliate. Instead, I said, “I’m ready; you can kill me. I heard a voice, and I’m not going back.” He stopped beating me and started crying, telling me I had been deceived. That was my first persecution after becoming a Christian.

I grew up in northeast Nigeria, and the fishing season is one of my fondest childhood memories. Now I’m a fisherman of a different kind—a fisher of men.

My entire family is Muslim. My dad taught us the ways of Islam, and my desire was to be a good Muslim like him. One day, I heard a voice in Hausa, “*Nasiru, ka tuba, ka karfi (Yesu), ya zama mai cetonka.*” (Nasiru, accept Jesus to be your Lord and be saved.) I thought it was Satan, so I started praying to Allah to make the voice go away. This went on for three weeks. I was devoted to living and dying as a Muslim. Becoming a Christian was the worst thing I could do.

I confided in my Christian friend, Joshua, and he said, “Congratulations! This is the voice of God. He’s asking you to accept his Son, Jesus Christ.” The following day he took me to a man of God who read from Rev. 3:20, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.” My eyes opened, and I became a Christian.

My Muslim friends started noticing changes in me. I felt threatened, so I left school and ran away to live with my brother in a different state. He didn’t know I had given my life to Christ. I met a pastor who shared the story of Paul with me. When my elder brother discovered I was no longer a Muslim, he was angry. He wasn’t about to let me destroy our father’s good name. That was when he beat me nearly to death. Later, he called a family meeting and announced, “Nasiru has become an infidel!”

I confirmed the allegations, and there was a lot of weeping and orders to recant my faith. I told the gathering I was returning

to Islam, but I secretly prayed to Jesus to help me. They burned my Bible. Everybody appreciated my brother for rescuing me, but I was disturbed by my actions and had no peace. After escorting my brother to a car, I boarded one after him and fled to the pastor’s house. The persecution traumatized me; I didn’t want to see or talk to my parents again.

I attended a conference by Navigators and I found Christians learning how to be like Muslims to reach them with the Gospel. If these Christians were this devoted then, I had a bigger mandate, having been a Muslim myself. I went back and started reaching out to my people, beginning with my brother. I now understood that the difference between them and me was how I related to them. They needed to see me loving differently.

I enrolled to study Mass Communication, and after graduating, I started practicing as a journalist. My interest is to be a media evangelist. I’m training a couple of young people, and drawing them to Jesus.

My biggest challenge is that people hardly trust me. Several ‘fake converts’ work as spies. Once, a church refused to accept me. They had previously tried helping a convert, and it didn’t turn out well. However, the pastor received me. The persecution wasn’t a discouragement but a platform for God to build me up. It has helped me to rely on Jesus alone when I have a need.

If you’re reaching Muslims, first understand and respect their culture. Don’t go wearing a suit and carrying a Bible.

There was a lot of weeping and orders to recant my faith.

Pray:

- For God to keep my family safe amid persecution. Being Christian means being hunted.
- For God to draw our families to Himself through us.
- For the media stories to be used to bless His people.



EVERY STORY COUNTS IN MISSIONS

BY CONRAD MBEWE

Africa is known for its storytelling tradition. Huts in a village homestead were often arranged with one in the middle that was open on the sides. Children gathered there to hear stories from parents and elderly people. The villages also had official storytellers, who kept the history of the village alive. Often, the stories were interspaced with songs that were easy to join in and that helped to build the plot to a crescendo. Although I speak in the past tense, this is still very much part of village life across Africa.

We must not lose this tradition in the Church. After all, most of the Old and New Testaments are comprised of stories. If the African Church is to become mission-minded, then we will need to reflect on how previous generations of Christians sacrificed for the Gospel on our continent. We need to hear stories of heroes of the faith so that we are challenged to emulate them.

The great missionary movement of the 18th century became an unstoppable flame as missionaries sent excerpts of their journal entries back to their sending churches. These were published by Christians back home, who were challenged to seriously consider God's call upon their lives. Fear could no longer restrain them as they read stories of both suffering and Gospel victory. Thus, the stream of missionaries going out into foreign missions soon became a mighty river.

One such story for me is about Olive Carey Doke, born in 1891 in England. Her father, J.J. Doke, always wanted to be a missionary, but health challenges prevented him. He, however, took up a pastorate in New Zealand. It was there that Olive Doke trusted in Jesus Christ for her salvation. After a few years, the family moved to South Africa.

