Sisters in Spirit
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In August 1894 Mwalimu Blandina Mwanbwanaa and her new husband, the Reverend Petro “Peter” Limo, departed Zanzibar for their mainland posting. In lieu of a honeymoon, the Limos headed to Peter’s childhood home of Magila, in a region of northeastern Tanzania that lies just east of the Usambara mountains and close to, but not on, the coast. The son of a local Kilindi leader, Peter lost his father during an uprising when he was just a boy. The elder Limo’s death and the complexities of local politics spurred Peter to affiliate with the church, and allowed him to ascend quickly through the local ecclesiastical hierarchy and to become the “pick of the elite” in Bonde. He was the first man from a mainland UMCA mission station to attend Kiungani, the UMCA’s theological college in Zanzibar, and became a person of considerable influence in the church. While a student at Kiungani, Peter met and courted Blandina, who was also an ethnic Bondei from northeastern Tanzania. Unlike Peter, Blandina had arrived at the mission some two decades earlier as a freed slave. The young woman was thus without any kin at all, except for the friends she considered “family”—that is, the British lady missionaries who had raised her and the other Schoolgirls.

The pair become engaged after perhaps three years of courtship, but they delayed the wedding date so each could pursue advanced studies in England.
Peter enrolled at Dorchester Theological College, and Blandina studied for a time at the Clewer Sisterhood’s School for Domestic Education. After their return, Peter’s anxiousness to “have a really well-educated wife” caused them to once again postpone the wedding; missionaries believed that “more teaching” would be “profitable” for Blandina’s future. In the interim, Peter was ordained, and became the first freeborn mainland African to be ordained with the aim of returning to teach “his own people.”

As was the case with all Native Clerics and their wives, Peter and Blandina were to work together as a team at their station of Kwa Kibai, preaching to the nearby “heathen” villagers and ministering to local Christian families. It was their task to educate the children, and to perform the day-to-day work required for a fledgling outstation congregation. Peter supervised the construction of a house typical to the area—mud plastered over a latticework of wooden strips, with a thatched makuti (Kiswahili: coconut palm) roof. The shape of the home, however, was atypical—square instead of round. The floor plan consisted of two bedrooms, a study, and a small chapel. The strange shape set the house apart from their neighbors’ one-room huts, marking it immediately as a pastor’s residence. In their square home, donning their modest Western dress, and settled in their monogamous marriage, Peter and Blandina modeled the virtues of the Christian nuclear family for their neighbors at Kwa Kibai. There was never, one sympathetic missionary reported, “a happier couple, they were not only deeply attached but also were really companionable.”

Blandina’s daily life at Kwa Kibai was defined both by the expectations of the mission and by the social realities of her new home. In particular, Blandina modeled the benefits of Christian education for her new neighbors. She focused on the younger generations of women first, setting out to open a girls’ school almost immediately upon arriving at Kwa Kibai. Both she and Peter believed strongly in the value of women’s education; Peter, in fact, was known as “one of the foremost of the African clergy in advocating more and better education for girls.” The work was “very difficult,” Blandina told some British friends in an 1895 letter, because the students “have not been taught anything for all their life.” Much the same could be said of the local community, which, until Peter arrived, had “never heard anything about the Gospel.” Blandina invested in relationships with local women, and even
fostered young women in her home when they showed interest in Christianity but found their conversions threatened by something or someone at home. Because the UMCA’s theology eschewed methods of evangelism aimed at mass conversion in favor of a system of education that emphasized slow revelations of the Gospel through ritual and practice, Blandina was largely restricted in her formal work with villagers to what she seems to have considered the somewhat remedial skills of reading and writing. In their early days at Kwa Kibai, Blandina was not even free to teach sewing to inquirers lest they leapfrog past the Christian virtues imparted in the instruction of less sophisticated domestic tasks.13

