

Emmanuel, Beli Bosco (1974–2014)

GEORGE OYET ARNOLD

George Oyet Arnold holds a B.A. in pastoral ministry from Middle East University, Beirut, Lebanon. Oyet also trained as teacher at Gulu Teachers College, Uganda. Before he joined the pastoral ministry, he taught and served as a school administrator for many years. Oyet served as a pastor in the refugee camps in Uganda and Magwi, South Sudan. Currently he is the director of education, Sabbath school and health departments of Greater Equatoria Field, South Sudan. He is also pastor of several churches under Juba SDA Central Church.

Beli Bosco Emmanuel developed an interest in becoming a pastor at the age of 15 and became a model for the young people who want to become ministers in Western Equatoria.

Early Years (1974-1990)

Beli Bosco Emmanuel was born October 2, 1974, in Maridi, Western Equatoria, when his father, Emmanuel Ladoli Profirio, was working as a medical assistant at Maridi Hospital. He was a native of Panyikwara, a village in Magwi county, South Sudan. He was an Acholi by tribe from the Bura clan in Magwi county, Eastern Equatoria state. As his father was a polygamist, Beli had ten sisters and three younger brothers. Both his father and mother, Alice, were Roman Catholics. The parents fondly called him Bosco to describe their life in the foreign land, as they had been refugees from 1956 to 1972. Being Catholics, they had learned that in Latin, Bosco means one living or working in the woods or forest. Thus, to remember the sojourn in a country that was not theirs, the name Bosco was given as an historical reminder of what the parents went through. Being the first son, the father gave him the second name Beli, fondly treating him as his elder brother because the word *beli* means older brother, an older male person, to whom one has a close relation.¹ Influenced by his name, Beli was a very responsible child. He learned to make difficult decisions when he was very young.

Becoming an Adventist (1983)

In July 1983, when Beli was about nine years old, he joined the children who listened to Pastor David Ogillo's preaching in Magwi. The preaching center was just opposite their home. The songs thrilled him and the preaching was amazing as he stated later. Thus, he received the Adventist message as a young boy. Consequently, when he went to Juba, Pastor Milla Longa became his teacher in the children's class in the Juba Central Adventist Church. On October 29, 1990, he was baptized into the Adventist church at the age of 15.² He had long shown great interest in church activities which prompted him to have a desire to become a pastor.

School Days—Primary to Secondary (1987-1998)

Beli started his primary education in Magwi and completed it at St. Joseph Primary school in Juba.³ After his primary school he went to Buluk Intermediate School from 1994 to 1996. Thereafter, he studied for three years in Juba Day Senior Secondary School from 1996 to 1998.

Compulsory Military Service (1999-2000)

Government policy required that all students, after completion of the Sudan School Certificate Examination, were to attend military training before attending a university or any other institution of higher learning. This was when the country was still part of the Republic of the Sudan. After a lot of pressure, Beli joined the military training just to fulfill the requirement for advancing his education; but his heart was not in becoming a soldier. While under training, he chose the signal department. He thought by doing so he would not kill anyone and would not have to bear arms. Even then Beli was not happy. He prayed to God to open a way for him to get out. He continued to pray, and one January day he heard that a group of young people was planning to walk to Uganda from Juba.

The Walk to Freedom - 2001

On January 7, 2001 Bosco (the dweller of the woods) left Juba on foot headed to Torit through the bush, walking for ten days, surviving only on wild fruits in the woods. From Torit he moved to Katire along the Imotong mountain range in eastern Equatoria, which took him one week to reach Katire. After resting a while in Katire, he and one of his uncle's sons left for Lomarati. Fortunately, he met his mother in Lomarati. He stayed there for one week and his mother escorted him through the bush to Agoro—a small village at the Uganda border. From Agoro he proceeded to Kitgum town, one of the district headquarters in northern Uganda. From Kitgum, he went to the Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement Camp in Kiryandongo district where South Sudanese refugees were settled. He was received by one of his maternal uncles who was a widower.⁴

Generally, life was not easy as there were a lot of challenges in the refugee camp. However, in the midst of all these challenges, he remained faithful to God. He also did not forget his main aim of escaping to Uganda which was to pursue education opportunities. But it was not easy. Despite the frustrations he kept on asking God to open for him ways of serving Him. While he was looking for educational opportunities, he served as the children's teacher in the Panyadoli Seventh-day Adventist Church in the camp. He also introduced an adult literacy class for women in the church who could not read or write. After a few years he was elected as district youth leader of the Seventh-day Adventist Church for South Sudanese churches in the Kiryandongo and Kyangwali Refugee Camps. In December 2005 he led a team of youth from Kiryandongo Camp to Kyangwali Refugee Camp about 200 kilometers from Kiryandongo for a three-week evangelistic campaign. At the end of that evangelistic meeting 72 people were baptized in Lake Albert by Pastor George Oyet Arnold.⁵

On February 3, 2006 he married Anek Joska. Pastor George Oyet married them in the Panyadoli SDA Church⁶ God blessed them with four children, three girls and a son, though the second born, a girl, died in infancy.

Becoming a Regular Church Worker (2006-2014)

From January 2006 to 2007 he worked as a gospel volunteer evangelist until the field office, which was based in Arua, Uganda, asked him to go to Juba to be the manager of the Juba SDA Compound⁷ While managing the work in the compound he was given another responsibility as associate pastor in the Juba district, and he pastored the Hai Neem Church from 2007 to 2008. In 2008 he was offered a scholarship to Middle East University, Beirut, Lebanon, to pursue a degree in pastoral ministry. Subsequently, the South Sudan Field Administrative Committee voted for Beli Bosco and Thomas Sebit to take intensive theology studies which started in June 2008. That same year he served as an intern pastor in the Juba Central Church⁸ Upon the retirement of Pastor Fulgensio Okayo, the Greater Equatoria Field Administrative Committee voted to appoint Beli as the Juba district pastor under Pastor Jacob Frungus' supervision, in addition to his responsibility as compound manager. His main church was the Mt. Zion SDA Church.⁹

The Final Years (2012-2014)

While Beli was the compound manager, he was supervising some house renovation when someone called him to attend to a visitor. He placed his bottled water at the window and went to attend to the visitor; then someone replaced his water with another water bottle which contained a paint thinning chemical. When Beli returned, he drank the water which was mixed with thinner and immediately realized that something was wrong. Although he was flown to Kampala for treatment, his life was never the same. In 2012 Beli was suspected to have liver cancer and his family decided to take him to India for treatment. With the help of the field, they raised US\$17,000 for the treatment. He was in India for one month before he returned home. July 17, 2014, he died of liver cancer just a year before he would have completed his studies.¹⁰

Contribution

Beli was a young man who had devoted his life to the service of the Lord. He died as a church employee after only six years and seven months of regular church service. He was a man of great potential and full of passion for the Lord's work. He was a model for the young people who want to become ministers. The church lost him at such a tender age when his ability in ministry was so needed. He left a wife, two daughters and one son.

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NOTES

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