

From Scandinavian Missionary Activity to an African local Church: A History of the Free Pentecostal Fellowship in Kenya (1955 to 2018)

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Abstract

This article reconstructs the history of a Pentecostal denomination in Kenya that was established by Scandinavian missionaries from two missionary agencies, namely the Norwegian Pentecostal Mission (NPM) and Swedish Free Mission (SFM), during the early 1950s. It relies on oral narratives by early African clerics, missionaries and church leaders as well as archival materials such as minutes, correspondence and reports to argue that the 60-year history of the Free Pentecostal Fellowship in Kenya (FPFK) may be periodised into three major epochs: the period of beginnings (1955–1984); the period of collaboration (1984–1996); and the period of nationalisation (1997–2018). It further contests that the present challenges for the church, such as the schism between Swedish and Norwegian sections, financial instability and the collapse of its national institutions, as well as an over emphasis on rural evangelism and a failure to penetrate the Kenyan urban life, are directly linked to its Scandinavian heritage.

Keywords: Free Pentecostal Fellowship in Kenya (FPFK); history of Scandinavian missions; East Africa; nationalisation of churches; post-colonial Kenya

Introduction

The Free Pentecostal Fellowship in Kenya (FPFK) is a local church in Kenya, whose missionary establishments started in 1955 and was locally registered in 1977 (FPFK Constitution 2002, 13). The church has over 170 000 members and about 500 local



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churches which are organised into 28 regions spread all over the country (FPFK Assessment Report, Taabco 2013, 14–19). The FPFK owes its origin to Scandinavian missionary work in East Africa. Two missionary societies in Kenya, the Swedish Free Mission (SFM), which later changed its name to Evangelical Free Mission, and the Norwegian Pentecostal Mission, consolidated their work in Kenya to register the FPFK. The Norwegian Pentecostal Mission contributed the term “Pentecostal” whereas the Swedish Free Mission contributed the term “free” to form the Free Pentecostal Fellowship in Kenya.¹ The two missionary agencies were already in Kenya by the mid-1950s, not long before the country obtained its independence in 1964. During its Annual General Meeting, FPFK delegates voted unanimously to change the name to Free Pentecostal Church (FPC), following an emphasis that the word “church” is missing in its national identity (FPFK AGM Minutes 2018: 5).

Not much has been written on this rather brief 63-year history of the FPFK denomination (1955–2018). In 2005, Stephen Muoki Joshua (2005) did a Master’s dissertation on the FPFK’s theological education and published an article a year later on the same subject (Joshua 2006, 173–191). The 28 October 2005 FPFK Jubilee celebrations following its 50-year presence in Kenya, did not witness any publication apart from valuable speeches delivered by various representatives (Kitur 2005, 1–11). In 2013, Taabco Consultancy firm did evaluation work for the FPFK and released a report.² In that report, Taabco (FPFK Assessment Report 2013) noted the need for documentation of the FPFK history. Various national FPFK projects have produced well-documented reports that are preserved at the FPFK Head Office in Nairobi. In the recent past, a national project managed from the General Secretary’s office by the name *Inuka Kanisa* (“Church Arise”) has had an objective of producing a history documentary on FPFK church activities (Andhoga 2015, 12). It is against this backdrop that the researcher set out to do a comprehensive historical analysis of the church’s development since its inception to date. The article is based on a two-phased methodology: 1) an archival study, which investigated collections of letters, reports, minutes, briefs, and church legal documents found in the FPFK headquarters; and 2) an oral study comprising 40 interviews, 20 from the Swedish section and 20 from the Norwegian section, purposefully sampled out of missionaries, early church evangelists and pastors as well as current leaders at various levels.

The article contends that the history of the FPFK may be periodised into three major epochs: the period of beginnings (1955–1984); the period of collaboration (1984–1996); and the period of nationalisation (1997–2018). These periods are marked by key events that set the end of an era and the beginning of another. The earliest missionary that can directly be associated with the FPFK arrived in Kenya in 1955 (FPFK Assessment

1 Letter by Maud Anderson, General Secretary of Evangelical Free Mission in Kenya, to the Registrar of Societies, Nairobi, titled “Notification of Dissolution,” 26 May 1984.

2 FPFK Assessment Report by Taabco, October 2013.

Report, Taabco 2013, 32). The first joint FPFK Annual General Meeting (AGM) after the merger of Norwegian and Swedish Missionary agencies was in 1984 and the first FPFK National Board consisting of local leaders without missionaries was elected in 1997 (FPFK Assessment Report, Taabco 2013, 32). The article further argues that during the period of beginnings, the key activity that characterised the period was that of establishing mission stations and local churches through evangelism and social work (education and medical treatment). During the period of collaboration, however, the key characteristic of the church was solidifying and uniting various establishments of Swedish and Norwegian missionaries in Kenya into one denomination. The nationalisation period has continued to be a painful experience of redefining relations following the handing over of church leadership to Kenyans.³

Table 1: Periods in the history of the FPFK

Feature	Period of Beginnings	Period of Collaborations	Period of Nationalisation
Dates	1955–1984	1984–1997	1997–2018
Number of years	29	13	18
Key Question	How do we establish churches?	Swedish and Norwegians, why don't we work together?	Yes, we are going back home, but who is in charge?
General Secretaries	Arvid Bustgård and Gustav Struble	Maud Anderson	Julius Bagaka, John Kitur, Walter Andhoga
Key Challenge	Cultures Clash	Church Division	Raising Local Support

The Period of Beginnings (1955–1984)

This period, marked by the arrival of the first FPFK missionary to Kenya (1955) and the birth of the FPFK in a merger between Swedish and Norwegian missionaries (1984), is about 29 years. During this period, the missionaries operated quite independently of each other at their Kenyan mission field and almost entirely depended on their sending churches and agencies in Scandinavia. The period witnessed expansive church establishments in various regions.

The Norwegian Pentecostal Mission's Work in Kenya

The early missionary activities of the Norwegian Pentecostal Mission in Kenya are associated with a missionary couple by the name of Arvid and Gunborg Bustgård, who

3 Rev. Peter Odak, interview by Rev. David Musumba, digital recording at FPFK headquarters, Nairobi, 29 October 2014.

came from the Norwegian town of Fredrikstad where Arvid Bustgård owned and ran a bicycle shop. At the age of 46 “he sold the shop and together with his wife went to Kenya because they felt God’s calling to do so.”⁴ They arrived in Mombasa in 1955 by ship. Bustgård would fondly retell how, after arriving in Mombasa, he asked for directions to Kenya. While in Mombasa they came into contact with another Norwegian missionary couple, Earl and Walther Olsen. For a very short time, they stayed together with the Olsens before they were picked by the Finish missionary Kusminen, and were taken to the mission station of the Native Finish Mission at Koru in Western Kenya. While in Koru, Kusminen taught Bustgård the Luo language because he was fluent in it.⁵

Since there was no registered Norwegian mission in Kenya at the time, Arvid and Gunborg Bustgård came in as visitors with Finish foreign ministers and stayed with them for about a month. During their stay with the Finish missionary, they were informed that there was a white lady who had a farm called Thessalia, which she had bought from a Greek farmer. Bustgård met the lady and negotiated to buy the land of 118 acres at a cost of Kshs 30,000 (Joshua 2006, 173–191).