Blandina struggled in this work alone because none of the local Christian women were trained to help. Even her assistant, the wife of a local teacher, was—in Blandina’s eyes—thoroughly unprepared for the work that needed to be done. Mama Mwaimu [sic], as she was known, was “no scholar; she cannot help me to do anything.” Blandina was even doing her own cooking, she lamented, because she did “not trust anybody to cook as I shall like, so it is best to do it myself.” Blandina had ample opportunity to instruct on the basics of Christian living, however, when a
famine caused by a plague of locusts brought villagers to her home nearly every day, either “to beg for help or to borrow some money.” The evangelist might have found inspiration at this moment in the Book of Joel, which depicts a similar invasion of locusts. A mighty army of the insects, with the “teeth of a lion and the fangs of a lioness,” left fields ruined and the ground dried up, the people grieving for the lost wheat and barley, and the cattle moaning. Yet as people turned to the church for help, God responded by driving back the horde with the appearance of horses and the noise of chariots; by providing grain, new wine, olive oil, and food to eat until they were full; and with a promise that they would never again be shamed. As in the biblical story, Blandina and Peter used the famine to evangelize, welcoming new inquirers into the church, providing them succor, and helping them rebuild.

Despite the fact that their new home was “quite central for the Bondei country,” and despite their growing relationships with local congregants and inquirers, the couple’s academic, social, and religious distance from members of their new community, even those who professed Christianity, sometimes left Blandina and Peter feeling “quite alone.” The famine and the resulting exodus from the area only heightened this sensation. And even though the pair originally hailed from the greater Bonde region, they were (and largely remained) marginal to the broader Bondei community. Blandina, by some accident of circumstance—a debt, a family hardship, a kidnapping, or capture—had fallen victim to the slave trade at an early age and had spent little time in the area. Locals might have remembered her family’s slave past and allowed it to cloud their interactions. Further, it is likely that if she had ever known Kibondei or any local customs, she was literate in neither by the time she returned as an adult. Peter’s early and singular affiliation with the mission community had been a result of his lowly status in Bondei society; the same divisions that had assured his ascendance through the ecclesiastical hierarchy continued to mar local politics, resulting in continued tensions to which he was anything but immune upon his return to the area. And while the Limos and the local UMCA staff successfully attracted some converts during the 1890s, the rate of conversions decreased with the establishment of the German administration and the arrival of settler planters during the same decade. The availability of new sources of patronage meant that the missionaries were no longer the most attractive patrons in Bonde. Christians of lowest standing in the church in Bonde sought out these new patrons, particularly when the mission refused to stand up for its followers against the nefarious tactics of German administrators and planters. Feeling frustrated and isolated, Blandina wrote a letter to her friends in Britain. With an undertone
of loneliness she told them, “I do miss my Mbweni friends and companions, but I hope to get accustomed to the people very soon.”

Blandina’s description of her experiences at Kwa Kibai betrays a sense of homesickness and nostalgia for the life and Christian community she had left behind at Mbweni. And judging from the writings of her contemporaries, she was not alone in yearning for a lost home. Rather than allowing their professional careers to be hindered, however, the UMCA’s evangelical wives turned this feeling of isolation and nostalgia into a highly productive evangelical tool. Homesickness bolstered professional obligation, inspiring Mbweni graduates not only to maintain the relationships and lifestyle they had developed at Mbweni, but to re-create their experiences at Mbweni in their new stations on the mainland. With duty and longing as one, Blandina and her colleagues pursued evangelical careers on the mainland that actively maintained and extended the community they had left behind. Standard outreach campaigns and village visits, establishing schools, and the daily performance of Christian living produced new congregants in Kwa Kibai and elsewhere. Women like Blandina forged teacher-disciple relationships with local women, fostered inquiring girls in their homes, and held Bible studies, sewing circles, and lace-making seminars, drawing new congregants into the UMCA community.

To combat their sense of isolation and alienation, the Limos, like their classmates scattered throughout the mainland, also remained oriented as much as possible toward the religious heart of the mission at Zanzibar. The Limos routinely undertook the six-hour walk from Kwa Kibai to the nearest central station, where Blandina met to worship and socialize with Louisa Sehoza and Faith Kayamba, childhood friends from the shamba. The pair also returned “home” to Zanzibar frequently, like their colleagues Beatrice and Petro Kilekwa, and maintained a spirited correspondence with their Zanzibar-based teachers and friends, as well as with patrons in England. If the women in these early days wrote letters to each other, the letters have not survived. We do know, however, that many clerics’ wives communicated with each other through their “mother” at Mbweni, Caroline Thackeray. She traveled frequently to visit her “daughters” and their families at their mainland stations, and brought news of the activity of their friends and classmates in other regions. She also published their (edited) letters in the UMCA’s monthly circulars, Central Africa and African Tidings, and word traveled back to the wives themselves, many of whom were consumers of these magazines.

