

Building Communion: **REAL STORIES OF AFRICAN HEROES**



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GLOBAL MISSION

This resource is an opportunity to reflect, learn, and celebrate the lives of African Christians whose faith and leadership have shaped churches, nations and empires across centuries and whose legacies continue to motivate us today.

INTRODUCTION

*Whose stories have we been missing?
Where might we seek hope and
inspiration in our current struggles?*



In a world plagued by rising tides of racism, far right activism, hostility towards refugees, and growing inequality, this resource is an opportunity to reflect, learn, and celebrate the lives of Black Christians whose faith and leadership have shaped churches, nations and empires across centuries and whose legacies continue to motivate us today. Many of these remarkable individuals have been deliberately overlooked, their contributions hidden or forgotten, yet their stories remain vital and inspiring.

This resource brings to life nine exceptional individuals. Each is introduced through a short biography, a fact file, and a reflection on their enduring influence. Through the stories of Philip Quaque, the first African ordained in the Church of England, Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther, the first African Anglican bishop, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a tireless advocate for justice, this resource highlights pioneers whose

faith and courage shaped radical new landscapes for the communities they served. Saints like Hadrian of Canterbury and Athanasius of Alexandria, theologians such as Mercy Amba Oduyoye, and leaders like Yaa Asantewaa – who led the Ashanti resistance against British colonial forces – show the courage and impact of African heroes and Christians throughout history.

At USPG, we are committed to racial justice and to facing our own history, including our own entanglements with slavery and racism. These stories belong to the Body of Christ, all year round – inviting us to celebrate, learn, and reflect on the kinds of actions we might individually and collectively take today. Please do share these stories and the resources which we have linked to with your churches and communities and speak out about how these remarkable people used the opportunities, wisdom and gifts that they had to overcome fear and oppression and build the Kingdom in their own times.

Sophia Jones
Director of Communications,
Engagement and Fundraising (maternity cover)

ARCHBISHOP DESMOND TUTU

First black Archbishop of Cape Town

Desmond Tutu was one of those few Christian leaders who both became a household name in their time, but also massively contributed to changes in the established world order at the end of the colonial era of European global hegemony.



His raw courage in the face of the cruel cutting edge of apartheid in South Africa, his ability in one moment to be taken seriously by Presidents and power brokers, and in the next to connect with the broad masses of struggling compatriots – A “Rabble-Rouser for Peace” as his principal biographer describes him.

First as General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, then later as the Archbishop of Cape Town, Tutu became the face and voice of the Opposition Parties in South Africa, as more and more people and organisations were “banned”. This was both a huge burden, and a challenge for which he was uniquely suited. His sharp mind, deep spirituality, and determination not just to talk but to act, were all critical.

He was the forefront of resistance while Mandela was in prison and was intimately involved in the negotiations first to release Mandela, then, with him, to seek a solution to the intractable problems between the cry for justice and the longing for peace. This for Tutu was a personal, theological, and spiritual battle that he carried often in private and lonely ways. Then later, he chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which did so much to enable the new society to be born.

Thereafter as he grew older, and in retirement, he never held back in criticising the new leadership where he saw them falling short of the vision they had shared together of the Rainbow People of South Africa.

I was privileged to be on his staff for some years. I saw his powerful sense of humour carve through deep divisions in synods over women’s ordination, gay rights, or military chaplaincies. I saw his prayerful humility in morning and evening offices. I watched him dance out of the church a large group of toi-toi-ing youths who had “invaded” the funeral requiem of a fellow bishop. Upon calming the situation, he returned to the altar and seamlessly continued the Consecration Prayer.

My last chance meeting with him was when I was boarding a plane home from Johannesburg shortly before his final illness. As I queued to board, I heard a raucous cackle of laughter behind me: it could only be Desmond, teasing the stewardesses. We walked to the plane together, reminiscing. Once on board we laughed as he, of course, turned left, while I retreated to the cattle class seats at the rear. Here was the very human, very loving, yet always perceptive,

priest, Archbishop, and Nobel Laureate for whom we and so many others give daily thanks.

Tutu was supported in some of his studies as a young man by USPG bursaries, and the Society found often discreet ways of supporting his work when the security forces were everywhere.

To explore Desmond Tutu’s legacy further, visit The Desmond Tutu Centre for Religion and Social Justice website and read their most recent [annual report](#). The research centre challenges asymmetrical systems of power and commonly accepted assumptions about the social world and human experience.

Fact File:

Born

October 7th 1931

Died

December 26th 2021

Ethnicity

Xhosa, Black South African

Place of Birth

Klerksdorp, South Africa

Famous for

Anti-apartheid activist, Nobel Peace Prize winner, and first Black Archbishop of Cape Town.

Educational / Spiritual Journey

Originally trained as a teacher; later studied theology at King’s College London and was ordained in 1960. Became Archbishop of Cape Town in 1986.

Interesting Fact

Tutu coined the phrase “Rainbow Nation” to describe South Africa’s diversity and hope for reconciliation after apartheid.