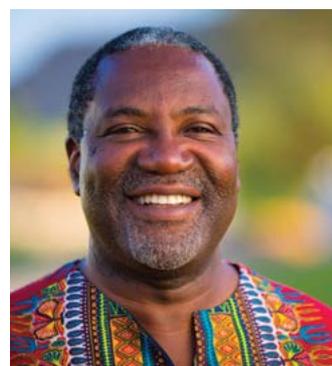
Soon after, J. J. Doke and his son Clement took a trip to Lambaland, an area within present day Zambia. They visited a fledgling Baptist mission station and, on their way back, J. J. Doke died from fever. Clement returned to Lambaland in 1914 to serve as a missionary. Two years later, Olive left the bright lights of Johannesburg at the age of 25 to join him, living in a mud hut with no running water in the jungle of Central Africa. Olive remained in Lambaland until she died in 1972— 56 years later.

I wish I could narrate Olive Doke's experiences and accomplishments as a missionary in Lambaland. It would fill an entire book. Suffice it to say that Olive quickly learned the Lamba language and worked hard at translating the whole Bible into Lamba with the help of her brother Clement. By 1960, they handed the printed Lamba Bible to the indigenous leaders of the Baptist denomination. Olive and her team of indigenous workers preached the Gospel all over Lambaland villages. She also ran a girls' school to help women support their husbands in ministry.

Olive never married. However, she was twice honoured by Queen Elizabeth (in 1953 and 1956) for her heroic missionary service in Central Africa. She was awarded the insignia of the Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE). When Zambia gained independence in 1964, Kenneth Kaunda asked Olive Doke to lead the procession of new leaders into the church building where the commemorative activities were to be held. In 1966, on the 50th anniversary of Olive Doke's coming to Zambia, the main state newspaper ran a full-page article on her. How much she was appreciated! Yet, the greatest recognition will come when God says, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

When you read such stories, you also want your life to count. I hope that you will be challenged by the stories of missionaries in this issue. May many respond by saying to God, "Here I am; send me!"

**Fear could no longer
restrain them as they
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victory.**



Conrad Mbeve has served as pastor of the Kabwata Baptist Church since 1987. He holds a PhD in Missions, and is the founding Chancellor of the African Christian University. He is a blogger and the editor of Reformation Zambia magazine. He is married to Felistas and they have six adult children and six grandchildren.



Rev. Lule leading a song at Ramadala

THE **LOST** CHURCHES OF MUNDU ARE **FOUND**

Little did Tom Desloges know the remarkable story his discovery was going to unravel when he found in his church's archives maps, letters and some reports about the Mundu. The Mundu? How did this name get there? Sources cited this tribe on the DR Congo border with South Sudan as unreached. Perhaps Rev. Lule would know something, Tom thought. But Rev. Lule didn't know either. All he had heard was that people feared the Mundu—if you went among them, you would not easily return alive. The missions department decided to send Rev. Lule on a trip to investigate.

**“We have kept
the land for you.
Send people
to come.”**

Tom is a Canadian missionary and the unit leader for Africa Inland Mission in DR Congo. He serves within the Missions and Evangelism Department of the *20eme Communauté Évangélique au Centre de l'Afrique* (CECA 20) denomination under the leadership of Rev. Lule Djamba Charles.

Rev. Lule set out from Bunia by motorbike, a better option than going by car, which would have taken all day. The motorbike could more easily maneuver the roads, but it succumbed to the rain's effect and toppled over many times; nevertheless, God was good. Each time, Rev. Lule got up and found it fit to continue.

It never broke down along the way. After travelling for half the day, Rev. Lule finally arrived at the first Mundu chiefdom of Missa.

Rev. Lule explains, “When you get to any village for the first time, you should see the chief and tell him the purpose of your visit. If he doesn't give you the permission, there is nothing you can do.” Rev. Lule called on the chief, and the chief and his brothers were very happy to receive him and hear his mission—to enquire about the Christian work that had happened among them many years ago. “Come with me,” the chief said.

We kept it for you

The chief showed Rev. Lule a bush-covered piece of land. “Your building was on this site,” he said. “The church no longer exists, but we have kept the land

for you. Send people to come and start a new church for us,” he implored.

The situation was no different in the other Mundu villages. At Ramadala, they took Rev. Lule to see a piece of property—another church that was now no more. But the people’s spiritual openness was hard to miss. “I had not planned to preach,” says Rev. Lule. “But when I saw their attitude, the Holy Spirit guided me to preach from Romans chapter 10. They listened attentively; especially the women, and seven people believed in Jesus.”

