

## **Roots and Fruits**

### **Rev Bill McKenzie: Lubwa, Northern Rhodesia/Zambia**

Raised in a Glasgow suburb, fully involved in the life of a large Church of Scotland congregation of 2,000 as leader, teacher and elder, training as an art teacher, working on a farm as a registered conscientious objector, marrying the farmer's daughter, teaching art and becoming involved as a counsellor in the 1955 Billy Graham Crusade, were all factors in a call to ministry. Through contact with missionaries on home leave I felt drawn to working abroad, to share the love of Christ wherever there was poverty, disease and other forms of deprivation.

Appointed a missionary of the Church of Scotland in 1958 I was ordained in Scotland to serve the Livingstonia Mission as a district missionary at Lubwa, Chinsali, Northern Rhodesia, a remote rural area. The time of preparation proved invaluable. Study and fellowship at St. Colm's, introduced us to works by Hendrick Kramer, (Christian Faith and Christian Religion), Roland Allen, (Spontaneous Expansion of the Christian Church) and Donald McGavran, (How Churches Grow). Briefings by such as Kenneth Mackenzie and others shed much light on the issues awaiting us: The prospect of the integration of the Mission into the United Church of Central Africa in Rhodesia (UCCAR) - moves towards further church union as the United Church of Zambia (UCZ) - the economics of a land rich in copper with a population living in rather extreme poverty - of a colonial government pursuing a policy of federation between Central African countries which themselves were more concerned for political autonomy, seeking independence and preparing to struggle to achieve it - and the Church at Lubwa destabilised and decimated by the charisma and song of a woman called Alice Lenshina Mulenga who claimed to have risen from the dead, commissioned by Christ to rid the land of witchcraft. Education and medicine had brought much progress but it took a simple village woman to release a people in spiritual bondage. She attracted thousands. The songs she composed were sung across the land as amulets and charms were abandoned, as were the traditional missions.

The first Secondary School in the country started at Lubwa, a large chain of rural Primary schools was managed from there; teacher training and nursing training had flourished. With developments on the line of rail and on the Copperbelt, there had been a big shift in population. The Secondary School transferred to Lusaka, teacher training moved away, and the Mission was in the process of handing over management of Primary Schools to the government. Lubwa Hospital was about to lose its status as a training hospital and would become a clinic with one orderly within three years of our arrival. The Church wanted to loose itself from missionary control, as evidenced by the wish to use Mission houses and transport. A similar desire was building up for political autonomy across the nation.

In my first few years I found myself involved in the integration of Mission and Church as last Presbytery Clerk of the Overseas Presbytery of Livingstonia whose first Clerk was Dr. Robert Laws - last Secretary/Treasurer of the Joint Mission Council - Clerk, then Treasurer of the Northern Presbytery of the UCCAR - and as a Presbytery representative in wider union consultations at Synod leading to the formation of the United Church of Zambia. All of that administrative involvement however was simply the background to so much that was at stake in the Church and nation.

The tonal language, Chibemba, came quickly through visiting widely and identifying as closely as possible with the village people. The church at Lubwa was founded on a rather dour Scots model. District congregations met for worship at schools where the teachers were in the employ of the mission, as were local evangelists. As I travelled from village to village with evangelists or elders, I encountered the full effect of the ministry of Alice. This indigenous movement had established simple churches resounding with song in almost every village. They lived by the Ten Commandments, but added "You shall not smoke." Lay deacons conducted worship almost daily. For a period of five years I made every effort to avoid confrontation with the Lumpa Church as it was known, but in my mind I held it as a role model for indigenous worship and mission. Tragically in 1964 the movement was proscribed by the Northern Rhodesian government in the face of violent confrontation with the United National Independence Party (UNIP) and ministry now became one of reconciliation. Our local congregations began to learn the lessons of that period, worship was transformed, village churches began to be built and new life flowed.

In January 1960 the Lubwa minister the Rev. P.B. Mushindo and I, contrary to the boycott by UNIP, decided to give evidence to the Monckton Commission. We testified to the peoples' opposition to Central African Federation and their desire for political independence. But before that came about our district, Chinsali, became the main stage for a Cha-Cha-Cha, a merry dance around the security forces. To show their frustration over the issue of independence UNIP closed roads, burnt bridges and schools - having removed the bibles from them. Many went into hiding in the bush and ministry took me there among them. After his release from prison in 1961 Kenneth Kaunda, son of our first minister, came to his home near Lubwa where we planned a private church meeting. This turned into a very public meeting which led to my falling foul of the provincial government, but I believe it was a turning point in the political agenda. In spite of the nickname 'Mr. UNIP' I took no active part in the political scene.

To promote church growth and biblical understanding I began to distribute what became known as 'sermon outlines', to almost 100 congregations around Chinsali. This spread and became a sort of Theological Education by Extension. Elder training became a priority, both in courses at Lubwa and the district. Celebrating the sacraments depended on two ordained ministers making infrequent congregational visits. My vision was to prepare locally appointed

elders for an ordained ministry. This began to appear possible when I was transferred to Kashinda, a former mission of the London Missionary Society (LMS) to engage in lay training both at Kashinda and throughout the Northern Presbytery of the United Church of Zambia (UCZ). Church treasurers, youth workers, elders and missionaries on language study all received training. I was to see the first non-stipendiary ministers ordained in 1976.

A final disappointment – due to political pressure a new orthography was imposed on the translation of the Bible for which I was secretary/exegete. It proved unacceptable.