

EAST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION NEWS AND INSPIRATION

# CONNECT



TITHE & OFFERINGS ENVELOPE

World in My Hands & offering!  
(Matthew 23:23)

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JAN-  
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2017

**GIVE! SAVE! LIVE!**

# GIVE! SAVE! LIVE!



**L**ike most kids growing up, I loved getting new toys. However, I would sometimes do something that would really annoy my parents. When my friends would come over to visit, I would take paper and wrap up my toys as gifts and then give them away to my friends.

My parents would often wonder why I was giving away toys they had spent money to buy. I would always tell them “Remember, it’s more blessed to give than to receive.” Plus, I just loved to see the

smiles my friends faces when I gave them an unexpected gift.

Today, instead of giving away toys I give my time, my talent and my treasure. That’s what the Bible calls stewardship. The biblical concept of stewardship is that nothing we have is really ours to begin with. We have simply been entrusted with it so we can be a blessing to others. God said to Abraham, “I will bless you so that you can be a blessing!”

The Bible tells us that Abraham was rich and increased in goods.

How did he become so wealthy you might ask? The answer is simple. He started with giving. The bible tells us that Abraham gave a tenth of all he had to Melchizedek the priest. (Gen 14:20)

Genesis 14 is the first mention of tithing in Scripture. As a result of Abraham’s faithfulness in tithe and commitment to giving, God blessed him with more than he could ever desire. That was the secret to his success. Growing up, I learned the concept of Give, Save, Live. First

we ought to give our tithe and offerings back to God. Secondly, we save a portion of our income and then finally we live on the rest.

I challenge, you to try this proposal. Remember, life is not about getting, it’s about giving. And while we don’t have to give away our toys, we can have an amazing satisfaction in giving our time, talent and treasure to invest in the Kingdom of God.

**Philip Baptiste**  
**CONNECT Editor**

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# SOMEBODY CHANGED THE PRICE TAGS!



**T**he story is told of three men that snuck into a major department store after hours.

These three men entered the store but didn't steal anything. Instead they did something very foolish. Something so foolish that you ought to slap them. They changed the price tags on each and every item in the store.

These men took the price tag off of a can opener and placed it on a flat screen TV and took the price tag of the TV and placed it on the can opener. They took the price tag off of a screwdriver and placed it on a microwave and took the price tag off the microwave and placed it on a screwdriver. They changed the price tags on each and every item in the store.

When the store opened the next morning, the managers didn't catch the mistake for 5 hours. Some customers got ripped off and some got bargains. Some walked away singing praise God from whom all blessings flow. I can tell that you probably wish you had went shopping at that store on that day.

I declare to you today, that somebody's changed the price tags in the world in which we live. In our world of materialism and misplaced values, I declare that somebody's changed the price tags. When people say you can do what you want to do, just as long as you don't

hurt anybody else, I declare that somebody's changed the price tags. When people can get up to their eyeballs in debt because they are trying to buy things just to impress others. I declare, that somebody's changed the price tags.

There's a story Jesus tells where a man had a wheat sown and someone came and sowed tares alongside the wheat. The bible declares that an enemy has done this. I propose to you that the enemy is trying to sow tares in the wheat of our lives. He's trying to change the price tags on our christian values and principles. He's even trying to change the price tag's on the bible concept of tithing.

In Acts Chapter 5 we read the tragic story of Ananias and Sapphira. They were God fearing christians who loved the Lord and were faithful members of the early church. However, they experienced sudden death because they lied about money. Instead of giving back to God a faithful tithe and offering, they kept back some of it for themselves. They allowed the enemy to sow tears in the wheat of their lives.

We must be faithful stewards and not try to rob God like Ananias and Sapphira did. The prophet Malachi councils us against this in Malachi 3:8-12.

"Will man rob God? Yet you

are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the Lord of hosts. Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the Lord of hosts."

This is a powerful promise. If we ensure we keep the price tags of biblical stewardship and faithfulness in place we will be blessed beyond measure. However, if we try to rob God and withhold the tithe and offerings from Him, we will be cursed and miss out on the incredible blessings we could have received if we were faithful to him!

As Adventist believers we are called to be like John the Baptist. John prepared the way for the coming of Jesus the Messiah and we are called as Seventh-day Adventist to prepare the way for the second coming of Jesus. In Matthew 11:11 Jesus commented to his disciples that of all the men

born of women there was none greater than John the Baptist.

Have you ever wondered what made John great? I believe that there are three qualities that John possessed that made him so incredibly great. First he was humble, secondly he was truthful and finally he was faithful even unto death. Adventist christians are called to be like John the Baptist. We must be humble, truthful and faithful. We cannot allow the enemy to change our price tags of humility for pride, or to exchange our tags of truthfulness for deceit. We dare not trade the price tags of faithfulness for compromise. In all areas of our lives, we must be humble, truthful and faithful to God until the end.

In a world where there are so many things competing for our attention. Let's us fix our minds on things above. Matthew 16:19-21 instructs 19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

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Dr. Blasious Ruguri is President of the East-Central Division.

# STONES IN THE BAG



**I** Samuel 17: 49: “And David put his hand into his bag and took from it a stone and slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead. And the stone sank into his forehead so that he fell on his face to the ground”.

1 Samuel 17: 49: “And David put his hand into his bag and took from it a stone and slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead. And the stone sank into his forehead so that he fell on his face to the ground”.

The Biblical account of David and Goliath is one of those that keeps us alert about how God works with His determined and faithful people, especially those that are willing and ready to put resources to work for the glory of God.

## “ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

David said to the Philistine, “You come against

me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. It’s of utmost interest to note that after those statements of determination, David reached his bag and got a stone out of five stones.

