East-Central Tanzania Conference

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The East-Central Tanzania Conference (formerly known as the East Tanzania Conference) is one among the five church administrative units of the Southern Tanzania Union Mission. It serves among its sister units: South East...
Current Territory and Statistics

The East-Central Tanzania Conference comprises the political regions of Morogoro; the northern parts of Dar es Salaam; Pwani regions of Morogoro Road moving from the Indian Ocean west to River Ruvu Bridge; west of Mlandizi center; and the Zanzibar Archipelago. The secretaries’ statistical report of December 18, 2018, shows a membership of 51,135 with 243 churches and 195 companies. The territory population stands at 7,595,386. This report reflects the recent reorganization of the East-Central Tanzania Conference which organized Dodoma and Kiteto to be part of the Central Tanzania Field with populations of 2,312,141 and 289,925, respectively. As of June 30, 2018, the online statistical report shows: 313 churches, 60,944 members, and a population of 10,197,452, which was before organizing the CTF.

Origin of Adventist Work in the East-Central Tanzania Conference

The East-Central Tanzania Conference has a mission of making “disciples of Jesus Christ who live as His loving witnesses and proclaim to all people the everlasting gospel of the Three Angels’ Messages in preparation for His soon return (Matt. 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, Rev. 14:6-12). The journey to the East-Central Tanzania Conference began in 1957. Elizaphan Bwirima Wanjara (1924-2005) who had just completed his one year (1956-1957) ministerial course at Bugema College, Uganda, opened doors for evangelism in the territory. Following his training he worked for two years as the pastor at Majita Mission Station, and from 1960 to 1966 he was sent to the town of Morogoro, where Adventist operations had been initiated in 1957. Together with Wanjara, additional missionaries from the Pare Mountains went to Morogoro and Dar es Salaam. These were the literature evangelists: Yohana Lukwara who was stationed at Morogoro, Elibariki Misheto and Elikunda Mgeni who pioneered work in Dar es Salaam, and John Lyambwa who worked in the Mpwapwa and Dodoma areas. E. Wanjara was a pioneer in this large region in East-Central Tanzania, and he helped coordinate the gospel work.

By 1959 Wanjara had organized a series of public evangelism meetings conducted by Fares Muganda at Shan Cinema Hall in Morogoro. The attendance went up to 1,000; but after a few days people disturbed the meetings and started to throw stones at them, so the evangelistic meetings were closed. Fares Muganda and his team did not lose hope. They continued preaching in other places such as the labor office in Morogoro, but the attendance was not good. The evangelistic team scattered, leaving Elizaphan Wanjara alone in Morogoro. He met an evangelist whose name was Yohana Lukwara. They did house-to-house evangelism and Nyambali, Daniel Mwakyusa, and Godfrey Suleman became the first converts. They started to worship at the welfare building in Morogoro, since there was no Adventist church. However, a church was organized at Mpwapwa thanks to the work done by Elizaphan Wanjara who spent most of his time preaching in Mpwapwa in collaboration with evangelist John Lyambwa. As a result, Yohana Chilungwana and Wilson Mogoire were among the first converts at Mpwapwa.

In 1958, literature evangelists Elibariki Misheto and Bariki Mgeni opened the door for evangelism in Dar es Salaam. Fares Muganda conducted evangelistic meetings at Amana Hall that year and 21 converts were baptized. These included: Musa bin Musa, Nanga Munji, Hakimu, and others. Due to the lack of a proper place for worship, these new believers were later shifted to Magomeni Seventh-day Adventist Church which was organized in 1963 after a big evangelistic meeting conducted by Earl E. Cleverland. These meetings had a big impact on Dar es Salaam because 75 people were baptized. People from various nationalities, civil servants, businessmen, and others were among those who joined the Church. These new members congregated at Magomeni Seventh-day Adventist Church from all parts of Dar es Salaam. They were attracted by the Adventist message, the singing, and the beauty of the Seventh-day Adventist Church at Magomeni. Pastor Bender and Pastor Kuyenga had a difficult time in collecting and nurturing these new members who were scattered in Dar es Salaam, and yet preferred to worship at Magomeni.

In 1962 eight people were baptized in another public meeting, and in the following years Elizaphan Wanjara had great success as an evangelist, leading 60 people to be baptized at Mpwapwa in 1964, 20 in Iringa, six in Tabora, 80 in Singida in 1965, and 30 in Sumbawanga in 1966. Elizaphan Wanjara boosted the growth of Adventist congregations in several towns in the southern half of Tanzania in the 1960s.