About the author

Edgar Ruddock and his wife Annette served as missionaries in Southern Africa between 1983 and 1991. During their time in South Africa, their work brought them into contact with many key figures of the church, including Desmond Tutu, providing a unique perspective on the period and its challenges. Upon returning to the UK, Edgar joined the staff at USPG as Director of International Relations, later becoming Deputy General Secretary, and now holds the position of life Vice President in retirement.

THE REVD PHILIP QUAQUE

First African Anglican priest

Philip Quaque was a trailblazer in the modern history of African Christianity. Born in Cape Coast in 1741, he grew up in a society shaped by European trade, colonial ambitions, and cultural exchange. His life journey – from a Fante child to an Anglican priest educated in England – placed him at the intersection of African tradition and European Christianity.



Quaque's significance in his own time stemmed from his pioneering role as the first African Anglican priest. Ordained in 1765, he returned from England to Cape Coast with the hope of evangelising his people. He established a school initially aimed at educating mulatto children, later expanding to include African children. This school laid the foundation for formal education in Ghana and eventually became the Philip Quaque Boys School.

Despite his dedication, Quaque faced immense challenges. His years in England had caused him to forget his native Fante language, making communication difficult. His European upbringing alienated him from local customs, and he was criticised by Africans for being too European, and Europeans for being too African. His missionary work was often undermined by cultural misunderstandings, lack of institutional support, and racial prejudice.

Today, Quaque is remembered as a symbol of resilience and cross-cultural engagement. His letters to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) are invaluable historical documents, offering a rare African perspective on colonial life, missionary work, and the complexities of identity. His legacy continues through educational institutions and scholarly recognition of his contributions to African Christianity.

Quaque's life teaches us about perseverance in the face of isolation and misunderstanding. His commitment to education and faith, despite limited success and personal hardship, reflects a deep sense of vocation. His story challenges the Church to reflect on how it supports missionaries, especially those navigating multiple cultural identities.

His struggles with identity, language loss, bereavement at the death of his English wife, Catherine Blunt, and cultural alienation remain as relevant in today's global Church as they were in the 18th and 19th century. Quaque's experience highlights the importance of contextual theology and the need for inclusive support systems for clergy from diverse backgrounds. His life also raises questions about how the Church engages with indigenous cultures and histories.

To discover more about how USPAG – the successor organisation to SPG – is engaging critically with and taking reparative action in response to its historic links to slavery through its ownership of The Codrington Estates in Barbados, visit [Renewal and Reconciliation: The Codrington Project](#).



Fact File:

Born

1741

Died

1816

Ethnicity

Fante

Place of Birth

Gold Coast (modern-day Ghana)

Famous for

First African ordained as a priest in the Church of England and the first African Anglican missionary.

Educational / Spiritual Journey

Taken to England by SPG missionary Thomas Thompson in 1754; baptized in 1759; studied theology and ordained in 1765; returned to Cape Coast in 1766 as a missionary and educator.

Interesting Fact

Quaque wrote over 40 letters to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), offering rare insights into 18th-century West African society and missionary challenges.

CECIL MAJALIWA

First black Anglican priest in Tanzania

Cecil Majaliwa's life is a powerful testament to transformation, resilience, and leadership in the colonial African Church history. Born around 1860 in Zanzibar, Majaliwa was sold into slavery at the age of six. His life took a dramatic turn when he was taken in by Bishop Edward Steere of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa (UMCA), who saw promise in the young boy and ensured he received a Christian education at the Kiungani school.



Majaliwa excelled both academically and spiritually. In 1883, he was sent to St Augustine's College in Canterbury, England, a missionary training institution. Upon his return to East Africa, he was ordained a deacon in 1886 and a priest in 1890, becoming the first East African Anglican priest in Tanganyika (now Tanzania). His ordination marked a significant milestone in the history of African Christianity. Majaliwa was educated and ordained through the UMCA, which later merged with USPG.

Majaliwa was assigned to Chitangali in the Ruvuma region, a remote and challenging mission field. Unlike many freed slaves who struggled to reintegrate into African village life, Majaliwa adapted quickly. He learned the Yao language fluently, translated Christian teachings, and built strong relationships with local leaders, including Chief Barnaba Matuka. His ministry was deeply contextual, rooted in respect for local customs and culture.

His impact was profound. He baptised many, trained future clergy, and established vibrant Christian communities. Six of his pupils became priests, and two became deacons. Yet despite his success, Majaliwa was never promoted or given broader leadership responsibilities. European mission leaders failed to recognise his achievements, and he was eventually removed from his post without clear justification.

Majaliwa is now celebrated as a pioneer of East African Christianity. His life challenges colonial-era assumptions that African clergy were incapable of leadership. His ministry demonstrated that African-led mission work was not only viable but essential for authentic and sustainable church growth.

His legacy is a source of pride for Tanzanian Anglicans and a reminder to the global Church of the importance of empowering indigenous leadership. His story continues to inspire efforts toward justice, inclusion, and contextual theology.

Majaliwa's life teaches us about perseverance, cultural sensitivity, and the transformative power of education. His ability to bridge cultures and languages made his ministry effective and enduring. His story calls the Church to reflect on how it supports and uplifts leaders from marginalized backgrounds.