Interestingly, in preparation for the battle, David did not go anywhere to borrow or make appeals for assistance. He used the available resources that God had given him. The stones, the sling and his willingness to attack. He simply reached his bag and pulled out one stone out of five. This is 20% of the resources he pulled out to accomplish the mission.

The Church of God has a mission of taking the good news of salvation to every kindred, tongue, and people. You must be aware that in the course of doing this, we are faced with challenges (Goliaths).

The Goliaths of manpower, Church administrative expenses, infrastructure developments, preaching and witnessing, name them. All these Goliaths are looking at us, mocking us, ridiculing us, and challenging us. Some of us are afraid of these challenges. Because of that, perhaps our challenges are still standing before us untouched!

## “ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

The reason they are still standing is that the stones

are still in the bag. No one is reaching inside the bag to pick up the one stone. You and I should emulate David. Reach your hand into the bag and take just one stone of the five the Lord has blessed you with so we can be victorious.

The Church of God is under ridicule, blasphemy; the glory of the Lord is trampled upon because the Stones are still in the bags, in bank accounts, in pockets, in gardens, in the farms. Get them from there and do mission in the name of the Lord. The reason we are still stagnating in Church is because people have not dipped the hands in the bags. The stones are still idle!

Doing something in the name of Almighty only means reaching your bags, pockets, bank accounts, gardens, businesses because that’s where the stones are. Get the stones from the bags and attack! Use these stones to hit all the stumbling blocks on the way to the mission. 1 Samuel 17:40.

David had five stones in the bag but used only one stone. Percentage wise, he used only 20% of the blessings. If we emulate what David did, by setting 20% of our income aside for mission that is 10% tithe to God and 10% offering we will experience incredible blessings.

E. G. White says that “In His providence, the Lord has ordained that the work in His vineyard should be sustained by the means entrusted to the hands of His stewards”

(Testimonies, Vol.3, p.117). We will experience unexpected blessings if we take the stones of out the bags and use them for mission.

## “ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

The Day the stones will be pulled out, we will celebrate and dance. Like the women of Israel did when David did in 1 Samuel 18:6-7 “it happened as they were coming, when David returned from killing the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy, and with musical instruments.”

Beloved, we have no reason to celebrate when stones are still in the bags, no celebrations when the money, the blessing from God Almighty is still locked up in banks when all resources are sealed off, and nobody is releasing them for the mission. Reach into the bags and release the blessings to be used for the glory of the Lord.

Yes the power is in the Lord and not in what we surrender to Him for mission. But when we give or return for mission, it becomes evident that we have totally surrendered all to Him for mission and we are right on course! Pull the stones out of the bag please!

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William Bagambe is the Steward and Trust Services Director for the East-Central Africa Division.

# I REALLY NEEDED THE MONEY



I am 24 years old. From the time I started my first job to just recently, I was in college. College: I probably do not have to explain further what that indicates for my financial situation. My income was not enough even with a job. So you know that college students are in a troublesome position when returning tithe. As a college student, to let go of 10 percent probably means surviving on water and bread for at least a week. I have to pay rent. I have to buy toothpaste. I have to pay school fees.

And with our demanding schedules, we do need to eat.

Therefore, tithing as a student had always been something I approached flippantly. Even when I did give back, I felt as though I was taking so much away from myself without getting enough in return. So I did not develop a tithe-paying habit. Instead, I argued (to myself, hoping God was

listening) that I needed that money—because surely God would not want me to starve, or be late on an expense. Those words carried me without tithing for years. They were some brutal years. Frankly, I did not trust God to be who He says He is. I wanted to get by on my own strength. It did not work.

## God Is Who He Says He Is

Genesis 14 chronicles the story of Abram giving a portion of his winnings to Melchizedek, king of Salem, and priest of God: “Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) And he blessed him and said, ‘Blessed be Abram by God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!’ And Abram gave him a tenth of everything” (Gen. 14:18-20, ESV).\*

In subsequent chapters we see God fulfilling His promises to Abraham: He protects him, delivers him from his enemies, gives him and Sarah a son, and multiplies their descendants. This same God will also protect, deliver, provide for us, and give us the desires of our heart. Our only task is to trust in Him with all our heart and lean not unto our own understanding.

## Why I Tithe

Tithing eventually came to me through two separate Sabbath morning offering appeals. In the first experience, I was at my home church. The woman giving the appeal told a personal story of how God blesses her every time she gives. She made the point that even when she does not have enough she still gives and God rewards—not necessarily in finances, but He still rewards. It was such a simple appeal that I am still astonished at how it struck me. I thought, God does provide for me, even when I do not give.

The other appeal came two weeks later. Offertory appeal time came, and I was expecting the usual, give, and you will receive. However, the young man took a different approach. He conveyed that what we earn is not yours. It does not belong to us. It is God’s. God only entrusts us. And when we do not give, we are robbing Him. His words brought a point

home to me: my relationship with God is based on mutual trust: God trusts me with His finances; I should trust Him with sustaining me.

## Making a Start

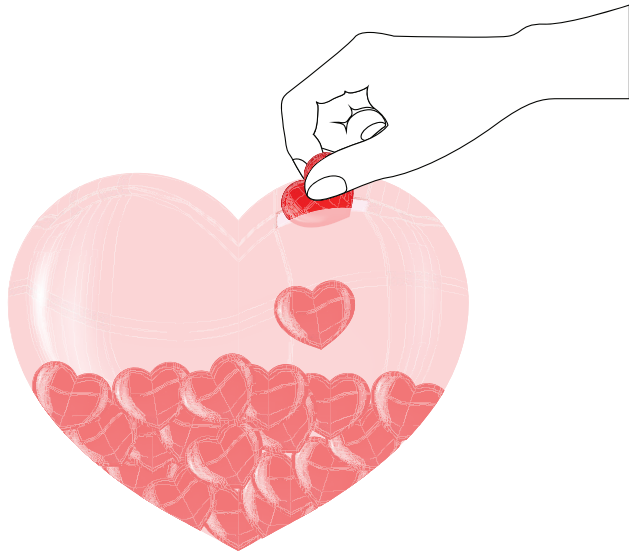
Although I may need that extra 10 percent to pay bills, or to buy that tube of toothpaste, the act of engaging in this system with God is exciting. I look at it as a challenge. It is me saying “OK, God, show off!” Realistically, it does not always happen the way I predict, want, or perceive. My act of willfully and wholeheartedly placing my trust in God, the unseen, stretches my faith. And frankly, if I can let go of finances, the material possession that guarantees comfort, I think I can let go of many things.