Organizational History of Conference

On June 15, 1960, the first executive committee of the Tanganyika Union (with its headquarters at Busegwe-Musoma and later shifted to Njoro-Arusha in 1978) sat to plan for the gospel work in Tanganyika. It was chaired by C. T. J. Hyde, and the secretary-treasurer was M. W. Curthbert. They formed a plans committee which later reported on the need to organize another field for the sake of expanding the work to the southern, eastern, and western part of Tanganyika. Among the fields and conferences formed was the General Tanganyika Field (TGF) which was formed in 1968. The TGF territory was comprised of 14 regions which were Kigoma, Kagera, Tabora, Singida, Dodoma, Morogoro, Pwani, Dar es Salaam, Iringa, Mbeya, Ruvuma, Rukwa, Mtwarra, and Lindi. The headquarters was in Morogoro at Morogoro Central Church (commonly known as Morogoro Mjini SDA Church). This church was organized in 1967. The first president of the TGF was H. Henning and the secretary-treasurer was R. Ngasani. These two are remembered for their hard work in the ministry and also for constructing a strong and durable office which is still used by the ECT. This building was also used as a college and a center for the Voice of Prophecy.
The development of the gospel work under TGF was promoted by the coming of Dobias who was sent by the Tanzania Union to Kibidula as a farm manager. It turned out that he didn't like that work, and he turned to ministry instead. He started sending evangelists who were local missionaries to unentered areas of the TGF. Among them were Lameck Mulungu who went to Njombe; Alhpaxad Katogi who went to Malinyi; and Rayphord Bulenga who went to Mpwapwa. In 1972 Joshua Kamunya Kajula was given the southern district with its headquarters in Mbeya. He was assisted by Yohana Lusingu who extended the work towards Songea. The work grew despite many leadership challenges because the Lord was in control. In 1982 the TGF was reorganized into the East Tanzania Field (ETF) composed of six regions of the Tanzania mainland (Pwani, Dar es Salaam, Morogoro, Dodoma, Lindi, Mtwarra) and five regions of the Zanzibar Archipelago. The remaining portion of the TGF was later organized into the South West Tanzania Field (SWTF) and West Tanzania Field (WTF) in 1991.

Elisha Okeyo in his book *Kanisa Safarini Tanzania*, meaning “the church on a journey in Tanzania,” has pointed out that by 2004 the ETF had grown to a membership of 36,060, while the total tithe was Tanzania shillings 774,278,270. The church members per capita giving was shillings 20,534. This qualified the ETF to be a conference, so on March 22, 2005, it was formally declared as the East Tanzania Conference. The first president was Geoffrey Simon Goliama.

Following the growth of the work in the conference, the ETC executive committee which sat on December 18 and 19, 2013, voted to request reorganization of ETC into two conferences. The recommendation passed through the union to the division executive committee. The need to reorganize ETC was a result of the growth of God’s work in the territory. By December 2014, the ETC had 282 churches which were organized into 67 districts, and the membership had grown to 53,790. The number of churches had increased by 12 percent and membership by 49 percent. With such an increase, it had become difficult for the conference officers and departmental directors to minister to the churches effectively, considering the distance involved from one church to another; hence there was need to organize a new conference. With a manageable territory, the church would be nurtured more effectively. Another reason was the financial status of the conference. The conference reorganizing team observed that ETC was doing well financially and had enough human resources and a large number of devoted church members, as well as experienced workers who could handle the ministry effectively. The agenda passed through several meetings from the union level to the division, and on January 6-8, 2015, two conferences were organized out of ETC. The two conferences formed were the East-Central Tanzania Conference (ECT) and the South East Tanzania Conference (SEC).

Following the reorganization, the East-Central Tanzania Conference comprised the political regions of Dodoma and Morogoro; the northern parts of Dar es Salaam; Pwani regions of Morogoro Road moving from the Indian Ocean west to River Ruvu Bridge; west of Mlandizi center; and the Zanzibar Archipelago. The first president of the ECT was Pastor J. F. Mngwabi who still serves.

**List of Presidents**


**Sources**


1. Rabson Nkoko, interview with the author at the Southern Tanzania headquarters on February 18, 2020. Dr. Nkoko is the executive secretary of the union.


16. Ibid.


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