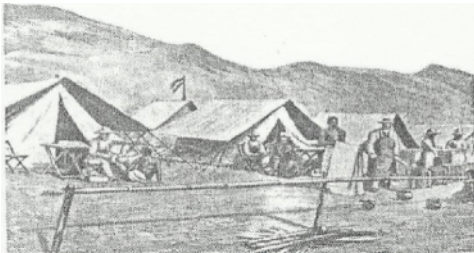


A SHORT HISTORY OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN TANZANIA - SOUTHERN DIOCESE



The arrival of missionaries in Southern Tanzania



A convoy of German Missionaries of the Berlin Mission Society (also known as Berlin I) from South Africa landed at Wangemanshore, a Nyakyusa land on the northern tip of Lake Nyasa in southern Tanganyika, on **25th September 1891** and set their tents there. The missionaries were invited by the Nyakyusa Chief called Mwakatungila. The original name of the area is Pipagika. It was called Wangemanshore after the name of the president of the Berlin Missionary Society.

Berlin Mission Society was started in 1824 by revival Christians who had the zeal to preach the Gospel overseas. They had already started their mission in South Africa.



The convoy was headed by Missionary Alexander Meresky. The convoy had 10 people, comprising of 8 white and 2 blacks. The names of the other White missionaries were Carl Nauhaus, whom the Africans necknamed him as "Kyamba", Christian Schumann or "Mwakikato", Bunk or "Buungu", and Franke. Franke got sick and returned to SA and died there in 1892. The other 3 whites were masonries: Rohring, Krause and Th. Nauhaus. The two blacks were Zulu Afrikans named Afrika and Nathanael.

For some reasons, in **1899**, the mission station was moved from Pipagika to Itete within Unyakyusa. From there missionaries spread out and started mission stations in different area: Manow in 1892, Mwakaleli 1893, Ikombe 1893 (moved to Matema in 1909). In Ukinga area the missions were established in Bulingwa 1895 and Tandala 1897.

In Ubena / Hehe area stations were established at Kidugala in 1898, Mufindi 1898, Emmaberg 1898, Lupembe 1899, Muhanga 1899 (moved to Pomern in 1912), Yakobi 1899, Ilembula 1890. In Uwanji a station was built at Magoye in 1900, in

Upangwa at Milo in 1902 and in Usangu at Brandt in 1908. Lastly, in 1913 mission stations were built in Wambungu and Wamasagati areas at Lwamate and Kingori, respectively.

Kidugala Mission Station



In Ubena area missionaries arrived after being invited by Chief Ngera (Ngela), expecting to get military assistance against Chief Merere of the Sangu tribe who invaded the area from the west. In that regard, the missionaries Christoph Bunk, Willhelm Neuberg, Martin Priebusch and Paul Gröschel arrived at Kidugala in 13th July 1898. The natives liked the missionaries because they helped them to ward off their enemies and diseases, especially smallpox.

Kidugala was the head quarter of the then *Lutheran Church of Southern Tanganyika* until 1963 when the head quarter was moved to Njombe town. From Kidugala mission work was carried out all over the Southern region comprising all or part of the today's administrative regions of Njombe, Mbeya, Iringa, Morogoro, Mtwara and Lindi. Some of these areas are now diocese of their own. These are South Central Diocese, Iringa Diocese, Ulanga - Kilombero Diocese, Konde Diocese, Mtwara Diocese and Ruvuma Diocese.

The menace of wars and church leadership



Wachungaji wa kwanza nane wa Kiafrika wa Kanisa la Kilutheri Tanganyika Kusini walioharikwa tarehe 05 Mei, 1934 kaniiani Lupembe, Njombe wakawa na Wamisionari wa Kijerumani. 1. Herman Wilhelm Neuberg 2. Lucizabiko Havanga Nyato 3. Lucangilo Mafule 4. Abaturanga Muto 5. Ananide Chungu 6. Mkuu wa Kanisa, Julius Dalke 7. Yohana Nyagava 8. Mtendzi Kyejula 9. Josefu Mpongolo 10. Lucizabiko Kihupi 11. Mkuu wa Shule Kidugala, Mch. Klaus. Chanzo: Nyiraka kuuuu, Maktaba iliyoko Seminari ya Kilutheri Kidugala, tarehe 26 Aprili, 2019.

