

Ogillo, Daudi Inda (1929–2011)

PHARES OGILLO, SAMUEL OGILLO, AND SUZAN CHRISTOPHER Y. LASU

Phares Ogillo

Samuel Ogillo

Suzan Christopher Y. Lasu

Daudi Inda Ogillo was a Tanzanian teacher, pastor, and pioneer missionary to Sudan.

Early Life, Education and Marriage

Pastor Ogillo was born in August 1929 in Sidika village, Rorya District, in the Mara region of Tanzania.¹ He was the eldest son in a family of nine children who were born to Petro and Ada Ogillo, who were Seventh-day Adventist lay evangelists. Daudi Ogillo was raised in a strict Adventist family.²

Daudi Ogillo started primary education in Rwangenyi village in 1943, and later on moved to Mugango, and Busegwe Primary schools, respectively. He joined middle school at Ikizu in 1945 and was baptized there by a Malawian pastor, Yoram Kamwendo in 1945.³ He attended Ikizu Teachers' Training College for two years, and later Bugema Adventist College in Kampala, Uganda, where He studied theology from 1963 to 1965. With this theological background he was able to launch his career immediately after his graduation. He later earned a Bachelor of Arts in theology from West Indies College in Jamaica, which he attended from 1985 to 1987.⁴

Ogillo married Rebecca Wanga on May 11, 1953. Rebecca was a daughter to a church elder, Mr. Reuben Aluoch. Together they were blessed with eight children, five boys and three daughters: Fares, Liva, Moses, Samael, Baraka, and Kezia, Pendo, and Joyce.⁵ Rebecca Ogillo, fondly known as Mama Ogillo, worked hand in hand with her husband in their missionary work in Tanzania and South Sudan. She became the first literature evangelist in Sudan and tirelessly sold Adventist books in Juba, selling hundreds of copies each month, which put Adventist literature into many Sudanese homes.⁶

Ministry

Daudi Ogillo was the first Adventist school teacher in Sidika, and served the Adventist church in various capacities in Tanzania, Egypt, and South Sudan for 39 years. He began church service as a teacher evangelist in 1952, teaching in Adventist schools. His first appointment was in Kamageta, Rory District. He taught at Kikumaye Primary School in Tarime, where he also established Kikumaye Middle School; Utegi and Bwasi Primary schools,

and Majita Middle School in Musoma District, respectively, between 1956 and 1963. He launched his ministerial career in 1965 after graduating from Bugema Adventist College. His first posting was to Ilingala of Ukerewe Island, one of the largest islands in Lake Victoria, and was later moved to Suguti, Majita, where he worked as the Publishing director. He was ordained in 1971 in Bwasi Mission, Majita, Musoma, and from 1972 to 1974 he served as Deputy Publishing Department director for Tanzania Union, serving from Mwanza and Morogoro in Tanzania. From 1974 to 1977 he served as the Publishing Department Director for North Mara Field. In 1978 he joined the Tanzania Union Evangelists Team that was mandated to preach in the main cities of Tanzania, where he worked until 1979.⁷

Missionary to South Sudan

In 1979 Daudi Ogillo was called to the Middle East Union to be the pioneer Adventist missionary in Sudan. This was a significant move because, prior to his relocation to Sudan, various efforts had been made by the Adventist church to send missionaries into the country, but they all had failed. However, it was difficult for him and the family to make a decision to accept the call because of the ongoing civil war in Southern Sudan, but through fasting and prayer and words of the song, "Hark the voice of Jesus calling, 'Who will go and work today,'" and a dream which Moses, one of his sons, had in which he saw many people calling his father to go and preach to them, the family decided to go. They left for Sudan⁸ without even an exploratory journey.⁹

The arrival of Pastor Ogillo on September 18, 1979, in Khartoum, where the Islamic government had denied any kind of visa to be issued to missionaries to preach Christianity was a miracle. Pastor Ogillo and his family went to Sudan on a one-month tourism visa, and all was in God's hands to open a way for the work permit. The Middle East Union team had booked a Sudan Airways flight to Juba, the capital of Southern Sudan, for the next day.¹⁰

Southern Sudan was still recovering from the First Sudanese Civil War, which had lasted for more than 16 years. During the war, many Southern Sudanese, including John Yanga and Sarah Morre, who had attended Bugema Adventist College in Uganda (now Bugema University) had converted to Adventism. After the war they had returned to Sudan, where they continued to observe the Sabbath with their families, but with no formal church arrangement. It so happened that the president of the High Executive Council of the Southern Region, as it was called then, His Excellency Joseph Lagu, was a brother to John Yanga and an uncle to Sarah Morre. These two had informed him of the expected visitors. The Middle East Union team had arranged that the missionaries would enter the Southern Sudan Region as the president's visitors.¹¹

On arrival at the Juba airport, Pastor Yusuf Farag, Egyptian pastor, and Tom Staples realized that President Lagu was traveling to Khartoum in the same plane that had brought them to Juba. They had put all their hope on the president, and now he was going away without meeting them. Neither were John Yanga and Sarah Morre at the airport. Pastor Farag realizing the problem they were in, rushed past the heavy security into the Airport VIP Lounge, amid orders by the security personnel to stop. He went straight to the president and said, "Pastor

