

Masoka, Wenson Lyson (1947–2014)

GIBSON SAMUEL MOYO, AND PASSMORE HACHALINGA

Gibson Samuel Moyo, M.Ed. (Philippine Union College, Manila, Philippines), was born in Chitapa Moyo Village, Mzimba District, Malawi. After obtaining a Master of Education Administration degree, he served as principal of Malamulo College, Union Education and Youth director, and Union executive secretary consecutively. Having served the Adventist church for forty-six years, he retired in 2005. His last post before retirement was registrar for Admissions and Records at the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, Kenya.

Passmore Hachalinga, D.Th. (University of South Africa), D.Min. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan), is the director of the Ellen G. White Research and Heritage Centre at Helderberg College of Higher Education in Cape Town, South Africa. Hachalinga previously served as district pastor, school chaplain, department director, conference and union mission administrator in Zambia and Angola, and as vice president/ministerial secretary of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division. He has authored one book: *Echoes From Table Mountain: Experiences of Seventh-day Adventist Pioneers in the Cape – Adventism's Gateway into Southern Africa* and several published articles and book chapters.



Pastor and Mrs. Wenson Lyson Masoka
Photo courtesy of Saustine K. Mfuné.

Wenson Lyson Masoka was a Malawian Seventh-day Adventist teacher, pastor, evangelist, and church administrator.

Early Life

Wenson Lyson Masoka was born on September 28, 1947, in Nseula Village, Neno District, Southern Region of Malawi. His father was Lyson Masoka, who, with his wife, Lesita Msiska Masoka, were both faithful members of the Thumba Seventh-day Adventist Church. God blessed them with three boys: Wenson Lyson Masoka, Welton Lyson Masoka, and Lyford Lyson Masoka. W. L. Wenson was the oldest of the three.¹ Elder and Mrs. Masoka believed in the value of education, and thus they worked hard to raise funds to educate their children.²

Education and Marriage

In 1956, at the age of 9, Wenson L. Masoka began his formal education in Sub Standard A at Thumba Mission Primary School of Seventh-day Adventists. The following year, he was promoted to Sub Standard B. In 1958, he successfully completed Standard One in the same school.³

In 1959, he attended the Mitumbu Mission Primary School of Seventh-day Adventists where he successfully completed Standard Three in 1960. Thereafter, he moved to Thambani Mission Primary School of Seventh-day Adventists, where he stayed until 1962.⁴

In 1963, he enrolled at Matandani Mission Primary School of Seventh-day Adventists, where he remained until 1964, after which it became necessary for him to temporarily leave school due to financial constraints. During this time, he briefly stayed at home, doing some piece work in order to raise money to enable him to return to school. While Wenson was on break from school, the South-East Africa Union Office in Blantyre employed him as a helper, to clean the yard and go to the post office to deliver and collect mail.⁵

Wenson Masoka's desire for education remained uppermost in his mind. While doing work at the Union office, he tried to enroll with the Malawi Correspondence College, but one of the missionaries at the Union office advised him to go back to Matandani Mission and do his secondary school studies there. He complied. He went back to Matandani Secondary School to start Form One in 1967.⁶

In 1971, he moved to Malamulo Mission Training Institute to study Form Three, and completed Form Four in 1972 at the same school. Thereafter, in 1973, he moved to Solusi College (now Solusi University) to study for his Bachelor of Theology degree, which he obtained in 1977. Eight years later, in 1985, he earned the M.A. degree from Andrews University, and in 2006, he completed the Doctor of Ministry degree from Andrews University Theological Seminary, in Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A.⁷

On November 30, 1980, Wenson L. Masoka was joined in holy matrimony to Rosemary Msiska at Soche Seventh-day Adventist Church. The marriage ceremony was officiated by Pastor J. H. Mambala.⁸ God blessed the couple with four girls: Rowena Mphatso, Rheeta Tamanda, Winnie Pilirani, and Wendy Thokozani.⁹ Rosemary Msiska, his spouse, is a Registered Nurse.¹⁰

Ministry

Soon after Wenson completed the Bachelor of Theology degree, Matandani Mission Secondary School called Masoka to teach at their school. He briefly taught there, but preferred pastoral work instead. On January 12, 1980, Pastor Masoka, J. D. Bilima, D. C. Kasambara, S. B. Kaunda, B. G. Kavaloh, B. E. Malopa, W. Menyere, and W. A. Ngwira were ordained to the gospel ministry at Lakeview Mission, Mlangeni, Malawi.¹¹ Between 1980 and 1983, the Union evangelist, the late Pastor J. H. Mambala, briefly trained Masoka to work as his assistant, but he was soon called to serve as the district leader of the Lakeview Mission Church. He also taught at Lakeview Seminary as a part-time lecturer.¹² Other faculty staff who served with Masoka at Lakeview Seminary were Elder and Mrs. Burton Wright, Elder and Mrs. Hugo Palm.¹³

