



South Zambia Conference

Photo courtesy of Southern Zambia Union Conference, Lusaka, Zambia.

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South Zambia Conference is a subsidiary of the Southern Zambia Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

South Zambia Conference is made up of the Southern Province of Zambia, with a population of 1,858,547. The total territorial area is 85,823 square kilometers, divided into 13 districts. The province has three tribal groups (Tonga, Ila, and Toka-leya), with Chitonga being the major language spoken. The Seventh-day Adventist Church membership is 347,111, with 564 churches and 1,249 companies. The conference has 26 ordained ministers and six licensed internees. The South Zambia Conference office is situated on Farm No. 269-A, and consists of 5,436 acres (2,200 hectares) at Rusangu Mission, in Monze District, Zambia.¹

Origin of the Adventist Work in the Territory of the South Zambia Conference

The Adventist message entered Zambia in 1902 when the American Adventist missionary, William Harrison Anderson, met King Lewanika of Barotseland, in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia (current Zimbabwe), while the king was returning from England where he had been invited to attend the coronation of Edward VII.² Having seen the advanced civilization in Britain, the king strongly urged the missionaries to go to Barotseland (Western Province of Zambia) and open mission work that would usher in civilization and prosperity.

In 1903, in response to the Barotse king's request and his own passion to establish a new mission station in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Anderson and his helpers, namely, Jacob Detcha, Philip Malomo, Jack Mahlatini Mpofu, and Andrew Nyakana, embarked on their mission expedition into Northern Rhodesia from Solusi Mission near Bulawayo. They crossed the Zambezi River near Victoria Falls and proceeded to Kalomo, where the Northern Rhodesia government had its headquarters. A government official encouraged Anderson to go northward to Chief Monze's area, hoping that the introduction of Christianity would pacify the Tonga people that David Livingstone had visited about half a century before.³

Surviving a near death experience from dysentery along the way, Anderson continued his northward journey through Choma and Pemba and finally arrived at Chief Monze's homestead near Chisekesi. After getting authorization from the chief, they traveled by foot northeast of Chisekesi in search of land with a sufficient water supply. A few kilometers into the bush, not far from where they envisioned that the railway line would later pass, they found a swampy spring where water was gushing out of the ground, commonly known by the local people as "Tinti." When Anderson saw this spring, he was convinced that this would be the ideal place to establish a Seventh-day Adventist mission station in Northern Rhodesia. He proceeded to mark the location and then went back to Chief Monze and to Kalomo to obtain permission to buy the land.⁴

After a two-year furlough in the United States, Anderson returned in 1905 to establish the Barotse mission station that later became known as Rusangu Mission.⁵ In his small book entitled *The Story of Rusangu Mission: A Brief Review*, Vivian Munachande Kanondo presents information he obtained from Abraham Mwiika, one of the first Tonga boys that Anderson (whom the local people nicknamed *Haaminya*) employed to build the mission. Mwiika listed the names of seven of the first eight natives who were baptized at Rusangu Mission between 1907

and 1908, namely, Samuel Mweemba, Joseph Choongo, Hapuleni Mulunda, Hilangwa Munakasala, Steven Mulomba, Benjamin Choongo, and Paul Hamaluba, although he could not remember the name of the eighth one. Adventist missionaries used a variety of methods to win converts, nurture church members, and raise funds for carrying forward their mission work. Some of the most effective methods included colporteurs selling religious literature, conducting camp meetings, and encouraging all church members to participate in annual harvest ingathering fundraising campaigns.