The name of the lady was Mrs Janssen, an American widow whose husband was a missionary sent by the Lutheran Mission. She had for two years been running the mission station, Thessalia, together with her husband. After her husband died in 1954, she felt unable to run the mission alone and had been praying for someone to come and take over the place and the work. Thessalia Mission Centre, as it is called today under the ownership of the FPFK, is situated at the border between the land of the Luo and the Kipsigi. Mrs Janssen saw the Bustgård couple as sent from God and she sold Thessalia to them in 1955.

Missionary Bustgård immediately started evangelical work and built a church made of mud and grass. He registered as a missionary of the Norwegian Pentecostal Mission in 1956.⁶ Most missionaries who joined him thereafter lived in mud and grass-thatched houses. The Bustgårds saw immediately that there was a need for educating children, as there were no schools around. He built the first school with mud and roofed it with iron sheets. He started to ask Norwegians to support the children with 100 NOK per year for a child. He invited children to school but observed that the people around Thessalia removed their children’s lower teeth, something that negatively affected their education. The Luo removed six teeth and the Kipsigi two. He told the parents not to remove the children’s teeth if they wanted to get school fees as well as support for their children.

4 Rev. Paul Ochola, interview by Rev. David Musumba, digital recording at FPFK headquarters, Nairobi, 13 November 2014.

5 Focus Group Discussion, digital recording involving 18 African retired clerics of the Norwegian department of FPFK, held at FPFK-Kindaruma Guesthouse, Nairobi, 12 and 13 November 2014.

6 Focus Group Discussion, 12 and 13 November 2014.

Although Bustgård registered his work as the Norwegian Pentecostal Mission in Kenya, he received very little support from Norway in the beginning. To be able to raise funds for construction and mission work, he resorted to business enterprises. He took a contract to harvest trees at Thessalia farm, which he sold as firewood to the Uganda Sugar Company, now known as Muhoroni Sugar Company. He also tendered to provide grass to a tea company in Kericho. The grass was used for roofing workers' houses in the tea estates. He also raised some layer chicken out of which he got eggs and would sell them to Asians in Kisumu. Bustgård's background as a businessman showed in the way he managed to support himself financially, developing Thessalia Mission from the humble beginning of mud-thatched houses to modern buildings seen there today.

It was not easy for Bustgård to raise local evangelists and workers in the new mission. He bought several evangelists to assist him in missionary work. He bought Mr and Mrs Albert Oriare Kitaga from the Native Finish Mission (NFM). He also bought William Chan, Luke Obiero, Mama Dorcas, Mama Kanisa, and Mr and Mrs Flora Chege from the same mission. Bustgård also went and got Joel Osoro, who was a pastor with the Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG) in Muhoroni. Joel Osoro became the first pastor of the Muhoroni Church and he was later transferred to Thessalia Church. The first pastor of Thessalia was Albert Oriare, who in 1962 was sent to Ahero after he had pastored for eight years. Bustgård worked with four key native church leaders in the early years. These were Pastor Joshua Arap Kiplangat, who pioneered work in Kalenjin land, together with evangelist William Chan. Albert Oriare was in charge of Kisumu and Joel Osoro worked in Thessalia. Afterwards they were joined by others such as Silas Owiti and Joel Osoro, who were the first pastors in Muhoroni Church. The first native Kipsigi was Joshua Arap Kiplangat, who pastored the Chepsirian Church.

The first missionaries to join Bustgård from Norway were nurses. Olaug Stenersby came to Thessalia in 1957 and in 1960 Kari Enger arrived. They started a dispensary where they could assist pregnant women as well as provide medical services to the community in Muhoroni. The next missionaries who came were Åse and Bjarne Lind. They arrived with their five boys in August 1963. In 1964, Inger and Gudbrand Sandvold came to help in the development of Thessalia. Missionaries Egil and Gudrun Gjervoldstad, together with their three children arrived in 1965 and they were also placed at Thessalia. Miriam Johansen who came the same year was also situated at Thessalia. She assisted Bustgård with book-keeping. Sister Miriam had a special interest in helping suffering children and she later established the home for orphans in Thessalia.

As the number of Norwegian children increased there was a need for a Norwegian school and a teacher. The mission board in Norway advertised a school teacher position and eventually sent Astrid and Arne Tveter in 1966. Astrid started school for the Norwegian kids in a small office in the church building at Thessalia.

During the late 1960s the Norwegian missionary work expanded exponentially. For instance, on 2 April 1967, 178 new Christians were baptised at Thessalia, among them

the sub-chief of Kiptere. This growth necessitated deeper and more organised Bible teaching. As a result, in 1968 Arthur Nyborg Pettersen was sent to Thessalia to teach short Bible courses.

The increase in the number of missionaries necessitated some expansion of the outreach area. A group of missionaries led by Bjarne Lind felt the need to go westward to Usonga location in the Siaya district. A native evangelist, John Paul Ochola, who had been serving there for a while brought news that the people there had urged for help from the mission. On 15 August 1965, Bjarne Lind and some others went to Usonga on an expedition to look at the plot that had been offered for mission work. They decided to start mission work at Usonga and on 22 February 1966 the building work started. The first building to be erected was the school building. By 1968 clinics and maternity services had started. The first two nurses and midwives at Nyambare Hill were Tora Brynhildsen and Oddrun Nordås. Both sister Tora and sister Oddrun arrived in 1967. Their care for the sick and for pregnant women brought much relief for the people in the area.

Meanwhile, Kristine Sjøli, who had come to Tanzania as a missionary in 1958, moved to Thessalia together with the Swedish missionary, Karin Larsson. These two were dedicated to spreading Bibles and Christian literature. They went to the market places to sell literature and little by little they engaged faithful Christians who assisted them in selling Bibles in the different local languages out in the district.

The health work needed more nurses and in 1969 nurse Åse Høydahl arrived to serve in the Thessalia dispensary. In 1970, nurse and midwife Nora Tjervaag joined to assist as well. As the maternity unit needed personnel on a 24-hours basis, more midwives were needed and in 1971 nurse and midwife Norun Sjøli arrived for the maternity unit.

During the years 1970–1971 several missionaries were welcomed to Kenya. Both the families Tveter and Gjervoldstad had moved to Nyambare Hill to take care of the work there, and Åse and Bjarne Lind went to Norway on leave. New missionaries to Thessalia were Trygve and Karin Korneliussen with their three children, and Gunnar and Hanne Østrem with their five boys. The Østrem's came from Tanzania where they had stayed for one year.

In 1973 a new school building for Norwegian missionary kids was built at Thessalia. This came as much needed relief to Mrs Astrid Tveter who, until then, had run the school on her veranda at her home at Nyambare Hill. Now a nice new building with adequate premises was available for the pupils and a boarding facility was also erected. This was aided by a change in education policy where the Norwegian Government could approve schools abroad and grant funds for their running. Alf and Astrid Somdal were the new teachers taking on the task to run the new school. The first boarding parents were Trygve and Karin Korneliussen. This was really a milestone for the Norwegian Mission in

Kenya and even Norwegian children from parents working with the Norwegian Official Development Aid, NORAD, joined the school.

