

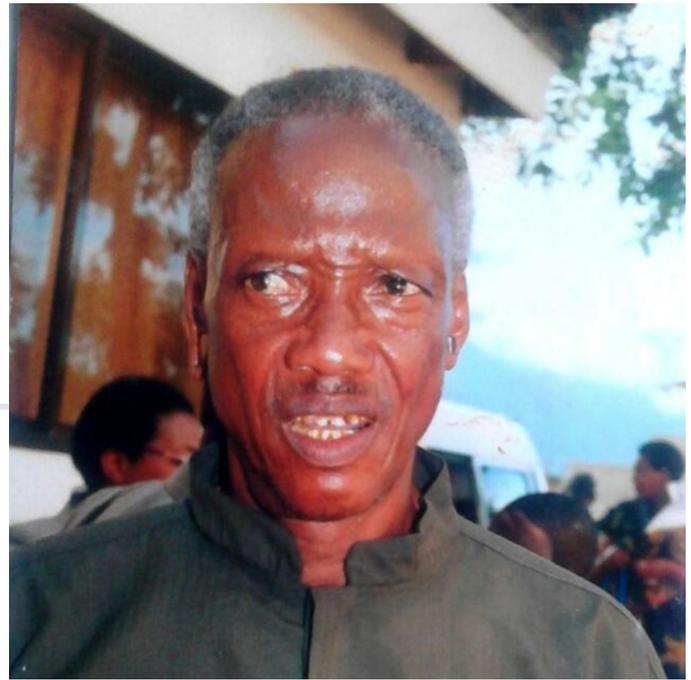
Njake, Mathew

Saiguran

(1930–2018)

GODWIN KILEVO LEKUNDAYO

Godwin Kilevo Lekundayo, Ph.D. (OCMS, Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, affiliated with Wales University, UK) is the president of Northern Tanzania Union Conference. He has served the church as a front line pastor for seven years, Ministerial secretary and Global Mission co-ordinator for three years. He has authored *The Cosmic Christ: Towards Effective Mission among the Maasai*. He is married to Dorothy and they have two sons and two daughters and two grandchildren.



Mathew Njake

Photo courtesy of Godwin Lekundayo.

Mathew [Meng'oriki] Njake was the first Maasai to serve as a pastor in the Seventh-day Adventist church in Tanzania.

He was born in 1930 to Njaake Saiguran and Mindewu at their home village of Engalaoni, Mwandeti ward, Arumeru district, Arusha region, Tanzania. He was the first of ten children. He began his primary education at Mwandeti Primary School between 1957 and 1965 and thereafter he moved on to Olkokola Middle School where he completed the seventh grade. He was baptized in 1967, after which he changed his earlier name of Meng'oriki to Mathew.¹ In 1973 Mathew Njake married Joyce Abraham Mghanga and together they were blessed with eight children, five boys and three girls.

In May 1971 Pastor Mathew Njake went to Heri Mission where he took a health course, and in 1981 he attended Arusha Adventist Seminary where he trained to be a pastor. He graduated with a ministerial diploma. Pastor Njake started working as a local church pastor in 1981 in the Hedaru church district in the same political district.² He worked there for two years and moved to Mombo, Maasai district. He was ordained to the gospel ministry on August 1, 1987.³ It was when he was ministering in this district that he got an opportunity to attend the 1990 General Conference Session as a delegate. His selection was in recognition of his being the first pastor from the Maasai people.⁴ He served in the Mombo district until he retired in 2007. Even then he continued to conduct evangelistic meetings among the Maasai, baptizing converts, officiating at weddings, and doing other pastoral activities until he passed away in 2018.

Pastor Mathew Njake's major contribution is that he contextualized the Adventist message to the Maasai culture. His approach was more successful than any that had been used before. One example is that whenever he visited his Maasai members, he held devotions in the midst of their cattle, as opposed to asking them to go to their huts/manyatta for prayer. Before he became a pastor, there was some kind of misunderstanding of the Maasai way of dressing. Some Adventist believers were not comfortable with the Maasai traditional dress; but, being a Maasai, he understood the traditional clothes and allowed church members to worship in their traditional attire.⁵

He also impacted his community in the area of stewardship. As a Maasai himself, he had his own livestock and he gave offerings and returned tithe from his animals. This inspired the people to emulate him. Mathew Njake died July 15, 2018.⁶

Source

ARH, NAD Edition, July 9, 1990.

Mathew Njake's Employee Service Record, January 1, 1972-December 31, 2007. North East Tanzania Conference archives, Same-Kilimanjaro, Tanzania.

NOTES

1. Joseph Saiguran Parsalaw, telephone interview with the author, March 10, 2020. Professor Makumira is a vice chancellor of the University of Makumira.
2. Mathew Njake's Employee Service Record, North-East Tanzania Conference, January 1, 1972-December 31, 2007.
3. Ibid.
4. Regular Delegates, General Conference Session, *ARH*, NAD Edition, July 9, 1990, 16.
5. Lucas Lemasiaya Sarayan, telephone interview with the author, March 11, 2020.
6. Sarah Mathew Njake, telephone interview with the author, March 11, 2020.

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