Tithing is just the start, a big start, a seemingly uncomfortable start. But I am truly intrigued as to how God will show Himself to me. And with Him doing so, my belief and assurance in Him will increase above the faith I place in my finances. I hope this can be your experience, your inclination, your intrigue: to prove God faithful.

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Tawanna Persaud is a recent graduate of Andrews University with a B.A. in English literature. She works in Lubbock, Texas, and plans to pursue international development law. *This article first appeared in the Adventist Review and is reprinted with Permission.*

# GIVING: IT'S A MATTER OF THE HEART!



The people of Israel had now reached two years into their forty years wilderness wanderings. God had brought them a mighty long way out of Egypt through the Red Sea and had provided water and manna for them to eat. A pillar of clouds was there to shade them from the scorching sun during the day; that same pillar would transform itself into a pillar of fire to provide the warmth, the light, and protection they needed at night.

Despite their rebellious spirit, God had been good to them.

He could have done even more, but because of their apostasy, the Israelites had forfeited the manifold blessings of His Divine Presence.

Now the time had come for the erection of a sanctuary for God among them. God had given Moses instructions concerning the building of the sanctuary – a tabernacle chosen by their Deliverer, a

holy dwelling for His presence amongst His people. This was not an easy undertaking. The building of the sanctuary was grand and expensive; it necessitated substantial giving.

In Exodus chapter 35:5, we note that people were called to bring generously, with a willing and ‘generous heart’. Verse 20-22 declares:

Then the whole Israelite community withdrew from Moses’ presence and everyone who was willing and whose heart moved them came and brought an offering to the Lord for the work on the tent of meeting, for all its service, and for the sacred garments. All who were willing, men and women alike, came and brought gold jewelry of all kinds: brooches, earrings, rings, and ornaments. They all presented their gold as a wave offering to the Lord.

And in verse 29, we read that: All the Israelite men and women who were willing

brought to the Lord freewill offerings for all the work the Lord through Moses had commanded them to do.

Do you see what was at the very foundation of their giving? It was a willing and generous heart. It was out of the willingness, the generosity of their heart that their giving flowed. Those whose hearts were stirred brought their offerings.

Do you see the importance of your heart when it comes to giving? Not everyone in the camp of Israel responded, but only those whose heart had been stirred. Why did they respond? It was because of their devotion to God and their spirit of sacrifice. The people of God recognized the worthiness of God to receive their offerings, and so they kept giving and giving. People gave their best. Their giving was an expression of their worship. It was a true expression and reflection of their relationship to the One who had freed them from slavery in Egypt and who had provided for their daily needs in the wilderness. Their deliverance was so real, and the Lord had so stirred their hearts that they were willing to give. What kind of giving was that? How did they give?

## 1. THEIR GIVING WAS REGULAR

Exodus 36:3 declares that “they received from Moses all the offerings the Israelites had brought to carry out the work of constructing the sanctuary. And the people continued to bring freewill offerings morning after morning.”

You will notice that their giving was not occasional but systematic. It was not based on impulse but in response to God’s goodness. Because of their awareness of God’s eternal blessings, they gave regularly. The same applies to us now. Our regular tithes and offerings are an expression of our thankfulness to God. Our wallet, bag, checkbook and bank statement tell us more about our spirituality than any verbal testimony we give.

The giving of our resources, of our time, of our money, are living testimonies of our relationship to God. It demonstrates whether we understand how generous and how good God has been to us. It is an expression of our worship.

Here in Exodus, we see that when God expressed His desire to the people of God that they should build a sanctuary for Him, they responded! They wanted to participate in that venture with God. They were willing to contribute. They were ready to sacrifice because of their love for God, because of their devotion to His cause. So as the sun rose, each day their thoughts would turn to meeting the needs of God’s work! As a result, they brought their freewill offerings morning after morning.

The people responded not because Moses was a great leader, a superb preacher, or an excellent motivational speaker. No, they responded to the Word of God – because only the Word of God, empowered by the Spirit of God, can stir

up men's hearts to this level of generosity and action. So, day after day they brought their offering to Moses for the Tabernacle. Day after day, they gave! Day after day, they contributed!

Day after day, they donated! Day after day, they provided! It was a daily habit, a day-to-day practice, not a once in a while impulse. Giving to God was not a burden but a joy! It came straight from their heart, not because they were forced to do so! Some of us might be waiting to give, saying: "I will start returning my tithe when my financial situation improves."

My friend, let me tell you that you don't have to wait for your financial situation to improve to start tithing. Just return your tithe faithfully to God, and you'll see your financial situation improve. I've experienced it in my life. As a young married couple, my wife and I faced some incredible challenges but always returned our tithes first before doing anything else. Sometimes we ran out of money, at times we didn't know what to do, at times we were almost desperate, but God always came through. He blessed us over and over and over again.

I encourage you to get into the daily habit of giving to God; then just step back and see God's miracles at work. Our God is faithful! He'll never let you down. He'll never turn His back on you! He'll never give up on you. Just give your life to Him in worship as a living sacrifice, offer your resources to Him in thanksgiving and see how He

will bless you beyond measure.

