

2012 CONVENTION REPORT

June 22-24, 2012

The family of Bro. John T. Flomo, National President of NALAA arrived in Minnesota on Tuesday, June 18, 2012 and was met on arrival by the National Vice President, Sis. Hawa Dukuly. From the airport they were taken to the home of the Mid-West Chapter President, Elder Amos Guar and then taken to lunch at the Potter's restaurant. Immediately following lunch, the President and Secretary met with the leadership of the Mid-West Chapter in the home of Elder Guar where they were given an update of the convention plans by Elder Guar and Sis. Dukuly, followed by a visit to the convention site located at The Crystal Community Center. Wednesday and Thursday were spent visiting with and mobilizing members by phone for the Convention. Another leadership meeting was held on Thursday night to finalize plans and strategies.

FRIDAY, JUNE 22, 2012:

Bro. Flomo led a NALAA team, which included Pas. A. Trye and Pas. Zenway, to meet and share ideas with a local doctor, Dr. Soli. At that meeting organized by Pastor Trye, the NALAA team appealed to Dr. Soli to use his influence in his field to find assistance for the Liberian Mission health field, especially the Cooper Memorial Hospital. In response, Dr. Mark Soli expressed his interest in living in Africa one day and said that Liberia might be that special location. He promised to try his best and would be getting back to the delegation in the near future. Bro & Sis Tom Niagawolo hosted a luncheon at their home for

the NALAA Leadership Team and the Liberian delegation. At 5:30PM, the convention activities began at the All Nation SDA Church with the arrival of invitees and convention attendees for the *Meet and Greet* session. Special guests attending the convention from Liberia included Pastor Peter Zenway, Director of Central Liberia Mission Station, Sis. Christine Davis, Sis. Esther Dagbeh and Pas. Emmanuel George, Director of ADRA Liberia. Other guest included Pas. & Mrs. Sargent Sims, Dr. Jeanette Bryson, and Sis. Belcher. Vespers began at 8:00PM with Pas. John Goffa as speaker and ended at 8:45PM.

SATURDAY MORNING, JUNE 23, 2012:

Sabbath School - Sabbath morning began with a buffet style breakfast at 7:45AM. Bro. Tom Niagawolo served as Sabbath School Superintendent and Pas. Zenway, Director of the Central Liberia Mission Station, taught the lesson with other pastors making contributions. After the Sabbath School program, Bro. John T. Flomo awarded certificates to several members of the organization for their moral and financial supports.

Divine Service - The Divine Service began at 11:10AM with Elder Amos Guar presiding. The Welcome was done by Bro. John T. Flomo, National President of NALAA. Scripture reading was done by Sis Rosemarie George and Intercessory Prayer was offered by Elder Ellen Segbeh, National Chaplain. Pas. Adventor Trye did the Tithes & Offerings appeal while Pas. Inyne Ekah did the NALAA offering. Special music was rendered by the All Nations S. D. A. Church Choir. Sis Theresa Smith introduced the Guest Speaker, Dr. Cedric Belcher.

Pastor Belcher began with an old familiar game Liberians played as kids. "Children, children I call your! Mama, Mama, I don't care. Children, children I call your! Mama, Mama, I don't care. I sent my cat behind you. Mama, Mama, I don't care. I sent my cat behind you. Mama I don't care. I sent my dog behind you. Mama, mama I don't care. I sent myself behind you! Mama, Mama, I don't care." There was a loud echoing response from the congregation each time with "Mama, Mama, I don't care." He then went on to say, "I have come to discover that those games I played in my childhood are not the same games I am playing today, and even our children are not playing those same games anymore. We have all up our games. In like manner the devil has also up his games". He said that the devil is not playing those games he played on us when we were in Liberia and had to walk to church, or when we were yet in the world, or single or without a job, education etc. The devil has up his game on us Christian. "The devil is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour." He said that "the devil is trying to destroy us, but Jesus is trying to develop us; that we need to understand that God doesn't develop us in the happy places but in the suffering places". He added that "God is not trying to make us happy but He wants to make us holy. He is not trying to please us but to purge us. God is not trying to satisfy us but to sanctify us. He is not trying to destroy us but to develop us".

Referring to the once popular Kodak camera, that was in existence prior to the digital age, Pas. Belcher said that when the Kodak camera was used to take a picture; the picture came out in a form called

“negative”. This negative was taken in a dark room where it was developed. “What I am trying to say to us is that the God we serve is able to develop the negatives of our lives. While Satan is trying to use the “negative” to destroy us, God takes our “negative” in a room and develops it and when He gets through, there is a picture that mirrors who He is.” He reminded the congregation that God does not develop us in the praise places, in the singing places or in the clapping places, but that God develops us in the painful, stressful, struggling, and persecution places.