While in some spiritual communities congregants used the medium of the written
letter to participate in “an imagined emotional community,” Blandina, Peter, and their contemporaries used the daily performance of Christian values and the relationships born from this work to participate in, maintain, and extend the UMCA’s affective spiritual community.  

Between 1890 and 1940, the UMCA’s African female lay evangelists forged inter-generational and pan-ethnic relationships, including friendships, formal teachers’ guilds, ad hoc gatherings for clerics’ wives, and teacher-disciple relationships. An examination of the historical context of the mainland during the time these relationships were forged and maintained suggests that the consolidation of colonial rule and the First World War exacerbated the conditions of isolation inherent in the evangelical enterprise. The lives, work, and emotional, professional, and religious intimacies of women like Beatrice Kilekwa, Lucy Majaliwa, and Kathleen Mkwara—women who embraced and embodied the UMCA’s particular ideals of prayer, ritual, scripture, secular and religious education, marriage, motherhood, and child-rearing that defined a UMCA Christian—translated these ideals to Africans living on the missionary frontier. These networks “worked,” as it were, in sustaining and expanding the mission community because they played on the very real feelings of isolation, homesickness, and nostalgia and on the slightly alienating experience of mission work that was cultivated early in its history by British missionaries, and adopted by the first generations of African evangelists. Rather than retreat from these emotions when they experienced them, clerics’ wives succumbed. To mitigate these feelings, they invested in personal relationships with congregants and inquirers through teaching associations, groups for clerics’ wives, and in the teacher-disciple relationship. In so doing, the UMCA’s female evangelists transformed homesickness, nostalgia, and alienation into powerful evangelical tools, which both sustained and extended the UMCA’s community of affective spirituality across disconnected lands and through generations.

The Affective Networks of Mainland Evangelism

The UMCA community, particularly as it stood after the substantive growth of several mainland congregations in the 1880s, might usefully be thought of as what Barbara Rosenwein has termed an “emotional community.” “Emotional communities” are “precisely the same as social communities,” but scholars’ analyses attend to “what these communities (and the individuals within them) define and assess as
valuable or harmful to them; the evaluations that they make about others’ emotions; the nature of the affective bonds between people that they recognize; and the modes of emotional expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate, and deplore.” After the UMCA’s expansion to the mainland, the community did not occupy a single physical space, but was rather a series of disparate physical places bound together and given life by bonds of affective spirituality, by the nostalgia for an idealized “home” at Mbweni, and by the yearning for the final home with Christ. The implicit emotional dimensions of the UMCA were rooted in missionaries’ investment in the church’s particular brand of Anglicanism, which first bound missionaries, and then their converts, together in an affective spiritual community. The emphasis placed in Tractarian theology on slow revelations of the Gospel through daily practice, and a preference for the teachable disposition of small children promoted a sense of spiritual, if not actual, kinship between missionaries and converts. The social structures and realities of vulnerability in late nineteenth-century East Africa led female refugees to invest in relationships as familial and to impute kinship ties when possible. Similar bonds of affective spirituality grew up between members of the same generation of congregants and between evangelists and converts, and teachers and protégées. In exile from lifelong friends, fictive and actual kin, and their missionary “mothers,” and often isolated from other Christians, the UMCA’s female evangelists seem to have experienced feelings of what we would call homesickness, isolation, boredom, and nostalgia in their new mainland homes. When these emotions mixed with a sense of professional duty, women like Blandina invested in evangelical outreach, expanded their social networks, and committed to maintaining relationships from Zanzibar.

Schooling, professional organizations, movement between stations, and the capacity for ritual practice to forge relationships between individuals and communities in diaspora created networks that sustained and expanded the UMCA. It is possible that in carving a united spiritual community out of “heathen” lands, the UMCA’s freed slaves and mainland congregants also were influenced by historically long-standing strategies for constructing arenas of collective action and achieving social and political complexity. People living in discontiguous territories frequently came to think of themselves as members of a single clan, clan network, or kinship group by a process similar to one employed by the UMCA’s female lay evangelists. Beginning in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, people living in Buganda (in what is today central Uganda) made important innovations in the realm of spirit mediumship. These innovations, spurred by particular agricultural challenges,
transformed “previously territorial spirits into portable spirits capable of ensuring the health of disconnected groups of people.” This process “drew upon the skills of itinerant mediums and lay at the core of clan formation.” The movements of these itinerant mediums from shrine to shrine over discontiguous clan lands created “therapeutic networks” that brought together communities whose leaders had a diversity of skills and knowledge, thereby “forging a powerful connection between clanship, collective health and the composition of knowledge.”