In the third village, the Tekadje chief said, “We don’t have any churches at all, but we want you to come. Send people who will teach us God’s Word. We will give them food and housing and everything they need.” He added, “You can even start the church meetings in my home.”

Rev. Lule travelled the Mundu villages for three days. In all three chiefdoms of Missa, Buru and Tekadje, there were a total of four run-down Roman Catholic churches. “The priest only comes once a year to baptize children and celebrate Easter,” people told Rev. Lule. The untrained lay minister in charge of the Catholic churches requested CECA 20 to take over. Spiritual hunger and open doors were everywhere. “Our parents knew about Jesus, but we have never heard of Him,” the Mundus said.

Lost and found

In the early 1990s, CECA 20 and Africa Inland Mission (AIM) started mission work among the Mundu. They planted the two “lost” churches at Missa and Ramadala. The missionaries journeyed by car every Sunday to hold services in the two villages, until the ensuing rebellion with the Mobutu regime forced them out of the country. The lack of spiritual leadership coupled with continuous instability and population movements meant many Mundu believers also vacated the area.

Within a month of Rev. Lule’s trip, the president and legal representative of CECA 20 visited the Mundu villages and advocated for mission work to begin. Rev. Lule organized a group of people for an evangelistic campaign, and more Mundus placed their faith in Jesus Christ. The CECA 20 church’s evangelism and missions training school, *Centre Chrétien de Formation pour l’Évangélisation et Mission Intégrale*, sent two student teams to work in Mundu villages. They revived the churches in Missa and

Ramadala and planted two more at Tekadje and Gbere within six months.

The Baka request

Rev. Lule was with the Tekadje chief when they passed a junction leading to a nearby Baka community [the Baka were featured as a least-reached people group in AfriGO Vol. 7, Iss. 2]. Some Baka people had gathered there with their chief to mediate a public dispute. When the Baka chief heard that Rev. Lule was passing, he ordered the meeting to stop and requested an audience with the “man of God.”

“I’ve heard news about the Mundu people,” he informed Rev. Lule. “We have seen the great changes happening among them. You go to the Mundus all the time, but you have ignored us. I have come to beg you: send us missionaries too,” the Baka chief pleaded.

“His words really touched my heart,” Rev. Lule expressed. “From the Baka all the way into South Sudan, there are no churches.”

All are called

Churches in Aba, a nearby community, are helping to oversee the new Mundu congregations. Other Mundu believers have also joined in the revived mission efforts. One Mundu pastor sent his church members to do evangelism in the villages. Two Mundu students from Aba and Gbere completed the mission training programme and are preparing to go serve among their people. A student from the previous year’s cohort received approval from the district leadership of his church to live permanently with his family as missionaries

among the Mundu. CECA 20 churches farther away are fundraising to support the new church plants, and they also send people for short-term mission trips.

Churches close to the Mundu in Aba, Aba-Cite and Faradje have been awakened to a new understanding of missions and their obligation to send the Gospel among the least-reached. Tom shares, “Local churches usually expect their denominations or the West to initiate missionary activity. We have spent time with these churches, demonstrating the need and showing their role in making missions successful. We still have a lot of mobilization work to do, but some pastors are beginning to realize that it is primarily their responsibility. A little missions education seems to have gone a long way,” Tom says; and we may add “in rewriting the Mundu story.”



Short-term missionaries from Bunia, Ituri Province, to the Mundu



STORYTELLING NOT JUST FOR KIDS

Have you enjoyed the stories in this issue so far? Everyone loves a good story; they are a great way to connect principles with real life. In fact, for two-thirds of the world's population, it is their preferred way to learn.

Perhaps your great-grandparents were more likely to tell stories than read books, but modern people? A surprising number of people groups around the world still function in oral cultures by choice or by necessity. Why not just teach everyone to read and move on then? We endorse oral cultures because they are valid, and learning by hearing can have significant advantages which bring people to Christ.

It took organizations in the West many years to use the story approach regularly—actually, just in the last 30 years. Here in Africa, we've known it all along. Now called “the storying movement”, people around the world are being taught to share Bible stories and other stories with a moral lesson to help people understand God's message to them. This method of sharing God's truth is attractive to everyone and a powerful tool.

A storying leader with Spoken

Worldwide was travelling to visit people in an Igala village in Nigeria. Along the road he met some other Igala people who asked where he was going. He told them he was going to another village to tell stories, so they asked him for one. He stopped and shared the Gospel with them in story form. Many of the people accepted Christ right there, and a church began in that village. It became part of the leader's regular route of storytelling and relationship building.