He illustrated the life story of Job which was the main theme of his sermon. Like the Oprah Winfield, Bill Gates of his day, Job was the richest man and a multi-billionaire of his time. Using Job 1:1 he said that when God introduced Job to us, He did not say what Job has or possesses, but who he is. God did not tell us about his portfolio or possession but his position. Bringing it home to us, he said “The first thing we learn about Job is not what Job has but who Job is.” Pastor Belcher reminded us that we live in a time where people are impressed with what people have. Speaking to the ladies, he warned, “Don’t get caught up with what he has, and don’t get impressed with what he has before you get to know who he is. It should be the other way around. Get to know who he is before you get impressed with what he has. It is not the car that he drives but what drives him. It is not the clothes that he wears but what clothes him. Is he clothed with the clothe of God’s righteousness? It is not the money he has in his pocket, but the respect and dignity he shows you as a young lady. It is not his biceps, or triceps nor the fact that he can lift some iron, but is his body the

temple of the Lord? Don't get caught up with what he has before you get to know who he is."

Using his personal story Pas. Belcher warned the men not to be impressed with what they see. "Don't get impressed because she smells good but that she smells with the fragrance of the Holy Spirit. Not because she has a big backside but that her body is the temple of the Lord". Going back to Job, he said that "the Lord gave the devil permission with restriction over Job: 'Do all you want with Job but don't touch his life'". He admonished us to hold on because whatever we are going through in our Christian life, the Lord has given Satan permission but with restriction.

He asked, "Would you serve God when it seems that everything you have has been taken away from you? Can you serve God when you don't have a church position?" He continued, "I know some of you were able to serve, because some of you were living in Sinkor, Old Road, Duala, and Paynesville, and had to walk miles or take taxi or bus to church and your were in church on time, but what happened to you now that some of you are now in America and have big cars in your driveway? Can you still serve God? I know you can serve God with one job but can you serve him when he blesses you with three jobs? I know you could serve God when there was no food and some of us had to eat tree barks, grass or just water but now that we are in America with food surplus and enough to eat and waste, can you still serve God?" He admonished us, using Job as an example, to serve God in all situations.

Later Pastor Belcher began to retrospect on a soccer game that took place in Liberia. It was a game between the Liberia Lone Star soccer team and the Ghana Black Star team. This was a crucial game for both countries; therefore the Ghanaians brought in their best players. On the day of the game, all Liberians wore red, white and blue. It did not matter which part of Liberia, tribe, clan or county you came from, all were united for a common cost to support the Lone Star. When Liberia won the game, pastor continued, "I saw people coming from the SKD stadium dancing, it did not matter if you were Catholic or Baptist. It did not matter if you were Methodist. As a matter of fact some Adventists in the group were dancing. They were singing a simple song that summarized what took place on the field. They sang: "Salinsa opened it, hee yah. Oppong closed it; hee yah. Salinsa opened it, hee yah. Oppong closed it, Eee Yah." The congregation joined echoing "Oppong closed it, hee yah," each time Pastor Belcher said Salinsa opened it, hee yah. He explained that the people of Liberia were giving praises and glory to two players who did something for Liberia on that day.

Then he asked the congregation, "Can you give God praise for what He has done for you, because the God we serve is more powerful than Salinsa and Oppong Weah." The congregation went wild when he said, "He does not need someone to open it and someone else to close it. He's the same God who can open it and can close it". He said, "If we are faithful to God, instead of saying Salinsa opened and Oppong closed it, we'll be able to say Jesus opened it, hee yah, and Jesus close it, hee yah". The Church joined in singing, "Jesus opened it, hee yah,

and Jesus close it, hee yah. Jesus opened it, hee yah, and Jesus close it, hee yah.” This went on nonstop for about eight minutes. In closing, pastor admonished the group to unite for the common good of our country and to serve and praise God for all that He has done for us and to continue the good works, because the same God who has begun the good work in us will finish it. Closing Prayer was done by Pas. Sargent Simms.

Lunch was served at the Crystal Community Center. Dr. Soli, conducted a seminar on the significance of health with emphasis on daily walking. Later, Counselor Gungar spoke on common issues that affect our community including immigration.

Dinner, June 23, 2012: The Dinner Session began at 8:45 PM on Saturday evening and Minister Johnny Smith performed during the dinner. Bro. John T. Flomo, National President, addressed the members present and hailed the successes of NALAA. “Few years ago we joined with the Columbia Union to help renovate the Paynesville Church in Liberia, bringing it to a modern standard at the cost of more than \$20,000 USD. We have honored many of our pastors and missionaries, and will honor three distinguished members of our SDA community who have contributed greatly to Liberia, namely Dr. Jeanette Bryson, Pas. Sargent Simms, and Elder Juana M. Kollie. Our on-going projects in Liberia include the building of the SDA Church in Zorzor, providing 30 modern comfortable benches as seating for the Gbaileliman Community Reaping SDA Church in Gbanga Bong County. We have a three-year scholarship program for 10 students which

began last year.” He also used this time to thank the supporters of NALAA. He said, “This year is election year, therefore on behalf of my leadership I want to thank the founders of this organization Bro. Simeon Smith, Sis Theresa Smith, Sis Johnetta B. Flomo, Mother Beatrice Barmadia, Elder Emmanuel Kudjordji, and myself; Pas. Menjor and Pas. J. Auzzell Gibson who have been there from the get go of this organization. I thank all of you who have supported NALAA and me during my leadership. My term ends tomorrow and I have loved serving you. Thanks again.”

