

# Zambesi Union Tidings (1954–1996)

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The *Zambesi Union Tidings* was the official communication organ of the Zambesi Union Mission between 1954 and 1996.

## Background

The Seventh-day Adventist Church opened its work in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in 1894. In 1902 the Adventist work was opened in Nyasaland (now Malawi) and in 1903 it was opened in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). For more than a decade the mission fields of Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia, and Nyasaland were administered from Cape Town, South Africa.<sup>1</sup> Growth of membership and territorial expansion led to the establishment of the Zambesi Union Mission in 1917, with offices in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia.

In later years, the union mission territory underwent several reorganizations. It was divided into the Southern Rhodesia and the Northern Rhodesia Fields in 1921. Northern Rhodesia, with its field office at Rusangu Mission, was administered from the Zambesi Union Mission headquarters in Bulawayo. Then Nyasaland became a union mission in 1925 under the name of South East African Union. In 1972 Zambia Field attained union mission status and became self-governing. Zambesi Union continued to operate until 1997 when its name changed to Zimbabwe Union Conference, with the headquarters still based in Bulawayo. From its initial organization in 1917, the Zambesi Union's communication was largely conducted through the *Division Outlook*. Beginning in 1954 it initiated the periodical known as *Zambesi Union Tidings*.

## Founding of the Periodical

While the people behind the idea of the periodical are not explicitly mentioned in the paper, it is assumed that it was Pastor Edward A. Trumper, Zambesi Union Mission president, and S. G. Maxwell, the paper's first editor. The periodical was produced at the union mission office, situated at 114 Jameson Street, Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia. The four-page paper was printed by Typocrafters (Pvt.) Ltd., and its postal address was P. O. Box 1715,

Bulawayo.<sup>2</sup>

When introducing the birth of the church periodical, the editor wrote, “You are commencing to read our new church paper. In our union there are nearly 100 churches . . . [with about] 20,000 church members . . . all our Mission workers and laymen are able to read English . . . We ought to know what is happening to the work of God in every part of our large field.”<sup>3</sup>

The first periodical, measuring (150 mm x 245 mm) was a free, “read-and-pass-on” quarterly periodical for English readers within the entire union, its fields, and churches. Maxwell wrote, “[T]hose who understand this language will pass on the news and information to those who are as yet unable to read this paper. . . . When you have finished [reading] this paper, pass it on to a friend.”<sup>4</sup> Both, “Africans and Europeans [are requested] to contribute to the success of this paper. . . news of your soul-winning actives, your new churches buildings, special meetings, tithe blessings and anything which would bring courage to others.”<sup>5</sup> This objective of the periodical seem to have been maintained throughout the 42 years of its existence (1954-1996).

The first publication was printed in a black and white ink, with neither pictures nor page numbers. It used a blue font for the heading. Among its first contributors was A. H. Brandt, the union home missionary secretary, who wrote instructions on how departmental reporting was to be done. In the second publication, James Ngaiyaye of Nyasaland (now Malawi) gave a report of his attendance at the 1964 General Conference Session held in San Francisco, California.<sup>6</sup>

H. T. Nkiwane, from Bulawayo, reported on the youth and children’s involvement in outreach in the Bulawayo Mission District. He also wrote on his religious liberty intervention on behalf of those in Bible classes who were being required by their employers to work on Sabbath.<sup>7</sup>

In volume 1, No. 3 of 1954, Pastor W. C. S. Raitt reported on the increased distribution of the *Faith for Africa* paper, of which the South Africa Union ordered 3,000 copies, while the Zambesi Union ordered 5,000 copies.<sup>8</sup> Mordecai R. Moyo reported on Chief Nguqumbane’s donation of an ox and a goat in the Filabusi District.<sup>9</sup> Peter Dube wrote from Mtoko regarding Mrs. Mabheka, a teacher who built a church for her leper converts, two of whom were baptized.<sup>10</sup>

## History of the Periodical

No information has been found regarding the number of copies produced or the cost of printing. From the first issue produced in 1954 until 1990, the publication had no pagination. Of all the available quarterly publications produced between 1954 and 1996, publications could not be found for the following six years: 1957, 1985-1988, and 1990. While there were numerous changes made to the periodical over the years, only the significant changes will be highlighted in this article, including a selection of stories shared in the papers.

In 1962 the printing of the paper was moved from Typocrafts Ltd., in Rhodesia, to the Sentinel Publishing Company, a Seventh-day Adventist publishing company situated on Rosmead Avenue, Kenilworth, Cape Town, Republic of South Africa. Although no reasons for this change were given, it could have been brought about by the change of leadership at the Zambesi Union Mission.<sup>11</sup> The 1962 issue contained two interesting stories from Northern Rhodesia (Zambia); one concerning 201 people baptized by Pastor J. Mabuti in the Southern Province Station,<sup>12</sup> and the other about Pastor E. Muyeba's visit and preaching to prisoners in Fort Rosebary (Mansa).<sup>13</sup>

In 1981 the main news had to do with the Zambesi Union office's move from 114 Jameson Street to 41 Lawley Road, Suburbs, Bulawayo, on July 31, 1980.<sup>14</sup> The new office building had plenty of office space and had a guest flat for accommodating workers who visited the office, as well as those who came there to attend committee meetings.

## Physical Changes of the Periodical

Over the years changes took place in the periodical's size, cover page design, and pictorial representations.