The South Lake Field called Masoka to serve as its executive director (president) from 1983 to 1985.¹⁴ Thereafter, the South-East Africa Union Mission called him to serve as its executive secretary from 1986 to 1988. Masoka was finally appointed as executive director (president) of South-East Africa (Malawi) Union Mission during the Eastern Africa Division year-end meetings held from November 5 to 14, 1989 in Harare, Zimbabwe.¹⁵ He replaced Pastor Franklin A. Botomani, who retired for health reasons. Meanwhile Pastor G. S. Moyo was elected as executive secretary for the Union Mission, replacing Pastor Masoka. Masoka served in that position from 1989 to 1997.¹⁶

In 1990, when Pastor Masoka visited North Pacific Union Conference and spoke during the regular Monday staff worship, he told a little of the needs in Malawi, especially the lack of bicycles for the pastor, which was the most economical means of transportation. North Pacific Union Conference president, Pastor Bruce Johnston wondered if they could gather some bicycles and send them to Malawi. On August 3, 1990, a dedication ceremony was held for the 105 bicycles gathered the surrounding areas. The North Pacific Union Conference staff contributed \$600 to buy spare parts and tires. The bicycles were loaded in containers and shipped to Malawi.¹⁷ The General Conference – ADRA Shipping Agency, Transportation West, sent a total of 110 bicycles and parts in groups from Portland as space allowed. The first container reached Malawi in December 1990. During the General Conference Annual Council meetings held in Perth, Australia, Pastor Bruce Johnston heard from Pastor Masoka that as a result of greater mobility with bicycles, Malawi Union had doubled the baptisms in 1991, topping 5,600. Pastor Masoka conveyed a word of thank you to the North Pacific Union Conference for the donation of bicycles to Malawi.¹⁸

As president of the South East Africa Union Mission, Pastor Masoka led out during the centenary celebration of Adventism in Malawi. About 10,000 people gathered in Lilongwe, the capital city of Malawi, on August 20-22, 1993, to participate in the celebration. Prior to this, the ceremony commenced on a Friday afternoon with a parade in the streets of Blantyre the second largest city in Malawi. By then, there were 142,000 baptized Seventh-day Adventists in Malawi. Plans were being laid to reach 150,000 by the end of the year. Present at the ceremony were Pastor L. H. Makeleta, president of the Zambia Union, Pastor G. Mushanga, president of Mozambique Union, L. D. Raelly, president of the Eastern Africa Division, and Leo Ranzolin, a general vice president of the General Conference. Others present were N. L. Doss, former South East Africa Union president, Dr. Elton Wallace, Z. F. Ayonga, communication director for the Division, and A. Mugwagwa, evangelist from Solusi College, plus many other missionaries.¹⁹

In 1996, Pastor Masoka led out in the official opening of Malawi's Literature Ministry Seminary. The idea of establishing the seminary was introduced by Elder Richard McKee, a former General Conference Associate Publishing director, who promoted the project during the Eastern Africa Division Publishing Council.²⁰ In 1994, builders started renovating an existing building in Blantyre after receiving US\$5,000 donated by the General Conference Publishing Department. Other donations came from the Malamulo Publishing House administrators. By 1996, more than US\$66,000 had been spent on the project. During the official opening ceremony, literature evangelists from all over Malawi and Zambia arrived to celebrate the occasion. General Conference Publishing Director Ron E. Appenzeller officiated at the cutting of the ribbon.²¹

As president, Pastor Masoka became involved and supported the production of a new hymnal for the use of the church in Malawi. It happened that in 1989, Ivan and Lorraine Crowder from Florida, U.S.A., went to Malawi to teach a semester at Lakeview Seminary. While there, Lorraine noticed that the Church in Malawi was still using a small song book put together in the 1940s. She conceived of the idea of producing a new, larger hymnal for the use of the Church in Malawi. Encouraged by Pastor Masoka, the Union president, Lorraine embarked on the project of updating the hymnal, now to consist of 450 hymns, 89 responsive readings, and other worship aids.²² Other sources indicate that the actual number of hymns was 362, including choruses and the national anthem.²³

After reviewing these items, the church leader gave the go-ahead. Lorraine drew from her rich experience as a music teacher, choir director and hymnologist. She made all the preparations of purchasing the computer software, obtaining publisher and copyright permissions, setting the music to the tonic sol-fa old English system, preparing to have the translation into Chichewa language used in Malawi. Four years later, the final touches were being made to the hymnal at Lakeview by workers led by Pastor E. S. Khonje while Pastor Masoka personally did the proofreading. The hymnal was published by the Malamulo Publishing House, and it was ready for use by January 1, 1998.²⁴ This hymnal was going to be used by the Chewa-speaking people residing in the neighboring countries of Mozambique,

Zambia, and Zimbabwe.²⁵

Thereafter, Masoka left for the United States of America, where he studied at Andrews University Seminary and received his Doctor of Ministry in 2006.

His Death

Prior to his death on May 7, 2014, Pastor Masoka was physically fit with no known ailments.²⁶ He died in his sleep while his wife was away at work as a nurse. The cause of death was said to be a heart attack.²⁷ He was buried on May 18, 2014, at Rosehill Cemetery in the State of Michigan, U.S.A.²⁸

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NOTES

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3. Welton Lyson Masoka, interview by the author, Lilongwe, August 15, 2018.?
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