

# West Rwanda Field

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## NAPHTAL KARANGWA

Naphtal Karangwa is the president of West Rwanda Field since 2016.

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West Rwanda Field is part of Rwanda Union Mission in the East-Central Africa Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

West Rwanda Field covers the government territory of Karongi, Nyamasheke Rusizi, a part of Rutsiro and part of Ngororero Districts, with a population of 1,715,000.<sup>1</sup> It has a membership of 108,291 distributed among 316 churches and 82 companies.<sup>2</sup> The work in this area was first organized in 1921, reorganized in 1960, 1972, 1984 and 1993. It was renamed in 2012.<sup>3</sup>

## History

J. H. Sturges come from Songa Hospital in Democratic Republic of Congo to Rwankeri, Rwanda in 1931 to begin the medical work in Rwanda. Together with Alfred Matter, an Adventist missionary in Rwanda, he explored the west Rwanda for a place where they could start medical missionary work. They chose Ngoma where they opened a primary school and Ngoma Medical Mission station in 1931. The mission work in Ngoba was under the Central African Union, which had been organized in 1928.<sup>4</sup> The first Sabbath keepers were baptized at Ngoma in 1934 and they were T. Matter, Rwakayiro Elie, Bayitereyemo Joël, Kanyenzi André, Kaberanya Magdalene, and Nyiracoco Eudie.<sup>5</sup>

A. Matter led the Ngoma Mission from its establishment in 1931 until 1945. B. R. Bickley replaced A. Matter as the mission leader and served from 1946 to 1949. Bickley was replaced by C. E. Felton (1950–1951). In 1952 W. H. Johnson joined and led the Ngoma Mission until 1953. From 1954, the Mission was led by J. C. Mattingly, with E. Semugeshi as his assistant. The Adventist mission spread to Cyangugu, a neighboring region of Kibuye. The Church in this area has been reputed because of its health ministry.<sup>6</sup>

In the 1940s the Ngoma Mission was constituted of Kibuye, Cyangungu, Kayove (Gisenyi) and Muko (Gikongoro). It was around this time that the name Ngoma Mission was changed to Mugonero to avoid the confusion between Ngoma of Kibuye and Goma of Democratic Republic of the Congo. In 1961 the leadership changed. Pastor E. Semugeshi became the first Rwandan national to lead the Mugonero Mission until 1963, when he fled to Tanzania like other Tutsis, following the political turmoil in Rwanda. He was replaced by M. Sembagare in 1964, and he served in that position until 1966. The following year, 1967, E. Ntakirutimana was elected Mugonero Mission president and he served as president until 1970<sup>7</sup> when he was assigned the position of a Departmental director in the Central Africa Union in Bujumbura.<sup>8</sup> Pastor Ntakirutimana was replaced by S.

Nzarora.

In 1977, E. Semugeshi returned from exile and led the Mugonero Mission until 1980, when he was replaced by E. Ntakirutimana until 1984. By that time the Mugonero Mission was added to Rwankeri mission and Cyangugu was given to the Mission of Butare in the south of the country. Mugonero Mission was restored as West Rwanda Field in 1994, when it was observed that North Rwanda Mission was too large to be managed. Pastor E. Ntakirutimana led the Conference again until the genocide against Tutsis in April 1994.<sup>9</sup>

During the genocide against Tutsis in Rwanda many workers as well as the population from West Rwanda Mission were exterminated, others fled to Congo. After the genocide work began under difficult conditions but it has continued to grow.<sup>10</sup>

On December 5, 1995,<sup>11</sup> a decision was made to temporarily relocate the headquarters of the West Rwanda Mission from Mugonero to Kibuye due to the lack of security and inaccessibility of the area. Five years later after the issues were resolved the headquarters of West Rwanda Field returned to Mugonero. The work continued to progress especially after 1999, when the Adventist message penetrated new areas like Busozo and Bugarama in south east of the field and Rutsiro and Nyange in the east. In the area of health, the field runs Mugonero Health Center and Karora Health Center. In the sector of education, West Rwanda Mission runs 2 secondary schools and 6 primary schools. Since 2014 West Rwanda Field has accommodated the Nursing and Midwives School of the Adventist University of Central Africa.<sup>12</sup>

West Rwanda Field like all other fields in Rwanda, is committed to advancing the Adventist mission. The main challenge to the work is the shortage of trained ministerial personnel. Nevertheless, graduates from the Adventist University of Central Africa in Kigali, Rwanda and the Adventist University of Africa in Nairobi, Kenya reduce the shortage of personnel every year.

## Presidents

B. R. Bickley (1946-1949), C. E. Felton (1950-1951), W. H. Johnson (1952-1953), J. C. Mattingly (1954-1960), E. Semugeshi (1961-1963), M. Sembagare (1964-1966), E. Ntakirutimana (1967-1970), S. Nzarora (1971-1977), E. Semugeshi (1977-1980), E. Ntakirutimana (1981-1984), A. Mujoyarugamba (1995), M. Kabindigiri (1996-2000), I. Ndwaniye (2001-2004), E. Munyakarama (2005-2007), J. Rusine (2008-2010), J. Nkinzingabo (2011-2015), N. Karangwa (2016-).

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## SOURCES

*Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook, 1931-2019.* <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/>.

West Rwanda Field Executive Committee Minutes, December 5, 1995. West Rwanda Field Archives, Kibuye, Rwanda.

West Rwanda Field, Quarterly Statistical Report, December 2019. West Rwanda Field Archives, Kibuye, Rwanda.

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## NOTES

1. "West Rwanda Field," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2019), 58, accessed September 28, 2019, <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB2019.pdf>.
2. West Rwanda Field fourth quarter statistical report, December 2019.
3. "West Rwanda Field," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2019), 58.
4. "West Rwanda Field," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1931), 104, accessed September 28, 2019, <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1931.pdf>.
5. Athanase Ngarambe, interview by the author, Kigali, Rwanda, December 6, 2019.
6. "Ruanda-Urundi Mission Field," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1954), 181, accessed September 28, 2019, <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1954.pdf>.
7. "West Rwanda Field," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1968), 26, accessed September 28, 2019, <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1968.pdf>.
8. "West Rwanda Field," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1972), 258, accessed September 28, 2019, <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1972.pdf>.
9. "West Rwanda Field," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1994), 44, accessed September 28, 2019, <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1994.pdf>.
10. "West Rwanda Field," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2019), 58.
11. West Rwanda Field Executive Committee Minutes, December 5, 1995, West Rwanda Field Archives.
12. Personal knowledge of the author as the current president of the West Rwanda Field.

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