The lack of recognition he faced highlights ongoing issues of racial inequality and historical erasure within Church structures. His story urges us to confront these legacies and work toward a more inclusive Church.

To help champion Cecil's legacy and work toward a more equitable Church, consider downloading Churches Together in Britain and Ireland's [resource for Black History Month](#).

Fact File:

Born

1860

Died

1908

Ethnicity

Yao

Place of Birth

Zanzibar (modern day Tanzania)

Famous for

First African to be ordained as an Anglican priest in what is now Tanzania.

Educational / Spiritual Journey

Born into slavery and sold at age six; educated by the Universities' Mission to Central Africa (UMCA) in Zanzibar and later at St Augustine's College, Canterbury; ordained deacon in 1886 and priest in 1890.

Interesting Fact

Majaliwa mastered the Yao language and translated Christian liturgy, gaining deep respect from local chiefs and villagers.

SAMUEL AJAYI CROWTHER

First African Anglican bishop

In 1864, Samuel Crowther became the first African to be made an Anglican Bishop. His story is epic.



In 1821, slave traders destroyed the town of Oshogun and captured an eleven-year-old Yoruba boy called Ajayi (or Adjai) along with his family. In 1822, he was freed from the Portuguese vessel, *Esperanza Feliz*, and sent to Sierra Leone where he was baptised into the name Samuel Crowther. He attended school, both in Sierra Leone and then briefly in Islington in England. On returning to Sierra Leone, he became the first student at the Fourah Bay College.

He went as the Church Missionary Society (CMS) representative on an 1841 expedition up the Niger, under Dr. William Baikie. His journal about this expedition so impressed the CMS committee that they invited him to attend Islington Training College.

It is notable that during that expedition he saw a monument to Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) missionary the Revd Philip Quaque, the first African in Anglican orders. In a letter accompanying the journal to the CMS, he reveals the deep impression that this memorial to another black man made on him:

When I saw the engraving which I inserted in my journal at Cape Coast Castle, I could not but think how many African missionaries, whose constitution is suited to the climate, might now be employed in this part of the Lord's vineyard. Who the individual was, I know not; neither have I heard anything of him, except from his monument. What attracted my attention was, that he was a Native of that place- sent to England for education- received Holy Orders- & was employed in his own country upward of fifty years. [Crowther's emphasis]

Crowther was ordained in 1843 and returned to minister in Abeokuta, in what is now Nigeria. He was recognised by the Bible Society as a notable linguist who translated the Bible into the Yoruba language. He was subsequently awarded a doctorate from Oxford University for this significant work.

On St. Peter's Day, the 29th June 1864, Adjai was consecrated Bishop of the Niger in Canterbury cathedral. He was bishop over a huge diocese covering West Africa from the Equator to the Senegal, with the exception of the British colonies of Lagos, the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone'.

However, the European missionaries were unwilling to be under his control so it was declared that the white missionaries within Crowther's diocese would be overseen by the white bishop of Sierra Leone rather than by Crowther. The jealousy of the white missionaries eventually led to

Bishop Crowther's authority being undermined and the effectiveness of his ministry being curtailed. Crowther died a disappointed man. No other African was made as a diocesan bishop until 1952, when Bishop Akinyele was appointed to the Ibadan Diocese.

Crowther's pioneering work as a Christian missionary, church leader and scholar cannot be erased. He stands as a giant who withstood the trials of slavery, and the blessings and trials of the church he served.

Looking for resources for your church this Black History Month? Check out The Church of England's [liturgical resources](#) which include Services of the Word, a Eucharistic service, Prayers of Lament and of Commission, and links to further resources for Bible studies, youth work, Messy Church, and music.

Fact File:

Born

1809

Died

1891

Ethnicity

Yoruba

Place of Birth

Osogun (modern day Oyo state, Nigeria)

Famous for

First African Anglican bishop and a key figure in translating the Bible into Yoruba.

Educational / Spiritual Journey

Samuel was captured into slavery as a child, freed by the British Royal Navy, educated in Sierra Leone, and later ordained by the Church Missionary Society (CMS).