From these beginnings at Rusangu Mission, the Adventist work spread throughout the country, mainly through the establishment of mission schools and clinics. After Rusangu Mission school, Musofu Mission school followed in the Copperbelt province in 1917, led by S. M. Konigmacher. Then Chimpepe Mission in Luapula province in 1921, led by H. J. Hurlow. Liumba Hill station also followed in Western province in 1928, led by S. M. Konigmacher, and finally Sitoti Mission school in Western province, established in 1944 under the leadership of Gladstone Imasiku.⁶

Ultimately, Northern Rhodesia became part of the new Zambesi Union Mission organized in 1917, with its headquarters in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia. Ronald C. L. Thompson states that when this union mission received its constitution in 1921, its territory was divided into the Northern Rhodesia Mission Field, Southern Rhodesia Mission Field, and Nyasaland Mission Field.⁷ J. V. Wilson was appointed to serve as the first superintendent for the Northern Rhodesia Field.⁸ This field's territory consisted of Northern Rhodesia, except for the Northern province lying east of the 32nd meridian. Its headquarters was located in Lusaka until 1945 when it was transferred to Chisekesi, a railway siding about 9.6 kilometers from Rusangu Mission.⁹

In Southern province, according to the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, the Adventist work spread through the establishment of outlying schools that became mission stations or districts, such Demu and Munenga in 1930, Kaumba and Nadezwe in 1934, Bweengwa, Dimbwe, and Kazungula in 1935, Mujika in 1941, Namwala in 1946, and Nteme in 1954.¹⁰ Among the pioneering teacher-evangelists who had come from southern Rhodesia with Anderson, and who also settled in Southern province, were Jacob Detcha in Mbeza near Bweengwa, and Jack Mahlatini Mpofu and Jim Mainza in the Kantengwa area.¹¹ The growth of the work in the Southern province necessitated the establishment of an effective organizational structure that would ensure that the gains were preserved and nurtured.

Organizational History of the South Zambia Conference

The organizational history of the South Zambia Conference may be considered from two different perspectives. The first view is that it began with the establishment of Rusangu Mission in 1905, and its later developments that led to the organization of the Northern Rhodesia Mission Field in 1921, which was later renamed the Zambia Field in 1965, leading to the organization of the Zambia Union Mission in 1972. A second view starts with the creation of the Southern Province Station in 1962. This article follows the second view whereby the Southern

Province station becomes the fore-runner of the South Zambia Field later established in 1972, which today is known as South Zambia Conference.

In 1962, as a result of the growth that was being experienced in Zambia, especially in the Southern province where the Seventh-day Adventist work had started, there was need to establish a separate station which would oversee the work in that province. Job Munashibolwa Mabuti was appointed to serve as director of the Southern Province station from 1962 to 1969. As narrated by his daughter, Grace Inamukubi Mabuti, who was born in 1932, Pastor Mabuti served as the station director until his retirement in 1969, after which he died in 1970.¹²

Those who were interviewed by the author confirmed the establishment of the Southern Province station. Laymond Njoloma served as a pastor under J. Mabuti's administration and was residing in Chipata, Eastern province, at the time this article was written; Simon Chileya II, a retired pastor who also served under Mabuti's leadership and now resides in Choma, Southern province, as well as Juliana Mwananyau Makeleta, a widowed pastor's wife who now resides near Musofu, Copperbelt province, all confirm that L. Ndaiseka succeeded J. Mabuti as director of the Southern Province station from 1969 to 1971.¹³ On May 23, 1972, approval was given for the Zambia Field to be organized into the Zambia Union Mission,¹⁴ and it was officially established as a separate union on June 1, 1972.¹⁵

In 1972 the newly established Zambia Union Mission moved its headquarters from Chisekesi in the Southern province to Lusaka in what was Central province then, a more central location, under the leadership of A. Bristow. The new union territory was divided into three fields. The North Zambia Field had its headquarters in Mansa in the Luapula province, and its territory was comprised of the Copperbelt, Luapula, and Northern provinces. The South Zambia Field had its headquarters at Rusangu Mission, in Monze, and its territory was comprised of the Southern, Central, and Eastern provinces.¹⁶ West Zambia Field was attached to the Zambia Union Mission in Lusaka, because of its largely rural location and small membership and was comprised of the Western and North-Western provinces.