The Guest speaker at the dinner, Pastor Emmanuel George, was introduced by Sis Hawa Dukuly, Vice President of NALAA. Pastor George explained that education in Liberia was heading in a downward trend compared to other countries in West Africa like Ghana and Nigeria. “The quality of education in Liberia is poor; teachers’ pay is lowest which among other things contribute to its poor quality”. He said that the opening of an Adventist University was very necessary at the time when many Liberian Universities have classes on Sabbath leaving Sabbath Keepers the challenge to decide whether to go to school and take their test on Saturday or go to church. He encouraged us to support the University so that it can become second to none in West Africa. He mentioned that the University had established relationship with Babcock University in Nigeria and Washington University in the US and it has secured a loan from ECO bank for construction on its 100 acres site on the Roberts-field Highway.

During the dinner Pas. Simms was honored for the role he played as an evangelist who held a crusade prior to the civil war reaching Monrovia. In response, Pas. Simms said, "I was not happy to run out like I did, but was glad when Bro. Flomo sent me pictures of the Paynesville S. D. A. Church. I glorify God and thank you for recognizing me here today." Also honored was Dr. Jeanette Bryson from Andrews University for her continuous support to Konola through AFKA (The Konola alumni association). Dr. Bryson who helped to organize AFKA said that she was grateful to be at the NALAA convention at the time and that she had heard about NALAA many years ago. "I am glad and honored to be invited to this occasion, especially to be honored. I love Liberia and am happy to do things to help Konola". Elder Juana M. Kollie was one of the honoree but was not present due to his ill health. He was honored for his services and his role played in the Kakata/Konola area. He also served as one of the constructors for the building of Konola. He now resides in Rhode Island. The awards were presented by Pas. Zenway from Liberia.

SUNDAY BUSINESS MEETING, JUNE 24, 2012:

On Sunday the business meeting was held followed by the election of new officers. The financial report was made by Sis Johnetta B. Flomo, acting Financial Secretary in the absence of the Treasurer, Elder Emmanuel Kudjordji. The report was discussed, voted and accepted.

During the meeting, the following items were discussed:

- The failure of members to respond to the \$5.00 monthly due payment. Therefore the body decided to introduce a new membership drive by encouraging everyone to register.
- The NALAA Liberia Monitor team responsible to monitor ongoing projects in Liberia.
- Agreed to continue with the present projects in Liberia.

The election of new officers was held and those elected to lead the Organization for the next four years are as follows:

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| 1. President | Bro. John T. Flomo |
| 2. Vice President | Eld. Amos Guar |
| 3. Secretary | Sis Johnetta B. Flomo |
| 4. Treasurer | Eld. Cecelia Juah Gibson |
| 5. Financial Secretary | Sis. Winifred Bradford |
| 6. Social Secretary | Sis Philomena Bundu |
| 7. Chaplain | Sis. Louse Teage |

It was voted that the next convention would be held in Maryland.

Bro. Flomo presented certificates of appreciation for services rendered the Association to: Pas. & Sis. Inyene Ekah, Pas. T. Ron Weegar, Pas. Christian Kolleh and Pas. J. Dalmeida. He also gave certificates to Bro. Johnny Russell, Mother Sarah S. Ekah, Sis. Emily Davis, Sis. Marie Guar, Sis. Winifred Bradford, Sis. Philomena Bundu, Sis. Deddeh Roberts, Sis. Sienah Zubawoe, Sis. Louise Teage, and Bro. Tom Ekah.

SPECIAL MEETING:

On Monday, June 25th, Bro John T. Flomo led a five-man delegation to visit KARA, a nonprofit organization that sponsors projects in Africa, and met with Mrs. Carol Barr. The NALAA delegation included Sis. Hawa Dukuly (former Vice President), Elder Amos Guar (Vice-President Elect), Mother Lucy Scott (Treasurer of the Mid-west Chapter), and Pas. Zenway. The NALAA leadership asked for help from KARA for its projects in Liberia. In response, Ms. Barr expressed her interest in the initiatives of NALAA and donated \$1,500.00 toward the NALAA scholarship program in Liberia.

We would like to thank our special guests and honorees for accepting our invitation to grace the occasion. We would also like to thank our Guest speaker for the wonderful sermon, the All Nations SDA church for permitting us to use their edifice; Ps. Zenway and all those who traveled from Liberia to attend our convention, not forgetting Pas. Emmanuel George and the wonderful presentation he made during the convention. Special thanks to the Midwest chapter and the faithful few who stood firm for the success of this convention. We want to mention that the heroes of this convention were the delegates from PA who got involved in an accident and did not reach Minnesota. We also want to thank Sis. Leona Garnett for the effort she made to drive to the convention from Delaware, bringing some members of our Liberian delegation with her, and for picking up others along the way. She also stopped in Ohio to visit with our wounded brethren involved in the accident before heading to Minnesota. What a Good Samaritan!

We thank all those who attended this year convention and we look forward to seeing you all again and many others in Maryland in 2014.

Johnetta B. Flomo, Secretary

John T. Flomo, President