**HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF GOD 7th DAY IN KENYA**

**Introduction**

The History of the Church of God is an intriguing story that has many versions depending on the region and people you may ask. Rarely do you find this particular history in a written format, but is usually conveyed by word of mouth from mainly senior members of the messianic faith to the young people. For instance, the first missionary who came to Kenya, depending on where you ask, these are the variations of names you will be given;

Andy Shoemaker

Andi Schumacher

Andy Schumaker

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(For this write-up, we shall use Andy Shoemaker as was popularly accepted). This particular minister was sent to Kenya in 1970 by A. N. Dugger from Jerusalem, Israel. Andrew N. Dugger was one of the most outstanding ministers in the Church of God 7th Day during the 20th century. He devoted his life to preaching the third angel's message as recorded in the Book of Revelation 14:9.

**Church Timelines**SinceTime**of the Apostles**

When we read the Book of Revelation chapter 2, we learn about letters that were addressed to seven churches spread across Asia. Even though the names of these churches refer to physical locations on the ancient Asian map, Yahshua was symbolically communicating to us through John on the island of Patmos. He gave a prophetic illustration of how the church will be from the apostolic age up to His second coming. Each of these 7 churches represents a timeframe in the historical chart of the true church that Yahshua established on the Rock (who is Elohim according to Deuteronomy 32:4), and even the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Mathew 16:18). The first church was Ephesus and represented the period from 33AD to 100AD, which was during the early church of the apostles. Five other churches of Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia as explained in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 represented five time intervals through which the church of God Seventh-day survived and thrived as well. More information on this can be found in the History of True Religion by A.N. Dugger. We are currently living in the last dispensation of the Laodicean church and it coincides with a period when the third angel’s message would be preached in the world as recorded in Revelation 14:9.

**A.N Dugger relocates to Jerusalem**

It was in the spirit of preaching the third angel’s message that this Jew by the name of A.N. Dugger relocated from the United States to Jerusalem Israel in 1953. Israel had just gained her independence in 1948. Therefore, AN Dugger having understood the end-time prophesies concerning the return of Jews to their homeland, he was convinced that it was prime time for him to evangelize. He established a printing press called the Mt Zion Reporter that helped him produce bible tracts, Judah magazines, and other bible literature such as the history of the true religion, Daniel, and Revelation among others. He would then share these materials with people in different countries notably in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean islands among others.

**True message from Jerusalem Reaches Kenya**

Some of Dugger’s publications landed in Kenya in various places courtesy of missionaries who were working with prison services in the colonial era in Kenya. It's such a publication that the late Edward Macharia picked and gained interest in it.

When COGMERS media met Edward Macharia at his home on request, he made it clear that the paper was not collected on the ground as has been told in the past, but actually that he was at the prison workshop when he found the publication. He started the correspondence after finding their contacts at the back of the publication (flyers, pamphlets, etc).

It's important to mention here that there is always a disconnect on how similar publication found their way in various parts of the country. One reason for this is that all the publication material, at the tail end, was usually written, Don't let me die, pass me to another person. We think, people adhered to this last line and passed it on to another person who would be interested.

One such person who landed on these bible tracts and gained interest was Munene Kihara in 1967, at Eldoret town where he used to work. Munene Kihara used to fellowship together with Pastor H.K Karanja at an SDA church in Githiga, Murang’a. After reading it, Pastor Kuria Karanja and his fellow brethren contacted Jerusalem through the postal address provided on the tract so that they could gather more knowledge on this matter. What followed was a series of correspondences between Jerusalem and Kenya, which meant that more people were gaining interest in the new Jewish faith from Jerusalem. The group therefore requested A.N. Dugger to send a minister to come and baptize Kenyans who had already accepted the gospel from Jerusalem.

Before Shoemaker came to Kenya, A. N. Dugger used to receive letters of correspondence with other Kenyans to whom he sent magazines and other literature to teach on various doctrinal topics. The correspondence would take time since communication by then was done through the postal address.

According to an interview done with Bishop Kuria Karanja, he confirmed that Dugger had been having correspondence with other people spread across Kenya. For that reason, Dugger shared a list of all those contacts with them so that they could organize these people before a missionary was sent to the country.**Bishop Kuria Karanja**was by then a young man who served as a deacon at an SDA church in Githiga, Murang’a. He was working closely with Elder Kimani Kiano who was at that time serving as a church elder in the SDA church. They wrote letters to all these people through the postal addresses shared by Dugger. They informed them to get ready because a messianic Jewish missionary would be sent to baptize them and shed more light on the Jewish faith.

**Elder Andy Shoemaker visits Kenya**

Elder Andy Marion Shoemaker arrived in Kenya on 7th August 1970. He landed unannounced and therefore there was no one to receive him at the airport. He however did not get stranded because upon mentioning the name Kimani Kiano, he was handed over to Kimani’s brother Gikonyo Kiano who was a senior government official then. His transport from the airport to Nairobi CBD was facilitated and was shown where to board a Gatang’ara bus that would take him to his destination – Githiga in Murang’a county.

Upon arrival, the driver took her to Kimani Kiano’s shop at Githiga which was run by his wife. Next to it was Nyambura Kimani’s (popularly known as Wa-Ngenye) shop. It happened that the driver whose name was Maina arrived, it was Wa-Ngenye he found and handed over the visitor to him. I was so excited to have been the first Messianic to receive Shoemaker, she exclaimed.