To provide leadership for the South Zambia Field, Anderson Muunyu was chosen in 1972. Pastor Muunyu led the South Zambia Field with its team of pastors and laity until 1976.¹⁷ His departure to the Zambia Union Mission in 1976 created a vacancy. The Zambia Union Mission appointed Lotson Hans Makeleta to take up the presidency of South Zambia Field. He was a trained primary school teacher and upon his election to the leadership of the field, he underwent an intensive leadership and theological training course at Solusi College in Zimbabwe for a period between six months to a year while serving in his administrative responsibility. This training gave him impetus to train and engage both the pastors and the laity in evangelism. In 1979, he was transferred to Rusangu Ministerial Training School.¹⁸

Then the Zambia Union Mission leadership, in consultation with the South Zambia Field constituency, appointed E. H. B. Siamaundu to serve as president, replacing L. H. Makeleta in 1980. Siamaundu also went to Solusi College where he underwent similar intensive leadership and theological training while taking care of his

administrative responsibilities. He mobilized the pastors and the laity to conduct evangelistic efforts in places where the Adventist message was not prominent. The South Zambia Field territory was transformed as a result of Siamandu's visionary leadership as hundreds of Christians from other denominations joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church due to the biblical teachings on the Sabbath and the state of the dead. His administration continued until 1984 when he was called to serve in another position.¹⁹

In 1985, Simon Chileya II became president of South Zambia Field. During his time, there was a massive involvement of members in personal and public evangelism and the baptizing of new converts intensified. For a long time, Southern province was known as Zambia's food basket due to its agricultural production. Pastor Chileya encouraged church members to be faithful in giving tithes and offerings, both in cash as well as in-kind. Unfortunately, during this period many farmers lost their cattle from the deadly foot-and-mouth disease that swept throughout the province, leaving many households without any means of continuing with their agricultural production. With the government's intervention, however, most families have since recovered from the crippling farming losses they suffered.

In 1988 the Zambia Union Mission underwent a realignment to increase the number of fields from three to six. The South Zambia Field territory, which had been very large, stretching for almost a thousand kilometers from Livingstone in the south, through Lusaka in Central province to Chama town in the northeastern part of the Eastern province, was reduced to cover only the Southern province. One of the new fields created was the Central Zambia Field, whose territory was comprised of the Central province and portions of the Copperbelt province. The other field created was the East Zambia Field consisting of the Eastern province. This territorial realignment boosted membership growth tremendously.

One of the youngest presidents to lead the South Zambia Field was Passmore Hachalinga, who was appointed in June 1993. He had served as district pastor and as secondary school chaplain. In South Zambia, he trained the laity in stewardship, leadership, and evangelism until June 1995 when Central Zambia Conference called him to serve as its president.²⁰

In June 1995, Bright C. Halwiindi was chosen to serve as president of the South Zambia Field. Pastor Halwiindi had preached the gospel on both public radio and television for many years as a layman. After serving as a district pastor for some time, he was appointed in 1988, to serve as executive secretary for the newly created Central Zambia Field where he remained until 1991. Thereafter he went back to serve as a district pastor. From there he was appointed to serve as president of the South Zambia Field in June 1995. He served in that capacity until December 1997.²¹

In 1998 Albert Bbwatu assumed the presidency of South Zambia Field. Before his appointment as president he had served in about seven districts for several years, as well as serving in field departmental leadership. As a result of team work, the field grew such that, in 2003, the South Zambia Field was granted conference status by the division.²² This achievement signified that the field had attained spiritual, organizational, and financial

maturity and was able to run and manage the work on its own without depending on higher organizations for financial support.