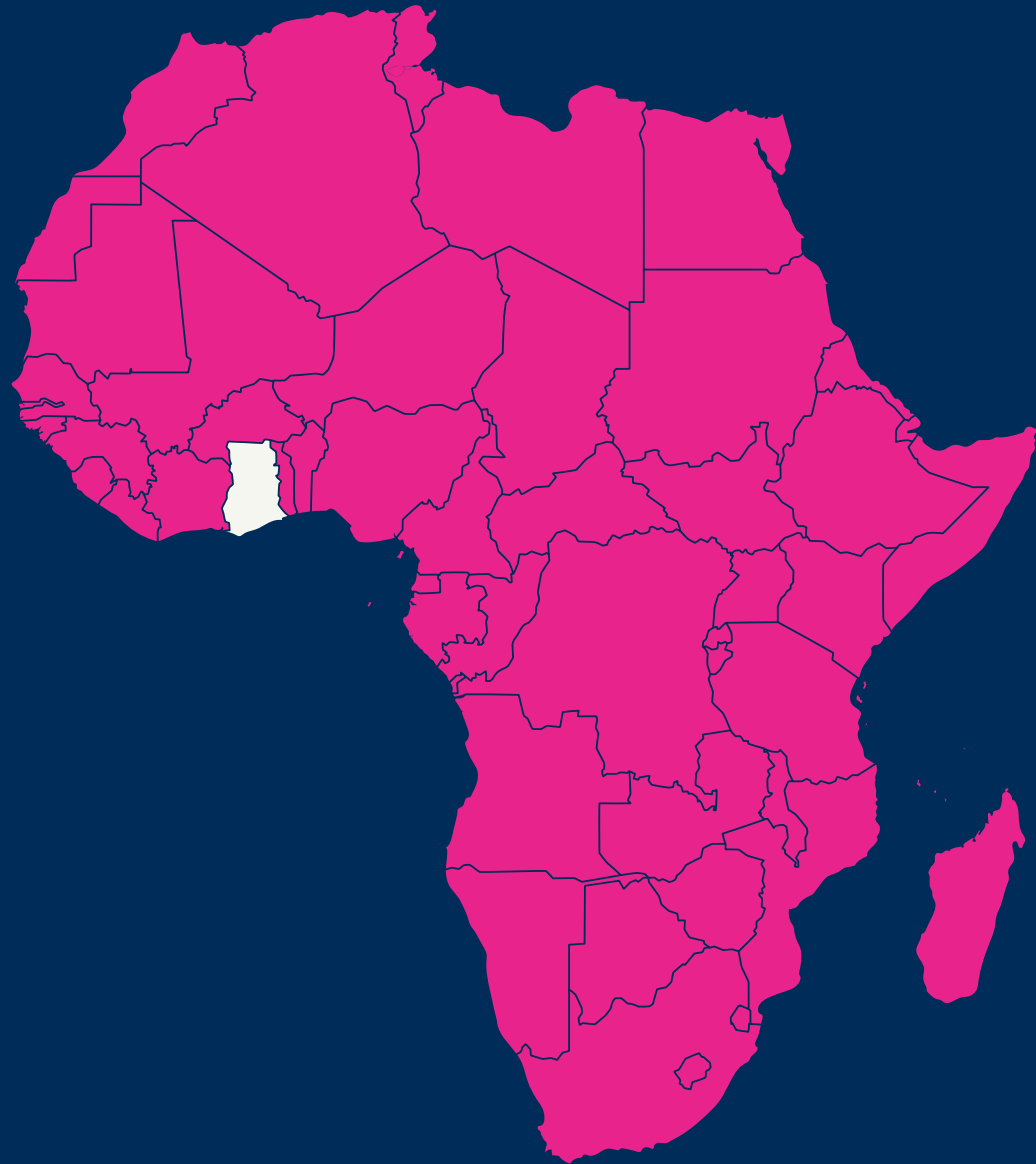
Interesting Fact

Crowther not only translated the Bible into Yoruba, but also compiled a Yoruba grammar and dictionary, preserving the language for future generations.

MERCY AMBA ODUYOYE

The mother of African women's theologies

Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye was born on 21 October 1934 in the Eastern Region of Ghana into a large Methodist family as the eldest of nine children. Her upbringing combined strong Christian roots with the cultural traditions of her Akan heritage. Her father was a Methodist minister, while her mother was active in church life, particularly in women's and children's work. This early environment introduced Oduyoye to both the strengths and the limitations of church culture, particularly regarding the role of women.



Her education began in Methodist boarding schools, and she later attended Achimota School, one of Ghana's most prestigious secondary schools. Initially trained as a teacher, she shifted her focus to theology after encouragement from one of her professors. She completed her Bachelor of Theology at the University of Ghana in 1963, before moving to Cambridge University in the UK, where she earned further degrees in theology. Upon returning to Africa, she taught in Ghana and Nigeria and became a leader in global ecumenical circles, working with the World Council of Churches and the All Africa Conference of Churches.

Oduyoye's most enduring contribution came in 1987, when she founded the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. This network provided space for African women to research, publish, and speak out on theological and cultural issues from their own contexts, challenging both patriarchal church traditions and the dominance of Western theological frameworks. For this, she is often described as the "mother of African women's theologies."

In her own generation, Oduyoye stood out as a pioneering African woman theologian in a field dominated by men and heavily shaped by Western categories. She gave voice to African women's lived experiences – addressing gender inequality, harmful cultural practices, and the silencing of women in both church and society.

Today, she remains a global figure in feminist and African theology. Her writings and institutions, such as the Institute of Women in Religion and Culture at Trinity Theological Seminary in Ghana, continue to inspire and empower women across the continent and beyond. She is significant for showing that theology must not only be faithful to scripture but also rooted in local contexts and social justice.

Her story teaches the value of humility, courage, and persistence. She models how theology can challenge oppressive structures while also affirming culture and tradition in transformative ways. She reminds us that the global Church must remain accountable to the voices of those at the margins.

To see how Christian theology is challenging oppressive structures today, read the Diocese of Southwark's [Anti-Racism Charter here](#).