## 2. THEIR GIVING IMPACTED OTHERS

Exodus 36: 4,5 mentions "they received from Moses all the offerings the Israelites had brought to carry out the work of constructing the sanctuary. And the people continued to bring freewill offerings morning after morning. So all the skilled craftsmen who were doing all the work on the sanctuary left their work and said to Moses, "The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the Lord commanded to be done."

Question: Have you ever given something to the work of God that it stopped a co-worker, a colleague, a fellow believer, an elder in his tracks, made him put down tools and come and say to the pastor 'she is too generous, tell her to stop?' That is exactly what happened in the wilderness. The people's giving so influenced the workmen that they had no choice but to go to Moses and say they are giving too much and they had more than they would need or use.

Wouldn't that be a great situation to be in as a church? Wouldn't it testify of our love for God? The building materials for the Temple came from the hearts of the people. They knew that God had met their daily needs and now they were going to meet the needs of the Tabernacle. The people brought more than necessary. There were no human manipulation and tricks there! No twisting of arms; no psycho-

logical maneuvering; just willing hearts ready to give until the people were restrained from bringing!

Ellen G. White makes this important observation: "All who love the worship of God and prize the blessing of His sacred presence will manifest the same spirit of sacrifice in preparing a house where He may meet with them. They will desire to bring to the Lord an offering of the very best that they possess. A house built for God should not be left in debt, for He is thereby dishonored. An amount sufficient to accomplish the work should be freely given, that the workmen may be able to say, as did the builders of the tabernacle, "Bring no more offerings." (Patriarchs and Prophets, p.346-7)

This is what happens when we love the worship of God and prize the blessing of His sacred presence. We will give because giving is an exact indicator of our spirituality and love for God.

## 3. THEIR GIVING WAS IN RESPONSE TO THEIR BLESSINGS.

A good question that we could ask ourselves is: Where did all the materials come from to make the Tabernacle? The answer is clear. We find it in Exodus 12:35,36: "Now the sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; and the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of

the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request. Thus they plundered the Egyptians."

How did it happen? "The LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians".

Has God been good to you? Has He smiled with such favor over you that you've even plundered the Egyptians around you? The fundamental question we can ask is: where do our blessings come from? They come from the Lord!

The problem is that sometimes we don't know that we've already been blessed. We are waiting for a move from God, an intervention from on high, a miracle to happen, not acknowledging that God has already blessed us. We don't realize that we've already been blessed so that we can be a blessing to others.

Sometimes, we pray for added resources when God has already provided enough for us and His cause. All we need to do now is to give because God has already provided.

The problem today is not that God has not supplied enough. God has blessed our work, our business, and our investments so that we can be a blessing to His church. The problem is that we are not willing to give enough. It is just a matter of the heart. It is just a question of our relationship with God. Why not make it our first and foremost priority?

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Alain Coralie is the Executive Secretary of the East-Central Africa Division

# ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY OF AFRICA TURNS 10



**K**enya-based Adventist University of Africa (AUA) celebrated its 10th anniversary with two days of festivities attended by two Seventh-day Adventist world church presidents.

Ted N.C. Wilson, president of the Adventist Church since 2010, and Jan Paulsen, who served as president from 1999 to 2010, joined hundreds of people in congratulating AUA and giving glory to God at the event in Nairobi on Oct. 28 and 29.

Wilson, in a Sabbath sermon, urged AUA to be intent in proclaiming the soon return Christ. He challenged the congregation to make God's word the foundation of all they do while waiting

to declare "this is the God we have been waiting for" upon Christ's second coming.

Paulsen set the pace for the weekend by giving an exposition on the armor of God and the need to put it on during Friday evening vespers.

"I commend you to the Word of God," he said. "Impress it upon our people. Through it, you will know Christ, right from wrong, and experience the power of His resurrection."

Matthew Bediako, who served as world church secretary when AUA opened in 2006, wrapped up the celebrations on Sabbath evening with a message themed, "Who dares to despise the days of small beginnings?"

Bediako said that the idea of AUA was planted by God Himself long before the university opened a decade ago and underscored that AUA was developed to help the gospel reach all of Africa.

Bediako also encouraged the students to keep Christ first.

"Degrees are important, but degrees do not win souls," he said. "We need dedicated pastors who are sold out to the mission of the church, those who love lost souls."

He passionately finished by saying: "The best times are ahead of us. God will use AUA to spread the gospel."

Congratulatory messages were given by various church entities, including the East-Central Africa Division, other

Adventist universities within the division, Hope Channel International, Middle East University, Maxwell Adventist Academy, ADRA-Africa, Advent Hill Primary School, and the three church conferences in Kenya.

Special tribute was given to those who helped spearhead and develop AUA:

Robert Lemon, Bremping and Mabel Owusu-Antwi, Blasius Ruguri, Chiemela Ikonne, Allah Kamwendo, Geoffrey Mbwana, Gerry Karst, Gideon Mutero, Hudson Kibuuka, Jan Paulsen, Luka Daniel, Matthew Bediako, Pardon Mwansa, Roy Ryan, Samson Getui, and Werner and Nancy Vyhmeister.

Students thanked AUA for training them to serve God and others in Africa.

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Janet Oyende is the public relations assistant for the Adventist University of Africa.



## THE CHURCH IN BURUNDI PREPARES FOR MAJOR EVANGELIST THRUST IN 2018



**T**he Adventist Church in Burundi is preparing for a major evangelist outreach project that will take place in 2018. Under the ECD theme *Mission Priority, It is harvest time.*

Church leaders in Burundi are making Total Member Involvement (TMI), the

anchor of every activity undertaken from now until 2018 in particular and 2020 in general. Provisions are being made to involve every single person in outreach and ministry. Pastors and church leaders are striving to prepare and plan effectively for the

nationwide 2018 TMI event in Burundi.

