

# Oyiengo, Nathan Amunga (1941–2015)

---

SELINA OYIENGO

Selina Oyiengo

---

Nathan Amunga Oyiengo was a pastor and administrator in Kenya.

## Early Life

Nathan Amunga Oyiengo was born to Jackton Oyiengo and Rispa Asami on December 23, 1941, in Ebulali Sub-location of Khwisero Location in the then Kakamega District (now Butere-Mumias District) in Western Kenya.<sup>1</sup> His father, Jackton, was a prison officer while his mother was a housewife and a small scale businesswoman. His was a big family of one brother and five sisters. His formative years were spent with his parents and siblings in Kakamega, but when he began going to school, he went to live with his father in Nairobi. For little Nathan, life in the city was a new experience, and it was not long before he found himself in trouble.<sup>2</sup>

During an interview with his children Jack and Selina in August 2015, he narrated how one afternoon while roaming around aimlessly he found himself on the shoulders of a stranger being whisked away to some unknown destination. The man who had grabbed him was so fast that Nathan did not find his voice until a neighbor called out his name asking where he was going with the strange man. Sensing danger, the would-be kidnapper dropped his human cargo and hurriedly explained that he was only playing with the boy. After giving that brief and completely unconvincing explanation of his weird behavior, the man hurriedly walked away and melted into the gathering crowd. Thus, Nathan was saved from a kidnapping that would have completely altered the course of his life.<sup>3</sup>

After completing his studies at class four level, he proceeded to class five, six, and finally class seven where he sat for another exam and excelled. After completing his junior secondary level exam, he took a job as a primary school teacher at Shiongo SDA School, which was near his home. He taught at this mission school from 1963 to 1964. In 1964 he was offered a teaching job in a government school, which he gladly accepted and eventually moved away from home. It was during this time that he had a near-death experience that marked a major change in his life.<sup>4</sup>

After a few months earning his own money, Nathan gradually began to feel that a spiritual life was not what he really needed. The Word of God stopped making sense to him, and his wayward friends did not make matters better. Before he knew it, he had begun drinking and could spend a lot of time with his friends in drinking dens. One afternoon he and his friends visited the brewer's place as usual. Listening to the encouragement of his

friends, he emptied bottle after bottle of intoxicating drink. He had never done this before, and even he himself was surprised at his own behavior. It was after he collapsed that his friends realized that things were getting out of hand. No one present in the brewer's room that day expected Nathan, who was lying unconscious on the floor, to recover, let alone live to tell the story. His friends, instead of helping him, fled the scene, leaving him with the confused brewer. The brewer who thought Nathan was dead was really shaken. She understood what implications such an occurrence would have on her business and her freedom. She was so relieved when afterwards he regained consciousness.<sup>5</sup>

After this, she whisked him out of her house as if to say 'stay away from my place.' This experience became the turning point in Pastor Oyiengo's life.<sup>6</sup>

## Ministry

After that terrible experience, Oyiengo made a firm decision to change his life for the better. In 1965 he quit his teaching job in the government school (in which he had taught from September 1964 to August 1965) and joined Chebwai Adventist School as a teacher. Against the protests of family and friends, Nathan rejected an offer to register with the Teachers' Service Commission to secure a permanent teaching position in a government school. He worked at Chebwai from 1965 to 1968. Soon after, he quit teaching altogether to join the ministry. In 1969 he was admitted at Bugema Adventist College in Uganda to train as a minister of the gospel and graduated in 1970.<sup>7</sup>

Oyiengo began his ministry in 1971 as a district leader at Chebwai District. His great interest in youth affairs was noticed during this time where he mentored many young people who later on became indispensable in the youth ministry. Dan Mmasi, in a telephone interview, described Pastor Oyiengo as the one who taught him stars and constellations with so much ease and confidence. His interactions with Oyiengo led him to develop great interest in the youth ministry. Years later, in 1992, when Dan Mmasi became the youth director of the then Western Kenya Field (now Great Rift Valley Conference), Oyiengo remained, in the words of Mmasi himself, his 'mentor and role model.' He continued to point out that Oyiengo's great sense of humor enabled him to accomplish difficult tasks even in his position as youth director of East African Union. Mmasi described Oyiengo as a person who mingled freely with people from different socioeconomic backgrounds, a quality that endeared him to many. Mmasi says:

He taught youth leadership and pathfinder staff training courses throughout the Western Kenya Field and helped me craft a formidable team of youth leaders in the field. Some of the youth leaders he mentored during his time as youth director and youth specialist are Tom Sumba, Moses Chirchir, Milka Kogo, Caesar Wamalika, Rose Mong'ou, Andrew Onyango, Richard Cheloti, Vincent Limo, John Shikwekwe, Reuben Arusei, Cleophas Murrei, and, of course, myself.<sup>8</sup>

He was in Chebwai District for only one year before he was called upon to take up a post as youth, education, and temperance secretary at the then Central Kenya Field (now Central Kenya Conference) in 1972. His tenure in this office lasted four years, ending in 1975. In 1976 he relocated to Chebwai to minister there as station director. On December 2, 1973, he got married to Elizabeth Nafula in a wedding ceremony presided over by Pastor Paul Wangai.<sup>9</sup> Pastor and Mrs. Oyiengo had five children; Jack, Selina, Solomon, Rispa, and Ronald and one adopted daughter Judith.

In 1978 he was transferred back to Central Kenya Field to serve as district leader. This he did for one year and in 1979 he relocated to Chebwai SDA School to serve as school chaplain. In 1981 he was transferred to West Pokot District to minister to the churches in that district for five years. From West Pokot he moved to Kakamega in 1986 where he served for one year before relocating to Lwandeti in 1987 for another year. In 1988 he was transferred back to Kapenguria to continue the work he had begun there. His second stay in Kapenguria did not last as long as the first one. He was there for only one year before being transferred to Western Kenya Field (now Great Rift Valley Conference) to serve as Associate Church Ministries director from 1989–1991.<sup>10</sup>

In 1992, a new mission was created within Western Kenya Field and stationed at Webuye. He along with others moved to Webuye to serve as associate executive director in the new mission. This mission has since grown to North West Kenya Conference. He remained in Webuye for five years, 1992 to 1996, before moving back to Western Kenya Field in Eldoret to serve as ministerial director in 1997. From the Western Kenya Field headquarters he moved to minister at Baraton University Kiswahili church. He served at Baraton from 1999 to 2002, when he retired after 40 years of service to the Lord.<sup>11</sup> It is important to observe that in all his years of service, Pastor Oyiengo moved with his family from one station to another, never leaving them behind.<sup>12</sup>

After his retirement in 2002, he moved to Kiminini, where his family owned a piece of land. While in Kiminini, he continued working with the local churches in the district in teaching music and training choirs, preaching, and teaching the Word of God. He continued ministering in different churches during weeks of prayer, camp meetings, and crusades. He enjoyed teaching prophecy in his local church and sharing his experiences with neighbors and friends. This work he continued for all the remaining years of his life. In November 2015 a crusade was organized by the churches in Kiminini District. Oyiengo was actively involved in this crusade, trekking long distances to reach the venue of the crusade. It was on Thursday, November 26, 2015, after arriving from the crusade meeting that he was taken ill. His condition deteriorated very fast, and he passed away in the late afternoon of Saturday, November 28, 2015. Oyiengo rests in his grave waiting for the glorious resurrection morning.

## Contribution

Nathan Amunga Oyiengo is remembered for the pioneer work he accomplished in West Pokot District, a relatively difficult area in the then Rift Valley Province of Western Kenya. The Lord used him to open many

churches and Sabbath Schools in the area. Many members of the Adventist Church in this region fondly remember him as the one whom the Lord Jesus used to lead them to the Adventist faith. His ministry in this region spanned five years (from 1981–1985) and covered many areas such as Kapenguria, Chepararia, Kesogon, and even as far as Lodwar. Pastor Oyiengo was able to reach many people that were hitherto unreached by the Adventist message. The impact he had on the people of West Pokot was so significant that he was again transferred to the same region in 1988 to continue the work he had begun there.

---

## SOURCES

Nathan Amunga Oyiengo's service record. Greater Rift Valley Conference archives, Eldoret, Kenya.

---

## NOTES

1. Nathan Amunga Oyiengo, interview by the author in August 2015, Kiminini, Western Kenya.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Dan Mmasi, telephone interview with the author, June 10, 2020.
9. Elizabeth Wafula Oyiengo, interview by the author, May 20, 2020, Kiminini, Western Kenya.
10. Nathan Amunga Oyiengo's service record, Greater Rift Valley Conference archives, Eldoret, Kenya.
11. Ibid.
12. Personal knowledge of the author as one of Pastor Oyiengo's children.

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring , MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000