

EVERY URBAN PASTOR FOR RURAL MINISTRY: A Sierra Leonean Case Study

The Wesleyan Church of Sierra Leone was founded in 1889 by the American Wesleyan Mission. The Church started in a rural area in a village called Kunsho. Kunsho is still less than twenty houses. From Kunsho the Church spread to other villages such as Masongbo, Binkolo, Kamabai, Gbendembu, Kamakwie and Kunkuna. The Gbendembu Bible School was then established to train pastors for rural ministry. For nearly ninety years the Church was found only in rural areas.

Near the end of the 1970s the Church embarked on urban ministries. Today there are over fifty Churches in urban areas in Freetown, Makeni, Bo, Kenema, Port Loko, Kabala and Kambia. Pastors who graduate from the Evangelical College of Theology (formerly the Sierra Leone Bible College) are posted to serve in urban Churches where they are able to exhibit competency in ministry.

Churches in urban centers seem to be experiencing both numerical and financial growth as compared to churches in rural areas. Pastors demonstrate more willingness to serve in urban areas than serving rural areas. Ministry in rural areas which was formerly vibrant is declining gradually. Motivation for rural ministry is low. Pastors in far distances are isolated. They are not visited often and lack the emotional care needed to continue serving in the midst of difficult circumstances. With these emerging trends in ministry the leadership

encounters difficulties in posting pastors from urban to rural areas. The then Department of Evangelism and Church Planting now the Department of Church Ministries was encouraged to design a mission strategy geared towards addressing this problem. A mission strategy known as EVERY URBAN PASTOR FOR RURAL MINISTRY (EUPRM) was designed.

Biblical Basis:

The biblical foundation for this mission strategy is found in Acts 13:2, "As they minister to the Lord and fasted the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" When the act of missions started in the early Church it began by sending two people. I cannot understand why the Holy Spirit needed two people instead of one person. I cannot speak the mind of the Holy Spirit in such decisions but I know there is value in being in the company of others. In fact being alone was what God said was not good (Gen. 2:18). Working together with others enhances developing and pursuing a common goal, sharing problems together and having the feeling of solving such problems. It encourages one another when one feels stressed and strengthens one another when one stumbles.

There is value in being in the company of others.

Paul saw the need to be in the company of others in mission, when there was a contention over John Mark. Paul did go alone but took with him Silas (Acts 15:36-41).

Relevance of the Strategy:

The strategy will target pastors serving in urban areas and their congregations. Urban pastors will be identified and sent to rural areas where they work together with rural pastors to do effective ministry. The relevance of this strategy will therefore be seen in light of the following:

- EUPRM enhances effective Evangelism: In this strategy there is much potential for effective evangelism in communities where there is low receptivity to the gospel. Evangelism requires mobilizing resources including personnel and confronting the people with the gospel. When this is done in concerted effort of two more pastors there will be abundant harvest.
- EUPRM exposes pastors to new realities in the ministry: Many urban pastors have never had the experience of rural life and ministry. Going to rural areas for one month will help them to have the feeling of what it means to work in rural areas. This will reduce the shock in future posting to rural areas. This will also motivate urban pastors and their churches to provide support for rural ministry.
- EUPRM provides a training ground for home missions: Pastors who feel motivated to engage in missions will have the opportunity to engage in practical missions experience. Some may also be motivated to take missions as a career through this strategy. In the first year of operation three of the pastors have demonstrated a willingness to engage at least in home missions. One of them has opted to take a course in missions at the Evangelical

College of Theology. He is praying for the financial support.