To lead the new conference, in 2004 Josephat Hamoonga was appointed as the first president of the South Zambia Conference. He was an experienced and successful evangelist, and he promoted and conducted lay training seminars in leadership and evangelism. His training of lay Bible workers was augmented by financial donations from Dr. Lindsay Thomas, a retired African-American Adventist missionary from the United States. Hamoonga served as president until December 2006.²³

In 2007, Fordson Vincent Chimoga became the second president of the South Zambia Conference. Like his predecessors, Chimoga brought to his administrative position a wide experience as pastor, departmental leader, lecturer, and church administrator. He became the first South Zambian Conference administrator to hold a doctoral degree in ministry. During his tenure as president, the work grew and tithe and offerings increased to the extent that the workers' salaries, which had been the lowest in the Zambia Union Conference, improved. During his administration, which lasted until 2012, he promoted teamwork among pastors, which resulted in the increased financial growth in the conference.²⁴

In 2013, Vanny Munyumbwe became president of the South Zambia Conference. Munyumbwe had been the head of the Department of Theology and a lecturer at Rusangu University before accepting this appointment. However, Munyumbwe's leadership at the conference was short-lived because of his appointment as executive secretary for the newly organized Southern Zambia Union Conference in 2015.²⁵ To fill the vacancy left, Maxwell Muvwimi succeeded Munyumbwe in 2016. Muvwimi assumed the leadership of the South Zambia Conference with a wide pastoral and administrative experience both in Zambia and abroad. He was still serving as president of the conference at the time of this writing.

During the leadership of the administrators mentioned above, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Zambia Field spread to the southeast along the Zambezi Valley from Chief Siampondo along the southern border with Zimbabwe, through the territory of Chiefs Mweemba and Sinazongwe, along the shores of Lake Kariba to Siavonga and Chirundu towns in the eastern part of the province along the border with Zimbabwe. On the western side, the Adventist work spread from Kazungula border post between Zambia and Botswana, through Mulobezi in Chief Musokotwane's area. As people migrated westward towards the Kafue National Park, churches were planted from Dundumwenze going northward through the territory of Chiefs Siachitema and Chikanta, into Mbila district onto Itezhi-Tezhi Dam on the Kafue River near Namwala town along the northern border between Southern and Central Provinces. Meanwhile, within the central region of the conference, along the line of the railway from Livingstone to Mazabuka, churches increased in number and membership leading to the creation of many mission districts. The statistics below provide the details of this growth.

Statistics of Membership Growth

It is amazing to see how the Adventist work grew in Zambia since the organization of the Northern Rhodesia Field with its headquarters in Lusaka in 1921. Fifty years later, in 1972, Zambia had a population of 4,000,000 and the Adventist membership stood at 21,180.²⁶ The total number of churches was 140. The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zambia had become mature enough to be given union mission status, namely, Zambia Union Mission.

In South Zambia Field, 20 years later (in 1993), under the leadership of Simon Chileya II, South Zambia Field alone had 151 churches and 43,185 baptized members from a Southern province population of 2,706,480. The number of churches grew from 151 to 153 in 1994. The number of baptized members also grew to 46,173, an increase of about 3,000 members.²⁷ By 1997, during the leadership of B. C. Halwiindi, the number of churches in the South Zambia Field had reached 184, with a total membership of 69,075, and the Southern province population then stood at 2,932,020.

In 1999, during the leadership of A. Bbwantu, the South Zambia Field's number of organized churches had increased to 239. The total membership had increased to 88,420, while the population of Southern province had reached 3,040,000. A comparison of the figures in 1997 and 1999 is enlightening. The number of organized churches in 1997 stood at 153, which increased to 239 in 1999, showing that the number of organized churches had increased by 86, which is more than a 50 percent growth rate. The total membership had increased to 19,345.²⁸

In 2003, the year that ushered the South Zambia Field into conference status, the organizational statistics are also impressive. The number of organized churches was 298, while the number of baptized members had reached 102,015. Meanwhile the population of Southern province had decreased to 2,987,700, due to the migration of people to the central region of the country in search of farm land. The membership increase that was realized between 1999 and 2003 was 13,595.²⁹