Scholarship on these “dispersed clan networks” of the distant Ganda past illustrates the capacity for “ritual practices to forge relationships among communities whose members did not necessarily share face-to-face interactions” and who lived in unconnected territories. It is indeed possible that the process of building networks across dispersed mission stations was a strategy lodged in the historical memories of the UMCA’s freed slaves and mainland congregants, retrieved and deployed in new and changing circumstances.

Networks across disparate mission stations can be understood to be given structure by affective relationships, in particular by terms we understand as homesickness and nostalgia. Historian Susan J. Matt glossed the contemporary American idea of homesickness “as the longing for a particular home,” and nostalgia as “a yearning for home, but it is a home faraway in time rather than space.” The Swiss scholar Johannes Hofer first coined the word “nostalgia” in 1688 when he combined the Greek word nostos, “return to the native land,” with algos, the word for pain. Used to describe what was then a “new disease that affected young people far from home,” both glosses of “nostalgia” seem to fairly describe Blandina’s sense of longing, isolation, and alienation. It is not purely coincidental that the emotions to which Blandina referred were also central to a genre of late nineteenth-century missionary writing that described the heroism, martyrdom, and self-sacrifice implicit in the lonely and slightly alienating experience of doing mission work. Literary tropes invoked in mission propaganda, fundraising calls, and organization-specific journals reflected—and often romanticized—the very real risks associated with mission work. Mainstream missionary hagiography of late nineteenth-century Britain implied that to be a “soldier” in Christ’s army, one must accept “the possibility of death in the line of one’s daily duty.” Obituaries of missionary women, which captivated audiences at home, glorified and valorized deaths that came in the act of self-sacrifice, duty, and service.

It is not surprising, then, that the records of female evangelists’ lives on the mainland highlight a similar longing for a sense of home, and a desire to, as Matt
describes it, “bridge past experience and present conditions.”28 Indeed, the same British women who sent lonely letters home, penned obituaries of their fallen comrades, and wrote articles for missionary publications were the very same women who served as amanuenses for African congregants, edited their personal letters for publication, and encouraged them to write in the first place.29 And, even for the women who wrote their own stories, told their own tales, or composed their own letters, they were unarguably influenced by the missionary-authored publications they read, and by the rhetoric of martyrdom, alienation, and self-sacrifice adopted by their missionary counterparts. As is the case with the voices of colonized women, their letters are extant, although fewer and farther between than scholars would like. Yet “even in the most unfavorable circumstances, the voices of the colonized subjects cannot be completely suppressed.”30 The echoes of their voices ring even louder when seen in the context of the isolation, alienation, and homesickness of African female lay evangelists at remote outstations on the frontier of mission at the turn of the century.

Two factors in particular shaped the isolation, nostalgia, and homesickness evangelists and other travelers experienced while away from the idealized center of the mission at Zanzibar. First, the ceaseless travels and lives of itinerancy that UMCA evangelists embraced as a natural part of their career path were inherently isolating. For the first generation of Mbweni graduates, marriage meant much more than simply the start of a new personal partnership and professional career. Marriage was a moment of rupture and dislocation, an end as much as a beginning. For many among the first generations of Mbweni students, Zanzibar was the only home they had ever known. They left behind the British women who had raised them, and they left their friends and classmates—all of whom had become like family. Moving to the mainland, they also left the relative comfort of the Zanzibar Christian community. Instead of generally sharing with one's neighbors a worldview and common enterprise, the priests and their new brides faced the possibility of being the only Christians for miles. The relative personal, economic, spiritual, and political security that congregants experienced on the shamba was replaced by the sense of isolation and instability that came with living among “heathen.” Evangelists were rarely experts in the complex political idiosyncrasies of their new stations, and they often faced hostilities of unknown and shifting origins. Even for those who, like Blandina and Petro, were headed to a familiar area, their faith, language, and cultural affectations immediately marked them as “outsiders” or “other” to the local population.
Lives of itinerancy and dislocation were particularly challenging for women in the late nineteenth century, Africa being no exception. Whether it was white American women engaged in local and regional migrations, British female missionaries enlisting as “soldiers’ in the army of the king of kings,” or African clerics’ wives making new homes on the mainland, they were all subject to the conflicting demands of a particular brand of late nineteenth-century womanhood. On the one hand, even the most mobile of women had relatively limited control over their own movements. Where they lived and whether they undertook migration depended on the decisions of fathers, husbands, and bishops, as well as on powerful social ideals that constrained their professional options. On the other hand, women were still seen as inherently domestic, tied to the home by a mix of ideology and social organization. Americans moving westward and Britons concerned with colonial expansion understood that women and the domestic had an important role to play in sustaining and safeguarding the home front. As Susan Matt has observed, for women in late nineteenth-century America “these ideals of feminine behavior did not always sit easily together, for in such a scheme, women were to be defined by home but also willing to leave it.”

