

Former Occultist Is Now First Female Pentecostal Pastor Ordained in Kenya

Margaret Wanjiru became a Christian 11 years ago and today has a church of 25,000 in Nairobi

An ex-satanist and a single mother of three has become the first Pentecostal woman in Kenya to be ordained to the pastorate. Margaret Wanjiru, who rejected occultism while weathering stiff resistance to her decision to become a Christian in 1990, is founder and senior pastor of The Nairobi Miracle Centre Church, a church of almost 25,000 and one of east Africa's largest Pentecostal congregations.

Wanjiru's spiritual turnaround occurred in early 1990 when she was operating a thriving import-export business. Her success allowed her the luxury of owning several cars as well as a special garage for servicing them.

When a female competitor came on the scene and started getting some of the business, Wanjiru consulted witches, who unsuccessfully tried to cast spells on the newcomer. The witches admitted to Wanjiru that a power greater than theirs protected the woman.

It was the first time anyone had suggested to Wanjiru that a power existed higher than the one she experienced. She approached senior witches in an attempt to gain more powers. They said they were willing to help her—if Wanjiru would sell

her soul to Satan in return. They gave her a week to decide.

Meanwhile, Wanjiru investigated her competitor to find the secret of her power. She discovered that the woman was “a born-again Christian” and that she supported the ministry of a Kenyan evangelist with generous gifts and with transportation during crusades.

Wanjiru concluded that the woman’s power lay in her being a Christian. She also decided that she wanted to have what the woman had.

Wanjiru took her two sons, born when she was an unmarried teen-ager—she now has a daughter, adopted seven years ago—and drove to the only church she had known as a child to seek that higher power. In this church, as children, Wanjiru and her sister had asked the preacher to lead them to salvation, but the preacher

had declined, telling them that they were too young.

This time, Wanjiru sat through the service, outraged that about half of the people slept through the sermon. Finally, she stormed out in pursuit of the preacher, who had concluded at the end of an uninspired sermon on sin that “sin is when you run the traffic lights.”

“He had no idea that I had had to run the lights to get to church on time!” Wanjiru told Charisma. “I walked out, got the boys from Sunday school and got into my sports car and drove off.”

Still spiritually hungry, Wanjiru next attended a deliverance

seminar. During the service, to her dismay, the preacher prophetically stated: "There is a woman here. You are involved in satanism, and you have cursed another woman with madness. Come forward!"

Wanjiru waited until the end of the meeting to approach the preacher. "I know someone who has done what you said," she said to him. Wanjiru had herself done it to a woman who used to work for her.

"Look for the woman you have bewitched," the preacher told her. "Say to her: 'In the name of Jesus Christ, be healed,' and she will recover."

Amazed that the preacher knew what Wanjiru had done, she did as he had instructed.

"My former employee instantly regained her mind." Wanjiru said. "She even remembered what I owed her in salaries and benefits."

The next time Wanjiru attended the seminar, the preacher gave her his number and asked her to call the next day. While trying to call, Wanjiru said that "all the telephones in the house went dead as if on cue." Desperate, she drove to her mother's workplace to place the call.

Wanjiru's mother was still working as a maid for the same family in whose servants' quarters she had single-handedly raised her six children. The minister came and preached to Wanjiru for a full hour, but it wasn't until she was alone in her office one day and overwhelmed by a sense of her sinfulness that she finally surrendered her life to the Lord.

Seven years later, after preaching and evangelizing on the streets, Wanjiru was ordained in 1997. Today she and her busy staff at Nairobi Miracle Centre Church host as many as 22 services each week.

The church is an affiliate ministry of Jesus Is Alive Ministries (JIAM), which reaches millions of people weekly in the sub-Saharan region of Africa and in Europe through its TV ministry. JIAM also hosts evangelistic crusades in various countries.