In 1956 publication measured 205 mm x 255 mm, with a cover page pictorial drawing of Victoria Falls. Some black and white pictures were included. The first issue's front-page article contained a spiritual appeal from the union mission president, Pastor Fred G. Reid, who wrote, "We workers and laymen should give careful consideration as to how things are going with our personal lives and with our services to God thus far."<sup>15</sup>

In 1962 the publication's size was slightly enlarged to measure 215 mm x 277 mm. The information about the year and quarter of publication was shifted from the top of the front page and placed at the bottom. In the first issue, Pastor F. G. Reid reported on his recent attendance of the 49<sup>th</sup> General Conference Session at which, out of the more 1,200 total delegates who attended the session, 74 had come from the Southern African Division.<sup>16</sup>

In 1965 the publication's size was reduced to 204 mm x 250 mm and consisted of loose papers stapled together. The editor's name was not indicated. The issue contained a union mission action "to discontinue the *Tidings* as a printed periodical and produce it as a duplicated Quarterly Union Bulletin." The explanation given was that there was not a sufficiently large budget to make publication of a periodical possible.<sup>17</sup> The introduction of the new *Zambesi Union Tidings* was undersigned by the paper's editor. It seems that Pastor F. G. Reid was the editor during this period. We find in this issue the president's promotion of the Ingathering campaign that was about to be conducted. He wrote, "The Ingathering campaign offers an almost unlimited source of funds for certain types of mission projects. . . . Now let us make careful and detailed plans for 1965."<sup>18</sup>

In 1974 the periodical's size was again slightly reduced to measure 203 mm x 330 mm, with the pages just stapled together. Its new logo, "Three Angels flying," was placed on the first page and the maps of Rhodesia and Botswana—the union mission's territory—were also displayed. In October 1974 the size of the publication was slightly increased to 210 mm x 330 mm.<sup>19</sup> The new editor was Pastor H. Carl Currie, who wrote his first

editorial from the U.S.A., where he was on furlough. During his furlough he baptized his granddaughter, Temple, at the same place he had baptized her father and aunt 18 years before. On a sad note, he reported that his 86-year-old mother had fallen and broken her leg.<sup>20</sup>

In 1981 the publication's length was cut down to 210 mm x 300 mm; at the same time the issue reported the relocation of the union mission headquarters office from 114 Jameson Street to 41 Lawley Road in Bulawayo's southern suburbs.<sup>21</sup>

In 1982 the publication size was trimmed further to measure 195 mm x 270 mm and it became a yearly publication. The first issue came out in November as "there was a shortage of secretarial help . . . . Because the TIDINGS [was] now being printed rather than mimeographed, [they could] use good quality black and white pictures in the paper."<sup>22</sup> Another change in the paper's publication was that "[t]he Southern Publishing Association offered to print the TIDDINGS [sic] and mail it as a supplement to the Trans-Africa Division OUTLOOK."<sup>23</sup> The maps that had been on the front page were replaced by four trumpets. The objectives of this new paper were (1) to inform the members of what was happening, and (2) to inform them of the plans, goals, and objectives of the work throughout Botswana and Zimbabwe.<sup>24</sup>

In 1984 the publication's adjusted size measured 215 mm x 275 mm and was now published in booklet form. This new publication's front page carried the news of the Bulawayo Adventist Secondary School, which was in the business of delivering Christian education. At that time, the only Adventist secondary school was situated in an urban area in Zimbabwe. The school had opened in January 1980 with 120 pupils and seven teachers, including the headmaster, Joseph Gabi.<sup>25</sup>

In 1989 the December publication size was reduced further to measure 165 mm x 245 mm, and one issue was produced per year. Its headline news this time was about the visit of 39 volunteers from the North British Conference, who were in Gwanda to construct a church building beginning on Monday, November 27, 1989, and it was expected that the building would be completed by the end of December. The coordinators of this project included Pastor Lester Parkinson, the Zambesi Union Mission church ministries director; Pastor H. Wilson from the South England Conference; and Pastor Moses Msimanga, pastor for the Gwanda SDA Church.<sup>26</sup>

In 1991 the publication's size was slightly enlarged to measure 175 mm x 250 mm and was this time to be published monthly. In the first issue, Pastor R. R. Ndhlovu, the union mission president, reported on the growth of the church. The church had started the *Harvest 90* campaign in 1985 with a union mission membership of 86,000 and ended the campaign in June 1990 with a membership of 148,000. For the new campaign, known as *Penetration 95*, the union's baptismal goal was 108,000 for the whole quinquennium.<sup>27</sup>

By 1992 the publication's size had become even smaller, measuring 133 mm x 210 mm. In the first issue, Pastor R. R. Ndhlovu reported that 7,757 baptisms had been realized that quarter, bringing the total union mission membership to 177,535. This achievement was, however, 3,386 people below the union mission's assigned baptism goal.<sup>28</sup>

The 1996 issue became the last publication for the periodical. The editor of the last publication was F. Boniface.<sup>29</sup>

## List of the Periodical's Name Changes

*Zambesi Union Mission Tidings* (1954); *Tidings Zambesi Union Mission* (1956-1974); *Zambesi Union Tidings* (1974-1980); *Tidings* (1981, Vol. 30, No. 1); *Zambesi Union Tidings* (1981, Vol. 30, No. 2 - 1994); *Tidings Zambesi Union* (1995); *Zambesi Union Tidings* (1996).

## List of Editors

S. G. Maxwell (1954-1955); W. C. S. Raitt, acting editor (1956-1957); W. C. S. Raitt (1958-1964); F. G. Reid (1965-1976); H. Carl Currie (1977-1984); R. R. Ndhlovu (1989-1995); F. Boniface (1996).

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27. R. R. Ndhlovu, Editorial, *Zambesi Union Tidings*. Vol. I. January 1, 1991, 1.
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