What was left for many women, then, was a tendency to idealize a particular vision of home as a “bulwark against the restlessness of the age.” Fundamental to this idealized vision was a public sentimentalization of domesticity. In missionary writings of this period, “feminine self-sacrifice/heroism was presumed to be a part of daily domestic living in a good and comfortable British home. The aim was to show that even extraordinary women had their roots in the commonplaces of human life.” The lonely, self-sacrificing “soldiers” of Christ’s army epitomized a sense of “domestically based self-denial,” and “glamorize[d] the essentially domestic drudgery that was supposed to occupy . . . the time of so many lady missionaries.” African women, many of whom were freed slaves or of the generally marginalized population who tended to affiliate first with mission communities, felt this homesickness acutely. For American slaves in the late nineteenth century, their homesickness was “intensified by their lack of control over their own destinies and was a reaction not just to the fact of separation and distance but to their powerlessness in a brutal system.” Indeed, psychologists believe that “those who cannot control their movement experience the feeling more than those who can.”

As *watumwa wa balozi* (a colloquialism meaning “slaves of the embassy” or, more generally, “slaves of the whites”), UMCA congregants and their descendants remained circumscribed and marginalized, even on the mainland.
Second, the advent of German colonial rule, the consolidation of the British colonial administration throughout Zanzibar and in parts of East Africa, and the First World War intensified the homesickness, isolation, and marginalization already inherent in the work of African clerics and female lay evangelists living, working, and traveling on the mainland. British missionaries in areas of German East Africa continued to function largely unaffected by German rule until the First World War, and the UMCA—like other missions—expanded its work on the mainland during this time. While the British missionaries generally avoided political entanglement, individual African members of churches felt the change more acutely. In the 1890s the German government prioritized military security and political control, which it achieved through violence and by affiliating with African leaders. Collaborators shifted the balance of power in each region, and the balance of privilege, and some Christians left the church for the promises of new German patrons.\textsuperscript{35} The administration imposed a tax in 1898, and demands for tax and labor were as unpopular in Tanganyika as they were elsewhere on the continent.\textsuperscript{36} A series of natural catastrophes as well as an economic shift away from its former orientation toward Zanzibar were also challenging for Africans throughout Tanganyika, not just Christians. A locust plague followed by a drought in Bonde in 1894 and 1895 was experienced by UMCA adherents as the “famine that kills,” taking the lives of people “like animals, two and two.”\textsuperscript{37}

It was not only UMCA evangelists who experienced the disruption and marginalization of the early 1900s; committed Christians throughout the mainland struggled with their own feelings of isolation and persecution, which were compounded by German rule. Adherents of the Bethel mission in Usambara, for example, fled to hilltop villages to escape the hostility of extended families, and the threats posed by alcohol and “coastal hairstyles,” and by their own marginality. “They led a different life from their relatives,” a descendant remembered. “They were regarded as dead by their parents and relatives.”\textsuperscript{38} Lutheran and Moravian missions encouraged their adherents, both explicitly and implicitly, to form communities separate and distinct from their heathen brethren.\textsuperscript{39} During the last decade before the war came to East Africa, Asians began to move inland from their enclaves along the coast and were accompanied by an increase in white settlement. Land alienation affected Africans throughout Tanganyika, increasing tensions and further isolating Christian communities.

