

# THE AFRICAN LEADERSHIP LETTER

A Joint Publication of the African Wesleyan Fellowship and the Africa Area Office of Global Partners

Vol.7 No.1

May 2018

## FINDING AN AFRICAN WAY TO DO MISSIONS

### Introduction

Profit and non-profit organizations are founded on the common vision to make an impact in their respective industries and areas of influence. In most cases, corporate and business strategies are formulated under the guidance of vision and mission statements in respect of environmental, business, or organisational forces. The current trend of growth in the Wesleyan Church within Africa is a point for celebration. Conversely, the diverse economic, political and spiritual challenges that the African church is currently facing within its new mission fields, demand finding an African way to do missions.

The aim of this article is to achieve the following objectives:

- a. To suggest an African model to do missions
- b. To sound an alarm for a more robust way of going forth
- c. To challenge leaders for strategic partnerships for missions within Africa

*The diverse economic, political and spiritual challenges that the African church is currently facing within its new mission fields, demand finding an African way to do missions.*

### Historicity: Models for Foreign Missions (Wesleyan Heritage)

It is impossible to come up with a real working African model for doing missions or to set some new standards, if we don't assess and appreciate how other models were implemented within the African church.

#### The Wesleyan Methodists

The Wesleyan Methodist Church in North America came into being in protest of slavery. Its focus then and after had an internal thrust until at the 1883 General Conference where a decision to raise funds for foreign missions was adopted (Cameron, 2005:37). In 1886, the Missions Board chose to start the work in Africa and Sierra Leone becoming the first mission field of the Wesleyan Methodists in 1889. It should be noted that Sierra Leone was a very rough terrain for these first missionaries and it is said that in 19 years of the mission work there, 11 missionaries died of disease. This was a more organized approach to missions with a more transformational thrust though they had minimum knowledge of the field.

#### Faith Missionaries (International Holiness union and Prayer League - 1897)

Faith missionaries were also known as martyrs. "Politically, they were not considered sent out but "went forth" as noted in Thomas & Thomas, (1976:29) cited in Cameron, (2005). The leaders of the day emphasized that all believers are sent and

it requires an act of faith to go out and not doing so, was considered a lack of faith. Going out by faith meant going out without any definite plans for financial support. On that note, going by faith presupposed living by faith which further meant living without any fixed salary or guarantee of the missionary's upkeep. Therefore, most missionaries went out as independent missionaries with no proper supervision. The reasons might have been that the union was not well structured and had no mission board to govern foreign missions though missions was at the center. The other reason could be that the union was more of a non-denominational entity and lastly, faith was held highly than proper planning for missions.

#### Career Missions (International Apostolic Holiness Union)

In 1900 the International Holiness Union and Prayer League changed its name to International Apostolic Holiness Union. Interestingly, in 1905 a Foreign Missionary Board was established to govern missionary work. With this kind of organisation towards foreign missions, a working model was adopted. Career missions meant that missionaries were assigned and supported by the Church. It also meant that there were no longer independent missionaries. This stands in contrast with the Faith Mission(ary) model.

In 1924, The International Apostolic Holiness Union changed its name to the Pilgrim Holiness Church. Cameron, (2005:36) as cited in the Wesleyan Church, (2005:5) observes that, "Their first mission fields were in South Africa, India, Japan, the West Indies and South America". Foreign missions was understood by the founders as vital to the holiness doctrine survival. In 1930, the Pilgrim Holiness Church set 81% of its budget for foreign missions as cited in Thomas & Thomas (1976:138). This kind of