"Human dignity is no other than the respect due to the image of God in us."

Fact File:

Born

1934

Died

Still living

Ethnicity

Akan

Place of Birth

Amoanna, Ghana

Famous for

Pioneer of African women's theology, founder of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians; ecumenical leader in the World Council of Churches and All Africa Conference of Churches.

Educational / Spiritual Journey

Studied theology at the University of Ghana and Cambridge University. Taught in Ghana, Nigeria, and abroad, helping to shape contextual theology via ecumenical leadership.

Interesting Fact

Oduyoye founded the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, creating a global platform for African women to publish theology from their own experiences and cultural contexts.

SAINT HADRIAN OF CANTERBURY

The African Abbot who helped shape the English Church

Saint Hadrian of Canterbury, also known as Adrian, was born around 630–637 in North Africa, most likely in the region of Cyrenaica in modern-day Libya. He is described by the Venerable Bede as “by nation an African,” and most scholars agree that he was of Berber descent. His early life was shaped by upheaval, since the Arab conquests of North Africa forced many Christians to migrate. Hadrian eventually settled in Italy, where he became a monk and later abbot of a monastery near Naples, on the island of Nisida.



Pope Vitalian came to admire Hadrian’s wisdom and learning and even offered him the post of Archbishop of Canterbury. Hadrian declined this honour, showing a humility that would characterise his career. Instead, he recommended Theodore of Tarsus for the position. The pope agreed on the condition that Hadrian accompany Theodore to England, bringing his knowledge and experience to support the new archbishop. On arriving in Canterbury around 670, Hadrian was appointed abbot of the monastery of Saints Peter and Paul (later known as St Augustine’s Abbey). He held this office until his death in 709 or 710.

Hadrian played an important role in the church throughout his life. Alongside Theodore, he helped to stabilise the English Church by aligning its liturgy, practices, and theological teaching more closely with the wider Church.

He also fostered a flourishing of education. The school he and Theodore established at Canterbury soon became one of the most celebrated centres of learning in Europe, producing scholars who would influence the development of theology, music, astronomy, and the study of Scripture across the Anglo-Saxon world. In many ways, Hadrian helped to lay the intellectual foundations of English Christianity.

Saint Hadrian’s life highlights the interconnectedness of the early medieval Church: a North African scholar who travelled to Italy and then to England, he embodied a faith that was never confined to one culture or continent. His example also broadens our understanding of the diversity of early Christianity. In recent years, debates about whether Hadrian should be remembered as a “black saint” have shown how modern categories of race are often projected onto the past. Regardless of these arguments, his story challenges assumptions that the early English Church was purely “white” or insular.

In an age still grappling with issues of identity, belonging, and representation, his life is a reminder that Christianity has always been global, shaped by voices from Africa, Asia, and Europe alike. The questions raised by the way he has been remembered – or misremembered – point to the need for honesty in how we tell the story of the Church.

His refusal of high office demonstrates that true leadership often lies in service rather than status, and his journey reminds us of the richness that comes when cultures meet and share their gifts.

For further UK racial justice resources and events, check out Leeds Church Institute’s [Churches Against Racism resources](#). The initiative kicked off in April 2024 and has started a journey of bringing Christians and Churches together to seek racial justice in Leeds.

Fact File:

Born

630-637

Died

709-710

Ethnicity

North African, likely Berber

Place of Birth

Likely Cyrenaica (modern day Libya)

Famous for

Prominent scholar, teacher, and abbot who helped establish the great school at Canterbury.

Educational / Spiritual Journey

Athanasius likely fled North Africa to Naples where he became a monk and served as abbot in a monastery. He accompanied Theodore of Tarsus to Canterbury and served as abbot of St Peter & St Paul (later St Augustine’s) at Canterbury.