Ogillo, the Adventist missionary is here, he is your visitor. You have to see him.” The president responded that he was in a hurry and the plane was ready to leave. To this Pastor Farag responded, “You are the president. Presidents do not wait for planes, but planes wait for presidents.” The president had to give in, and Pastor Ogillo and his wife, Rebecca, and Tom Staples were rushed into the VIP lounge. After the introduction, President Lagu charged one of his ministers responsible for religious affairs with providing accommodation for the Adventist team at the government’s senior rest house, and to help search for a house for the missionary family to rent. Being the president’s visitors, the Adventists were accorded a VIP welcome.¹²

The Sabbath of September 22, 1979, was the first Sabbath for the Adventist missionary family in the Sudan. Together with the Middle East Union team, Pastor Ogillo’s family, Pastor Yusuf Faraq and Mr. Tom Staples gathered under a big tree at the government’s rest house. About ten other people at the rest house were invited, and an informal church service was conducted. The invited guests were surprised to see a group of people who worshiped on Saturday. After a brief sermon they had many questions, and were much impressed.¹³

With the support of the president of the Southern Sudan region, Hon. Joseph Lagu, Pastor Ogillo was quickly accepted among the government officials. President Lagu invited him to travel with him on one of his official visits to three districts. It was a week-long presidential tour. He confided in Pastor Ogillo that he hoped that the tour would help introduce him to the districts’ administrations and would help to open ways for his ministry. During the tour, they had the opportunity of sitting and charting together, and even ate together at the same table, and the president asked him to lead in prayers at several occasions.¹⁴

On their return from the tour, Joshua Diu Dau, a director in the ministry of home (religious) affairs, was appointed to fast track the registration of the Adventist church in Southern Sudan. Joshua Diu Dau had come into contact with Adventists in Ethiopia many years earlier, and was delighted to have the opportunity of working on their church registration in the Sudan. Pastor Ogillo’s work permit was processed after this encounter, and in a few months’ time, the church was ready for its first evangelistic meetings.¹⁵

Other Adventist members besides John Yanga, his wife, and Sarah Morre, were Ret Chol and Peter Pal, who were baptized in Ethiopia, and Fulgensio Idda Okayo who was baptized in Uganda, and who became the official translator and assistant to Pastor Ogillo. On hearing of Pastor Ogillo’s arrival, Okayo resigned from his teaching career at Torit Technical College and traveled to Juba to join Ogillo in planting the seeds of the gospel. Napagi Levi Gidudu, who had accepted the Adventist message in Uganda, was also there to whole-heartedly support the early years of the church in the Sudan by working enthusiastically with Rebecca Ogillo as a literature evangelist. Rebecca Ogillo and Pastor Okayo met him while selling books. He looked at the books and asked, “Do you have a book called *The Desire of Ages*? Our church uses it.” It was a great joy to discover that there was a faithful Adventist, working at Juba Boat Yard, keeping the Sabbath faithfully in a foreign land with no members known to him.¹⁶

Pastor Ogillo did not wait for the church's registration to be released before starting his work. He conducted his first meetings at the home of a member of parliament, who had met Pastor Ogillo during the presidential tour. The two had become close friends. Because he was an influential man, and a relative to the president, many people attended these Bible study gatherings that were conducted within his gates at Buluk area, Juba. This opened the way for a bigger and well-organized evangelistic effort at the Juba Cultural Center.¹⁷

First Evangelistic Meeting in Sudan

The first large open evangelistic meetings were conducted at the Nyakuron Cultural Centre in Juba in 1981. Many people attended these meetings. Among them were Charles Okwera and George Okwera, who had received the Adventist message through Fulgensio Okayo while at Torit technical college, where Okayo was a teacher. They had all kept the Sabbath with their families, and had for years hoped and waited for an Adventist pastor to come and baptize them.¹⁸

John and Linda Sines, a young couple who had volunteered to come and build the mission compound in Juba, and Dr. Gerald Whitehouse, all from the United States, had by now joined the Adventist team in Juba, and they all participated in the Nyakuron evangelistic meetings. Mr. Sines taught popular Adventist choruses, while Dr. Whitehouse, a public health specialist, talked about health issues. Pastor Ogillo preached the gospel, while Mr. Okayo did the translation. The rest of Pastor Ogillo's family, Napagi Levi, Sarah Morre, John Yanga, and a few others who had received the message earlier at Buluk were the ushers. They distributed Bibles and song pamphlets, assisting visitors to open their Bibles, etc. At the end of the meetings 25 people accepted Christ and were baptized in the River Nile. The work had begun, and soon more evangelistic meetings would follow at Loa, Magwi, Malakal, and Maridi.¹⁹

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was granted 15 acres of land in the Munuki area. John Sines, Mr. John Mori, and Mr. Napagi worked with other construction workers to set up a mission. They constructed a workshop, a workers' house, and a dispensary. The workshop was temporarily used as a church on Sabbaths, and later on a dispensary served that purpose as well. Mr. John Worker replaced Mr. Sines as the head of construction in 1981. More missionaries, including Dr. M.C. Neilus, came in 1982.

