

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

MISSION BIOGRAPHICAL SERIES

BISHOPS – MISSIONARIES

ID#

163

**NAGBE, BISHOP STEPHEN
TROWEN**

Christian Advocate: March 1, 1973

A Friend Recalls Late Bishop Nagbe

When the late Bishop Stephen Nagbe was elected to the episcopacy at 32 in 1965, he became the youngest bishop in the history of the church.

A native of Liberia, Bishop Nagbe was also the first indigenous bishop to head Liberian Methodism.

Our paths—his and mine—crossed while both of us were attending Gammon Theological Seminary in Atlanta.

One summer after the school cafeteria had closed and I had two weeks before I was to depart for employment, Steve and his wife, Melvena, invited me to have my main meal with them. I gladly accepted, and for two weeks "Steve" and "Campbell" (the latter being the way he referred to me) became simple greetings for us.

Most blacks take real pride in vaunted positions their clergymen



receive and often remind you of the respect due their leaders. At the 1970 General Conference in St. Louis I saw Bishop Nagbe and, for me, he was still Steve.

I was quickly cautioned by another member of the Gammon class, the Rev. Samuel NeSmith. "You should not call him Steve," he told me. "He is a bishop and that is what you should call him."

At the 1972 General Conference in Atlanta, somehow it was Steve again.

When the bishop died February 2, at 39, he headed the Monrovia Area, comprising the 23,000-member Liberia Central Conference of the denomination. In addition to the B.D. degree he received at Gammon in 1961, four years later he earned a Master of Sacred Theology degree from Boston University.

Bishop Nagbe first became ill last September while attending a meeting of the Council of Bishops in Ohio. The bishop entered a hospital in Chillicothe, Ohio, to be treated by a former missionary physician, and was accompanied by a physician on his return to Liberia in October.

The bishop is survived by Melvena and their three children.

—JAMES CAMPBELL

North of the border the proposed name of the union outcome is "The Church of Christ in Canada." An 81-page plan of union now goes to legislative processes of the denominations. Their membership is listed as: United Church, 4,277,446; Anglican Church, 1,109,221; Disciples of Christ, 3,500.

The plan calls for the office of bishop despite objections by some in the United Church. Both Anglican and United Churches have groups vehemently opposing union.

In addition to the Indian Roman Catholic-Protestant joint effort on behalf of converted Hindus, there were other similar joint projects.

In Ireland top-level Anglican and Roman Catholic churchmen appealed for aid to a two-year-old school to train specialists in religious conciliation for all of Ireland.

In England a Roman Catholic-Methodist dialogue committee appointed a group to study questions concerning the Eucharist and the ministry as they relate to both churches.

In Scotland satisfactory progress was reported after the first business session of a joint committee appointed by the national Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) and the Methodist Church to prepare a basis

the Union faculty since 1967, is the editor of a series of books on black religion, and the author (1967) of *The Negro Pilgrimage in America*, identified as a standard high school and college text.

Saint Paul Seminary Elects McElvaney

As its second president Saint Paul School of Theology, Methodist has named a native Texan who brings both business and pastoral experience to theological administration.

He is the Rev. William K. McElvaney, 44. Since 1967 he has been pastor of Northaven United Methodist Church in his native Dallas. He is a graduate of Southern Methodist University and its Perkins School of Theology and a member of the North Texas Conference.

National journals have featured Mr. McElvaney's work in two Dallas suburban churches, first at Mesquite, Texas, then at Northaven. Before he entered the ministry he spent three years in banking and in the oil industry.

Mr. McElvaney was the unanimous recommendation of a selection com-

Board of Global Ministries
The United Methodist Church

14th floor, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, N.Y. 10027. (212) 749-0700
Cable: missions new york

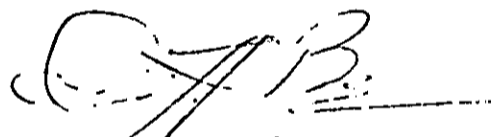
February 2, 1973

TO ALL BOARD OF MANAGERS AND DIVISION AT-LARGE MEMBERS

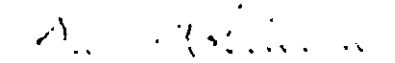
Word was received today of the death of Bishop S. Trowen Nagbe at 9:35 a.m. in Monrovia, Liberia.

At this time we have no further details; however, messages may be sent to Mrs. Nagbe at Box 1010, Monrovia, Liberia.

Sincerely,



Isaac H. Bivens
Assistant General Secretary
Regional Coordinator of Africa Team



Sue Robinson
Executive Secretary
Africa Team

Ylah

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UNITED METHODIST INFORMATION

ARTHUR WEST
Executive Secretary
601 West Riverview Ave.
Dayton, Ohio 45406
(513) 222-2511

THE GENERAL NEWS SERVICE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

NEW YORK OFFICE

1107 Avenue C
475 Riverside Drive
Phone: 212-850-1100

NEW YORK (UMI) -- Bishop Stephen Trowen Nagbe, 39, one of the youngest bishops in the United Methodist Church and head of United Methodism in Liberia, died February 2 in Liberia after a six-month illness, according to a cable received by the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries here.

Bishop Nagbe was last in the U.S. in September for the semi-annual meeting of the United Methodist Council of Bishops and later spent time in a hospital in Chillicothe, Ohio. He returned to Liberia late in October and had remained there.

Bishop Nagbe was episcopal leader of the Monrovia Area, comprising the 23,000-member Liberia Central Conference of the United Methodist Church. The quadrennial session of the Central Conference was to have been held in November but had been postponed until February because of the bishop's illness. It was not known here whether the session could be held as scheduled later this month.

At the time of his election in 1965, Bishop Nagbe was only 32, at that time the youngest bishop in the United Methodist Church. He was also the first indigenous bishop elected in his country to head Liberian Methodism, his predecessors having been American bishops assigned to service in the West African country. His election was considered a landmark in the growth of the Liberian church. Liberia is the oldest area of overseas mission work of the United Methodist Church,

missionaries having gone there first in 1833. Bishop Nagbe had been elected for a term and was subject to re-election at this session of the Central Conference.

Before he was elected an episcopal leader, Bishop Nagbe was pastor of the Mt. Scott Methodist Church at Cape Palmas. He had previously been pastor and acting district superintendent at the Gbarnga Methodist center.

Born in Betu, Liberia, October 23, 1933, Bishop Nagbe received his education in Methodist schools, including the Barclayville Elementary School and the College of West Africa (secondary school) in Monrovia. He received the bachelor of arts and theology degree from Cuttington College in Monrovia in 1956 and came to the U.S. for further education.

He attended Gammon Theological Seminary, Atlanta, Ga., and received the bachelor of divinity degree in 1961. He earned the master of sacred theology degree from Boston University School of Theology in 1965.

Active in denominational and interdenominational church life in Liberia, Bishop Nagbe was for four years a member of the United Methodist Board of Missions. He spoke frequently in churches and elsewhere on visits to the U.S. to attend Council of Bishops meetings and other events.

Surviving are his wife, Mrs. Melvena Nagbe, and three children. A funeral service was scheduled for February 11 in Monrovia.

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(February 5, 1973)