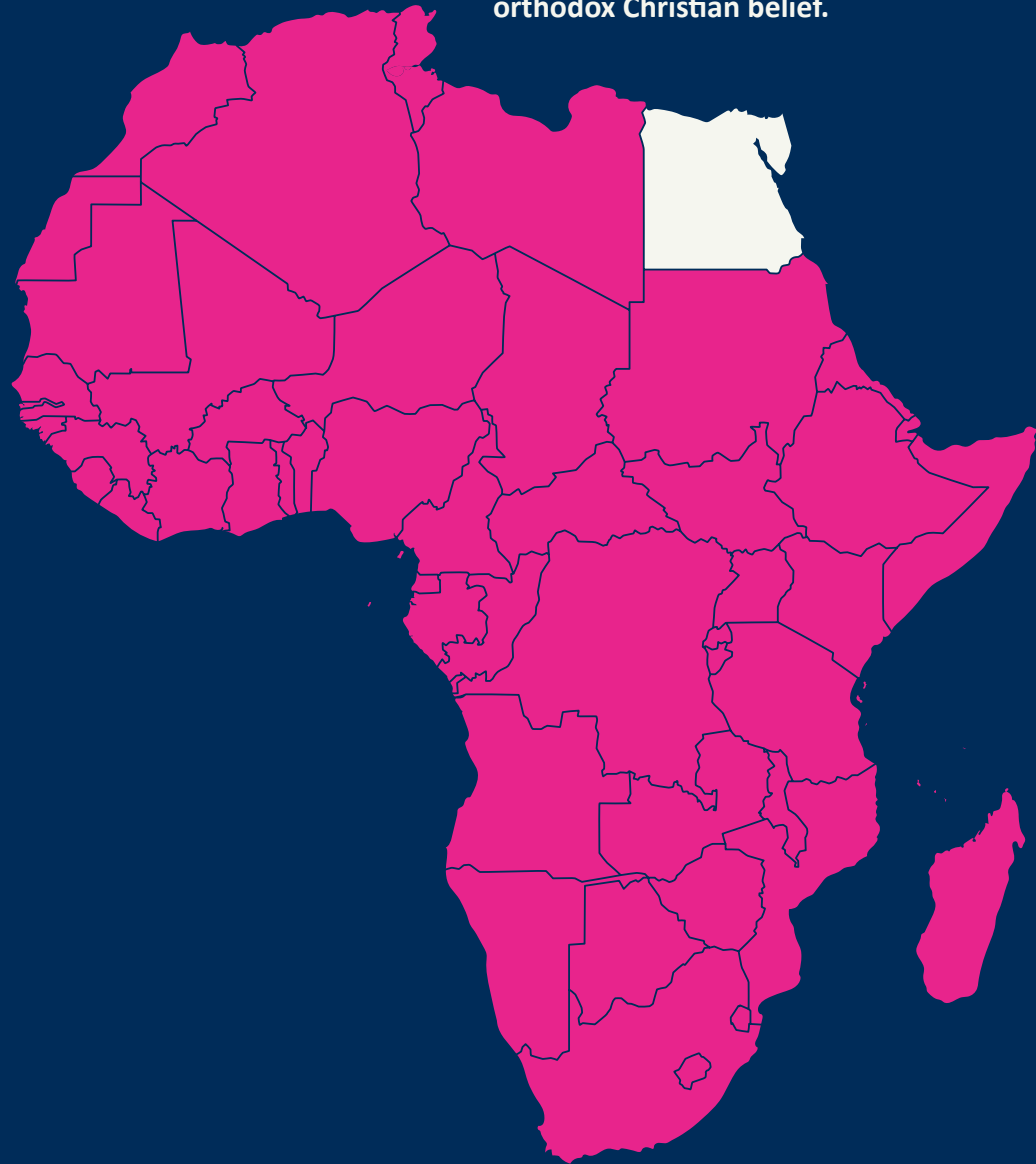
Interesting Fact

Hadrian twice declined the archbishopric of Canterbury, yet recommended Theodore of Tarsus; who he accompanied to England.

SAINT ATHANASIUS OF ALEXANDRIA

Defender of the Faith

Saint Athanasius of Alexandria, often affectionately referred to in church history as the “black dwarf” due to his short stature and African heritage, was one of the most influential figures in early Christianity. Born in 296 AD in Alexandria, Egypt, Athanasius lived during a time of great theological and political turmoil in the Roman Empire, especially concerning the nature of Christ and the Trinity. Despite being exiled five times over the course of his life, his tireless defence of the Nicene faith helped shape the foundations of orthodox Christian belief.



Athanasius is best known for his opposition to Arianism, a heresy that denied the full divinity of Jesus Christ. As a young deacon, he attended the First Council of Nicaea in 325 AD, which produced the Nicene Creed – a fundamental declaration of Christian belief. His theological treatise *On the Incarnation* remains a classic of Christian literature, explaining the mystery of the Word becoming flesh.

Despite the political dangers, Athanasius never compromised on his convictions. After being appointed Bishop (Patriarch) of Alexandria in 328 AD, he became a staunch guardian of Nicene Christianity, often clashing with emperors and other bishops who sympathized with Arianism. His repeated exiles – sometimes at the risk of his life – earned him the title *Athanasius Contra Mundum* (“Athanasius Against the World”).

In his own time, Athanasius was a lightning rod of controversy and courage. He gave voice to the theological concerns of many in the Church who feared the erosion of Christian truth. Today, his legacy is still felt in the creeds recited in churches around the world. His insistence on the full divinity of Christ safeguards the core message of Christian redemption – that only God could save humanity.

From his life, Christians can learn resilience, conviction, and the importance of standing for truth, even when it is unpopular or dangerous. His life reminds the Church that theological clarity matters and that unity should never come at the expense of essential doctrine.

The challenges Athanasius’ faced are still applicable today, as the Church continues to navigate challenges around doctrinal fidelity, persecution, and cultural pressure. His African heritage also highlights a broader issue in church history – many early African church fathers, including Athanasius, have been whitewashed in Christian art and literature, particularly during and after the colonial period. Some modern scholars and theologians have worked to recover and restore his identity as an African Christian leader.

One of the key organisations pioneering racial justice work is The Virginia Theological Seminary, primarily through its descendant-led reparations initiative which funds programmes that promote justice and inclusion. For the latest resources and updates on their work, visit: [Reparations](#) | [Virginia Theological Seminary](#).