The first Adventist camp meeting was conducted in Juba in 1981, featuring Pastor Yohana Lusingu from Tanzania as the guest speaker. Church members who attended it came from as far as Loa, a hundred miles away. The meetings were held at Pastor Ogillo's compound in the Haila Jalaba area in Juba.²⁰

Pastor Fulgensio Okayo and the late Pastor George Okwera were the first Sudanese Adventists to receive ministerial training at Tanzania Adventist College (now the University of Arusha). They later became the first ordained Sudanese pastors in the Adventist church. Many more Sudanese, young and old, men and women, have since received Adventist education in Adventist institutions in countries around the globe. It is our hope

that one day, all will come back to keep the work of God rolling in this land that was for many years “forgotten.”²¹

The Church at Nasir

In 1980 a messenger from Nasir, a village in the remote region of the Upper Nile, near the Sudan-Ethiopia border, brought news to Juba. There were many people in Nasir who had heard of the Adventist message. It was preached to them by their relatives who had been converted to the Adventist Church while in Ethiopia. They had built a church and worshiped every Sabbath, but had never seen an Adventist pastor. They had always wished and prayed for a pastor to go to their village and baptize them. They were ready. Pastor and Mrs. Ogillo, Charles Okwera, and Mr. Okayo responded to the call and traveled to Nasir by boat on the River Nile. The church in Nasir was delighted; at last, God had answered their prayers. A few meetings with the believers led to baptism, and a church was formed.²²

Miracles in Sudan

In 1983, evangelistic meetings were conducted at Magwi village. There, a traditional healer/magician believed he had the power to kill whoever he wished to. He realized that the Adventists posed a threat to his profession, so one day he declared to his fellow villagers that he was giving Pastor Ogillo and his team 24 hours to pack and go, or else he would be dead the next day. When Pastor Ogillo and his team received the news, the whole team fasted and prayed that God would do something to bring glory and honor to His name. The next day, many people attended the meeting in anticipation of something bad happening to the preacher. To their amazement all went well, and after the meeting news spread that the traditional healer was sick. He later admitted publicly that the preacher had far more powerful charms than his. More than eighty people accepted Christ as their personal savior and were baptized. Some people who were believed to have been possessed by evil spirits accepted Jesus and came back to their normal senses, and calm and peace reigned once more in their lives. They rejoiced and praised God.²³

Another miracle was witnessed at Loa village, a hundred miles south of Juba. Pastor Ogillo and his team were conducting evangelistic meetings at Loa when a local traditional healer/rainmaker vowed to interrupt the meetings by causing rain to pour every evening. People had always believed that he had the power to bring rain. The first evening of the meetings it rained heavily. The evangelistic team was told about the rainmaker’s plan to disrupt the meetings every evening. That evening they prayed, believing that God would turn this into a great blessing. From then onwards, it either rained early in the morning or at night after the meeting. Many people attended the meetings. At the conclusion, more than 80 people accepted Christ as their personal savior and were baptized. It was there at Loa that the first Adventist church building in the Sudan was constructed.²⁴

Pastor Ogillo oversaw the growth of the Adventist church in Southern Sudan, as he preached in and around Juba. Ogillo's visionary leadership in South Sudan saw him, together with Dr. Gerald Whitehouse, train Sudanese nationals with various skills to ensure continuity of the work of God in the country. They also put in place a clear financial strategy through the training of colporteurs. Daudi and Rebecca Ogillo served in Southern Sudan, until 1985. Today thousands of Sudanese praise God for the messages of hope and eternal life that he delivered to them. By the time Pastor Ogillo left South Sudan 450 South Sudanese had accepted Christ as their personal Savior and had been baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Three churches had been organized and three companies formed. Pastor Ogillo returned to Tanzania in 1987, where he served as the Tanzania Union Evangelist until 1988. Later he was appointed as Tanzania Voice of Prophecy director, and he served in that position until his retirement in 1991.²⁵

Later Life

Between his retirement in 1991 and 2004, Pastor Ogillo held two evangelistic meetings a year, and at least two camp meetings,²⁶ bringing more than 600 souls to Christ through baptism. He held more than 22 camp meetings in Tanzania after retirement. He organized and trained a team of 40 lay evangelists who went out to conduct numerous evangelistic meetings in Tanzania. Pastor Ogillo completed his journey in the afternoon of June 2, 2011²⁷, leaving behind his widow, Rebecca Ogillo, three daughters and four sons, 29 grand-children, and four great-grandchildren.

Legacy

Daudi Ogillo is remembered as the first Adventist missionary to South Sudan. He is known as a person who had good rapport with government officials, which made his ministry and leadership easier. He was a leader who believed in training local people for sustainability of the work.

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NOTES

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