

## **Ground breaking**

**Speech by Dr. Henry Smith, Principal, Proposed Africa Wesleyan University College at ground breaking ceremony on 18<sup>th</sup> May, 2023 in Southern Province Zambia.**

Members of Pilgrim Wesleyan Church in Zambia Zimba congregation digging trenches at Africa Wesleyan Church (AWC) site in 2022



Honourable Douglas Syakalima, MP, Zambia's Minister of Education receiving flowers from students of Zimba College of Nursing and Midwifrey before he officiated at the ground breaking ceremony of proposed Africa Wesleyan University (AWU) Zimba Campus in Southern Province on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

There are moments in our lives that will live forever in our memories. 18 May 2023 was one of those moments! One day you will tell your children and grandchildren that you were here – part of a day that symbolizes progress and a new beginning. When Jesus healed the paralytic the people said – **“WE HAVE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS BEFORE.”** Those were the words people said that morning! **“We have never seen anything like this before.”** For this we give God all the thanks and all the glory! Principal Elect Dr Henry Smith said in his introductions.

Upon arrival in Zimba, Dr. Patrick Matibini, speaker emeritus of the National Assembly, and now Vice Principal for Administration for Africa Wesleyan University put it best. He said we’ve been dreaming and talking for years hoping and praying for a university, but it’s just been talk but it has come to reality – Dr. Matibini said, “Today makes it irrevocable!”

Dr Henry Smith thanked the Minister of Education, the Honourable Douglas, Siakalima and the members of his team and the accompanying officials who have graced the event with their presence. He also came with other officials and dignitaries from Zimba, around the region and nation – forgive me for not welcoming each by name he said. Again, Presiding Bishop Juden Siachitema the head of our church – the Pilgrim Wesleyan Church – made introductions and gave special recognition in a few moments.

Special recognition must go to the members of National Board of Administration of the Pilgrim Wesleyan Church. Without the enthusiastic support of the National Board of Administration led by the current Presiding Bishop Siachitema we would not be here today. He has kept his promise to be 110% behind establishing a university.

And, we are thankful that the three Bishops who have served our church and propelled the dream are here to join in the celebration said in his speech. I am eternally grateful for the administrative team I am working with, which includes Vice Principals for Africa Wesleyan University College -- Dr. Alfred Kalembo, Dr. Patrick Matibini, and Dr. Georgina Hamaimbo. These three are the senior leaders of our current administrative team giving oversight to the university start up. And thank you to Bishop Stephen Kakungu who’s experience and wisdom in higher education has been critical to our efforts.

He welcomed many pastors -- and especially those special pastors whose congregations have stepped up as partner church with a church in the USA and are **praying, giving and working** to make this dream a reality. We already have 8 churches who have committed to be partner

churches with Wesleyan Church in North America. Several members of those partner churches have already brought stone to help build this campus and worked in the hot African sun to dig trenches for the walls around the property. We are looking for 40 churches in Zambia and 40 churches in the USA to partner to move this glorious dream forward.

Special recognition also goes to our Chancellor Dr. David Sibalwa who led a task force of 13 valiant members at the direction of then Presiding Bishop Alfred Kalembo. Dr. Rev. Bishop Alfred Kalembo championed this dream during his more than 17 years as Bishop and National Superintendent of our Church. He kept the dream alive! Also, I want to thank him for his oversight and work with his many team members to put today's ceremony together.

There are so many to thank and recognize for the work that has brought to this morning. Thanks to the local churches and the members of the Zimba Mission Hospital next door, and the members of this community – the local Council for Zimba, and many others all join us in thanksgiving! Thanks to Principal Tizza Tembo and all who assisted her from the Zimba Mission College of Nursing and Midwifery.

A very personal special thank you goes to Rev. Gary Sidle, his wife Penny and his team of leaders from the Church of the Nazarene. Rev. Sidle has served as a missionary in Zambia for more than 20 years. But, many years ago I was his professor and advisor when he was a student at Mount Vernon Nazarene University in the USA. I extend a special welcome to our Nazarene friends and many others from a multitude of denominations who support this dream! We want all believers regardless of their denominational affiliation to be part of our vision. I truly don't know where to stop with my recognition and gratitude he said.