Signe and Frank Ove Haukeland with their children, and Liv Toril and Arne Rinding arrived in Kenya for missionary work in August of 1973. The Haukelands came to assist in the ministry at Eastleigh and the Rindings were placed at Nyambare Hill to fill the vacancy after Hanne and Gunnar Østrem. Later in the same year Ruth Skoglund arrived, and she was also placed at Nyambare Hill to serve in the evangelical ministry.

In 1973, there was an expansion within the health department. NORAD had opened up to grant more development aid funds through Christian mission organisations and therefore both expansion of the maternity buildings at Thessalia was made possible and more health personnel could be appointed. In 1974, three more midwives arrived in Thessalia to work in the maternity ward. These three were Åse Dagsvik, Solveig Granseth and Aud Seterøy. The nurse Jorunn Fagerheim also arrived in Kenya in 1974 to assist in the dispensary at Nyambare Hill. Arthur and Elly Nyborg Pettersen were the first Norwegian missionaries to take up work in Nairobi. They felt a burden to reach underprivileged people with the Gospel, like those staying in the Mathare Valley slum.

In 1974, a new church building was set up at Eastleigh for the congregation established there by the Nyborg Pettersens. The church at Eastleigh was inaugurated in 1975 and the Bible-school at Karen was built and opened in 1976. Gudbrand Sandvold was appointed to be the first principal of the school.

In 1975, missionary Arne Rinding was suddenly taken ill and died after a short illness. Oddrun and Ola Emil Sprakehaug with their children arrived in August 1975 to take over from the Rindings at Nyambare Hill. Inger and Øyvind Johansen became new teachers at the Norwegian school the same year. In 1976 the nurses and midwives, Laila Tjore and May Kristine Aamli, arrived in Thessalia to work in the health sector.

In 1978, Torunn and Ragnar Bakken took over as teachers in the Norwegian school from Inger and Øyvind Johansen, while Inger and Torolf Karlsen had the responsibility of the Norwegian boarding. Inger and Torolf were appointed to take over as principal and matron of the Karen Bible School in 1981.

In 1979, Gunnveig and Ernst Knudsen with their two children became missionaries with duties within an evangelical ministry and later on this was combined with the task of being boarding parents for the Norwegian missionary kids. In 1980, Liv Toril Rinding took over from Bakkens as responsible teacher at the Norwegian School. In addition, she was involved in evangelical ministry in the churches and also preaching in the prisons in the area. The teacher, Liv Bergh, arrived at Thessalia in 1981 to work in the Norwegian school.

Bjarne Sivertsen had arrived in 1980 and he also was placed at Thessalia. In 1981 nurse Jorunn Slettum arrived as well as Berit Sjursen. Jorunn Slettum started health work at Oyugis where Haukeland had built a dispensary and two houses where missionaries could stay. Later on, in 1982, Jorunn Slettum and Bjarne Sivertsen married and together they ministered at Thessalia as boarding parents for the Norwegian school children for one year. In 1984, they were back in Kenya and were placed at Oyugis in 1985 after a short period at Nyambare.

For a long time, there had been a need to care for destitute children, orphans and children with a handicap. Miriam Johansen had a special call for helping suffering children. In 1982 a new building was opened at Thessalia specifically built for the purpose of caring for children in need. Berit Sjursen would be engaged in this work together with Miriam Torolf. Inger Karlsen took over as principal and matron for the Bible-school in Nairobi.

In 1978, Åse and Bjarne Lind had returned to Kenya after some years in Norway. They stayed at Nyambare Hill until in 1982 they took on the task to set up the buildings for a polytechnic school at Kiptere. In 1982, the Norwegian mission organisations together became receivers of funds collected through a television programme called "Action Hope." That money could be spent as the mission's own share when projects from NORAD were applied for. This led to considerable activity in the field of social contribution. Numerous schools were built, many of them in Kisii in addition to the Kiptere Polytechnic. At Ober Kamoth a health centre was set up. Birger and Anne Grete Hovden had arrived in 1981 and Birger, as an experienced engineer, got the responsibility to complete the Ober Kamoth project.

Ola-Emil and Oddrun Sprakehaug came for their second period in August 1981. They took over the responsibility of the evangelistic ministry in Kisii from Trygve Korneliussen, who together with his wife Karin, went to Norway for furlough in spring 1981. In 1982, Inger and Øyvind Johansen returned to the Norwegian school to take over the responsibility from Liv Toril Rinding, who then terminated her task as principal. Jorunn and Bjarne Sivertsen were appointed as boarding parents. In 1983, Margrethe and Svein Nystrøm came to Kenya for their first period. They were placed at Nyambare Hill. In the years to come an extension of the ministry out from Nyambare Hill would take place. An evangelistic ministry was started at Namatore, half way between Eldoret and Kitale. The mission work that started in 1955 was thus still expanding. Every year hundreds of people were baptised. During half of the year 1966, 700 hundred were baptised. At one occasion 178 were baptised at Thessalia mission during one ceremony.

In the year 1981, 545 were baptised at Thessalia and 900 at Nyambare Hill.⁷ And in 1983 there were 6 585 Christians within the churches attached to Nyambare Hill mission. The work expanded to new areas like Oyugis, Kiptere, Kisii, and Nairobi. All the time new evangelists were engaged and the Gospel was preached in the villages. Missionaries were continuously engaged in erecting new churches and inaugurating the church buildings. In Norway, the mission in Kenya had got committed supporters who collected money both for paying evangelists and the building of churches. African evangelists would be the first to establish work in a new town and after a group of converts had been organised, Norwegian missionaries would be invited to take up church construction and social work. This informal relationship between the African agency, the Norwegian missionaries and funding partners abroad was a key feature that characterised early missions of the FPFK.

The Swedish Free Mission's (SFM) activities in Kenya

According to a letter written by Maud Anderson, the General Secretary of Evangelical Free Mission in Kenya (EFM) on 14 July 1995, in 1958, the Pentecostal churches of Sweden decided to send missionaries to Kenya to establish churches. As a result, Rev. Gustav Struble was sent from Sweden and he arrived in Kenya in 1960. Rev. Gustav and Maria Struble were born in Sweden in 1884 and 1893 respectively. They were sent by the Filadelfia Church in Stockholm to establish work in Nakuru. Upon their arrival in Kenya, they settled in Menengai, Nakuru. Rev. Gustav Struble was employed as a farm manager by a British settler called Joe, who in 1962 gave him 20 acres to build a church.⁸ This is part of the location where the Menengai Church is situated⁹ which was inaugurated in 1963.¹⁰ He would pick up people from the farm villages and bring them to church and back after Sunday services on his pick-up van. Munyasya and his wife Eda, who became the first African evangelists, were working with the missionary in those early days. They began a nursery school which later became Menengai Primary School. In addition, Gustav Struble started a Bible school on the compound of the church, where many of the present FPFK pastors had their initial ministerial training. African Evangelists who had been trained in Menengai were sent out to different places such as North Kinangop, Nyeri and Kakamega, where they established churches.