commitment really shows their seriousness about foreign missions

#### Employment Missions (1968 Model – Present)

In 1968, there was another major merger between the Pilgrim Holiness Church and the Wesleyan Methodist Church. This merger saw the birth of the Wesleyan Church. Surprisingly, it is said that from 1968 to date, the North American Wesleyan Church has contributed 0% of its general budget to foreign missions (Cameron, 2005:78). The adopted model was that the local Churches should contribute direct to the centralized mission budget. Cameron went on to say this model worked perfectly well in 1968 because there was still the loyal element that motivated general mission giving (p.78). When this loyalty started to decrease funding for overseas mission decreased as well which resulted to budgetary crisis; hence, the scaling down of missions in the 1990s. In 2003, there was a shift by the Wesleyan World Missions to a "system of personalized budgets". A missionary family is supposed to raise an overall exact figure for their ministry, which is 100%. Cameron further states that failure to raise the required funding could lead to the missionary called home at any given time or not deployed (termination). Without support from the denomination, the missionary has to raise funds for himself and a certain percentage for the staff at the HQ in Indianapolis (Cameron 2005:80).

The implication is that a North American missionary becomes expensive to send and maintain leading to a reduced workforce in the field today.

#### The Implications of these models for African missions

##### 1. Faith Missions

This is not a practical model for today's missions in Africa. It is believed that most of

the work done before 1905 in South Africa and India failed (Thomas & Thomas). However, one would hasten to say that this is a model that is currently being followed by African churches engaged in foreign missions. There is no proper planning and no sending package guaranteed at times. Faith missions presupposed dying on the mission field or having no retirement package. It further presupposes no proper schooling package for your children.

## 2. Career Missions

It implies control, planning, establishment of functional structural missions department and support systems. It raises loyalty on the part of the missionary and faithfulness or commitment on the part of the denomination. Local churches are motivated to be part and parcel of the process with them becoming the backbone of the support system. The denomination has a say on expected desired results and proper supervision unlike in the Faith Missions (missionaries) model. In Faith Missions, it appears as the cheapest way of doing missions but the danger is that a missionary might be wholly independent or tempted to convert the planted Churches into his or her own independent Churches.

## 3. Employment Missions

Missionaries raising support for themselves cannot work effectively in our current spiritual context. It works but the Church leaders (pastors and superintendents) have to raise and maintain a high “temperature of organisational commitment and loyalty to the denomination”. Lack of it will see many missionaries coming home with little or no accomplishments in the field.

## **Suggested models for missions (African way)**

### Transformational Missions

The “Transformational Missions Model” (TMM) is closely related to career missions but this does not only recognize an individual’s call to missions. God has not called us to march through nations or just making disciples of all nations. That being true but the African Wesleyan Church has to bring transformations in these newly found missions field. Therefore, the focus of foreign missions should go beyond spiritual transformation to transformation of culture, communities and nations. For this to be effectual, the African Wesleyan Church has to:

- a. Empower the missionary to be sent through training, education and skills (theology is not sufficient). In other words the individual has to be packaged as a transformational or change agent. Without these, there are chances of becoming a liability in the mission field.
- b. Empowerment would also mean raising resources for transformational projects (transformational projects have to empower communities, church members, cultural transformation and the nation). William Carey’s approach to missions in India was transformational. Carey saw that the gospel was to touch every sphere of life- the public square, the marketplace, the science lab, and the neighborhood (Miller, 1998:1). He introduced the first savings banks into India and established the first newspaper ever printed in any oriental language. He also pioneered the idea of lending libraries in the subcontinent so that Indians could be exposed to the knowledge of the world. He stood against the oppression of women and Hindu practices of sati, or widow burning (Miller, p.1). This is just to mention but a few empowerment projects that transformed the Indian masses and culture.

This is to say that first order paradigm of the Great Commission should go beyond evangelism and discipleship and deal with the horizontal component of it too. The horizontal component deals with concerns for the creation and for our fellow man's needs

It should be noted that Churches which have mastered these values have access to the most senior men in the government and our Zambian Church in this part of the world is an example partly of the good work done by the first missionaries and what is currently done.