- EUPRM encourages local churches to contribute to evangelism. Pastors serving in local churches will form the primary targets. Local churches will be encouraged to mobilize the resources needed for the pastor on mission. The local church will also spend time prayer for the mission work. When this is done members will see themselves as contributing their resources for missions.
- EUPRM provides emotional support to rural pastors: Our rural pastors are serving in remote places where they face adverse conditions such as poor salary and medical care. Worse still, pastors are isolated from the rest of other ministers. They are hardly visited by colleague pastors and the leadership of the church. The only opportunity they have to meet with other pastors and the leadership of the church is during District Conference. They lack the emotional support they need when they face difficulties in ministry. This strategy will provide the spiritual, emotional and psychological support needed to help rural pastors who are serving under difficult circumstances stay rather than abandoning the ministry.
- EUPRM and socio-economic transformation: Urban pastors in mission together with the pastor and the community will identify and engage in some ministry of transformation in health, education, farming etc. At Kadanso for example, the pastor who was sent there sensitized the community to see the need to construct a nine mile road from the Chieftdom headquarters town to the village. The pastor organized the community and they were able to raise twenty-five million leones (Le. 25, 000, 000, \$US 6,000). This money was paid to hire the services of a road construction firm to rehabilitate the nine mile road. This project was accomplished in five months.

Implementing the Program

Agencies:

The program was implemented by the following agencies:

- *Mission Agency:* The Wesleyan Church of Sierra Leone through the Department of Church Ministry is implementing the strategy. As an agency the department in collaboration with the various District Superintendents identifies the pastors to be sent at a time. The department provides orientation for the pastors before they are sent out. The Director receives service report from each pastor. He compiled an annual report for the attention of the National Superintendent who in turn presents the report to the National Board of Administration.
- *Local Churches:* Two set of local churches help in the implementation of this strategy: The Sending and Receiving Churches. Sending Churches include Churches in urban areas in Freetown, Makeni, Bo, Kenema, Kambia, Port Loko and Kabala. These churches endorse the recruitment of pastors into the mission work, raise the funds and engaged in prayer. The local Churches also receive reports from the pastors and the annual report from the Director of Church Ministries. Three churches were identified as Receiving Churches: Kukuna, Komoya and Kadanso. As receiving churches they were responsible for providing lodging for the pastors and the required cooperation.
- *Non-Government Organizations (NGOs).* The strategy requires the cooperation of NGOs in providing social services. At Kadanso for example the community collaborated with a road construction firm that provided the service for rehabilitating the road linking the village to the Chiefdom headquarters town.

Programs Included:

Programs included in this strategy are categorized into pre-evangelistic, evangelistic and post-evangelistic. Pre-evangelistic programs included prayer and resource mobilization including the construction of parsonages. Evangelistic programs included prayer, Jesus Film Campaign, preaching and teaching, baptism, membership reception and socio-economic transformational activities. Post-evangelism programs include receiving, compiling and dissemination of report to partners.

Steps in Implementing the Strategy:

- *Designing the strategy:* The strategy was designed with the approval of the National Superintendent.
- *Prayer and Sensitization:* Prayer and sensitization among churches, para-church organizations and NGOs to support the strategy. It took the department one year to do this. The strategy was shared with the six District Superintendents for discussion during the 2012 District Conferences. The strategy was endorsed for its commencement in 2013.
- *Identification of rural churches.* Three Churches were identified based on their need and characteristics: these Churches were: Kukuna, Komoya and Kadanso. Kukuna and Komoya are Soso communities and are predominantly Muslim areas. The American Wesleyan Mission entered into Kukuna and built a Church there in 1948, the membership is still less than ten. Work at Komoya started in 1990; membership is still made up of children. Pastors are known to have labored and abandoned the stations in frustration. Kadanso, a Limba community, was reached in the early 1940s by American Wesleyan Missionaries. The people are animist. In every household there is a sorcerer. Many pastors are afraid to be posted to this community for fear of bewitchment.

- *Building of parsonages.* Two of the selected communities lacked parsonages. Funds were raised to construct the two parsonages before the commencement of the project.
- *Identification of sending churches:* Thirty-six local Churches were identified to serve as sending Churches. The churches provided transport, food and other logistics for their respective pastors.
- *Launching the program:* The strategy was launched in Freetown during the 2012 District Conference. The National Superintendent launched the program. All the local churches were motivated to contribute to the program.
- *Pastors engage in evangelism and ministries of transformation for four weeks.* Converts

during this period are baptized and received into membership. For a ten-year period no baptism was done at Kadonso and Komoya. With this strategy a total number of fifty-six adult candidates were baptized at Kadonso and thirty-eight children were baptized at Komoya. The terrible road at Kadonso was rehabilitated during this period.

