

Guddaye, Yohannes (1920–2005)

MANDEFRO ALEMAYEHU

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Yohannes Guddaye was a pioneering evangelist and teacher in Ethiopia.

Early Life

Yohannes Guddaye was born in 1920 in South Gondar zone, Ebenat district, Feres Meda Kebele (subdistrict), Ethiopia. His mother was Etihun Yiha and his father was Guddaye Adme. He was the tenth child of their 11 children. He completed the eighth grade at Debre Tabor Adventist School. He was married to Nigistie Chekole in 1947, and they had four sons and four daughters.¹

Joining the Ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Yohannes Guddaye joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1957. After his baptism, Yohannes worked at the Debra Tabor Seventh-day Adventist Mission Station as a guard and as a generator operator. During this time he also attended school and raised his young family. After working for six years, he moved with his family back to his birthplace, Feres Meda, to begin a small school and establish a church. From there he traveled to the surrounding villages, encouraging members and spreading the gospel to those who had not heard it.

As his children grew older and needed to attend regular school, he moved his family back to Debre Tabor, and he became a traveling evangelist. He had to leave his young wife and children at Debre Tabor and travel to all the surrounding villages, traveling for three to four weeks at a time. He only came home for a few days at a time, to make sure that his children had enough food for the next month and to replenish his supplies for the coming weeks. He traveled over a wide area and was not deterred by the cold, heat, rain, bandits, or even malaria; sometimes he slept under the open skies in lonely forests, having only his mule for a companion. He worked as a traveling evangelist for 13 years.

His zeal for Adventist mission was a result of his upbringing. When Adventism first started in Gondar province, Guddaye, the father of Yohannes, was one of the prominent patriarchs of the young Adventist Church. Soon after they accepted the Adventist truth, there was persecution from the surrounding Orthodox Christians, so they had to leave their land behind and move to a new place called Gubda. However, the problem did not end there; the people around their new home banded together and raided the Adventists. Guddaye, being the elder

of the group, instructed his people not to fight back. The raiders took everything they could and burned the rest; as they were leaving one of them turned around, shot Gudaye's father, and killed him. This incident seemed to spark a fire in young Yohannes's heart. He must have resolved within himself that the only way to fight these people was by spreading the gospel.

Yohannes was ordained as a pastor in 1980. He was the third pastor from the sons of Guddaye, the faithful martyr, following Pastor Dessie and Pastor Tebeje. After his ordination, he served churches in Addisu Ager, Debre Tabor, and Gondar. He served the Adventist Church for more than 35 years in many different ways, and he retired in 1992. While residing in Addis Ababa as a retired pastor, he was active in visiting the sick, the poor, the discouraged, and the lonely.

On November 20, 2005, Pastor Yohannes Gudaye passed away at the age of 85 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

NOTES

1. This article is based on the author's interviews with Yohannes Gudaye's family members on July 25 and August 14, 2019, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Nigistie Chekole (wife), Tamene Yohannes (son), and Abraham Yohannes (son).

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