Mission work was interrupted by the **Maji Maji War** of 1905 - 1907, first and Second World War of 1914 - 1918 and 1939 - 1945, respectively. During the world wars a number of church infrastructures were destroyed and German missionaries deported back home. The church was left an orphan. It was during this time, however, when indigenous people took over the leadership role of the church. Thus, in 5th May 1934, eight indigenous pastors were ordained

at Lupembe, and one of them, Yohana Nyagava (number 7 in the picture), was elected President of the Church in December 1939. Of course, this indigenous pastor presided for a very short time, as he was replaced by Rev. Martin Nordfeldt, a Swedish missionary. Swedish missionaries took over the leadership of the church from 1941 to 1959. Nyagava was deposed following a number of allegations and persuasions against him. Of course, it has to be born in mind that during that time colonial rulers and missionaries had some sort of collaboration. This collaboration could not allow indigenous awareness.

In **1963** the Lutheran Church of Southern Tanganyika was united with other six churches of Tanganyika to form one church, the Evangelical Lutheran church of Tanganyika (ELCT). The seven churches which formed the ELCT were:

- The Lutheran Church of Southern Tanganyika - a Synod lead by a President.
- The Lutheran Church of Northern Tanganyika - a Diocese lead by a Bishop.
- The Evangelical Church of North-Western Tanganyika - a Diocese lead by a Bishop.
- The Lutheran Church of Usambara/Digo - a Synod lead by a President.
- The Lutheran Church of Central Tanganyika - a Synod lead by a President.
- The Lutheran Church of Iringa - a Synod lead by a President.
- The Lutheran Church of Uzaramo - Uluguru, a Synod lead by a President.

This union of the seven Churches took place on 19th June 1963 and its 50 anniversary (1963 - 2013) was celebrated at Makumira Tumaini University on 23rd June 2013.

The Southern Synod became a **Diocese on 27th September, 1981** with Rev. Dr. Yuda Bernard Matata Kiwovele being consecrated as her first bishop. Chronologically, until today (2021) the Diocese has been lead by six Bishops. These are as follows:

- Bishop Dr. Yuda Bernard Matata Kiwovele (1981 - 1987)
- Bishop Lunogelo Mwanalufunga Vuhahula (1987 - 1991)
- Bishop Zephania Andefidze Mgeyekwa (1991- 2003)
- Bishop Cleopa Akutulaga Lukilo (2004-2011)
- Bishop Isaya Japhet Mengele (2011-2019)
- Bishop Dr. George Mark Fihavango (2019 to date)

Church services: Evangelism, Healing and Teaching

From the inception of the Gospel in the Southern part of Tanzania, the Church is known by her service to serve the whole man; spiritually, bodily and mentally through evangelism, health services and schools.



Spiritually, the total number of Christians as per 2021 is about **185,000** and the number of pastors is **190**, of which about 42 are retired pastors. The number of parishes is **85** and **591** preaching points.

About health services, there is one **hospital** - Ilembula Lutheran Referral Hospital. Its early buildings were mud walls and grass roof), one **health centre** (Kidugala Lutheran Health Centre) and thirteen **dispensaries**, which are Kidegembye, Brandt,

Nyanyembe, Ikuna, Igongolo, Mapanda, Kangaga, Madundasi, Usuka, Yakobi, Ulembwe and Ukalawa.

In education, there are four **secondary schools**, of which one is part of the sections of Kidugala Lutheran Ceminary. The other schools are Igumbilo Girls, Emmaberg Girls and Mufindi Girls. And one more school is about to start very soon in Njombe District. All primary schools (about 30) were nationalized in the 1970s. The Diocese, however, has just started to run one English medium primary school in Njombe at Nyekamtwe. Moreover, the Diocese is running three intermediary or tertiary colleges providing certificates and diplomas in Theology and church music (evangelists, pastors and musicians - at Kidugala), ITC, Business Management, Community Development (at Njombe), Health and Allied Sciences (at Ilembula) and Vocational Training (at Mafinga and Ilembula). The plan of the Diocese is to have in a near future a university out of these learning institutions.

Membership with other Church bodies

- The Southern Diocese relates with mission societies and churches as a partner.
- The Southern Diocese is part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT).
- The Southern Diocese is a member of the Christian Council of Tanzania (CCT), Lutheran Mission Coordination (LMC) and Lutheran World Federation (LWF).
- The Southern Diocese relates with other denominations in social activities and prayers, e.g., World Prayer Day.

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