

In Uganda, Anglicans Are Casting Out Demons

Last Friday in the dusty town of Kabwohe, Uganda, more than 5,000 people crammed into an enclosed field to worship Jesus. They stayed from 7 p.m. until 6:30 a.m. for an all-night celebration that included dancing, singing, shouting, speaking in tongues and an altar call that resulted in dozens of conversions. A few times during the evening, someone was set free from demons.

You might expect this in Africa, where Pentecostal churches have been growing for decades. But this event, which happens in Kabwohe once a month, is sponsored by All Saints Anglican Church. Right after a demonized woman was carried away from the rickety wooden stage, Rev. Gordon Karuhanga led the congregation in the Apostles' Creed. Then he and other robed clergy served Communion.

It took more than an hour to serve the bread and grape juice to the crowd.

This is the new face of revival in Uganda, where hundreds of traditional Anglican churches have been set on fire by the Holy Spirit. All Saints Church in Kabwohe had shrunk to a handful of people a few years ago. But today the 400-seat building cannot contain the throngs of worshippers who show up for Sunday or mid-week services. When I spoke there last Saturday morning, many people sat in plastic chairs outside the building and watched through the windows because the church was packed.

Rev. Karuhanga is no traditional Anglican. He was persecuted by his bishop when he began teaching about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He sees people delivered from demons regularly, sometimes right in the middle of a church service. His

parishioners are now learning how to set local families free from the witchcraft that has been so prevalent in Uganda.

“There are many invisible forces that are in constant attack against God’s people,” says Karuhanga, who has focused his efforts on getting people delivered from *amahembe*, a form of sorcery promoted by local witchdoctors. People who are oppressed by these spirits often begin twitching, flailing their arms and falling on the floor in fits when they hear the gospel for the first time at All Saints Church.

“To counteract the power of demons, many Anglican churches have become open to praying for deliverance,” says Rev. Medad Birungi, an Anglican evangelist who established the interdenominational World Shine Ministries in 2005 in Uganda’s capital, Kampala.

While he, too, has been persecuted by traditional bishops, Birungi sees a growing openness to charismatic renewal throughout the Anglican churches of Uganda. Today, 12 of the 38 Anglican bishops in his country are open to charismatic renewal. A similar openness is developing among Ugandan Baptists and Presbyterians.

“We are raising up a whole new crop of young Anglican leaders here,” Birungi told me. “Within 20 years they will replace the liberal bishops. These new leaders speak in tongues and embrace all the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In the next 20 years, we will experience a whole new wave of revival here.”

This explosive spiritual movement is not limited to Uganda. Similar waves of renewal are impacting Nigeria, Tanzania, Rwanda, Botswana, Kenya and other African nations. In some large prayer gatherings sponsored by the African House of Prayer, Christians have asked God to break witchcraft covenants that were made by government leaders.

With the Holy Spirit’s help, Africa is slowly renouncing its historic ties to sorcery, corruption and genocide.

This surge of conservative, Spirit-filled Christianity in Africa has been on a collision course with its liberal counterpart in the West. Uganda's Anglicans are baffled by the 2003 decision by the Episcopal Church in the United States to accept gay marriage, and they have asked the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, to kick the Episcopalians out of the worldwide Anglican communion because of the heresy.

At a meeting last month in England, Anglican leaders voted to put the Episcopal Church on probation for three years as they try to resolve the conflict. They rebuked the Americans for a "fundamental departure from the faith and teaching" of the church, and they strongly reaffirmed that biblical marriage is between one man and one woman.

At All Saints Church in Kabwohe, Rev. Karuhanga says he will never compromise biblical teaching on sexuality, and he says he has prayed for people who struggled with same-sex feelings. Those people found grace to live in sexual purity. And while he stands firm on his convictions, he offers compassion rather than judgment.

"The church must be rooted in the Word of God," Karuhanga says. "I see the Episcopalians in America as people who need to be helped. We need to teach them."

Now that many dying liberal churches in the United States have lost the fire of the Spirit, it appears that African Christians are picking up the torch and carrying it for a new generation.