

Maiyo, Jackson Kipler (1926–1985)

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Godfrey K. Sang is a historical researcher and writer with an interest in Adventist history. He holds a B.A. in History from the University of Eastern Africa Baraton and a number of qualifications from other universities. He is a published author. He is the co-author of the book *On the Wings of a Sparrow: How the Seventh-day Adventist Church Came to Western Kenya*.

Pastor Jackson Kipler Maiyo was a pioneer Nandi evangelist, teacher, pastor, translator, and church administrator.

Early Life

Pastor Jackson Kipler araap Maiyo was born in 1926 in Eldoret in western Kenya. His unwed mother, seeing that she could not take care of him, decided to give him up for adoption. One early morning she took him to the home of a woman who did not have children and left him there and disappeared.¹ The childless woman discovered the crying baby and took him in and cared for him. She called the neighbors and informed them that she had discovered a baby abandoned at her doorstep and had not seen the mother. The neighbors told her to care for him as her own which she happily did, thanking God that her prayers had been answered. She gave him the name *Kipler* (meaning “the white one”) because of his biracial parentage.

In 1936, when Kipler was ten, the Nandi Adventist evangelist Ezekiel Maswai took Kipler to live with his family at Kabiemit in Nandi. It was here that he was introduced to the Adventist faith and, after taking Bible lessons, was baptized in 1938. He began his early education in 1937 at Ndalat School before proceeding to the Government African School in Kapsabet in 1941.² Some of his contemporaries at the school included former Kenyan President Daniel araap Moi. He remained there for four years and in 1944 sat for his PSE (Primary School Examination) and passed.³ He thereafter went on to train to become a teacher at the same institution. After his training, he moved to Kaigat the cradle of Adventism in Nandi. His education was far more advanced than that of the pioneers and he became a teacher at the new Adventist school there.

Entry into Ministry

Following the closure of the Kaigat School as a result of strong anti-Adventist pressure in Nandi, he briefly taught at government schools before resigning to work for the church as soon as its schools were legalized. In 1949 he married Elizabeth Jemeli and they raised nine children together. In 1954, while still an evangelist, he went to Kapenguria in West Pokot and brought to the faith Robert Kamakil who became the first Pokot to embrace Adventism. This would prove an important window for the Adventist faith in the north Rift region.

He taught for several years in church schools before going to Bugema in 1956 for his ministerial training. He graduated with a diploma in theology in 1957 and then pastored various churches starting with Mombasa. He was involved in the translation work at Kebeneti in Kericho and took part in translating *The Great Controversy* by Ellen G. White into the Kalenjin language. The book was completed in 1960 and published the following year.

Mission Director in Nandi

He was ordained as a minister in 1961. The Nandi Mission Station was created that year and was separated from the Chebwai Mission. He was appointed the first mission director for Nandi. It was during his tenure as the Nandi station director that the church in Nandi grew tremendously. He was particularly involved with the youth ministries and encouraged the young people to hold evangelistic campaigns throughout Nandi, Uasin-Gishu, Trans-Nzoia, West Pokot, and beyond. He also encouraged every church to establish an active youth program.

It was during the early evangelistic campaigns that there was a great expansion of the Adventist church in western Kenya. The church at Kapenguria in West Pokot in Kenya's northern Rift Valley was finally organized under his tenure and this marked the furthest reach of the Adventist message. He worked at the Nandi Station at Kaigat through to 1965 when Pastor Peter Butuk took over from him. He was instrumental in securing the land for the Kaigat Dispensary and donated his own land to establish the Kaigat Adventist Boarding Primary School in 1970. He was later involved in setting up the pioneer Adventist secondary school in the Segero region in 1976. Nandi was under the Central Kenya Field before moving to the Western Kenya Field in 1981.

In 1975 Pastor Maiyo moved to Nakuru as a district pastor to relieve Pastor Aggrey Kutondo who was leaving for further studies at Tanzania Adventist College in Arusha. In 1978, while still a pastor in Nakuru, he was instrumental in the establishment of the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton in Nandi, together with Pastor Fred Wangai and others.

Moving to Ranen Field

In 1981 he moved from the Central Kenya Field to become the executive director of the Ranen Field whose offices were situated 25 miles from Kisii town. While in that position he also served as the communication and ministerial director. By virtue of his position at the Ranen Field, he now sat on the executive committee of the East Africa Union. At the Ranen Field he was in charge of the Migori and South Nyanza districts down to Kehancha in Kuria country and the border with Tanzania. The area had some 128 churches at the time of his arrival and 31,524 members.⁴

He served until 1985 when he fell ill as the result of a broken nail that had lodged itself in his foot when he was young. The nail had remained for so long in his body, but it suddenly became septic, necessitating its removal. He was admitted at the Kenyatta National Hospital in June 1985 to have the offending object removed, but after

its removal the foot became gangrenous. Before he was due for an amputation, the situation got worse, and he died on June 24, 1985, and was laid to rest two days later at his home in Kaigat.⁵ He was survived by his wife Elizabeth and their nine children.⁶

SOURCES

Sang, Godfrey K., Kili, and K. Hosea. *On the Wings of a Sparrow: How the Seventh-day Adventist Church Came to Western Kenya*. Nairobi: Gapman Publications Ltd., 2017.

Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1982.

School Records at Kapsabet High School, Nandi County, Kenya.

NOTES

1. From an interview of James Ruto of Kebeneti who was told the story by Jackson Kiplel Maiyo, then a pastor at Kebeneti in 1964.
2. From School Records at Kapsabet High School (formerly Government African School). He was given the Admission number 780.
3. Ibid.
4. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1982), 81.
5. Sang, Godfrey K., Kili, and K. Hosea, *On the Wings of a Sparrow: How the Seventh-day Adventist Church Came to Western Kenya* (Nairobi: Gapman Publications Ltd., 2017).
6. Pastor Luke Maiyo, interview by author, June 5, 2019.

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