

Image not found or type unknown



Zephaniah Bina (1919–1987)

WILLIAM ANDREW IZUNGO

William Andrew Izungo

Zephaniah Bina was an Adventist teacher, pastor, prayer warrior, and administrator in Tanzania.

Early Life and Education

Zephaniah Bina was born in 1919 at Kibumaye, Tarime District, in the Mara region located around Lake Victoria in Tanzania. Before he became an Adventist, Bina practiced African tradition religion, and later Roman Catholicism. He became an Adventist in 1934.¹

In 1933, at the age of 14, while attending the Isbania Catholic parish, Bina asked his grandfather for permission to attend school. His grandfather refused and told him that if he quit attending to the cows in order to go to school, he would not be given a dowry to marry. Bina chose to sacrifice a dowry for school. He escaped to the Catholic missionary school, which was near Isbania.² One day after he learned how to read and write, he asked a Catholic father to let him read a Bible. The father slapped him in a way that he never forgot his entire life. Consequently, he left the school.³

Bina remembered seeing his brother Samson Chacha Mwita with a black book when he was home from school. So, he intended to go to the same school at Kibumaye. Around 1935, Bina enrolled at Kisu Seventh-day Adventist Upper Primary School and eventually qualified as a teacher, probably around 1942. Because of the long distance between school and home, his brother did not allow him to visit home until he had completed standard 6. During the holidays at school, they did mission work for their tuition.⁴

Ministerial Training and Marriage

In 1946, Bina married Bathsheba Bhoke Sabai in a ceremony officiated by Pastor Paulo Kilonzo. They had seven children, four daughters and three sons. In order of age, the children were Joyce Robhi, Elizabeth Nyakorema, Tabitha Nyanswi, Joseph Mwita, Steven Magesa, Lucas Mogonche, and Weirungu Eliada. From early 1959 to 1960, Bina studied a ministerial course at Bugema Adventist College. In 1962, he enrolled for the one-year public health course at Heri Hospital College.

Ministry

Bina was employed as a teacher evangelist soon after graduating from his studies. During the early years of his employment, around 1946 to 1950—immediately after World War II—the country was still very primitive; in some places it was not uncommon for people to walk around naked.⁵ In 1947, soon after his marriage, Bina was transferred to a place called Bukenye, in the place of another person who had declined the position. Bina's wife was not pleased with this assignment either, but after consultation and advice, she agreed to move. At Bukenye, Bina's efforts resulted in increased membership, a well-built school, and excellent community relations.⁷

In 1950-1951, Bina was moved to the school in Minigo Shirati where, once again, the one who was first asked to go refused because the risk of contracting malaria was high and the hospital far away.⁸ In Minigo Shirati, he was much loved by the people, earning a reputation for being an exemplary God-fearing man who lived his faith by actions.⁹

By 1955, Bina was teaching middle school at Ikizu Training School in Musoma where he stayed until at least 1958.¹⁰ By 1963, he was a pastor in the East Lake Field.¹¹ From 1964 to 1967, he was secretary for publishing, radio-television ministry, and youth ministry in the field.¹² Bina became a pastor in the East Nyanza Field in 1968.¹³ In 1969, he was president of the East Nyanza Field.¹⁴ By 1975, he had become president of the Central Nyanza Field.¹⁵ Bina became president of the General Tanzania Field in 1977¹⁶ and the Central Tanzania Field in 1983, where he served until his retirement in 1985.¹⁷

As field president, Bina was a spiritual leader who believed in servant leadership. He was humble and led through mentorship. Baraka Muganda recalled being entrusted to drive Bina's personal vehicle when traveling with him throughout the field. "We departmental men...watched him, how he led, and how he conversed with church members."¹⁸ William Daniel Tieng'o, who as a young worker knew Bina, thought him to be

an amazing leader who loved what he did. He also believed in transparency, accountability, and dedication to the cause of the gospel work. He believed in collective leadership, collective decision making, and was very loyal to the Church. I remember him calling me so many times for personal prayer in his office. He never talked ill of his fellow leaders in front of us. ¹⁹

Bina loved young people, those who worked under him in particular. He would give parental and spiritual advice freely to them without ceasing. The majority of workers in the Tanzania Union who went abroad for further studies in the late 1970s and 1980s were those who had worked under him and accepted his advice.²⁰ Bina was ready to help all people. In the mission stations, he was the only one with a car, yet no one was denied the service of that car. He would convey visiting pastors from the bus stand to the meeting place and afterward transport them back to the bus stand.²¹ He loved to preach every Sabbath, and rarely attended the worship service without preaching. He loved the pastoral work.²² Bina was attentive and gifted at problem-solving. Seldom, if ever, did anyone blame him for being treated badly.²³

Later Life and Contribution

Early in 1985, poor health forced Bina to retire. He was diagnosed with diabetes, a disease which led to his death²⁴ After retiring, Bina fought the disease for two years; however, he succumbed to it in 1987²⁵

Zephaniah Bina was recognized as two things: a prayer warrior and an excellent mentor. He was also effective in teaching good health practices. Part of the legacy he left to the society is what he did in Mara region. He initiated health training concerning female genital mutilation. When he came from Heri in 1962 (after graduating the public health course), most of people were ignorant on the issue of hygiene. People did not have toilets, were not bathing, they didn't boil drinking water, and so on. He started educating the Seventh-day Adventists about the importance of health and people changed.²⁶

SOURCES

Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1955-1985.

NOTES

1. Steven Bina, interview by author, Phone Call, December 22, 2019.?
2. Ibid.?
3. Ibid.?
4. Ibid.?
5. Ibid.?
6. Lucas Mogonche, interview by author, April 20,2019, Mara, Tanzania.?
7. Ibid.?
8. Ibid.?
9. Ibid.?
10. "Ikizu Training School," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1956), 215-216.?
11. "East Lake Field," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1963), 211.?
12. "East Lake Field," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1965-1966), 264.?
13. "East Nyanza Field," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1969), 278.?
14. "East Nyanza Field," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1970), 283.?
15. "Central Nyanza Field," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1975), 101.?
16. "General Tanzania Field," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1978), 117.?
17. "East Tanzania Field," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1984), 90.?
18. Baraka Muganda, interview by author, January 25, 2019, Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania.?
19. William Daniel Tieng'o, interview by author, March 15,2019, Morogoro, Tanzania.?
20. Eliada Weirungu, interview by author, July 18,2019, Arusha, Tanzania.?
21. Lucas Mogonche, interview by author, April 20,2019, Mara, Tanzania.?
22. Ibid.?
23. Ibid.?
24. Mwita Bina, interview by author, February 18, 2020, Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania.?
- 25.

Ibid.?

26. Machumu Bina, interview by author, June 20,2019, Mara, Tanzania.?

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the [Seventh-day Adventist World Church](#)

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring , MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000