“If the world is against the truth, then I am against the world.”

Fact File:

Born

296 AD

Died

373 AD

Ethnicity

North African (likely Coptic / Egyptian)

Place of Birth

Alexandria, Egypt

Famous for

Defender of Nicene Christianity; opponent of Arianism; author of *On the Incarnation*.

Educational / Spiritual Journey

Educated in classical and theological studies in Alexandria; served as deacon under Bishop Alexander; ordained bishop in 328 AD.

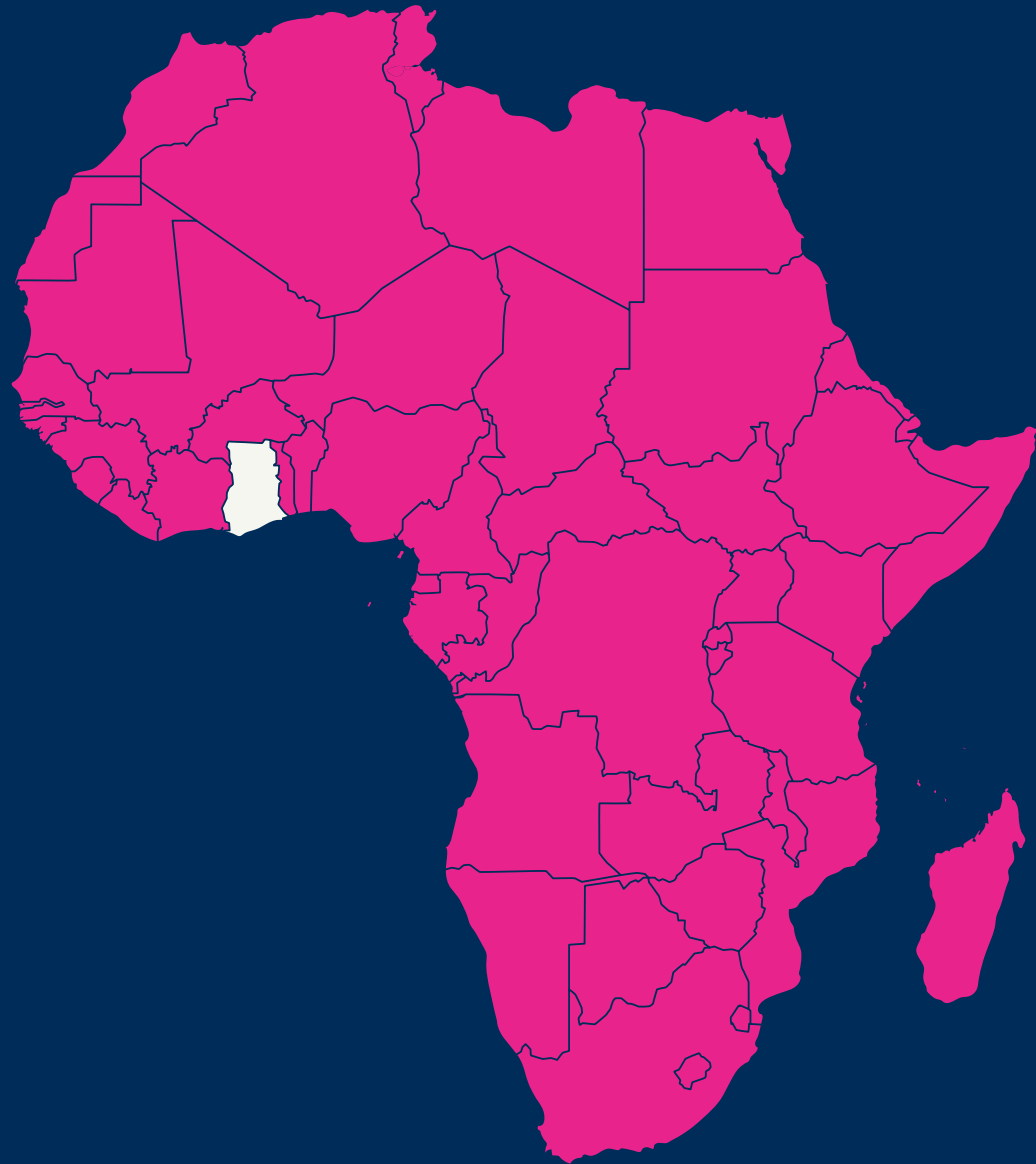
Interesting Fact

Athanasius was exiled five times by four different Roman emperors – yet always returned to his post, remaining bishop for 45 years (17 of them in exile).

YAA ASANTEWAA

Ghanaian Queen Mother and freedom fighter

Yaa Asantewaa was Asantehemaa, or Queen Mother, in the Asante kingdom, now part of modern Ghana, from 1880-1921. The Queen Mother is a powerful figure in Ashanti culture. She is part of a dual leadership system at the head of government and decides on the Asantahene or king. She is a leader in political and civil governance, and sometimes, as with Yaa Asantewaa, she leads the armed forces.