For millions of the unreached around the world, storytelling is an ideal way for believers to share the Gospel. Some sisters in Vietnam and Laos learned to use storytelling as a “Travelling Bible.” They journey from village to village, to places where the Bible is not allowed. They choose from their repertoire of memorized narratives for the appropriate audience and situation at a moment's notice. As they travel, they train other believing women in the same storytelling skills, thereby multiplying the concept of Travelling Bible across the countries. (Excerpt from the book *Orality Breakouts*.)

Do you want to use storying or storytelling in your ministry to reach people's minds and hearts? It may

not be as easy as you think. AfriGO interviewed Tom Stout, head of orality for SIM. He cautions strongly: Pastors, don't just add a few illustrations to your sermon and consider that you've done your bit for the oral learners. People in these cultures actually learn very differently from the literates in your congregation. For instance:

- Oral learners absorb information by hearing, observing and imitating.
- They learn from real-life events and like to receive information in group settings with strong community fellowship.
- It may take more time to learn new things because of different ways of processing.

Tom also warned that it is not possible to become a proficient teacher in the oral tradition just by reading a book or attending a workshop; rather, it is a style which is best developed through long interactions and considered learning. Africans have a great advantage; many of us have grown up in this tradition and are comfortable with it. We've listed some resources to peruse and get started, as well as links to audio Bibles and stories which you can share with others.

TRAININGS

According to orality specialists, the best and most current training can be found on the EMDC website: <https://emdc.online>. Available are seminars on Scripture Engagement (SE), Bible storying, orality, oral and written Bible translations, linguistics, and literacy. It also has a huge archive of past seminars and workshops. A specific help is

the SE Guide, which assists communities in choosing SE materials and approaches which best suit their community. <https://emdc.guide/>

MORE ABOUT STORYING



Three reasons storying is essential for making disciples globally: <https://bit.ly/3TeiFqF>

OneStory is a network of organizations such as Wycliffe Bible Translators, Youth With A Mission, and Pioneers who have joined together to promote storying as a ministry approach. Read more about what storying is, and find resources to help you learn it. <https://bit.ly/3Ezjcis>



What is Bible storying? This article on the Orality Network's website explains what storying is when using the Bible. <https://bit.ly/3U04h6s>

HELPS



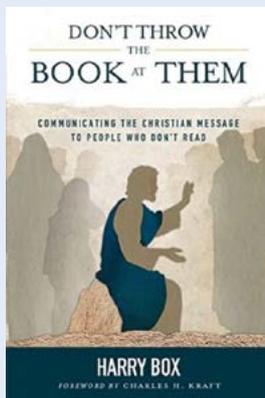
The E3 Partners website has a wealth of helps, including the materials from their disciple-making training. <https://bit.ly/3gT4M3p>

This website has 262 Bible stories and tutoring on how to tell them. Stories are in English and five West African languages. <https://bit.ly/3Wo1G7V>

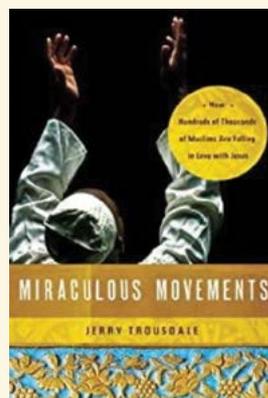


The Story Producer (SP) app from SIL has templates you can use on your Android phone to translate and dub stories, then create videos and distribute them to all types of mobile phones and other devices. It usually requires a one-week hands-on training to build capacity in the SP app for local use and sustainable production. <https://bit.ly/3DULWSM>

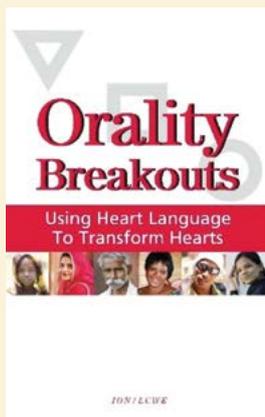
BOOKS



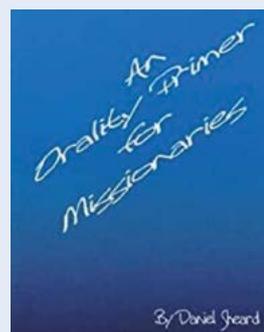
Don't Throw the Book at Them: Communicating the Christian Message to People Who Don't Read is an easy-to-read manual for cross-cultural missionaries and national church leaders ministering in oral societies. The e-book costs US\$8.49. <https://amzn.to/3Nt0cFn>