Evangelistic campaigns have been organized almost at the same time in the Capital City Bujumbura and in other different major areas of the country where 8,000 people have been baptized, last summer. Perhaps this may portray the bigger picture of how things might look like in 2018.

Burundi Union Mission territory is located in Burundi. Burundi as a country has just

crossed a period of socio-political tension between political stakeholders and it is reorganizing to recover from many decades of ethnic conflicts, war and crime.

Within a population of about 10 million, The Seventh-day Adventist Church counts about 128,198 members worshipping in more than 819 churches.

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Philip Baptiste the editor for CONNECT.

## CONGO

### ECD PRESIDENT ENCOURAGES TOTAL MEMBER INVOLVEMENT IN SONGA



Fesaha Tsegaye

**H**istorical visit to Songa Mission & Songa Adventist Hospital by ECD President.

Dr. Blasious Ruguri, president of the Adventist Church in the East-Central Africa region recently visited the East Congo Union Mission to attend the 2016 year-end meetings. During his visit, he traveled to the Songa Mission and the Songa Adventist

Hospital, about 800 km northwest of Lubumbashi.

He was warmly welcomed by church members, the community, and the Big Chief of Kamina. This visit was historical to Songa Mission because this was the first time in almost 90 years of its existence to be visited by the Division President. Participants were blessed by this visit and appre-

ciated his focus on mission and evangelism through Total Member Involvement.

"I am impressed and happy to see that Songa is such a vibrant place," said Ruguri. "Knowing that this is where Adventist mission started in the DR Congo fills me with great joy."

The president shared he would like the world church to pray for this institution.

"We need more infrastructure, human power, and funds to do what we can to help Songa Mission and the Songa Adventist Hospital move forward."

During his visit, the president officially opened a medium-sized clinic which will be managed by the Songa Adventist Hospital.

The Songa Adventist Mission will be celebrating its 100 year anniversary in August 2017. Adventism began in Songa when the first Adventist missionaries arrived

100 years ago. Songa Mission was established officially in 1921 and the Songa Adventist Hospital was opened to the community in 1927 by Dr. J. H. Sturges. Through their efforts, the work spread throughout the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Currently, Songa Adventist Hospital is a 95-bed rural mission hospital located in a sparseland of 500 Hectares.

"I was touched by the commitment and faithfulness of the Songa Members," said Ruguri.

The Adventist Church has three Unions in the Democratic Republic Congo with 538,364 church members as of June 30, 2015.

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Fesaha Tsegaye is Health Ministries Director for the East-Central Africa Division.

## YOUTH RAISE FUNDS FOR UNIFORMS AND SUPPLIES FOR NEEDY CHILDREN IN ETHIOPIA



Photos: Courtesy Ethiopia Union Mission

The youth at the Kebena Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ethiopia are engaged in community service. The primary focus are prisons, orphanages and a nearby school.

This idea was strengthened and encouraged by the Sabbath school lesson in the third quarter of 2016, which strongly emphasized the active role the church needs to play in society. The Adventist Youth Committee at the Kebena Seventh-day Adventist Church decided to take action on this lesson by engaging with a nearby governmental school to provide help.

The Adventist Youth Committee identified children who came from low-income families who couldn't afford to buy uniforms. These kids were being fed at least once a day by the government. After the idea received joyous approval from the pastor and the board, it was decided to raise funds by proposing the concept to the church members.

One Sabbath, following the Sabbath school study, two members of the committee

stood in front of the congregation and introduced the idea. They stressed the application of the Sabbath school lesson studied so far and finally asked the members to “participate in this tremendous blessing of service.”

A moment of silence took over. Then, one church elder stood up and said, “I would like to cover the expense for one child even if I’m a retired person.” Another member then said, “I would like to cover for two.”

Then members started to raise their hands, “I would like to cover the cost of not only the uniform but the books and stationary.” Members started to indicate with their fingers—three, four, five, showing the number of children for whom they were willing to cover the expenses of the uniform.

Once the goal of funding thirty uniforms was reached, one church member interjected, “Let’s increase the number.” And pledges kept coming and coming. It was incredible! God was visibly working through the people, opening up hearts to work for his cause.

After the service ended,

one elderly lady, who didn’t look to have much for herself, came to a committee member and put in his hand enough money for one child. Another member came and said he would be willing to cover for ten children. By the end of that day, the committee raised double of the amount needed.

All of the committee members were in awe with what they witnessed that day. “We have seen God truly at work,” exclaimed one AY committee member. Following that, it was decided to provide not only uniforms but exercise books and all the necessary stationary for 40 students. The school was notified and, with the church members at the forefront, selected 37 students who desperately needed the supplies.

Consequently, one Sabbath was decided to invite the children and their parents to the church and deliver the supplies provided to them by church members. On that day, the children came with their parents and spent the Sabbath morning in the church listening to the

Word of God. Following the service, they had lunch at the campus together with the church members and supplies were delivered by the church pastor. The children and their parents had smiles on their faces which could not be expressed with words.

“This is wonderful,” said one parent, “I am grateful for what you have done for us. I have no words but to say God bless you.” Another one said, “This might not mean much to you. But it means a whole lot for my child and me. God bless you.”