Right behind Kimani Kiano's shop was a room where she directed him after short greetings since they would not chat much due to the language barrier. She had discerned that that must have been a Jew from Jerusalem. She immediately sent for Hezekiah Kuria Karanja, who was about 23 years old and would at least communicate in English. Wa-Ngenye recalls how she admired watching Hezekiah chatting with Shoemaker animatedly as if they had known each other for years. The bond they formed that day must have been the genesis of their solid bond throughout Elder Shoemakers' stay in Kenya. Later that evening, Kimani Kiano was informed about the guest when he left work; he was a health inspector at Githiga and the trio sent believers around to go and welcome the guest. Some of those who were present during that evening were: Mama Wahome, Jane Kamau, Mama Gathairu, and**Kimani Gathaara**, among about twenty others. This became a routine for every evening.

Elder Shoemaker was a man of average height and carriage who was in his early 60s because he was grizzled. He was a very jovial man and his gusto for evangelism was manifest and taught with undying charisma that glued his audience until conversion. Despite his staunch spiritual stance, his face always had a reassuring smile that concealed some wrinkles that had begun to emerge. He spent most of his time teaching the doctrine and praying for the sick and with the help of Deacon Hezekiah Kuria Karanja, who accompanied him wherever he toured as his interpreter, as well as other available believers, he was able to deliver his message effectively. He spent the night there and also planned his visits to other parts of Kenya.

He decided to first of all visit Ol Kalao, in a village called Nyakariangá where he baptized all those that had gathered there from neighbouring areas and ordained 16 men to shepherd the flock. After that, he visited an Akorino church in **Kimende, Limuru,** shared the gospel from Jerusalem and baptized new converts at**River Bathi.** There was one believer called **Joel Kaburia**who was also ordained in addition to the 16 men to look after the new believers at Limuru. He then moved to Githiga in Murang’a, and all along Pastor Kuria Karanja was playing the role of an interpreter for **A.M Shoemaker**. New believers in Githiga were baptized and two more men were ordained by Shoemaker, thereby making the total number of ordained ministers **19**.**Bishop Kuria Karanja** was among the two who were ordained in Murangá and the other person was**Elder Kimani Kiano**. Through all these visits, Elder Shoemaker managed to baptize around 300 people and among them ordained a total of 19 members to shepherd the flock.

One of the most notable things that happened is that Bishop Karanja established a very strong connection with Shoemaker right from the time he came to Kenya. He was Shoemaker’s interpreter as he went on with his mission across different parts of Kenya. Additionally, he was a Deacon and a youth leader at his church back then and he had organized several youths such that they used to hold prayer meetings and fellowships with Shoemaker every evening for the time that he spent in Kenya. Shoemaker would share a lot with them about the word of God from Jerusalem.

**Church after Shoemaker**

After**A.M. Shoemaker** left Kenya for Israel, there was continued correspondence between the newly established church in Kenya and Jerusalem. The parent church in Jerusalem continued to send support literature in the form of bible lessons, tracks, bible calendars, and Judah Magazines to nourish the young and tender church in Kenya. The church learned how to observe biblical festivals and everything about church administration. Pastor Kuria Karanja and the late Pastor Muigai Ngángá joined hands and made a very formidable force in spreading the gospel across Kenya. They worked closely together and could travel for long distances, holding open-air meetings to share the word of God from Jerusalem. Through these efforts, many churches were opened in various districts, towns,o and villages in Kenya.

Dissensions

In the 1980s, the church went through hard times and dissensions arose among the members. Some splinter groups emerged during this period. Some of these groups are still in existence to date. Feast keeping as well as the manifestation of the Holy Spirit through dreams and visions were the main issues that caused disagreements. Also, there was little or no mentorship from Jerusalem especially after the death of A. N Dugger in 1975.

**A new dawn**

There was however a sigh of relief in 1991 because that is when COGMERs through the leadership of General Overseer Kuria Karanja miraculously acquired a church plot at Eastleigh Section 3. This would usher in a new period of peace and prosperity for the church especially now that there were no more wrangles. Eastleigh section 3 has always been the headquarters of the Church of God 7th Day (COGMERs) in Kenya, with branches all over the country.

One of the main reasons that led to the rampant expansion of church membership in the early 1990s was the establishment of a department called the National Evangelical Outreach. This is a well-organized body within the church and has representatives at the national, regional, and village levels. It has all along been organizing missions at the national, and regional levels as well as in local churches. During these missions, members hold open-air evangelism for several days and sometimes they camp for several months to share the third angel’s message. The church has also continued to employ innovative techniques through the able leadership of General Overseer, H.K Karanja. We have seen the establishment of the church media department that has played a big role in projecting COGMERs on the global map, especially through the church website and social media handles. Many people in Kenya and beyond have become part of our family by following our activities online, something that could not have been achieved previously due to geographical limitations. The results of these efforts have been remarkable as more people continue to know and accept Yahshua in their lives.

We are grateful to Adonai because what started as a small church with just a few people, has now grown to become a big organization in Kenya and beyond the borders. There are currently over 200 branches spread across the country with more than 300 leaders to shepherd them in the capacities of Pastors, Elders, and Deacons. We have branches in the neighboring Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, and South Africa. We have also created friendships and affiliations in the USA. Pastor HK Karanja is the Bishop for COGMERs ministry in Kenya and is currently deputized by Pastor Kabuga Kimotho. A church elder is usually in charge of a branch and is assigned two or more deacons depending on several members in the branch.

At the moment COGMERs enjoys a large following owing to its original doctrine of A. N. Dugger and Andy Shoemaker lessons that they taught. Using written resources like the History of the True Religion, Sabbath Bible Lessons and constantly preaching the Third Angels message.

We forge on winning souls, rising and raising for Yahshua.

HalleluYah!

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