The number of organized churches in 2005 stood at 317, while the total membership stood at 113,488. In 2003 the number of organized churches stood at 298, but in 2005 it reached 317, with a total increase of 19. The total membership in 2003 was 102,015, while in 2005 it reached 113,488, with a total increase of 11,473, which is a more than 50 percent growth rate.³⁰ In 2008 the conference continued to experience tremendous growth. The total number of organized churches reached 334, and the total membership was 140,328. The number of churches in 2005 was 317 and rose in 2008 to 334, having increased by 17 churches. The membership in 2005 was 113,488 and in 2008 it reached 140,328, which shows an increase of 26,840. In about two years, the conference membership had grown by more than 50 percent.³¹

As of April 4, 2018, South Zambia Conference statistics indicated that the number of organized churches stood at 562 and the number of baptized members stood at 269,359. The same report indicates that the number of baptized members in December 2017 had been 266,557, which means about 2,802 new members were added between January and March 2018.³² Praise for the growth of the work in the South Zambia Conference is given

to God for using the pastors and members to spread the Adventist message.

Augmenting the work of pastors and church members, are supporting ministries that also contribute to the growth of the work in the South Zambia Conference. Riverside Farm Institute, a member of the Adventist Laymen's Services and Industries (ASI), has helped the South Zambia Conference, especially in evangelizing the Lusitu and Siavonga districts in the northeastern part of the Southern province. Other self-supporting organizations contributed toward the advancement of the church work through such programs as "Roofs for Africa" during the 1990s, and recently through the planting of "One Day Churches" and "One Day Schools" by Maranatha Volunteers International.

South Zambia Conference also operates a few institutions that include Rusangu Secondary School, Rusangu Basic School, Gohwe Primary School, Ntandabale Basic School, Terry Schwartz Secondary School, Maranatha Basic School, Wilson Basic School, Johanny Myburg Primary School, and Victoria Falls Primary School, and one health facility called Rusangu Rural Health Centre.

South Zambia Conference's Future Outlook

Beginning with about eight people who accepted the Seventh-day Adventist message through baptism around 1907 and 1908, the church has grown to almost two million baptized Seventh-day Adventists in Zambia, out of whom almost 400,000 are members in the South Zambia Conference where the work started.³³ Rusangu Mission, which has been growing since 1905, experienced tremendous development beginning in 2003 when the Zambia Union Conference opened the Zambia Adventist University at Rusangu Mission. In 2012, the name changed to Rusangu University, highlighting the historic name of "Rusangu," which the missionaries adopted through a vote of the Rhodesia Committee Council in 1918.³⁴ Today Rusangu University has three campuses, namely, Rusangu Main Campus at Rusangu Mission in Monze; Lusaka Campus in Lusaka; and Copperbelt Campus in Kitwe. The numbers of enrolled students range well over 4,000. Rusangu University significantly contributes to the growth of the mission work in the South Zambia Conference through several of its educational programs.

Name Changes

Southern Province Station (1962-1971); South Zambia Field (1972-2003); South Zambia Conference (2004-present).

List of Presidents

J. M. Mabuti (1962-1969); L. Ndaiseka (1970-1971); A. Muunyu (1972-1976); L. H. Makeleta (1977-1979); E. H. B. Sijamaundu (1980-1984); S. H. Chileya II (1985-1993); P. Hachalinga (1993-1995); B. C. Halwindi (1995-1997); A.

Bbwantu (1998-2003); J. Hamoonga (2004-2006); F. V. Chimoga (2007-2012); V. Munyumbwe (2013-2015); M. Muvwimi (2016-present).

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3. *Ibid.*, 157.
4. Peters, H. E. "The Contribution of Education to the Development of Elite's Amongst Tonga Plateau of Zambia: A Comparative Study of Schools Leavers from Two Mission Schools (1930-1965)," PhD Thesis, University of Illinois, (Woodlands, Lusaka: Teresianmum Press, 1976), 56.
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