- *Exit after four weeks:* Pastors are to serve only for one month. He exits at the end of one month and another pastor enters immediately without any gap.
- *Report:* The Pastor compiles his report noting the activities, challenges, opportunities and recommendations. The report is submitted to the Director one week after the exit.



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A CASE FOR AFRICAN WESLEYANS TO RESPOND TO THE MISSIONARY CALL

The Mission

“How thus will they call upon who they did not believe? And how will they believe in the one about who they did not hear? And how will they hear about him if there is nobody who preaches? And how will there be clergymen, if they are not sent?” (Romans 10: 14)

God's heart for mission must be the major priority for the church today. It is God's breath. To be sent symbolizes “the mission,” but this term is not written in the Bible. Before the 16th century the mission was considered as the sending of the Son by the Father, and the sending of Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son. Now “mission” has become understood as the sending of the church to the world by the Father.

The mission consists planting the Church militant in the whole world, in a permanent way, in various countries. The work of missionary is thus the preparatory step of the ecclesiastical activity.

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Missiology is a full theological discipline. It is the science which must be mastered by all those who make a commitment to the field of the mission. We have just said that the mission is at its core the work of evangelization. And that's one of the big challenges of the church in Africa today. Evangelism is to announce the Gospel, the good news. These expressions are found frequently in the New Testament.

Evangelization

Evangelization is the means by which people are reached by the Gospel. It reaches its purpose only when those who received the Gospel are converted and become Christians then give birth to other Christians. Evangelization and the growth of the church is thus an ongoing and continual process.

To summarize, in the evangelistic mission, we say that it consists in the proclamation of the Good news, teaching and testimony. It is in these three phases that the church guarantees the continuity of Christ's work.

Evangelization is an important challenge for the church in Africa because the God of the Bible is not static. The African continent is a dynamic society. The church has to adapt its teaching to the present needs for the continent. That is why this evangelization must rather be either made by the African themselves than by the western missionaries. We shall quote an African

theologian Ka Mana who published an entitled work: "The New Evangelization in Africa".

He says: "A Christianity which was not able to evangelize the society in its deep aspects, was not able to build the social dikes against the detainment of the evil and gave everywhere the image of a useless varnish put on an unlimited African and world paganism."

Before the Christianity, the African lived in a social and cultural environment. This environment shaped his thoughts and actions to face the existential problems and to organize his environment and life in interpersonal relations, in economy, and in the social justice. This environment is also the place where God shows himself to him and calls him; the place of meeting and dialogue, conversion and support in his word. Christianity brought the Good News to Africa, the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ. But Africans shall only remember it if this Good News is adapted to the different cultures of Africa.

William A. ETEKI says in his work "Work with Christ in the Cultural Revolution," "It's time to say that the purpose of the Church is to bring the Gospel to a community as such with its culture, its religion, to introduce the Christ into all the human values which find their justification."

Culture is an integrated system of beliefs about God or about the reality and about customs: how to behave, communicate with the others, to speak, to pray, to get dressed, to work, to play to deal to cultivate etc. ... That is why missionaries have to be initiated in African cultures which is the way given to people to organize their world. Missionaries who are successful become identified with the culture by an intimate knowledge of the people, as we can give the example of our Lord Jesus Christ himself. He left his glory to become a vulnerable

and dependent child. He also knew the time of poverty, oppression, hunger, thirst and he cried.

As missionaries we have to know all the aspects of the culture of the people by taking on their lifestyle and we have to show a real sympathy for them. The purpose of culture is to learn to communicate confidently and really with people of the other culture. That is the task of the missionary and its concern; it consists in establishing communication or a contact point.

The Impact of an African Missionary in an African Country

A missionary is a product of a culture which probably is very different from the receiver of the Christian message. But an African missionary can be shocked partially, because the cultures are almost the same. As an African missionary he will adapt easily and will communicate Christ in a way that the people understand and repent and believe in the gospel in an understanding way.