- c. Local churches must also be empowered for missions. Missions must not start on the top and end in the boardrooms, only to come as announcements to the masses. Such plans or visions will definitely lack the needed support. If all churches are awakened for missions, it will be very easy to raise missions fund across the African Wesleyan churches no matter where one comes from. There are few churches I can go and raise funds for missions outside of Mozambique such as: Ntabamhlohlanana in Swaziland, Thembisa in South Africa and not forgetting EWBC. Why? These congregations are led by people who are very much into missions and their passion is expressed by people who are led by them. I am aware that some of our leaders who have gone to the USA to raise funds for certain projects would go from one local Church to another. This is what we need to champion here in Africa. Our local Churches must be resource pools for missions. Despising the power of the local Church will definitely endanger transformational missions.

*Local churches must also be empowered for missions.*

### Strategic Partnership

Each Wesleyan church in Africa has its unique weakness(es). Therefore, our marketplace must be seen as a cake that we all need to consume strategically. The importance of this is that it converts our weaknesses into strengths in terms of tangible resources. It also calls for the partners to evaluate and recognize what they possess as source of strength or competitive advantage (money, human and skills set). Strategic Partnership(s) is needed at this point of time in history more than ever before. The reason is that the African Wesleyan Church has made some inroads into other different African countries. The challenge of not having resources to fund these newly found missions field could severely hinder church growth in these fields. Historically, it took more than 100 years for the African Wesleyan Church to awaken to this reality. It is true that countries like Uganda and DRC have gone into other countries such as Kenya, Cameroon, Burundi and Rwanda but the same trend is likely to occur of handing these fields to GP for funding. For this to be effective, the following foundational factors must be considered:

1. The leaders must take decisive action to see foreign missions as primary.
2. Our local churches must be attuned and saturated with missions emphasis at different levels
3. A regional or continental sending agency must be put in place. This mission agency must see to it that resources are put in place, training and empowering those who are to be sent.
4. There has to be a budget allocation for each member country (10% or more)
5. Strategic planning
6. Holding annual missional conferences and seminars

A good example of strategic partnership is of Jibacam which consists of Latin America and Caribbean countries. Before 1995 the work of missions was primarily done through the North America Church. The Church was only in 8 countries until 1995. In 1995 Jibacam was formed and consisted of only 4 countries. From 1995 till to date, Jibacam has managed to plant Churches in 20 countries and most of the work is done by the natives. Currently, they are working on planting churches in Arab countries. They are also working on how they could use their different currencies for missions funding. It should be noted that most of these countries in Latin America are either poor or poorer than our African countries.

Consequently, we have chosen the cheapest way of sending our people to these new fields and not wholly depending on the nationals at this initial stage. The consequences are likely to be a loss of identity for the Wesleyan Church as a holiness movement. My conversations with our Zambian counterparts about Malawi really shows that we cannot break virgin ground for missions as loners. A holiness missions ambassador is needed to model our beliefs and values and further refute false expectations. Sending the Malawian people to the Bible College is not good enough. In Malawi, we might end up being another Pentecostal Church brand if no Ambassador is found either from our Zambian counterparts, Mozambique or

elsewhere. Hence, strategic partnership is needed to rebrand our missional objectives for foreign missions.

## Conclusion

The current Church growth and challenges presented in these newly found missions fields (current Rwandan scenario) demands a model of doing missions within our African context. The writer has looked into other models which were implemented and analyzed their possible dangers. Faith Missions is not conducive for modern Africa. We cannot send our people to mission fields without any sense of responsibility and commitment. We cannot let them go as martyrs in the missions field. Faith Missions failed in the past and is still failing the Church today. It's against this backdrop that two possible models were suggested namely, "Transformational Missions Model and Strategic Partnership.

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## CREATING A STRATEGY TO REACH BEYOND OUR BORDERS

### A Brief History of the Wesleyan Church of Sierra Leone

Following a plea by J. Augustus Cole to the Wesleyan Methodist Connection in North America, mission work started later which gave birth to the Wesleyan Church of Sierra Leone (WCSL). Rev. A W Hall was sent to survey the Sierra Leone mission field in 1887. Based on his report, the following missionaries were sent to Sierra Leone: Rev and Mrs. Henry Johnston and their son Irwin and Dr. Alice Harris. These missionaries arrived in Sierra Leone on the 11<sup>th</sup> of December 1889. In 1893 Rev. Henry Johnston started the first primary school for boys and girls in Kunsho.

