

Three Proverbs



Even as God once used Aaron to assist Moses, so he moved Benford Kawiliza, a native-born pastor of considerable experience, to mentor Missionary Dan Sargent 28 years ago. That's how he eventually learned to speak the Chichewa language, and to understand the African culture. He has let his ministry be guided by three meaningful African proverbs. The first is: ***"Gather stick by stick to make a bundle"*** Indeed, that's how the mission field has grown - one congregation at a time until now the numbers astound: 113 congregations ... 33 pastors ... and since 2012, every rural congregation served by its own native-born pastor!

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together" That's the second proverb and it was also applied. It took some time, but encouraged by his mentor, Missionary Sargent patiently taught the men how to lead the congregations and the women how to teach the children. After still more time, The WELS built a training center to further develop the abilities of promising young men from the area.

And after still more time, the most promising of those were enrolled in the Bible Institute for three more years of training; and then, the most promising of those were recommended to the Pastoral Seminary for three more years of study, and one of 'on-the-job' training. And now, after all that time and teaching, God, in keeping with His promise, is giving African pastors as gifts to His African church.

The third and final proverb can also be applied to the 'maturing of a mission church' if you understand that African mothers use slings to carry newly born babies about on their back where the baby can feel secure and be lulled to sleep by the rhythm of the mother's walking or working. That beautiful picture helps to explain the proverb: ***"The child on the mother's back does not know the journey is long"***. And so it is with an infant church ... so long as it is being carried, it can rest and even sleep! But eventually, as it grows, it must be awakened and made to realize its responsibilities.

As it grew, the Lutheran Church of Central Africa was helped to see and assume an ever-greater share of its responsibilities. Already in 1980, its members resolved, under God, to gradually increase their offerings so that within twenty (20) more years the salaries of all their native-born pastors would be fully funded by the congregations. And when that goal had been achieved, God moved them to assume 20% of the cost of their parsonages as well!

Today, only four (4) WELS missionaries are needed to help supervise that entire field. It's humbling to think that for the last seventy (70) years, the Lord has allowed us to take part in and rejoice over the growth of His Church in Zambia. But it's also exciting to know that mission planting continues ... in Ethiopia, Sudan, Liberia, Tanganyika, and Kenya, because it takes time for the seed to grow and for the crop to mature.

So with those African proverbs in mind, let's continue to support with our fervent prayers and generous offerings 'the sowing of the seed and the maturing of the crop' because the question - 'How much time is left?' - can only be answered by our returning Savior who said: *"Behold, I am coming soon!"* (Rev. 22:12)

Rev. Dan Westendorf served as the chairman of the Administrative Committee for African Missions

Please pray for those working in fields that are ripe for harvest. Share their story, engage with future news and receive updates. Go to this link to learn more about our mission fields in Africa and how the Holy Spirit is working faith in people's hearts
<https://wels.net/serving-others/missions/africa>