As news of the crisis in Europe reached Tanganyika and Zanzibar in June 1914, the very act of following the Queen’s religion and outwardly sympathizing
with her culture and customs became perilous for entire communities of UMCA adherents living in what was then German East Africa. Such danger doubly affected clerics and female lay evangelists who were already on the margins of mainland communities. As the war began, expatriate German officials quickly provoked and sustained full-scale war in East Africa in order to lure enemy troops away from more important theaters. This move epitomized Africa’s colonial exploitation by turning the region into a mere battlefield. And indeed, with the resident German Defense force—which included Europeans and African askari (soldiers/guards)—already in place, Colonel Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck and his troops engaged in a ruthless guerilla campaign. In order to pull ahead on the battlefield, Germans and Britons both tightened control over their East African territories and increased demands on residents. Famine and disease were commonplace, and fear predominated. Roaming armies looted and pillaged. Perhaps most dreaded was the Belgian Force Publique, widely believed by Africans and many Europeans to employ cannibals. Evoking bitter memories of Nyamwezi slave raiders, Belgian troops lived off the land and created unmitigated terror in the Tabora region. For many UMCA congregants, especially those who had lived through raids, kidnappings, and the general instability of the slave-trading era, it must have felt as if the horrors of the slave trade were descending once again.

The war quickly disrupted British evangelical work in German East Africa. British missionaries of many denominations fled either to British regions of East Africa, to Zanzibar, or to Europe, abandoning their stations throughout the mainland. The Germans and their askari arrested many of those who remained, along with many African teachers, lay workers, and congregants. By December 18, 1914, the last of the UMCA’s British missionaries stationed at Msalabani, the mission’s largest station in Tanga region, were arrested; askari took African clerics and teachers to internment camps, where they would remain until the end of the war. Male congregants were conscripted to work as porters and manual laborers, and unmarried African women were enlisted to “prepare and clean flour, rice, beans, etc.” for German officials and troops. By July 1915, one of the few remaining African teachers at Msalabani wrote of the period after the outbreak of war that “the people here are being very harshly treated now, the district is like a wilderness, there are hardly any people except women and children. The few men who are left have exceedingly hard service of porterage [sic], and are constantly beatne [sic], and if a man is known by the officials at Marimba to be a Christian his hardships are without expression, because they are known as the friends of the English.” Blandina Limo’s
husband, Peter, was forced into work as an overseer on the Handeni Road. By the end of the war, his right arm was paralyzed and he was deaf in one ear. A German official had treated him like an “animal,” he said, kicking him and striking him in the head. Peter had also become “very poor since the war,” he said. He returned to find “even my house and church was broken down.”

Despite the work many African clerics like Petro performed in the hopes of keeping the churches open, there were congregants who left the UMCA. In Bonde, for example, after hearing on December 9, 1914, that twelve teachers had died in prison, there was widespread “mourning in the land” and “people despaired of further hope of seeing the others back.” Congregants lamented, “there is no Christianity now—let everyone do as he likes,” and retreated to the lush hills to fend for themselves.

Although missionary absence and the difficulties of war dismantled many fledgling Christian communities and some stations lost congregants, the ordeal ultimately strengthened the UMCA. The war consolidated power in the hands of the Africans who remained behind, offering them responsibilities they otherwise might not have acquired. Left alone at mission stations, African clerics—whose authority and decision-making power had for years been circumscribed by European control—were now in charge. To be sure, the UMCA’s African clergy had by design more autonomy and responsibility than Africans in other missions; this was particularly true for Africans in charge of and in congregations at rural outstations. Yet the UMCA’s Native Clerics assumed even more autonomy and authority during the war, and congregants who remained faithful to the church made tremendous personal sacrifices to keep their communities intact, if not flourishing. Samwil Mwenyipembe, for example, was on staff at an outstation in the Magila complex of missions when the war began. Left alone to tend to the spiritual and physical needs of a community that stretched several days’ walk in all directions, Mwenyipembe assumed the responsibilities of his imprisoned colleagues: he performed services, repaired and maintained church buildings and farms, mediated between German officials and imprisoned church staff, allocated increasingly scarce resources to congregants and other remaining staff, and maintained the print shop. Along with these additional duties, Mwenyipembe requested and was granted limited permission to perform marriage ceremonies. Concerned that their unmarried girls would be conscripted into manual labor or worse, congregants had begun to arrange marriages under “heathen rites.” In December 1915, for example, a young girl named Masingano caught the eye of a German official stationed locally. Afraid of Herr Fischer, her relatives acquiesced and allowed him to pay 80 rupees
in exchange for her. She remained with him until he fled at the end of the war.\textsuperscript{49} Mwenyipembe’s new authority would have prevented such matches in the future.

