

Stewardship Ministry in Tanzania

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The stewardship ministry has played a very important role in fulfilling the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Tanzania. The first missionaries laid the foundation of this ministry in 1903.¹ Being touched by the love of God, church members are giving tithes, both in cash and in kind such as cows, goats, and different items. Great testimonies are shared among church members, and many are being led to work in partnership with God.

The stewardship department has played an important role in assisting the administration to accomplish the mission of the church as it was designed.² The purpose of this department includes, but is not limited, "To articulate a biblical vision of stewardship and the integration of the lordship of Jesus Christ into every area of life, and to call the church to a total commitment of the entire life and all resources and possessions to the lordship of Jesus Christ."³ It is also the purpose of this department to enable the church members to know and to play their important role as the body of Christ in supporting the mission of the church through tithes and offerings. They should do this faithfully by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.⁴

Founding

The stewardship ministry was founded by the missionaries at the beginning of the gospel work in Tanzania in 1903. The first missionaries were Abraham C. Enns and Johannes Ehlers. The Stewardship Department, just as it was, it is part and parcel of the gospel work. It is said that the stewardship teaching was very necessary because it is the main source of funds that support the proclamation of the gospel work. Some of the challenges that these missionaries met were, to travel some places by foot. For example, when they came to Pare Mountains, they had to travel by foot from Korogwe to Giti where they built the first church in Tanzania. Another challenge was that the missionaries of other religions were not happy to see other religions enter into their mission fields. These religions were Lutherans and Muslims.⁵

Because of this the Adventist president of Germany, Pastor L. C. Conradi, decided to start the work south of lake Victoria, and this became the second station for the Adventist work in Tanzania.⁶ In this part of Tanzania several Adventist missions were started such as Busegwe, Ikizu, Ntusu, Majita, Itilima, and Utimbaru.⁷ Other challenges

that the first missionaries faced were malaria⁸ and language barriers. It was from that beginning that both church members and local church leaders embraced stewardship ministry to this day.

History

The beginning. Pioneers of this mission taught stewardship from the beginning (1903). The pastors and church leaders taught stewardship.⁹ Apart from this, church members were also taught self-reliance, both in schools and church settings. In 1930 missionaries conducted a strong industrial program. This was done at Suji, which is situated in the Northeast Tanzania Conference. The subject of self-reliance needed to be taught in that beginning. History shows that the subject continued to be emphasized in churches and schools, as well. Suji schools indeed provided the best educational curriculum in the region. Some of the courses, offered were tailoring, carpentry, and boot making. Students were also given tools for such courses. In addition, agriculture, beekeeping, paper modeling, and masonry were taught.¹⁰

Stewardship taught at schools. The church leaders decided to offer a stewardship course in the Tanzania Adventist Seminary and College. This appears in the Tanzania Union minutes of April 2, 1980. The vote states, "To request the college administration to offer a full course of stewardship to the ministerial students, as the knowledge of stewardship is essential in their work as church pastors."¹¹ Pastor Elias Kasika, one of the stewardship directors in the union, was called to teach the stewardship course to the ministerial students in Tanzania Adventist Seminary and College as per the action. The same spirit that led the first missionaries to teach stewardship principles to the church members is still leading the current leaders to do the same.

On November 23, 1993, during the year-end meetings, it was voted, "... to adapt the EAD recommendation (EAD 2222/93) on stewardship, self reliance, and sacrifice."¹²

The Split of the Union. One of the challenges that union leadership faced was that it was not easy for the church leadership to minister effectively to all parts of Tanzania. Traveling from one end to another needed time and money. It was necessary, therefore, that the union be split into two: Northern Tanzania Union Conference (NTUC) and Southern Tanzania Union Mission (STUM), and this was done in 2013. As of today NTUC has two organized fields and four conferences and STUM has two organized fields and three conferences. The benefit of this development is that the stewardship ministry has been brought more closely to the church members than before. Currently, church leaders and departmental directors do not need to travel long distances as it was before. This saves money and time; above all, it is helping departmental directors to be more effective and more focused for better results.

