

Liberia

SIM is involved in medical and dental ministries, discipleship and training, and radio ministry in Liberia.

This West African nation enjoys the rare distinction of never having been colonised or even temporarily occupied by a foreign nation. Since 1847, Liberia has been a free and independent state. For the past 15 years, civil war has torn this nation apart, but the church remains faithful and hope for peace is growing.

Current SIM Ministry

SIM's primary role in Liberia is to assist the ministries of the Evangelical Church Union of Liberia (ECUL) and ELWA (Eternal Love Winning Africa) Ministries Association in medical work, leadership training, and in radio broadcasting.

The establishment of Radio ELWA launched the ministry of SIM in Liberia in 1954. Prior to the civil wars, Christian programmes were broadcast in 45 languages throughout Liberia and its neighbouring countries. ELWA Hospital opened in 1965, and in 1976 missionaries began planting churches in outlying areas.



SIM's Partner Church



In 1997, following the last of three missionary evacuations, an association of churches related to SIM and other churches formed the Evangelical Church Union of Liberia (ECUL). As of January 2005, the ECUL has 77 organised churches and 63 more in various stages of development. SIM missionaries who have returned to Liberia primarily assist the ministries of ECUL.

History of Christianity

Due to Christian influence of freed slaves from the United States who settled in Liberia, Protestant missions had an early start in Liberia. Two Baptist pastors were among the first to arrive in 1822 and begin church and mission work. American Baptists and Southern Baptists joined their work, and it has developed today into the Liberian

Baptist Convention with about 50,000 affiliates.

The first Methodist missionary arrived in 1833. Some of the earliest settlers were also Methodist, and the Methodist Church has developed into the largest denomination in Liberia. Other Protestant groups followed: United Lutheran Church (now known as the Lutheran Church of Liberia), Pentecostals, Seventh-Day Adventists, Baptist Mid-Missions, Protestant Episcopal Church of the USA, and Worldwide Evangelisation Crusade. Many small Protestant mission societies served in the country prior to the civil war. In fact, at that time Liberia had one of the highest per capita missionary populations in the world.

Although the Portuguese contacted Liberia as early as 1462, no permanent Catholic work was established until 1906. Earlier attempts to establish a mission among the settlers all ended in failure. Catholic work has been marked by greater success in education than evangelism.

In 1952 SIM involvement in Liberia began when the newly-formed West Africa Broadcasting Association (WABA) joined SIM. Radio ELWA, twelve miles from downtown Monrovia, grew rapidly and broadcast in 45 languages, using five transmitters. In 1965 a 45-bed hospital was opened, widening SIM's ministry. By the late 1970s SIM had started church planting ministries in Tahn and Kolahun.

The civil war started in December 1989. As it progressed, SIM evacuated most of its personnel, leaving behind a skeleton crew to keep the radio station on the air and treat war casualties at the hospital. SIM's ELWA compound became flooded with nearly 22,000 refugees. The refugees believed the warring factions respected SIM's work and neutrality and would leave the compound untouched. Finally, in July 1990, even the skeleton crew was forced to evacuate. Within two hours after the refugees learned of this, they abandoned the compound as well. On their evacuation route, however, five missionaries were taken back to ELWA compound by Taylor's troops. Taylor had the missionaries broadcast over the ELWA radio his victory speech announcing himself as Liberia's new president.

In the following months, opposing forces sought to control ELWA, resulting in the total destruction of the radio station, print shop, power house, and six residences. All buildings suffered extensive damage and looting. SIM missionaries began to return to Monrovia in January 1991, and their numbers built back up to nearly 40 (adults and children) over the next year-and-a-half. Within a week after Taylor's new attack on Monrovia in October 1992, all but four of the men evacuated, and half of those who evacuated returned to Monrovia within the next three months. In June 1995, forty missionaries lived in Monrovia. Because of an incursion in April 1996, the missionaries were once again evacuated. All national staff also left, and the mission buildings were looted and damaged worse than before.

In the meantime, former employees of the hospital, services, and radio moved in to save the campus from total looting. Within a couple of months they re-established the hospital as a clinic. SIM sent support personnel to consult and provided some funding for capital expenses, and radio ELWA started again in early 1997. In mid-1998 several missionaries moved back into Liberia to work. The team there continues to grow.

The National Church

No official state church exists in Liberia. Many old churches along the coast need revival. Nominalism and syncretism with animistic beliefs are widespread among leaders and members. Some urban and inland churches are growing and reaching out in evangelism. A Liberian Council of Churches is composed of Lutheran, Episcopal, Methodist, and similar groups.

An evangelical fellowship of churches and missions established in 1966 became dormant in 1982, but was reactivated in the late 1980s as the Association of Evangelicals of Liberia (AEL). It is helping Liberians re-establish themselves through loans, training, and work among rural people. The funding comes from groups like Tearfund and World Relief.

Please pray for

- the leaders of Liberia as they face the challenges of rebuilding their nation additional administrative personnel for SIM Liberia.
- trusting partnerships between SIM and ECUL (SIM's partner churches) and SIM and ELWA. opportunities for effective training of pastors and church leaders so they will carry the true message of Jesus Christ back to their home villages.
- wisdom for the Liberian leaders of ELWA and ECUL as they discern new directions and opportunities in the post-war environment, that they would keep the missionary goal of their ministries as their highest priority.

Opportunities

[Personnel Coordinator](#)

[Trinity Dental Clinic Volunteers](#)

[All Liberia Opportunities](#)

Projects

[ELWA Radio Rebuild](#)

[ELWA Radio Programme Sponsorship](#)

[All Liberia Projects](#)

Stories

[Emerging From War](#)

['Common sense' for war-torn Liberia](#)

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