

# Origin of Adventism in Eldama Ravine

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Eldama Ravine is a town in Baringo County, Kenya, a few miles north of equator. It is the cradle of Adventism in the northwest part of Kenya that today has 30,078 church members who worship in 352 organized churches!

## Introduction

Eldama Ravine was established as an administrative point by British colonialists and later served as a transit road for lumber harvested from surrounding forests. It was previously the headquarters of the former Koibatek District and Eldama Ravine constituency. It has a population of 45,799. It is largely an agricultural trade point producing the world's popular commercial rose flowers. It is a fairly cosmopolitan home for more than half of Kenya's ethnic tribes.<sup>2</sup> Eldama Ravine is within the Central Rift Valley Conference (CRVC) that was organized in 2014, and was later reorganized and divided in 2020. The territories that make CRVC are: Baringo, Laikipia, Nakuru, Narok, and a larger portion of Nyandarua and Samburu counties.<sup>3</sup>

## Initial Spread of Adventism in the Region

The Eldama Ravine Seventh-day Adventist Church was started by Elizabeth Wacheke Karanja, who used to worship with her children in a location owned by a businessman named Kamau best known for running a college that trained mechanics and drivers.<sup>4</sup> Wacheke had been given use of one of the classrooms in the college where they fellowshipped.<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth had become an Adventist in 1973 through the effort of evangelist Paul Katuku, a literature evangelist from the Nakuru Central Seventh-day Adventist Church.<sup>6</sup> Paul sold her the Kikuyu translation of the book *For a Better Africa* by Robert J. Wieland.<sup>7</sup> When Elizabeth read it, she understood the message of Adventism. The evangelist visited Elizabeth at the home she shared with her children and grandmother in Eldama Ravine. These regular visits motivated them to learn more about Jesus.

## Challenges

After the family became Sabbath-keepers, their biggest problem was to have a place to worship. The nearest church was 60 km (37 miles) away from their home. During the years 1973 and 1974, obtaining a method of transportation was a challenge in that particular location, and it was impossible to walk such a great distance. Wacheke was invited to attend a campmeeting by Evangelist Paul Katuku, and during that meeting, she made

the decision to become a Seventh-day Adventist and was baptized.

She was advised to look for a place of worship even if it was a classroom in a nearby school. She went to Shimoni Primary School and was given access to a place to worship. However, the school children there made so much noise that it disrupted their worship services. The school was sponsored by the Catholic Church, and pupils were expected to attend school on Saturday. Elizabeth had to look for another place of worship and found a room available in the nearby commercial college. Here, she fellowshiped with her children until they moved to the land where the current church has been built.

## Assistance from Nakuru Central SDA Church

Soon after the young company began worshipping at the college premises, the Nakuru Central Church sent over Evangelist Joshua Njuguna<sup>8</sup> and others who came in and participated on alternating Sabbaths. This nurtured the young congregation. Among the early Adventists who fellowshiped with Wacheke's family was Evangelist Paul Katuku (who had brought them to the faith), Moses Ndung'u, Philip Owili, and Pastor Daniel Macharia.

## Progress in Evangelism

In 1978, a major evangelistic campaign was conducted by Adventist youth from the Nandi District that culminated in the addition of members to the local church.<sup>9</sup> The Sabbath School was officially attached to Kamara Seventh-day Adventist Church some 25km away along the Eldoret-Nakuru Highway. As time went by, the membership increased, and the Eldama Ravine Sabbath School was organized into a church.

During the tenure of Pastor Sammy Seronei as district pastor, the Church obtained a parcel of land from the Eldama Ravine municipality and constructed a semi-permanent church building on it. Membership continued to increase as many more evangelistic campaigns were held. Today the Church has birthed six other churches and three Sabbath Schools.

## Reorganization of Administration

Originally, the Eldama Ravine Church was under the Central Kenya Field that had been organized in 1953. In 1981, the Western Kenya Field was organized from the Central Kenya Field, and the Eldama Ravine Church was placed under its jurisdiction. Being on the extreme end of the Western Kenya Field territory, the Church received less attention, leading to a slowing of the evangelistic progress. With the organization of the Nakuru-based Central Rift Valley Conference in 2014, the members appealed to East Africa Union to be transferred to the nearby conference.

## Current Status

The Church is currently under the Eldama Ravine District which has seven churches and three Sabbath Schools. They all fall under the North Baringo Station of the Central Rift Valley Conference in the East Kenya Union Conference. The neighboring church districts are Kampiyamoto and Nginyang. The Eldama Ravine District has the following churches: Eldama Ravine Main, Kapcholoi, Kenewa, Equator, Kisorobi, Hope Alive, and Chepng'etuny. The Sabbath Schools are: Solian, Kabiet, and Kimamoi.

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## SOURCES

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## NOTES

1. "Central Rift Valley Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2021), <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=52600>.
2. "Eldama Ravina," *Wikipedia*, last edited November 13, 2020, accessed June 7, 2021, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eldama\\_Ravine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eldama_Ravine).
3. "Central Rift Valley Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2021), <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=52600>.
4. Elder Peter Wachira, interview with author on May 1, 2021. Elder Peter Wachira is currently a church elder with the Eldama Ravine SDA Church.
5. Ibid.
6. Esther Wambui, Interview with the author, May 1, 2021. Esther Wambui is the daughter of Elizabeth Waceke.
7. *For a Better Africa* was published in 1967 by Robert J. Wieland through Africa Herald Publishing House at Gendia. It has been translated into many languages. Wieland (1916-1911) was a long-time Adventist missionary to Kenya.
8. Joshua Njuguna later became a pastor.
9. Godfrey K. Sand and Hosea K. Kili, *On the Wings of a Sparrow: How the Seventh-day Adventist Church Came to Western Kenya* (Nairobi, Kenya: Gapman Publications, 2016),158.

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