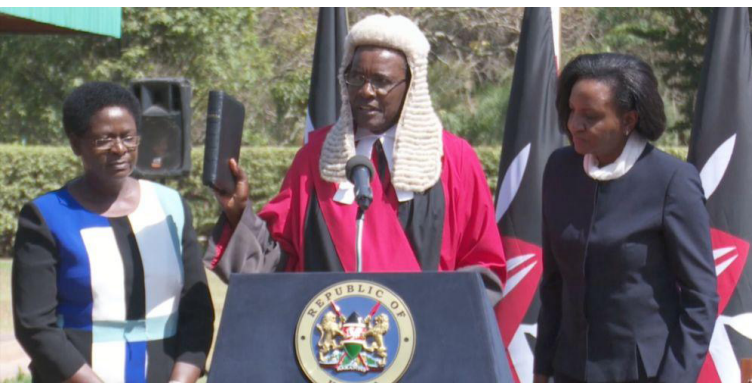
It was beautiful to see the happiness this act of service brought those families. God was at work in motivating the members of the AY committee, opening up the hearts and hands of the church members, and in the families who were at the receiving end. It goes without saying if we are willing to work for God’s cause, he is “faithful and just” to “perform the good work He has begun in us.”

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Jafe Gemechis is youth, chaplaincy and public campus ministries director for the Ethiopia Union Mission.

## ADVENTIST SWORN IN AS KENYA'S TOP JUDGE

### DAVID MARAGA SEEKS GOD'S BLESSING BEFORE STARTING HIS NEW JOB



Hope Channel Kenya

**Chief Justice David Maraga taking the oath of office at the State House in Nairobi, Kenya, on Oct. 19, 2016.**

**A** Seventh-day Adventist judge who refuses to work on Sabbath has been sworn in as the chief justice of Kenya's Supreme Court, marking the first time that a church member has presided over a country's top court.

Chief Justice (CJ), David Maraga, invited Blasious Ruguri, President of the Adventist Church's East-Central Africa Division, whose territory includes Kenya, into his chambers for a prayer of dedication before tackling his new responsibilities.

"As a staunch Christian, I had purposed that before I begin to discharge my new duties as the CJ, I will pray and thank God for bringing me this far," Maraga said as he ushered Ruguri, other Adventist leaders, and senior judges into his chambers.

"I have come along with the leadership of the Adventist Church, and I call upon Dr. Ruguri to lead the prayer session," Maraga said, Kenya's *Daily Nation* newspaper

reported.

Ruguri said Thursday that the judge is a man of prayer and an example of faithfulness to all Adventists.

"He puts prayer first," Ruguri told the *Adventist Review*. "He was in no hurry to take up his new office until after he had invited God to accompany him on this path."

Maraga, 64, was sworn in Wednesday during a ceremony at the State House, the official residence of Kenyan President, Uhuru Kenyatta, in the African country's capital, Nairobi.

Kenyatta had endorsed Maraga, a court of appeals judge, to the seven-member Supreme Court upon the recommendation of the Judicial Service Commission, which is comprised of Supreme Court judges and other legal experts. The previous chief justice had retired earlier this year.

Maraga made national headlines in late August when he told the Judicial Service Commission during the vetting process that he would

always place his faith above his work.

"It would be very difficult for me to sit on a Saturday to hear a case," Maraga said at the time, responding to a commission member's query about a hypothetical situation. "I would rather talk with my colleagues in the court to accommodate me and exempt me from sitting if the hearing extends to a Saturday."

Maraga said his practice is to worship God in church on Saturdays, the biblical seventh-day Sabbath.

Kenya's national parliament gave final approval to Maraga's appointment on Tuesday.

Ruguri, who also prayed at the opening of the swearing-in ceremony, said Kenya's Adventists are thrilled about the appointment of a fellow Adventist to the top court.

"There is a strong feeling that out of his faithfulness to God, he will be faithful to the people, faithful to the nation, and truly execute fairness and justice," he said. "The church in Kenya is both very happy and at the same time very humbled."

The Adventist Church has 867,000 Adventists worshipping in about 9,000 congregations across the country, which has a population of 44.3 million. Christians comprise about 82 percent of the population, with the second-largest group being Muslims, with 11 percent, or 4.3 million people.

Ruguri called for prayers for Maraga, whom he said many Kenyans hope will help the government as it grapples with

corruption.

"The whole nation is expecting so much of him," he said. "More of us need to lift him up and to really ask God to stay with him so he can stand true to the expectations."

Seventh-day Adventists have served as judges in the past, but none has led a country's Supreme Court. An Adventist, Mary Angawa, previously served as a judge in Kenya's Supreme Court, and Daniel David Nanda Nsereko of Uganda is currently a judge with the International Criminal Court in The Hague, The Netherlands. In Papua New Guinea, Gibuna Gibbs Salika serves as deputy chief justice of the South Pacific nation's Supreme Court.

Maraga's elevation to chief justice should remind all Adventists to remain faithful to God, Ruguri said.

"As we continue practicing our faith in this world, we need to know that we are under close scrutiny and observation by the public," he said.

"You never know when you might be called upon to fill in a sensitive and critical position like this," he said. "We must just practice our Christian life with diligence and carefulness so we can serve well when we are called."

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Andrew McChesney is the News Editor for the *Adventist Review*.

## ADVENTIST RADIO SHOW IN RWANDA WINS TOP AWARD



**O**nesphore Yadusoneye, Managing Director for *Voice of Hope Radio* in Rwanda (Ijwi ry'Ibyiringiro) wins a media award as the producer of the best radio magazine for 2016. The event was organized by the Media High Council in conjunction with the Rwanda Association of Journalists and the Rwanda Governance Board.

The event took place on November 7, 2016, at the Marriott Hotel in Kigali. Rwanda was celebrating the Africa Information Day in conjunction with the 8th National Media Dialogue and Development Journalism Media Awards ceremonies for 2016.

The magazine award was for "Male Involvement in Family Planning." The winner produced this program after learning in training that many men think that Family Planning is a women's issue only.

Professor Anastase Shyaka, the Chief Executive Officer for the Rwanda Governance

Board commended the media practitioners for their role in educating and informing the locals hence contributing to the development of the country.

The president of Rwanda Union Mission, Pastor Hesron Byilingiro, congratulated the winner for the achievement and requested that he and his colleagues continue producing quality work which can benefit not only Adventist church members, but also non-Adventists since radio has no boundaries.