For many adherents—clerics, their wives, and lay congregants alike—the deterritorialized affective networks in which they were embedded gave them strength during deeply challenging times. So, too, did their awareness of, and investment in, their broader evangelical project. African church leaders—both male and female—were aware of their place within a larger, changing society, and of the role that they would play in shaping it. In 1908, Samuel Sehoza—a priest originally from the Bonde region—spoke to the Kiungani students about their theological responsibility. “People of Africa!,” he addressed the multiethnic group in front of him:

We were born in different parts and belong to different tribes, but we were all living in darkness and in the shadow of death. God led us through many hardships, by long journeys, through hunger and thirst, and even death, without our understanding that it was the good hand of our God upon us leading us in love. But today we understand the reason why we left home—today we have learnt and we know that Almighty God loved us, and when we were far away He remembered us. So when we think of our past dangers and our present prosperity, we give our thanks to God.\textsuperscript{50}

Displaced from what they knew as “home” and seemingly alone in a foreign land, UMCA evangelists used a homesickness for Zanzibar and a longing for the relationships forged on that island as a powerful evangelical and community-building tool, as they had done for decades. This historical context illustrates that rather than having their marginalization mitigated over time, isolation and homesickness continued to be relevant emotions that women invested in professional guilds, ad hoc pan-ethnic groups for teachers’ wives, teacher-disciple relationships, and intergenerational fosterage and friendships as a way to solidify and extend the deterritorialized affective networks from Mbweni across the mainland and through several generations.

**Guild of the Good Shepherd and Guild of All Saints**

Mission officials founded the Guild of the Good Shepherd in 1885 and the Guild of All Saints in 1887. Both guilds were intended to be professional development
organizations focused on enhancing the teaching careers and “spiritual lives” of Mbweni’s pupil-teachers, and of maintaining relationships between Mbweni’s Industrials after graduation. The British missionaries who founded the guilds or attended their meetings wrote most of the records of the guilds that exist today. These records often include quotes from African members about their experiences in the guild, but as is often the case with the voices of African female lay evangelists, their responses are mediated by British translation or editing. Background provided by British missionaries, quotes from African guild members, and the broader context of the relationships between congregants and the structure of the mission suggest the particular reading of the guilds as mechanisms for both maintaining and forging spiritual and emotional connection, even across unconnected lands and through generations.

At its most local level, the first guild, the Guild of the Good Shepherd, offered pupil-teachers an opportunity for continuing education and professional networking. One guild leader recalled the lessons that she and others had imagined when they founded the guild: “Teaching is a high vocation and not to be undertaken lightly; that we must try to train our scholars’ whole being, body, soul, and spirit, and not be content with mere head knowledge.” In order to do so, she continued, “a teacher must teach by example as well as by work; that we must never do our work in the spirit of an hireling, but seek out our scholars with diligence, and take for our pattern the Good Shepherd ‘Who lay down His life for His sheep.’” At guild meetings, officials led members in a short office, offered a series of standard prayers, including their eponymous Psalm 23, and sang hymns before concluding with a short sermon on the “duties and privileges of a teacher’s life.” Holding guild meetings regularly at the guild’s offices at the Good Shepherd Chapel suggested to members a certain physicality to the communion of Mbweni-trained teachers—it was a place to which women could come to be with other new clerics’ wives, to catch up with friends, and to reconnect with their own former teachers. The very existence of a guild for Mbweni-trained teachers from multiple generations also suggested to its members that theirs was a community that stretched through space and time. The guild introduced teachers to other women who had attended Mbweni either ahead of or after them, expanding the UMCA’s affective community by creating new social, intellectual, and religious intimacies. The content of these meetings, and the discussions that unfolded between individual women there, also illustrated to attendees that they were part of a single ideological community that shared in certain central tenets of mission theology and practice.
Special occasions, such as guild anniversaries, taught current members about the reach of the intellectual and professional genealogy rooted at Mbweni. For example, church officials used the opportunity of the guild’s seventh anniversary in 1893, or “Good Shepherd Sunday,” to remind teachers of the service of their late colleague Mildred Furahani. Mildred was the first Mbweni-trained teacher to start a boarding school on the mainland. Among other sacrifices for the mission, Mildred adopted ten “little girls” at a mission station where she and her husband, Martin, served, “providing for them entirely, the Mission clothing them only.” Mildred’s girls were, in the words of one missionary, “quite like a bit of Mbweni.”