When Gustav Struble received his 70th birthday present in the form of funds he used it for the construction of Kinangop church at the foot of Mt Kenya.¹¹ After increased

7 Norwegian Pentecostal Mission in Kenya, AGM Minutes of a meeting held in Thessalia Mission Centre, 12 April 1982.

8 Anania Mwangi, interview by Edward Mungai, digital recording at FPFK headquarters, Nairobi, 29 October 2014.

9 Anania Mwangi, interview by Edward Mungai, 29 October 2014.

10 Willy Munene, interview by Edward Mungai, digital recording at FPFK headquarters, Nairobi, 29 October 2014.

11 Maud Anderson, interview by Stephen Muoki, digital recording at FPFK headquarters, Nairobi, 7 December 2014.

evangelical work and the establishment of “various congregations a registration was necessary.”¹² The church was then registered as Swedish Free Mission (SFM) on 23 February 1963 by the registrar of societies within the Kenya Colony (Protectorate).¹³ The name Swedish Free Mission (SFM) was used until 14 October 1971 when it changed to Evangelical Free Mission (EFM) in Kenya.¹⁴

Other missionaries who arrived in the early days of the Swedish mission work in Kenya were Miss Eva Danielsson, who arrived in Nakuru in 1965, as well as Mr Einar Karlsson, who went to Nyeri. In the same year, Ulla Struble, daughter of Gustav and Maria Struble, and Rhode, the son of Gustav, joined their parents in Nakuru missionary work. They established work in and around Nairobi in places such as Kawangware, Kangemi, Gikambura and Eastleigh.¹⁵ In 1969 an agreement was made to publish an East African Pentecostal magazine named *Habari Maalum*. The magazine stopped being distributed in Kenya in the late 1980s but continued in Tanzania.

From the year 1970, there was a considerable increase in the interest abroad for Swedish missionaries to visit Kenya on account of encouraging missionary reports. Notably, Swedish missionaries in Tanzania were finding Kenya the better alternative to the changing land policy under the Ujamaa socialist ideal. A major shift in leadership came in 1974 when Gustav Struble was suddenly recalled to Sweden and was replaced by Brinkbag. A letter from Svenska Fria Missionen (Swedish Free Mission) at its headquarters in Filadelfia Church in Stockholm to the Registrar of Title in Nairobi was very categorical:

We hereby inform you, that Mr Rhode Struble and Mr Gustaf Struble no longer are trustees in the Evangelical Free Mission in Kenya. On September 25th 1973 it was decided, that they should be replaced by Oscar Lagerstrom, Harry Sundin, and Helge Westin and we would be very grateful to you if you would register this change.¹⁶

It is not clear what led to the recalling of Struble, although one may deduce that age was already a key factor since he had just celebrated his 70th birthday. It is clear, however, that during the 1970s a noticeable high number of missionaries arrived in Kenya. Some had formerly worked in countries such as Tanzania, Zaire and Burundi. As a result, new work was started in Mombasa and Machakos as well as in Loitokitok. In addition to

12 Letter by Maud Anderson, “Notification of Dissolution,” 26 May 1984.

13 Letter by Maud Anderson, General Secretary of the Evangelical Free Mission in Kenya to the Registrar of Societies in Nairobi, on the subject, “Re: Registration of Evangelical Free Mission in Kenya – Reg No. 4615,” 14 July 1995.

14 Letter by Maud Anderson, “Notification of Dissolution,” 26 May 1984.

15 Rev. Silas Babu, interview by Rev. Edward Mungai, digital recording at FPFK headquarters, Nairobi, 29 October 2014.

16 Letter by Arne Peterson, Secretary of the Swedish Free Mission (Stockholm) to Registrar of Title (Nairobi) on 28 March 1974.

planting churches, Swedish missionaries found the local communities facing numerous social needs, especially in education and health. They got involved in building schools, health facilities and vocational training centres.¹⁷

Mr and Mrs Arne and Birgit, “Mama Haraka” Flordin, Mr and Mrs Ingvar and Bibbi Nilsson, Mrs Ethel Angerlöf and Miss Anita Boström settled in Mombasa with a mission to do literature and Bible correspondence work. A bookshop, Gospel Centre, was opened in Mombasa in 1974. Church planting also took place and the Likoni Church was established in 1974.¹⁸ Mr and Mrs Oscar and Märtha Lagerström arrived in Mombasa and later settled in Nairobi, where they worked on Bible correspondence courses as well as church work. Mr and Mrs Alfred and Anna-Lisa Andersson joined them in Tract Centre, doing the Bible correspondence work which was now expanding.

The Great Controversy over Strategic Direction

In 1973, Swedish Missionaries met at YMCA in Nairobi. The key agenda of the meeting was to resolve a raging debate on whether Swedish missionaries should be involved in planting local churches. According to Maud Anderson, “the decision in Sweden was then not to found churches, since Kenya had so many registered Pentecostal missions. Instead, they preferred to join one of them, namely the Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG), Valley Road Church, Nairobi.”¹⁹ Indeed, the intention of some of the missionaries as well as contact churches such as that in Linköping strongly felt that at this stage the priority was not to plant churches in major cities but to work with literature distribution and Bible correspondence courses and to support other local mainstream Pentecostal churches such as the Nairobi Pentecostal Church (NPC). This was compounded by the fact that the EFM constitution did not allow it to own property and establish churches.

There erupted a sharp tension between the missionaries and EFM since a good number of missionaries felt called to establish churches (Joshua 2006, 180). Leadership crises erupted and the situation became so severe that in 1974, 12 Swedish pastors representing the Swedish churches with work in Kenya attended the EFM annual conference held in September at Brackenhurst, Limuru. The meeting was intended to decide on leadership issues as well as bring about reconciliation between missionaries and set out a strategy for future work. The meeting was attended by a large delegation from Sweden. It was then agreed that church work could be established. At the meeting, it was resolved that EFM will be involved in founding local churches and that the constitution would be amended to incorporate the agreed decision.²⁰ The Swedish delegation appointed Mr

17 PPFK Assessment Report by Taabco, October 2013, page 15.

18 Rev. Peter Odak, interview by Rev. David Musumba, 29 October 2014.

19 Maud Anderson, interview by Edward Mungai and Stephen Muoki, 7 December 2014.

20 Letter written by Secretary, Deputy Secretary and Deputy Vice Secretary of the Swedish free Mission in Kenya on the subject, “Re: Changes of Name and Constitution,” n.d.

Oscar Lagerström to be the secretary of Evangelical Free Mission, which he accepted with the condition that Maud Anderson, who had arrived in 1973, would be his assistant.²¹ This position was later taken over by Mr Allan Lägervik through ballot, the successor of whom was Ms Maud Anderson and in 1993 Rev. Edward Mungai.