In 2013, Yadusoneye won an award on Environment by Rwanda Environment Management Authority and another award by United Nations Family and Population Agency (UNFPA) called the Population Media Award.

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Article by Voice of Hope Radio Team.

## ECD PRESIDENT INAUGURATES A POLYCLINIC IN RWANDA



**A**fter participating in year-end meetings in the Rwanda Union Mission, Dr. Blasious Ruguri, President of the East-Central Africa Division (ECD) inaugurated a two-story Nyarurama Polyclinic on November 18, 2016.

Pastor Isaac Ndwanaye, President of East-Central Rwanda Conference said that this conference decided to build this polyclinic in order to fulfill one of the 3 pillars upon which our church is founded: Evangelism, Education and Health.

Dr. Hesron Byilingiro, President of Rwanda Union Mission, commended everyone who contributed to the realization of this project. "I am proud of this and so is every church member in Rwanda Union Mission because of this marvelous project."

Byilingiro further noted that Nyarurama Polyclinic in East-Central Rwanda Conference is a reflection of the entire Rwanda Union Mission because there are other similar projects taking place in this territory. He underlined that this polyclinic is a center of influence whose purpose is to exalt the praises of our Creator.

According to Ruguri, this

project is not only for East-Central Rwanda Conference or Rwanda Union mission, but for the entire worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church.

"This building itself is a message. It is speaking very loudly to the people who look at it. It is a tremendous witness. There are people who will find their way in the kingdom of God because of this project", Ruguri said.

He stressed that this project has a unique purpose, "Missio—we want to impact the people of this area and beyond."

Ruguri asserted that when this polyclinic opens, it must be peculiar. He mentioned that while doctors will be treating patients, they will also be praying for them and sharing the message of hope.

He commended the leadership of Rwanda Union Mission and church members for their exemplary commitment in mission. The East-Central Rwanda Conference is planning to extend this project by building a hospital in the next four years.

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Onesphore Yadusoneye, Acting Communication Director for Rwanda Union Mission and Managing Director of *Voice of Hope Radio*.

## ADVENTISTS IN JUBA CELEBRATE GLOBAL HAND WASHING DAY



The 9th celebration of global hand washing day, an annual event that is commemorated globally, was held this year in South Sudan at the Seventh-day Adventist Primary School in Juba with the theme *Make hand washing a Habit-Washing hand with soap keeps cholera away from you and your family.*

The celebration brought together 33 schools around Juba, among them also were the UN fraternity, international NGOs, national NGOs, national government ministries, along with State and Local governmental officials.

The commemoration was presided over by the Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation of the national government Hon. Sofia Pal Gai. In her Speech, the minister highlighted some of the key reasons why hand washing with soap should be a habit among the South Sudanese community.

The minister said 41% of South Sudanese children suffer from diarrhea, while 19% suffer respiratory infection and that 40% of deaths of children under five years of age are due to poor hygiene practices.

She encouraged collective responsibility in reducing

the burden of diarrhea and respiratory infections in the community. The national government now puts emphasis on water and sanitation and hygiene (WASH) as a critical priority of public health development agenda for South Sudan.

Commenting on challenges, the minister mentioned that only 33.3% of South Sudanese population has access to adequate sanitation and hygiene services.

She encouraged the national ministry of education to introduce hand washing practice in their curriculum in all schools in South Sudan.

The minister thanked the Seventh-day Adventist primary school for hosting the event and for their active participation and performance during the entire celebration. She shared she was proud to be a part of the celebration in an Adventist school because she herself attended an Adventist school in her earlier years adding that she is a product of Adventist education.

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John Taban is the Communication Director of the South Sudan Attached Territory.

## ADVENTIST SHARE FOOD AND ENCOURAGEMENT IN SOUTH SUDAN



The country of South Sudan has recently experienced economic challenges. The devaluation of the currency has been slowly pushing the majority of families into a financial crisis. Most households in the region have been unable to provide for their daily needs.

Recognizing the desperate need in their neighborhood, the Mount Zion-Hai Neem Adventist Church a Branch of Juba Adventist Central Church, decided to provide food every Sabbath to the needy children from the neighboring slums known as Khor Bou. The people of Khor Bou fled their areas to avoid insecurity and settled in Juba.

The Church is also engaging in other outreach activities in the community such as providing shelters to families headed by women. Church members have donated clothes and are distributing them to the struggling families in the community.

The Church has become a place where the children from the community find comfort and relief every Sabbath. John Taban, communication director for the South Sudan region, said, "The gospel has to become practical, the acts of mercy formed the main ministry of Jesus Christ, and He approached people by meeting their needs before bidding them follow Him. James, a disciple of Jesus, asserted that the religion that demands is to look after the fatherless, and widows in their distress... (James 1:27). That is what the Adventists in our region are trying to do."

Church leaders are requesting continued prayer for the community of Khor Bou in Juba and MT Zion Hai Neem Church as they strive to heal the hurting and share the hope in their region.

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By SSAT Communication Staff.

## NEW REHABILITATION CENTER REACHES OUT TO THE COMMUNITY IN SINGIDA



Courtesy of the Northern Tanzania Union Conference

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Northern Tanzania Union Conference has created new avenues for outreach through the establishment of a Rehab building at Singida Region in Tanzania as a part of accomplishing their mission and helping society in overcoming different problems.

The idea started within the department of womens ministry due to the increasing number of girls and boys who engage themselves in drugs and prostitution activities which cause the deceleration of man power to the society as well as deceleration of moral behavior. The idea to rescue those who are in pain is supported by the whole Union and its churches.

Mariam Samo, a director of womens ministry, was able to mobilize her people within the church and government leaders as well.