Mission work in its initial stage was challenging. Missionaries were overtaken by sicknesses claiming the lives of some of them; ten missionaries died and were buried at Kunsho (the earliest death was in 1894, Irwin F. Johnston), others died of tropical related diseases soon after they arrived in America. (Discipline of the Wesleyan Church of Sierra Leone, 2002).

After our National Conference, held from May 25-28, 2017 at the Wesleyan Conference Centre in Makeni city, the National Superintendent thought it prudent to develop a strategic plan for the Wesleyan Church of Sierra Leone for the next four years of his administration. In that strategic plan, the vision of the Wesleyan Church of Sierra Leone was recaptured in the strategic document:

**VISION STATEMENT:** A self - supporting and spiritually matured Church engaged in wholistic ministry in Sierra Leone and beyond.

A critical look at the vision statement brings to light key areas that need attention “self-supporting,” “spiritually matured Church,” and “engaged in ministry in Sierra Leone and beyond”. In an effort to focus on the vision, a meeting was held with key lay members of the Wesleyan Church to galvanize them to see the need to own and support the church. The outcome was a creation of a Laity Support Fund. Within a period of less than six months this group of lay voluntary supporters has contributed millions of Leones towards specific projects in consultation with the National administration.

Another aspect to the strategy is that of embarking on an aggressive Discipleship program in the church so that members can grow to maturity. In that direction the current administration is working on a strong discipleship program beginning with the pastors and then the pastors in turn will ensure strong discipleship in every local church.

The other aspect of our vision statement has to do with ministry in Sierra Leone and beyond. The administration reflected the significant growth of the Church within Sierra Leone with the gospel of Jesus Christ through evangelism, discipleship, church planting, and ministries of compassion.

1. CHURCHES:  
CHURCHES - 200  
NO.OF Full PASTORS - 230
2. SCHOOLS:  
NURSERY - 12  
PRIMARY - 124  
SECONDARY - 21  
BIBLE SCHOOL - 02  
TECH/VOC. - 02

### 3. MEMBERSHIP:

FULL MEMBERS - 11,780  
ASSOCIATE MEMBERS - 10,550  
JUNIOR - 12,950  
TOTAL - 35,280

### 4. HEALTH:

HOSPITAL - 01  
HEALTH CENTRES - 03

It was agreed that although much has been done in the areas of church planting, education, health, and development within the borders of Sierra Leone, nothing has been done over the years in taking the gospel beyond the borders of Sierra Leone in total negligence to the Great Commission.

The sad reality is that the church has always put the issue of lack of “resources” as the barrier to obeying the Great Commission. A close look at the Great Commissions recorded in each of the Gospels and one in Acts, Jesus made no mention of money or resources. Hear Him:

John 20:21 in the Upper room on resurrection day, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”

Mark 16:15 again in the upper room one week later He says “Go into the world and preach the good news to all creation.

Luke 24:46-48 “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

Acts 1:8 at the Mount of Olives “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth”

Mathew 28:18-19 at the mountain in Galilee he says “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

As a church, we decided to take Him by faith by embarking on the following strategy to launch into missions beyond Sierra Leone:

**PRAYER:** The Wesleyan Church at headquarters and in all pillar churches across the seven districts of the Church encourages fervent prayers to be held repenting on the long neglect of the church to embark on missions beyond the borders of Sierra Leone and asks others to pray for support and supporters.

**SELECT A COUNTRY:** As we prayed, a burden fell on all intercessory groups to pray specifically for the Gambia and churches prayed for various ethnic groups in the Gambia and for their safety before and during the national elections and for God’s glory to be manifested in the Gambia.