Following the above meeting, EFM was registered with the Land Office and given a certificate of incorporation with the legal right to own property. Many more churches were constructed. Ms Karin Larsson, who had worked with the Norwegian Pentecostal Mission in Thessalia since 1964, moved to SFM in Nairobi and later to Machakos, where she worked with Ms Gudrun Rosell. Later Ms Inga-Maj Berggren joined Gudrun Rosell and they eventually moved to Thika, Nyeri and later to Mombasa, where they were involved in literature work. Ms Marie-Louise Rask joined the literature work in Mombasa. Ms Inga-Lill Berggren joined in 1974 and went to Loitokitok and Elaine Åman arrived and settled in Machakos to join Mr Helge and Sara Westin in church planting work. Elisabeth Gustafsson worked with Elaine for some time in Machakos. Elaine Åman was later called upon to train Sunday school and youth workers in the country.

In Loitokitok, a missionary couple by the names Harry and Hildur Sundin began work, which was later taken over by Mr and Mrs Anders and Hildur Grönberg. Mr and Mrs Erling and Anna-Greta Elgeholm also worked in Loitokitok for a shorter period.²² Ms Anki Sandqvist came in 1973, first worked in Nakuru in youth and children's work as well as being a volunteer CRE teacher in high schools. She later became the assistant director of Christian Religious Education Awareness for Teachers (CREATE), where hundreds of primary school teachers have been offered in-service courses in Christian Religious Education (CRE).²³

In the early 1970s, communist ideals led to a change in Tanzanian land policy. As a result, a number of missionaries moved over the border from Tanzania to join the work in Kenya. Among them were Mr and Mrs Göte and Mary Brinkeback who settled in Nakuru and Mr and Mrs Axel and Wendela Nilsson, who settled in Nyeri and later moved to Mombasa and Eldoret.²⁴

Several churches were built during this period, among them the Likoni Church in Mombasa (1974), built by Arne and Marie-Anna Flordin and opened in 1976 and Nyeri

21 Willy Munene, interview by Rev. Edward Mungai, digital recording at FPFK headquarters, Nairobi, 30 October 2014.

22 Rev. Peter Odak, interview by Rev. David Musumba, 29 October 2014.

23 Rev. David Ford, interview by Rev. Edward Mungai, digital recording at FPFK headquarters, Nairobi, 30 October 2014.

24 Rev. Peter Odak, interview by Rev. David Musumba, 29 October 2014.

Church, built by Axel Nilsson and opened in 1979.²⁵ Church plots were acquired, certificates were applied for and approved and title deeds were issued in EFM name.²⁶ Indeed, it was during this time of great controversy and increased missionary activity that the church grew most. This is evidenced by the brief annual report of the Free Pentecostal Fellowship in Kenya presented by the General Secretary, Maud Anderson in 1984. It in part reads as follows:

It is with much gratitude to the Lord that we look back on the year 1984 and for the many blessings that he has bestowed upon us as individuals and as a fellowship. It is with joy that we note that many people have received the Lord Jesus as their personal Saviour and been added to our churches country-wide. Full statistics have not been received for the year 1984, but the church membership was approximately 30,000 with around 300 pastors and evangelists and 50 missionaries. One of the significant happenings during the year 1984 was the merger of the Free Pentecostal Fellowship in Kenya, originating from Norway and the Evangelical Free Mission in Kenya, originating from Sweden, which took place on 26th May 1984 at Karen and which led to the strengthening of our work in Kenya. The FPFK committee, elected at the above meeting, has met three times during the year. May the Lord continue to bless his people and may many more commit their lives to service for Him before He returns.²⁷

A new constitution was worked out and it was decided that the EFM registration should only include Swedish missionaries and that each local church should have its own registration according to the Swedish (biblical) system. This was, however, refused by the Office of the Registrar and the constitution had to be amended to include the national churches. The new constitution was accepted in an AGM and later communicated to all churches through an intensive visiting programme by Ms Maud Anderson, Mr Edward Mungai and other national leaders.²⁸

Early SFM Projects in Kenya

In 1973, contact was made with Mrs Lagerström by Ms Mary Smythe of Keswick Book Society and a request was made for the Swedish mission to take over the bookshop. This was done officially in 1974. Mr Allan Lägervik was requested to be the new manager after Ms Mary Smythe.²⁹ The handover to Mr Lägervik, however, did not materialise. Meanwhile, Margareta Håkansson had arrived in Kenya in 1974 as an assistant and was

25 FPFK Organizational Documents, *The Constitution and rules doc.* 001, Nairobi, Uzima Center, 2001, 1.

26 Maud Anderson, interview by Stephen Muoki, 7 December 2014.

27 Maud Anderson, "A Brief Annual Report for the Free Pentecostal Fellowship in Kenya 1984," Karen Head Office, 1984.

28 Letter written by the General Secretary of FPFK, Maud Anderson to the Registrar of Societies, 14 July 1995.

29 Joseph Ayieye and Vigdis Gjervoldstad, "Church Leaders Seminar: Leadership FPFK Structure Management, FPFK Capacity Building Programme, OD & CB project manual," Nairobi, 2000, 4.

left with the shop until a new manager, Mr Hans Sandström from the USA, came. Mr Sandström and family only stayed for one year and Margareta became the new manager and stayed until 2012. Maud was the assistant manager for some years until she became full-time general secretary. Gospel Centre in Mombasa was incorporated with Keswick.

The Tract Centre expanded and Mr and Mrs Åke and Maggie Sandström joined the work. In 1975, Swedish churches decided to fundraise aggressively for Kenya to raise one million Swedish Kronor. These funds were meant to buy a property in the middle of Nairobi. That later fell through but the funds were used for building churches and providing churches with corrugated iron roofs.

The Flordins later moved from Likoni to Kakamega as church planters and in the beginning of the 1990s a carpentry training school was started with PMU Interlife, the development wing of the Swedish Pentecostal Movement,³⁰ and the Swedish International Development Cooperation (SIDA) support. They were joined by Mr and Mrs Välikangas and the Kimmo Katisko family who built up the school and started the training programme. They were later replaced by Mr and Mrs Willy Alesand as teachers of the school. Mr and Mrs Stig and Gertrud Gustafsson arrived in Nairobi to join the church work and were instrumental in building the first permanent church in Kawangware with the help of Dan Grönberg.³¹

The first PMU/SIDA financed project was Kimana Secondary School, Loitokitok, which was built in the 1980s by Mr Dan Grönberg.³² A mobile health clinic was run in Kajiado by Karin Hansen, Lilly Nedergård, Hans and Ingela Sundström as well as Noomi Grönberg before being handed over to national staff. Due to Mr Lagerström's return to Sweden, Mr Lägervik was chosen to be the new secretary and he moved to Nairobi. He was also involved in Bible correspondence work and church planting in Limuru and Gatundu, after having started a Christian bookshop in Thika. After a time, he left for Sweden and Maud Anderson as his assistant took over and was later elected as General Secretary for a number of years until 1993 when Edward Mungai took over, followed by Julius Bagaka in 1996.

Earliest SFM Churches and Indigenous Pastors

Missionary Gustav Struble (of Swedish Free Mission) visited Nyeri several times, starting from 1961 and he met with many preachers (not from Swedish mission) who

30 PMU Interlife is the development wing of the Swedish Pentecostal Movement which was started in 1965 and has around 84 000 members and 477 local churches. Accessed 22 September 2018, www.eurac-network.org/en/pmu.