Miraculous Movements is an inspiring book about how stories of Jesus are transforming the lives and communities of thousands of Muslims. Well worth the price of US\$6.99 for the ebook. <https://amzn.to/3FCwHyT>



Orality Breakouts: Using Heart Language to Transform Hearts (a free downloadable book) "Oral learning has changed the way our ministries are conducted. I know the congregants are now receiving at least 70% of their spiritual nourishment using oral strategies. We are also able to commence church planting with a focus on the unengaged and unreached people groups. Orality and the many applications from this book have enriched my life and ministry. Do not miss this for your ministry." – Bishop P. N. Njunguna, Review from Kenya, Orality Breakouts. <https://bit.ly/3sRqyYj>



An Orality Primer for Missionaries, US\$4.99 ebook <https://amzn.to/3NuPG0d>.

GO! NEWS OF AFRICA'S MOBILIZING CHURCH

SUPPORT RAISING BOOTCAMPS

By the end of 2022, Support Raising Solutions (SRS) will have had five bootcamps across Africa to teach missionaries to become financially healthy, vision driven, and fully funded. At the Rwanda Bootcamp, 58 people participated from four African nations. Camps were held in Ethiopia in October, and in Kenya in September. SRS, a

US-based organization, has trained missionaries from all over the world on how to raise and maintain their support. SRS offers special bootcamp rates for Africans and African missionaries are finding the trainings applicable to fundraising on the continent. You can read more on their website at <https://bit.ly/3sUfsBD>.



Bootcamp in Nairobi, Kenya



The Ghana Evangelical Missions Association (GEMA)'s annual missions conference met from 12-14 October. Attending in person were 215 people with a further 46 participating online from six countries. The main speakers were from Ghana, Nigeria and India, with each speaking from their respective contexts on the conference theme, 'Every Believer a Sender.' Various mission agencies were present to hold exhibitions and mobilize more workers. GEMA hopes to raise and send 30,000 missionaries by the year 2040.

Akrofi-Christaller Institute (ACI): A Postgraduate Mission Institute for the African context

The Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture is a postgraduate research and training institute fully accredited by the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission with a Presidential Charter to award its own degrees. ACI seeks to be at the cutting edge of the Church's mission and encounter with society and culture in Ghana, Africa and the wider world. It is committed to documenting Christian history, thought and life in Ghana and in Africa as a whole.

ACI offers Master of Arts in Theology and Mission with specially designed options, Master of Theology in African Christianity and Bible Interpretation and Translation, and the PhD in Theology. Certificate programmes are also offered. Visit

ACI's website at www.aci.edu.gh.

"Before coming to ACI, I did not have an enlightened African vision of Christianity and its role in African society. The experiences I am gaining at the Institute through research are refining my understanding of Christianity and its prophetic role, especially in Central African Republic society." -Rev. Plaisance M'bara, PhD

Candidate, Central African Republic.

"I strongly commend and recommend ACI as a training ground for anyone wanting to serve God's purpose in his or her generation. ACI's integral approach to theology, mission and culture not only met my expectations but also has the best intellectual minds on the Faculty."

*-Rev. Dr. Femi B. Adeleye, PhD
Alumnus and Adjunct Lecturer*



ACI graduates: Master of Arts in Theology and Mission



Join us every third Friday of the month for engaging mission interviews with those at the forefront of African

missions. We'll be live on Facebook and YouTube.

<https://bit.ly/3qiYXxz>

Commissioning of Francis Kuntenga, missionary to Mozambique



MALAWI'S BROOM: SENDING TOGETHER

A lone broom strand can do little, but bound together with other strands, it becomes an effective and unbreakable broom.

Not so many years ago there were no Malawian missionaries, but all that began to change in 2010. Today, 147 churches and denominations are part of the newly formed Malawi Missions Initiative. Nine missionaries have been sent to countries like Thailand, Mozambique and Malawi, with five more heading out soon! By banding together, they are sending better together.

In 2010, mission agency SIM held a series of conferences for church leaders, who were each presented with a set of books to help develop their ministries. By the third conference in 2012, missions had become the strong focus, and participants came together to form a national task team, the forerunner of what would become the Malawi Missions Initiative (MMI).

The MMI officially launched in 2014, with the Evangelical Association of Malawi and SIM in attendance. Rev. Paul Mawaya, SIM mobilizer and now head of the MMI, says, "Once the Church is properly taught about missions, and passionate leaders are on board, there is no problem in raising missionary support." Flowing from this vision is financial support for sending missionaries.