Innovation-Sacks for Tithe and Offerings. The introduction of returning tithe in kind was another breakthrough for the stewardship department in Tanzania. Church members have accepted the plan and to this effect, the church leaders have produced special sacks that can be used to keep tithe in kind from different crops church members are involved in like, maize, beans, groundnuts, onions, et cetera. In other words, instead of using

envelopes, as they do with cash, they use sacks for the same purpose. These sacks are labeled as property of the church to differentiate them from other ordinary sacks. Many church members have accepted the plan and through this way, the church is getting tithe and offerings in kind in a good measure. On the other hand, some give tithe and offerings in kind from animals like cows, goats, and even chickens. Conferences and unions are receiving reports from many parts of Tanzania about tithe and offerings from cows, goats, chickens, et cetera. A challenge with tithes in kind is that items like eggs and fruits get spoiled before they are sold. Tithe in kinds of animals like cows require feeding and keeping before they are sold.

Methods and Means. Different methods, strategies, and tools have been used in teaching the subject of stewardship to the church members. Among other strategies that were voted during the Tanzania Union Session in 1971 were to require pastors to visit church members and to pray with them regularly. The month of December was designated to be the special month for stewardship, where church members should be led to renew their covenants with God.¹³ In the later years the stewardship week was added to two weeks per year, one at the beginning of the year (May) and the second at the end of the year (December).

Publications. To enhance stewardship education among the church members, covenant cards (140,000) and envelopes (500,000) were printed.¹⁴ To deepen the knowledge of stewardship among our church members, it was necessary to prepare and to print stewardship books, not only for the local church leaders but also for the church members, as well. These books contain different subjects on stewardship. More than fifteen thousand books are now in the hands of church members.¹⁵

Impact

The stewardship ministry in Northern Tanzania Union Conference receives testimonies from many parts of the union. These are testimonies of what God has done and is doing to those who give their tithe and offerings faithfully to the cause of God. These testimonies are shared with church members in this union. As a result, many people are inspired to turn to God and work in partnership with Him. The testimonies of faithful tithers have touched many, not only Adventists but also non-Adventists, as well.¹⁶

Stewardship Directors of the Tanzania Union

Reuben Ngasani (1967-1969), Harun Shija Mashigan (1969, 1970), Elizafani Wanjara (Years Not Found), Yohana Lusingu (1982, 1983), Baraka Muganda (1983-1985), Jacob Gagi (1991), Pastor Elias Kasika (1991, 1992), Joseph Otieno (1993-2000), Jeremiah Izungo (2001-2003), Jacob Ngussa (2003-2010), Jeremiah Izungo (2011-Present).

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. Kangalu B. Elineema, Keto E. Mshigeni, and Jonathan A. Lukwaro, eds., *Arise and Shine, stories of 32 Suji Mission Alumni* (Interpak Books, Pietermaritzburg, 2015), 7
2. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Working Policy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist*, 2009 - 2010 ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2009), 341
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 342.
5. Elisha Okeyo, *Kanisa Safarini Tanzania* (Morogoro, Tanzania Adventist Press, 2014), 219.
6. Ibid., 31.
7. Ibid., 32, 33.
8. Elisha Okeyo, *Kanisa Safarini Tanzania*, 28.
9. Ibid., 219.
10. Elineema and others, 11.
11. Minutes of Tanzania Union Executive Committee, April 2, 1980; Jan 1980 – Nov 1980

12. Tanzania Union Mission minutes, Arusha, Tanzania 1992 – 1993, November 23, 1993.
 13. Tanzania Union Mission, Minutes of Tanzania Union Committee, "Stewardship," December 3, 1971
 14. Tanzania Union Mission, "Minutes of Tanzania Union Committee, Stewardship Material orders," November 19, 1981.
 15. Yoseph Otieno, interview by the author, March 17, 2020.
 16. Abraham Laizer is one of the Adventist members who have been giving tithe and offerings from cows and goats every year. One time he gave a tithe of 100 cows to the Lord. Now having seen the blessings of the Lord in his life some of the non-Adventist members called an Adventist Pastor to set aside tithes from their cows for the Lord (Pastor Jackson Mndingi, Tanga District Pastor, interview by the author, February 2017).
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