31 FPFK, AGM Minutes of the FPFK, 1991, 2.

32 FPFK, Extracts of Minutes taken at the Annual General Meeting of the Free Pentecostal Fellowship in Kenya on May 26 May 1984 at Karen.

were willing to join him in his mission work. Some of those he met were Willie Munene, Ananiah Mwangi and Gerald Muteru.³³

Willie Munene, who hailed from Kihome Church, later opened a church in North Kinangop at Karima after joining Gustav Struble. He settled there and continued pasturing in the church.³⁴ Ananiah Mwangi was a businessman before joining Gustav Struble. He lived at Nanyuki. He owned a dry-cleaning company which was known as Seven Stars Drycleaners. He met Gustav Struble in Nyeri in 1963 at Outspan Hotel and decided to work for the Lord under the Swedish Free Mission. In 1964, Gustav Struble sent him to Huhoini Church to work with Muteru. Later the missionary asked him to choose to serve either the church or his dry-cleaning business. He chose to serve the Lord.³⁵ In 1971, Gustav Struble, who was nicknamed *Kamunyu*,³⁶ transferred him to Menengai Church where he stayed for three months only, after which he was sent to Solai, Nakuru.³⁷

Gerald Muteru was a member of the Anglican Church before he joined the Swedish Free Mission. In 1964, he started preaching at Huhoini. His salary was 50 shillings per month. He had to quit preaching for a while in order to construct a house because he wanted to marry. He went to Gustav to ask for help to enable him to marry. Gustav Struble gave him 10 shillings only. He was very discouraged but went on working with Struble. He completed his house and married in 1965. He continued ministering and opened several branches.³⁸

Missionaries Maria and Gustav Struble, together with local pastors Gerald Muteru, Ananiah Mwangi and Willie Munene, planted several churches in the area around Mt Kenya under “the flag of Swedish Free Mission.” These local churches include Kihome Church established in 1960 and built as a permanent structure in 1963, Huhoini Church established in 1964 and built in 1978, and Munyange Church in 1966.³⁹

The Maasai Church was uniquely established in the sense that it proceeded from the work of an African evangelist from the Luo community who worked alone for years before missionaries in Tanzania agreed to join him. Rev. Peter Odak relied on the support of the pastoralist Maasai community before Swedish missionaries joined him in

33 Gerald Muteru, interview by Stephen Muoki Joshua, digital recording at FPFK headquarters, Nairobi, 30 October 2014.

34 Willy Munene, interview by Rev. Edward Mungai, 30 October 2014.

35 Anania Mwangi, interview by Rev. Edward Mungai, 29 October 2014.

36 The word *Kamunyu* is from Gikuyu and it may be transliterated as “one who uproots.”

37 Anania Mwangi, interview by Edward Mungai, 29 October 2014.

38 Gerald Muteru, interview by Edward Mungai, digital recording at FPFK headquarters, Nairobi, 29 October 2014.

39 Anania Mwangi, Willie Menene, Gerald Muteru, interview by Edward Mungai, digital recording at FPFK headquarters, 29 and 30 October 2014.

establishing Rombo Church as well as its immediate branches in Loitoktok, Ilacit and Kimana.⁴⁰ Later on he was involved in pioneering churches in the coast region, such as Likoni and Lamu (Mpeketoni).

The Period of Collaboration (1984–1995)

The earliest collaboration efforts between NPM and SFM were born out of the need for theological education.⁴¹ It was the common need to train local church personnel that brought the two Scandinavian bodies together. By the beginning of 1974, the missionary work had developed tremendously and there was a significant need for a Bible school. The two bodies registered separately both in Kenya and abroad, started to talk about building a common training institution in Nairobi. Eventually “a nice, convenient plot was bought at Karen on the outskirts of Nairobi in 1974 and Egil Gjervoldstad was given the responsibility to oversee it.”⁴² He moved with his wife to stay at the new property while working on this big project.

There were other parallels and friendly initiatives between missionaries from Norway and Sweden aimed at determining ways of working together in the mission field. This became easier considering that the two mission agencies were part of the same Pentecostal structure in Scandinavia, which allowed a specific congregation to be autonomous within a broader framework of church networks, commonly referred to as fellowships. Several consultations were held and collaboration was achieved slowly; this saw locals beginning to “fellowship” more freely. Therefore, as the missionary establishments grew bigger the need to legally synchronise the congregations’ operations and reduce their dependence on the mother churches in Scandinavia became apparent.

Legal Twists in Search of a Merger

The idea of a merger between Scandinavian bodies working in Kenya was formally debated for the first time in 1976 during a joint meeting held at the Lumumba Hall in Roysambu,⁴³ Nairobi. This comprised all Scandinavian missionary bodies working in Kenya. In total nine organisations were represented, including Maranatha, Full Gospel, East African Pentecost, Evangelical Free Mission (EFM), and Norwegian Pentecostal Mission (NPM). The key purpose of the meeting was to collaborate and unite in the

40 Rev. Daniel Kisemei, interview by Stephen Muoki Joshua, digital recording at FPFK headquarters, Nairobi, 29 and 30 October 2014.

41 Stephen Muoki Joshua, “The Interface between ‘Missionary’ and ‘National’ Theological Education in the Free Pentecostal Fellowship in Kenya: A Historical Perspective,” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, December XXXII (3) (2006): 173–191.

42 Rev. Michael Onyango Atiang, interview by David Musumba, digital recording at FPFK headquarters, Nairobi, 12 November 2014.

43 This property was owned by the Communist Party and later sold to Canadian Pentecostal Missionaries. It is presently a part of Pan Africa Christian University (PACU) campus.

mission field. Their specific objectives were: 1) to avoid overlapping in evangelistic work; and 2) avoid duplication of project work in specific regions and funding sources.⁴⁴ At that meeting, a merger was found to be necessary. However, the idea was only supported by EFM and NPM. Others dropped off due to various reasons. Full Gospel, which was from Finland, did not want to collaborate with these others due to its longer history of missionary presence in Kenya. Full Gospel also felt that they had been in Kenya for far too long and were more established. The East African Pentecostals were also not interested in the merger.⁴⁵

EFM and NPM discussed what the name of the merger organisation should be. They unanimously agreed to “Free Pentecostal Fellowship in Kenya (FPFK).”⁴⁶ In 1977, after the merger meeting in Lumumba Road, they went ahead and registered the new FPFK with the registrar of societies in Kenya. The involvement of locals from both sides raised the need for developing a constitution that would see harmonisation of work in the FPFK. In 1978 Gudbrand Sandvold modelled how an FPFK constitution could look like.⁴⁷ However, the process of legalising common operations between the two sections was slow. Whereas the NPM went ahead to dissolve itself and use the new FPFK identity and name, the SFM, on the contrary, was rather more cautious and sluggish.⁴⁸ The SFM officially joined the FPFK in 1984, eight years after its registration. Indeed, it was not until 1984 that the two bodies worked together under FPFK registration.⁴⁹