Sending models

A few sending models are used across the nation. One missionary is completely supported by his local church. Another missionary has several congregations from one denomination who have banded together to send and support him; he has been in the field for four years.

Other missionaries are supported by individuals. This can be challenging due to the number of people one must interact with to raise the necessary support and the time needed to keep each informed of the work. Missionaries in this situation can be seen as outside the local church structure, presenting another complication to overcome.

Missionaries who are tentmakers can also be sent. A church blesses and prayerfully supports a missionary, but he earns his salary in a foreign place through a business or employment, while doing ministry.

Stories like that of Rev. Gusty Makhutchu are incredibly encouraging. He felt called to go but his church did not have a history of supporting missionaries. However, once he declared his intention, a church member gave a huge portion of his retirement savings at great sacrifice. Now Pastor Makhutchu and his wife Ellina are frontier missionaries in Mozambique. Last December, when Gusty and his wife were in Malawi, their church put together for them a packet of maize meal, sugar, cooking oil and some money for

Christmas celebrations. Another member gave a gift of money. It is deeply touching to be remembered this way.

Powerful networks

Twelve prayer fellowships formed in 2014 in cities across the country still meet monthly to pray for the unreached. Their goals have expanded to engage mission-minded leaders and Christians in cross-cultural missions and to facilitate those who want to go.

The MMI works within the Evangelical Association of Malawi, which provides a natural network of regional committees from which to reach out to churches. Paul Mawaya says, "Leaders wield a lot of influence, so missions sensitization is directed at them." The MMI uses various strategies to engage leaders right down to secondary school students. Churches often invite them to give missions motivations, and short missions courses have proved useful. These include Interface, the Great Commission Seminar from the Global Missions Initiative, and Understanding World Evangelism, which was developed in Malawi by Rev. Reuben Kachala.

Within churches, Rev. Mawaya has found that when the members understand the Great Commission and everyone sees their role, the vision for reaching the lost becomes a church-wide priority. Rev. Mawaya advises: "The top member to the bottom member should own the mission and be exposed adequately to issues of missions. I believe that better understanding produces a passion to participate."

**Better
understanding
produces passion
to participate.**

PEOPLE GROUPS: THE DEAF OF NORTH AFRICA

Across the world, there are up to 72 million Deaf people, making them one of the largest unreached people groups on the planet. According to DOOR International, a mission specializing in reaching the Deaf, fewer than two per cent know Jesus.

Conservative estimates put more than 1.5 million Deaf people across the seven northernmost countries of Africa, where followers of Islam comprise at least 97 per cent of the population, except for Egypt, which is 86 per cent Muslim. In such places, the likelihood of a Deaf person meeting a Christian, let alone being able to communicate with that Christian, is rare.

Traditionally the Deaf have been viewed as “disabled”, but it is more accurate to see them as having a separate culture, with their own language, the local sign language. Across the world, the Deaf share many characteristics and challenges in daily living. The parents of most Deaf children can hear, and most of them do not learn sign language. Where it is available, a Deaf child may learn to communicate from other Deaf people or from a Deaf school. Their community is comprised of other

Deaf people rather than neighbours and family. This leads to a distinct worldview.

Deaf people may suffer a great deal of oppression from those who can hear; in some places they are not allowed to marry and no efforts are made to include them socially; few people learn sign language to engage the Deaf. In many communities, they have no real voice and can be isolated, or even hidden because of family shame.

Another challenge for the Deaf is low literacy levels. Poor access to education means they do not often learn spoken language well enough to read it. This creates problems in using any study materials, including the Bible. There are very few scriptures in local sign language, and no Gospel videos or other resources.

Through experience and practice, it has become very evident that the best people to reach the Deaf are those who are Deaf themselves, or who have been accepted into Deaf society. Training for Deaf leaders and Deaf missionaries is needed to bridge this gap.

AT A GLANCE

- Many Deaf people value their language and culture so much that if they were given the chance to hear, they would refuse.
- The Deaf community is often isolated from those who do not understand them.
- Interaction with the hearing world can traumatize the Deaf, who cannot process audible information.

PRAY FOR

- Missionaries and local Christians, especially those who are Deaf, to be trained in reaching the Deaf of North Africa.
- Resources for Deaf people in languages and formats they can access.
- A growing love for the Deaf, and a willingness in Christians to reach out locally and globally.

Sources: Joshua Project, Peoplegroups.org, DOOR International, Open Doors, Christer.org | <https://www.pray4tunisia.com/en/uupg/deaf/>



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