**SHARE THE VISION WITH OTHERS:** After much prayer, the administration started sharing with individuals and groups the burden we have to reach the country of The Gambia with the good news. Global Partners were the first to support our drive morally and financially.

**FIELD SURVEY:** The Assistant National Superintendent in the person of Rev. Solomon Sesay was selected by the administration to conduct a feasibility study of three communities in the Gambia that is Banjul, Serekunda and Breikuma and to interact with stakeholders like the Council of Churches in the Gambia, The Evangelical Fellowship, The Sierra Leone Christian

Fellowship and the Embassy of Sierra Leone bordering on the business of Wesleyan Church Mission establishment in the Gambia. He was also given a mandate to conduct a survey of the identified communities with a view to ascertain the population demography, livelihood activities, basic social amenities and receptivity to the Gospel among others.



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## **A LEADER'S TASK: STRATEGIC PLANNING**

When church leaders are involved in developing a strategic plan every member of the church has potential to acquire huge benefit from the church organization. Church leaders are expected to invest a lot into the moral, social and spiritual life of their congregations through effective discipleship as a way to attain sustainable church growth. Much of what is expected is not evidenced in the church today because most church leaders unintentionally cause low impact in the transformation of the church due to lack of appropriate operational systems. 21st century leaders need to look beyond this scope as the Bible is very clear about visionary leaders: "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Prov. 29:18. This article, therefore, is an attempt to help leaders in their operations by using the strategic planning concept.

Strategic planning is a road map a visionary leader will create to determine the direction of his leadership. As commonly perceived, strategic planning is an organizational process of defining its direction and making decisions on allocating resources to pursue its vision. In other words strategic planning is a guiding policy that enables organizations to accomplish their dreams. It influences the formulation, coordination and implementation of objectives that gear towards actualizing the vision of organizations. Setting a strategic plan is a crucial step towards the achievement of the goal of an agency or organization.

A fundamental analysis that highlights a smart strategic planning is the SWOT analysis. This analysis serves as a working tool to monitor and evaluate the external and internal factors which influence or accelerate the functions of the organizations. SWOT simply means



Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. A SWOT analysis enables organizations to be aware of their status and take necessary measures to improve operations. The SWOT system is applied to ensure that resources are used appropriately.

Table 1 below is an example of a given church which used the SWOT analysis to enhance its operations.

<b>STRENGTHS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Huge membership</li> <li>• Qualified pastors</li> <li>• Well structured programs</li> <li>• Standard church building</li> <li>• Good musical instruments</li> </ul>
<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few mature members</li> <li>• Underpaid pastors</li> <li>• Poor attendance at weekly meetings</li> <li>• Deplorable parsonages</li> <li>• Untrained and unqualified musicians</li> </ul>
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize discipleship training seminars</li> <li>• Identify potential people and send them for theological training</li> <li>• Mobilize funds to improve housing accommodation for pastors</li> <li>• Send capable youths to music schools</li> </ul>

<b>THREATS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The advent of diluted gospel teachings emphasizing healing, prosperity, prophecy, etc/</li> <li>• Transfer of trained and qualified pastors to other denominations due to poor remuneration</li> </ul>

The strategic planning of a successful leader should encourage unity among members. A strategic plan that is embedded with good public relations and effective communication systems has the potential to meet the desired results of the institution. Smooth communication and public relations can harmonize gifts, talents, abilities and skills of members of the organization regardless age, experience and literacy level and thereby create outstanding outcomes. It is an effective instrument a leader can use to address basic needs as housing, health, water, food, electricity and literacy for all including the unborn child and those of retirement age. Investments such as farming, mining, micro and macro trading, education and industrialization are elements that should be found in a strategic plan.

The entrusted responsibility of any leader is to design a strategic plan that will promote the core values of the institution to maintain its integrity and sustainability. A strategic plan should be driven by the vision and mission statement of the organization in order to attract members and possible investors.



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