An overwhelming majority of FPFK correspondence materials, written between 1984 and 1997 and archived in the FPFK head office, centred on the legal aspect of work relations. For instance, a letter by Maud Anderson, the General Secretary of FPFK, dated 26 May 1984 advised the Register of Societies that “Properties held in the name of EFM will be held in trust by the registered trustees of the EFM pending the conclusion of all formalities after which they will be transferred and vested in the name of the registered trustees of the Free Pentecostal Fellowship of Kenya.”⁵⁰ A day later, a letter was written from Stockholm by the Missionary sending body in Sweden to the Registrar General in Nairobi confirming that cancellation of the registration of EFM was authentic. It further advised that “the founder mission agree to the proposal that all EFM

44 Maud Anderson, interview by Stephen Muoki, 7 December 2014.

45 Maud Anderson, interview by Stephen Muoki, 7 December 2014.

46 Maud Anderson, “A Brief Annual Report for the Free Pentecostal Fellowship in Kenya 1984,” Karen Head Office, 1984.

47 Gabriel Onyango, interview conducted by David Musumba, digital recording at FPFK headquarters, Nairobi, 12 November 2014. See also a letter written by the General Secretary of FPFK, Maud Anderson to the Registrar of Societies,” 14 July 1995.

48 Letter written by the General Secretary of FPFK, Maud Anderson to the Registrar of Societies,” 14 July 1995.

49 FPFK, Minutes Number 20 taken at the first joint AGM of the FPFK at Karen Bible School, 26 May 1984.

50 Letter by Maud Anderson, “Notification of Dissolution,” 26 May 1984.

properties be transferred to FPFK upon its dissolution.”⁵¹ However, a letter written the same day by the secretary Maud Anderson cancelled the request to deregister EFM, noting that “we have several properties in that name [EFM] and it might take a long time to transfer them to the Free Pentecostal Fellowship in Kenya.”⁵² Therefore, in a period of three days, more than 10 letters were written that had direct bearing on how FPFK stakeholders collaborated with each other either abroad or locally.

A Common National Leadership and Constitution

A new FPFK constitution developed in the year 1983, was adopted during the first joint FPFK Annual General Meeting, which was held at Karen Bible School on 26 May 1984.⁵³ The 12-page document provided for a National Board which was constituted to lead the FPFK church under two separate departments, Swedish and Norwegian. The constitution was, however, put under immediate review and a committee was established.⁵⁴ The committee developed “proposed amendments to the 1983 constitution” which was adopted in the 1985 AGM.⁵⁵ Further to the constitution amendment, the 1984 AGM members resolved “unanimously to accept the application for membership from EFM and immediately receive this body into the FPFK without conditions.”⁵⁶ Pastor Asteriko Okwero was appointed the Chairman of the FPFK, and Ms Maud Anderson became the first General Secretary of the FPFK, based at the offices within the Karen Bible School premises.

Therefore, the legal twists in search of a merger and the effort to establish a new common constitution are indicative of the fact that the most significant activity between 1984 and 1997 in the history of the FPFK organisation was its effort towards working together. While both mission organisations had their respective constitutions registered with the Kenya government, the first joint constitution was developed in 1983 to enable the two organisations to merge in 1984. The reform of church financing and administration was, however, a slow and gradual process that continued for quite some time. The FPFK was hence registered with the Kenya Government under the Societies Act, even though the church groups continued to operate independently having certain things in common. “They would have two AGMs,” explained Maud Anderson, “departmental and national AGMs each year.”⁵⁷

51 Letter written by Swedish Mission in Stockholm to the Office of the Registrar-General in Nairobi, 27 May 1984.

52 Letter written by Ms Maud Anderson to the Registrar of Societies, 27 May 1984.

53 FPFK, Minutes Number 20, 26 May 1984.

54 FPFK, Minutes Number 20, 26 May 1984.

55 FPFK, Minutes of FPFK AGM held at Karen Bible School, 4 April 1995.

56 FPFK, Minutes Number 20, 26 May 1984.

57 Maud Anderson, interview by Edward Mungai and Stephen Muoki, 7 December 2014.

The Period of Nationalisation (1995–2018)

The process of nationalisation, commonly understood as a process of “handing over the mandate of leadership and service at the mission field to locals” (Pate and Keys 2002, 156–165) started in the FPFK during “the mid-1990s when the church started witnessing increased involvement of locals in the running of FPFK.”⁵⁸ Factors that necessitated nationalisation were not unique to the FPFK. First, the overarching paradigm of thought in East Africa, and pretty much the case globally (Bosch 1991, 2), was that African churches were coming of age and could be “self-governing, self-propagating and self-supporting” (Hildebrandt 1996, 35). As a result, most missionaries were being recalled to Norway and Sweden in order to allow locals to assume responsibility for the growth of already established local churches as well as the planting of new ones. Therefore, the FPFK nationalisation was a process driven from abroad out of missionary agencies’ interpretation of the context and conditions in the field, rather than by a forceful demand from the churches in Kenya.

Building the Kingdom of God Together (BKGT) Conferences

However, this was not an easy process, as it attracted heated debates. In 1995, the Swedish department of the FPFK held the first nationalisation conference at the Limuru Conference Centre (LCC) to discuss ways to nationalise the FPFK. It was arranged and sponsored by PMU Interlife. This conference ushered in a process that eventually changed the face of the FPFK and is, therefore, perceived by pastors as the beginning of the nationalisation process.⁵⁹ A series of similar but joint conferences between the Swedish and Norwegian departments were held from 1995 to 2000 and were popularly referred to as “*Building the Kingdom of God Together (BKGT)*” conferences.⁶⁰ As Maud Anderson recalled, “this was a time of deep discussions, at times painful when tension and misunderstandings between missionaries and national leaders arose.”⁶¹ However, following these conferences, there was “a greater understanding and fruitful cooperation.”⁶²

With the nationalisation also came the need to strengthen local leadership capacity in terms of personnel training and organisational policy development. During the 1995 Limuru conference, it was proposed that a capacity-building programme as well as Organisation Development (OD) be initiated. In the spirit of nationalisation, the first election of a local leadership without any foreign missionary in the National Board was

58 Letter written by Maud Anderson under the title, “Registration of Evangelical Free Mission in Kenya, Reg. no 4615,” February 2001.

59 Anania Mwangi, Willie Menene, Gerald Muteru, interview by Edward Mungai, 29 and 30 October 2014.

60 Letter written by the General Secretary of FPFK, Maud Anderson to the Registrar of Societies, 14 July 1995.

61 Maud Anderson, interview by Edward Mungai and Stephen Muoki, 7 December 2014.

62 Maud Anderson, interview by Edward Mungai and Stephen Muoki, 7 December 2014.

held during the 1997 AGM. This first national board was chaired by Rev. Patrick Gikonyo of Namanga Church. Rev. Julius Bagaka became the General Secretary and held the post until 2005. In the same year, the FPFK headquarters moved from Karen Bible School premises to its present offices at Kindaruma road in Nairobi.