So, why are we here? We are here to perform a symbolic **GROUNDBREAKING** for the first building on this campus. A classroom building with 2 classrooms and toilets for the students. Soon our next building – a campus centre – which will contain faculty and administrative offices, additional classrooms and a library and computer lab will be built.

It was a year ago that a team of campus planners, architect's, civil and electrical engineers spent a week on this property preparing a master campus plan. They were led by a great friend from the USA, Glen Harris, who helped design many of the building at the hospital over the past many years. As you will note on the handout the campus from an artist viewpoint. The dream is big and bold!!

Yes! Today is a celebration of real tangible progress towards the establishment of a Christian University – one of the first, if not the first in the Southern Provinces – Africa Wesleyan University College! Let us remember how far we have come with efforts of many and the blessings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Today we give Him the glory and honor.

It is important to note that we do what we do today in faith! There are still important hurdles to jump and rivers to cross before the University College actually begins here. As our sign says, this is the PROPOSED site for AWUC. We are in the process of completing the application for approval from the Higher Education Authority for baccalaureate programs in Theology, Primary and Secondary Education and of course Nursing from the Council of Nursing. The HEA is aware of this event as are the leaders from the Council of Nursing. We hope what is witnessed here today and what we see with our eyes, and hear with our ears will, without question, demonstrate our passionate unwavering commitment to the establishment of Africa Wesleyan University College! We believe a Christian university has the potential to change the world for Christ!

I'd like to mention several important things:

First, I want to clarify the relationship between Africa Wesleyan University College and our sister College - the Zimba Mission College of Nursing and Midwifery. For months Principal Tizza Tembo has been praying for a second classroom to be constructed for our nursing students. Currently, for the three student intakes since beginning in 2021 we have only one classroom. We are using the hospital chapel, and through the gracious permission of the Central Pilgrim Wesleyan church, we are using their facilities for intakes 2 and 3. But, this is not acceptable long-term and we have asked the Nursing Council and the Higher Education Authority to be patient as we sought to the money to build the needed classrooms. With this classroom we are building here which will have two classrooms, we will have the three necessary classrooms for our diploma nursing students. The Zimba Mission College of Nursing has governmental support and its own authority and autonomy, but the relationship between the Nursing College (and the Hospital) and the University is an essential element of our identify. All three have been established and are owned by the Pilgrim Wesleyan Church. In fact, this land – all 17 hectors – given to the Church many years ago by a forward-thinking chief from this region has been allocated by the Pilgrim Wesleyan Church to the University. So, while this building will be on the University campus, the students of the Nursing College will have priority for the use of this classroom building.

It is also of great importance to remember that the Bible College in Jembo near Pemba will have a strong affiliation with the University here in Zimba. We anticipate many of our bible college graduates will continue their education here at the University. Also, we plan someday in the near future to begin a School of Agriculture near the Bible College in Jembo since the Church has much land there ready for our use.

I close my remarks with this. There are three distinctive of AWUC:

- First, our Commitment to Christlikeness is our highest priority. As a private Christian University College, we will hire academically qualified faculty and staff who are fully committed to Jesus Christ. And, we will begin every class-day with chapel.
- Second, we commit to excellence in all things from the quality of education to the buildings and grounds. We want to be good and faithful stewards of God's provision.
- Third, we want to provide an affordable education. We hope to do this by being a work university. By this I mean, each student will have a work assignment – working in the dining hall, the grounds, and so forth – and this will provide tuition for the students.
- Finally, this cannot happen without financial support! The National Board of Administration has prepared a plan for the denomination to financially support AWUC and will be announcing the particulars soon. Also, partner churches have pledged money each year to the University. Partner churches pray, work and give over the next 3 years. This idea of partner churches is really taking off with nearly 10 churches both in Zambia and the USA have signed partnership agreements.

Finally, I am thrilled and delighted to announce that an anonymous donor has made a significant pledge toward the establishment of our first two building – the classroom we break ground for today, and our next student centre. I met with the family and they have given \$700,000 USD to make this a reality – that is approximately 13,430,000 Kwacha. It is not enough to complete our vision of the total campus with multiple buildings, but it is a powerful start! With God's blessings and the support of all you here today and many around this world – more is to come! This is a beginning!

Thank you for your interest and support. And, thank you for being here today! Finally, please check out the website for further information and updates:

[africawesleyanuniversitycollege@edu.zm](mailto:africawesleyanuniversitycollege@edu.zm)