She introduced a strategy to accomplish this by creating uniforms for the women at the Rehabilitation center.

Mariam also prepared a big promotion to reach the goal of starting construction of the rehab building. She involved the government leaders and other community members.

During the function which was held at Sheikh Amri Abed at Arusha the guest of honor was Regional commissioner Hon. Mrisho Gambo, apart from supporting the project, he appreciated the willingness and initiative of church members to make this idea become a reality. Church leaders are praying that this project will help countless individuals in the Singida community.

Gideon Msambwa is the communication director for the Northern Tanzania Union Conference.

## MOROGORO DISPENSARY LAUNCHES MATERNITY SERVICES



Christopher Ungani

The 2016 year-end meetings of the East-Central Tanzania Conference (ECT) held in Morogoro was followed by a string of noteworthy ceremonies of opening maternity services at Morogoro Adventist Dispensary on December 1, 2016.

At the opening ceremony, the honor of cutting the ribbon was given to Dr. Frank Jacob, a Regional Health Officer for Morogoro Region, who served as a Guest of Honor.

This jubilant occasion was also attended by government officials, health officers, conference officers, departmental directors, church workers from various church institutions and numerous other guests.

“The future of our nation depends, first and foremost, on the physical well-being of our people,” Jacob said. “We congratulate the Seventh-day Adventist Church for joining hand the efforts of the government in ensuring that people are living in good health.”

Dr. Josiah Tayali, Director of Health Ministries Department at ECT, said that it is one of the responsibilities of his department to ensure that all mothers who are

coming to health facilities get best services, especially in maternal health. The goal, he said, is to “develop our prenatal clinic services which serves 300 mothers and 400 children monthly with the best postnatal services.”

The ECT financed the renovation of Morogoro Adventist Dispensary, construction of the laboratory, and construction of delivery facilities. Eight deliveries can be accommodated daily.

“Now we have ambulance and delivery equipment, and our constructed facility ensures every conceivable comfort and convenience, including lavatories in all patient rooms, we are able to provide medical care of the highest quality,” said Athanas Sigoma, the Treasurer of ECT.

The East-Central Tanzania Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church runs four dispensaries found in Morogoro, Dodoma, Pemba and Zanzibar.

Christopher Ungani is the Communication Director of the Southern Tanzania Union Mission

## THEOLOGY GRADUATES FROM BUGEMA GEAR UP FOR TMI



Diane Kibukka

**T**heology graduates from the Adventist University of Bugema in Kampala, Uganda pledged to embrace the Total Member Involvement (TMI) initiative as they prepare to enter into full-time ministry.

The graduates expressed their excitement for mission during the 22<sup>nd</sup> graduation, which took place November 13, 2016 in Kampala.

Pastor Ogembo Richard, a 2016 graduate, commended the University for equipping students with the knowledge and ideas to implement “Total Member involvement”. He revealed one of his strategies would be to empower church members to be fully involved and to enjoy team working with Jesus. He believes that by total participation, members can be transformed into the image of Jesus.

Pastor Ssali Kisaki Emmanuel, another graduate, said the graduates feel prepared to go and be the light of the world and inspire every church member to reach their friends and

neighbors with the good news of Jesus.

According to Dr. Gebre Warancha, Dean of the School of Theology and Religious Studies, in every area of study, lecturers informed students about church initiatives including TMI. He challenged the graduates to concentrate on church member participation lest their education be “useless”. The dean believes that Bugema has groomed its students for mission and equipped them for excellence in ministry.

The 22<sup>nd</sup> graduation at Bugema University was a celebration of 1,378 distinguished graduates. Those graduating from theology know that a special mission lies ahead as the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Uganda is getting ready to participate in a special nationwide TMI Evangelist campaign. The event is scheduled to take place in Tanzania and Uganda from June 16 to July 1, 2017.

By Prince Bahati and Diane Kibukka.

## ADVENTIST YOUTH IN UGANDA USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO START A NEW CHURCH



Immanuel Ogwal

**O**ver 250 people were baptized as the result of a Facebook Invitation to a three week evangelist campaign held in a rural region of Uganda. The evangelist outreach event was held in the Agago region located approximately 400 miles north of Uganda’s capital Kampala.

400 people attended nightly and more than 250 were baptized at the conclusion of the three week outreach on December 3, 2016. Pastor Rogers Kaggwa, Communication and Education Director for Central Uganda Conference said “Our hearts have been touched to see God at work through through the meetings. We praise God for youth that are dedicating their social media for ministry and outreach.”

In addition to the baptisms, that resulted from the social media campaign, Adventist young people have raised over \$5,000 USD towards building a new church building for the baptized members.

The SDA-U Facebook group was started by three young men, Samuel Okello, Andrew Ssegawa and Ivan

Kiconco who had a shared vision to promote evangelism. Samuel Okello, a native of Agago is the only known Adventist in Agago and felt the joy he has experienced in Adventism should be shared with the people in his village.

To get the churches support, the three young men visited the Northern Uganda Field under which Agago falls and they got the full blessings of the Field Executive Director, Pastor Luke Isile. 20 missionaries were dispatched by the field to Agago in preparation for the evangelist effort.

The nearest church to Agago is over 70 km away. This church will be a center for growing church membership in the surrounding area. Pastor Paul Muasya, General Field Secretary of the East-Central Africa Division, who visited Uganda Union Mission during the 2016 year end meetings was delighted to receive the report on this initiative. He hailed the use of social media as the way to go in furthering evangelism.

Immanuel Ogwal is the Communication Director for the Uganda Union Mission

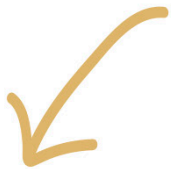
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MEN'S RESIDENCE HALL



GUEST HOUSE



WOMEN'S RESIDENCE HALL



CAFETERIA