We can now see the task of the African missionary in a clearer perspective. The missionary has to cross the cultural barriers in two directions. The first one is to be able to

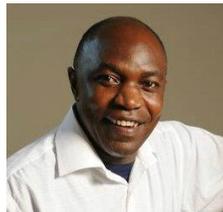
decode correctly the biblical message according to the rules of the interpretation of the Bible. The second: the African missionary looks in the direction that is the “culture of the receiver” with his own perception of the world, and his codes of communication. He has to remember himself the receivers of this culture are so profoundly rooted in the ideas and values of their culture as he is in his.

As Christ found it necessary to become identified with the human race to bring salvation and become our Sovereign Priest, also African missionaries can easily adapt to other African cultures and life, then give the gospel better.

In the process of acculturation, missionaries will experience culture shock, but for Africans that will be cut in half. And the objective of the missionary work should be the establishment of native churches which have their own administration and their own propagation.

Conclusion

African missionaries will be better in Africa than in the other continents. He will discover easily ways to communicate the Gospel to other African brothers.



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## STRIKING THE BALANCE BETWEEN BEING A SPIRITUAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE LEADER

The general duties of the National Superintendent of the Wesleyan Church of Sierra Leone according to its Church Discipline are two-fold: “To provide Spiritual and Administrative Leadership for the Wesleyan Church” (Paragraph 740:1).

The model of spiritual leadership is in Jesus Christ who considered himself as the Good Shepherd. This means, spiritual leadership is a kind of relationship compared to a relationship between a sheep and a shepherd. As a good shepherd, Jesus said he laid down his life for his sheep. “I am the good shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”(John 10:11), so also is the spiritual leader. The National Superintendent as the spiritual leader therefore like Jesus is the shepherd of a flock of over 30,000 sheep. As a shepherd, he is responsible for leading, feeding, nurturing, comforting, correcting and protecting the sheep. These responsibilities call for many activities such as teaching, preaching, praying, counseling and providing for the social and physical needs of the sheep (people). The general aim of being a spiritual leader is to provide enabling environment that can build a healthy relationship between God and man for inheriting the kingdom of God.

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Being an administrative leader on the other hand, means protecting and promoting institutional needs and policies. The church is an institution that consists of personnel, assets, mission and vision. These need to be upheld at all times so as to prevent the institution from falling apart. The National Superintendent as administrative leader has the responsibility to ensure that the mission, vision, personnel and assets are maintained and coordinated for sustaining the institution. As an administrative leader, he is responsible to the National Board of Administration, National Conference, Global Partners, and the Districts and Departments under his supervision (Paragraph 740:1-27). His administrative functions call for many activities such as coordinating, chairing meetings/conferences, planning, monitoring, reporting, traveling, etc.

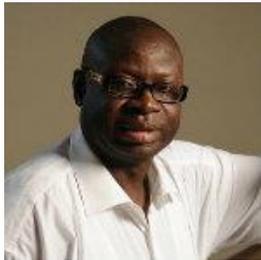
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Being the spiritual and administrative Leader is highly demanding. Spiritual leadership is meeting the needs of every member and being the administrative leader is to meet the institutional needs. I view the two to be inseparable. This is a clear indication that the office of National Superintendent (spiritual and administrative leader) has a huge task in ensuring that both the needs of individuals and the institution are equally met. These functions

are essential for the growth of individuals in the church.

In order to create a balance between the two roles, the spiritual and administrative leader must build the capacity of District Superintendents and National Directors/ Departmental Leaders. The Church structure comprises of District Superintendents and National Directors. These two sets of people are in direct contact with the majority of the church

population. They are directly responsible to the greater flock of the church members. For a balance to be kept on the spiritual and administrative leadership, he should focus on the building of the capacities, skills, competences and resources needs of the two categories of the persons mentioned above. It is much easier for him to mentor his close associates and empower them to go out to affect the lives of the majority whiles he creates a balance in his administrative work.



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