In the early twentieth century, the Ashanti kingdom was menaced by the British government who wanted to annex the wealthy kingdom and make it a British protectorate. The British were particularly anxious to gain possession of the golden stool, a symbol of the soul of Ashanti kingship which had been handed down through the generations from the legendary priest Anokye to the first Asantahene or king, Osei Tutu I, in the late 17th century.

The Ashanti leadership refused to hand over this symbol of the Ashanti spirit and went to war in defence of their freedom. Eventually the Asantehene, Prempeh I, and 150 warriors and leaders were captured and exiled to the distant islands of the Seychelles in the western Indian Ocean, a distance of over 6000 km.

But Yaa Asantewaa took over the leadership of the army and fought fiercely in what was called the 'Yaa Asantewaa wars' before she was captured and also exiled to the Seychelles.

There, the Asantehene Prempeh I accepted the ministry of (SPG) missionaries and were baptised in St Paul's Church in 1904. All but six of the exiled Ashanti leadership, including Yaa Asantewaa died in exile. Prempeh I was restored to the Ashanti kingdom on December 17, 1924.

The Ashanti never surrendered the real golden stool to the British. They were fobbed off with a replica while the real stool was hidden until it was accidentally uncovered in 1920. It is still used ceremonially by the Asantahene.

In 2024, a delegation from the Seychelles, led by the President, Wavel Ramkalawan, an Anglican priest, visited Kumasi to commemorate Prempeh I's return from exile.

Yaa Asantewaa is remembered as a fierce defender of her people, a warrior Queen Mother.

To find out how you can help champion racial justice today, visit The Racial Justice Advocacy Forum's [website](#). The Forum is an ecumenical Christian entity that seeks to speak prophetically on behalf of Black and Brown Christians to the government on racial injustice challenges and makes recommendations to help churches begin or continue engaging with racial injustice in the twenty-first century.

"If you the men of Asante will not go forward, then we will. We the women will."

Fact File:

Born

1840

Died

1921

Ethnicity

Ashanti (Asante)

Place of Birth

Ashanti Empire (modern day Ghana)

Famous for

Led the Ashanti rebellion against British colonialism in 1900, known as the War of the Golden Stool.

Educational / Spiritual Journey

Received traditional Ashanti education; deeply rooted in the spiritual and political systems of the Asante people.

Interesting Fact

Yaa Asantewaa was the Queen Mother of Ejisu and became the first woman to lead an Asante military resistance, rallying male chiefs when they hesitated to fight.

THE RT REVD ELLINAH NTOMBI WAMUKOYA

First female Anglican bishop in Africa

Ellinah Ntombi Wamukoya was a groundbreaking figure in the life of the Anglican Church and African society at large. Born in 1951 in Eswatini, Wamukoya's life and ministry would later carve a new path for women in religious leadership. Her election in 2012 as the Bishop of Swaziland made her the first woman to be consecrated bishop in any of the Anglican provinces across the African continent – an act that reverberated far beyond the boundaries of the Church.



Widely known as 'the green bishop', Bishop Ellinah was a champion of Anglican engagement with the fifth mark of mission 'To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth'. She served as Chairperson of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa Environment Network (ACSA-EN) and the global Anglican Communion Environment Network. On Voice of America, Bishop Ellinah declared, 'Climate change has a face. That face is poverty.'

Bishop Ellinah was born into a working-class family in Manzini, Eswatini, and studied at the universities of Botswana, Lesotho, and Eswatini. She worked as a teacher and then as a civil servant in her native city, serving as Town Clerk and CEO of the City Council of Manzini, before being ordained as a priest in 2006. Then, while the Church of England was still debating whether women could be allowed in the episcopate, she was ordained a bishop in the Anglican Church in Southern Africa, a consecration that was nothing short of revolutionary in her context.

At her consecration, Bishop Ellinah pledged, 'I am going to try to represent the mother attribute of God. "A mother is a caring person but at the same time, a mother can be firm in doing whatever she is doing.' She travelled across the world to champion causes dear to her heart including justice for women and children and for the earth.

In 2016, the BBC named her one of the 100 most influential and inspirational women in the world.

When she died in 2021, she was mourned, not only by her husband, Okwaro Henry Wamukoya, their children and grandchildren, but by the whole Anglican Communion, and indeed the world.

Today, Bishop Ellinah is celebrated as a pioneer and spiritual trailblazer. Her leadership opened doors for other women in ministry, showing that strong theological conviction and compassionate leadership transcend gender. In a world still grappling with issues of inclusion, representation, and justice within religious institutions, her life remains a model of courage and humility.

To learn more about ongoing projects, ministries, and events which celebrate diversity and promote unity and inclusion, read the latest One People Commission and South Asia Forum [information booklet](#).

"Climate change has a face. That face is poverty."

Fact File:

Born

1951

Died

2021

Ethnicity

Swazi

Place of Birth

Swaziland (modern day Eswatini)

Famous for

First female Anglican bishop in Africa.

Educational / Spiritual Journey

Studied at the University of Botswana and Swaziland; later trained in theology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal; ordained as a priest in 2005 and consecrated bishop in 2012.

Interesting Fact

Wamukoya was chosen from a shortlist of male candidates, breaking long-standing gender norms in both church and culture.



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