Organisation Development and Capacity Building Programme (OD&CB)

The FPFK's Organisational Development and Capacity Building (OD&CB) project was jointly funded by Norway and Sweden in 1997 in order to aid nationalisation efforts. The need was brought about by global developments in Sweden and Norway concerning identity and mission of the church in Africa. The Swedish Mission Council (SMC), of which PMU Interlife is a member, pioneered in this field with technical support to facilitate churches and related organisations to reflect on their identity and organisational work culture. In this context, the FPFK benefited from the larger process of enhancing the partnership between the North and South through the OD interventions. The OD project made it possible for FPFK national leaders, local church pastors, elders and other leaders to become involved in the growth and development of the FPFK. Leaders were taken through various training programmes aimed at improving their effectiveness and efficiency. Missionaries Vigdis and Arne Gjervolstad played a pivotal role in the nationalisation process through their role as project leaders of OD and CB.

Further to training, the OD and CB project facilitated the streamlining of FPFK national operations. Key among the issues prioritised was a revision of the national constitution for the church. Efforts to develop organisational policy documents such as personnel and other operational manuals then followed. Through the OD and CB process, the FPFK "was enlightened to its important role in civil service provision and undertook a bold step to improve its participation in social work."⁶³ It is not a coincidence, therefore, that between 1995 and 2005 the FPFK increased its funded projects by well over 90 per cent, besides joining ecumenical bodies such as the Evangelical Alliance of Kenya (EAK) and the National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCCK). The FPFK-run projects included such as: HIV/AIDS awareness and youth projects; Maasai and HIV/AIDS project; Kainuk community development project; Tuinuane women project; Anti-Female Genital Mutilation Project (FGM); gender, humanitarian emergency relief projects; and Organisation Development projects. Individual churches in Norway and Sweden contributed immensely in supporting humanitarian emergency projects that evangelistic ministries dubbed "soul winning," children and mission work. Other supports from Sweden and Norway were directed to the Karen Bible College as a training arm of the FPFK, and to scholarship programmes through which nationals accessed higher education.

63 FPFK, Assessment Report by Taabco, October 2013, p. 93.

Conclusion

This article has outlined the historical development of the FPFK since its inception. It established that Norwegian missionaries arrived in 1955 and began work among the Luo and Kisii people in the far western region of the country in Kisumu. They were followed by their Swedish counterparts, who in 1960 started work among the Maasai and coastal people in the south. Between 1955 and 1984 the two missionary groups independently established local churches and registered them in Kenya. In 1984, however, they merged and established a common office in Nairobi. Between 1984 and 1995, the FPFK transformed itself from scattered missionary establishments into a single local church. This required a lot of collaboration. Since 1995, however, the church embarked on an intensive nationalisation process. Therefore, the church denomination has existed in Kenya under many names of registration: NPM/SPM missionary centres (1955–1984), FPFK 1984–2018, and more recently, FPC (2018ff).

We have argued that each of the three periods of FPFK presence in Kenya has been characteristically different, presenting the church with new sets of challenges. During the period of beginnings (1950–1984), Scandinavian missionaries became “quasi farmers” first owning large pieces of land and using the produce to enhance their missionary interest. It is striking that Scandinavian missionaries became interested in an English colony with lots of language barriers. Their zeal in learning local languages and their energy in farming gave them the advantage in sharing a new faith. However, their relations with the African junior church workers were in many instances not as good. Retired FPFK African pastors who worked with Norwegian missionaries during the beginning periods had mixed feelings as they remembered their experiences during a Focus Group Discussion that was organised as part of data collection for the present work on 12 and 13 November 2014 at the FPFK Kindaruma Guesthouse in Nairobi.⁶⁴ The 18 members spoke of “Spiritual Colonialism” and that they agonised during their tenure under the Scandinavian missionaries. They said that “Africans were not involved in decision making” and were kept from addressing the missionary agencies abroad, they were never allowed to enter the houses of the missionaries.⁶⁵ Whereas “the offering was always small ... the missionaries said to the people not to give anything in support of the pastors or even give tithes since the missionaries were responsible for giving pastors food and clothes.”⁶⁶ They argued that this foundation has had major negative impacts in the church. For instance, it created undue dependency of Africans on the Scandinavians. Secondly, due to its origin in the farms, the FPFK has remained a “rural” or “agrarian” church almost unable to penetrate the urban centres. This is a major limitation, considering the fact that the Kenyan society is fast transitioning from an

64 Focus Group Discussion, 12 and 13 November 2014.

65 Focus Group Discussion, 12 and 13 November 2014.

66 Focus Group Discussion, 12 and 13 November 2014.

agrarian rural to an urban lifestyle on account of rural to urban migrations and the implementation of a devolved constitution that was inaugurated in 2010.

Similarly, during the collaboration period, the FPFK attempted to deal with the challenge of division between two groups of local churches with different identities, namely Swedish and Norwegian. This rift was exacerbated by nationalist differences between the Scandinavian missionaries. As a result, local churches from each side still consider themselves as either Norwegian or Swedish. This divisive paradigm of thought manifests in each activity of the FPFK today, especially in church polity and in the elections to FPFK national offices. A large number of assets are still registered separately and not under the FPFK. The Fifty Years Golden Jubilee function held at Thessalia Mission Centre on 28 October 2005 was regarded by the “Swedish pastors”⁶⁷ as one-sided. It had no representation from Sweden either.

The 23 years of nationalisation (1995–2018) have enabled the FPFK to transfer voting power from the “white” missionaries to “black” African leaders. Therefore, it has only superficially changed the face of the FPFK from white to black leadership, but has failed to deal with fundamental identity and missional issues of the church. This has brought on board various challenges. First, missionaries only exited from national leadership positions and migrated into running social projects carrying with them all the financial support. As a result, there was more money in the projects housed in the same compounds with “starving” church congregations. In many cases, the FPFK churches dwindled as projects prospered and pastors became project workers taking pastoral work as their part-time vocation. Second, the Swedish department was more committed to nationalisation than its Norwegian counterpart. As a result, the identity of the two sections of the church, as well as growth in the post-white-missionary era, has become very different. The presence of Norwegians in the mission field is more than that of Swedish nationals. Third, the challenge of raising local financial support and ideologically shifting FPFK membership from overdependence on Scandinavia has come at a heavy price. For instance, financial support from Scandinavia for the Karen Bible School continued to shrink since 1995 and finally ceased in 2005.⁶⁸ As indicated in the 2015 AGM minutes of the FPFK, local church delegates to the AGM have vehemently opposed proposals to increase financial support for the college from local church congregations.⁶⁹ The college faces imminent closure on account of financial instability.

67 This term is loosely used here, as it is usually used in the FPFK fraternity, to refer to African pastors who have served in the Swedish tradition of the FPFK. See Focus Group Discussion, 12 and 13 November 2014.

68 Daniel Ogada, interview by Stephen Muoki, digital recording at his office, Karen, 13 April 2014. Daniel Ogada served as the principal of the Karen Bible School between 2013 and 2015.

69 FPFK, Minutes of AGM held at Karen Bible School in Nairobi, April 2015.

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