Mildred’s story, and the guild leaders’ public accounting of it, positioned current guild members within a longer-standing intellectual genealogy that began with such early Mbweni graduates as Mildred Furahani and extended several generations later to the girls whom she had clothed and educated. In bringing “a bit of Mbweni” as she called it to the mainland, Mildred and fellow guild members reproduced this ideological community there. In sharing Mildred’s story, guild members not only reinforced their existence as a community, but defined the boundaries of it. Even in diaspora, teachers and students could reenact the Christian virtues and practices that defined both education at Mbweni and its graduates. With Mildred’s attention and care, her adoptive children were more than just mainland inquirers; they came to embody the reproduction and extension of the UMCA’s community to the mainland.

Formally, special guild retreats were an occasion for professional development, but UMCA teachers also benefited greatly from these opportunities to cultivate relationships with women in different cohorts at Mbweni, fleshing out their professional, personal, and spiritual networks. Every year or two, women and clergy who had served on the mainland returned to Mbweni to discuss their “experience of difficulties and trials of work on the mainland” in order to give “counsel to those young women who are going to work in distant places.” Such retreats offered practical information for the soon-to-be mainland teachers as well as for veterans, who could pick up new tricks of the trade, and also were an opportunity for experienced teachers to model the relationships that were expected of and possible for the next cohorts of teachers. European teachers recognized that among the returnees for these retreats, “the bond which began in their old class-room days . . . still holds, and . . . they love to meet and talk over the old times.” In so doing, returnees inaugurated new graduates into a much larger fellowship of teachers, and instilled in them the techniques and relationships necessary for building congregations and communities. These reunions also offered women the opportunity to make new
connections that would sustain them during what was an inherently isolating and increasingly unpredictable political situation on the mainland.

While physical reunions were an important activity of the guild, of even greater significance to the extension and solidification of the UMCA's network of female lay evangelists was the affective spirituality of guild life. The “rules” of the guild were three: (1) to communicate with prayer for the guild once a month; (2) to say the guild prayer daily; and (3) to attend the monthly guild meeting. Guild founders hoped that participation would increase members’ “sense of the religious character of the teacher’s office [and to] encourag[e] intercessory prayer for one's scholars.”55 Guild officials also advised students to “set a good example to their scholars and to pray for them by name.”56 The guild’s emphasis on the recitation of particular prayers was a meaningful tool in the maintenance of community, for the “guild prayer” reinforced to its practitioners their membership in the community, and reminded them of the particular practices, behaviors, duties, and tasks they had pledged to perform and uphold. Prayer for one’s scholars was also an evangelical tool, a practice that bound teachers to their students and incorporated new generations of Christians into the UMCA’s spiritual community.

Members also relied on the affective spirituality promoted by guild prayers to help them maintain their ties to Mbweni and to the UMCA community while in diaspora. When members left for work on the mainland, there was a celebration and service, with “special prayers and intercession for the teacher who is leaving.” Teachers and clerics’ wives carried this spiritual connection with them to the mainland, where they relied on their own prayers and the prayers of others to assuage the loneliness and alienation of life on mainland stations. Members often detailed in letters to Mbweni and to their guild colleagues “how much they feel the support of each other’s prayers.” Perhaps feeling unmoored in her new station, with no friends nearby and only a few Christians to worship with, one teacher found temporary solace on “Guild Day,” when she knew that the guild’s leaders and members would “be all praying for us.”57 Instead of falling out of touch once on the mainland, the traveling teachers came to rely on their membership in the guild as a “great bond of union.” Indeed, prayer not only reinforced their ties to other members on Zanzibar and across the mainland, but it kept them bound to the civilizing influence of Mbweni. Daily prayer allowed guild members to seek refuge in ritual, reminding themselves of their training, of their duties, and of their commitments to their husbands, to the mission, and to God. Reciting guild prayers daily was also a way to bolster resolve and avoid the temptations associated with life
on the frontier of the mission. Prayers offered a respite from the domestic drudgery of life as a cleric's wife, teaching grown women skills one had mastered as a young girl. Indeed, the prayer activated a particular emotional subjectivity shared (at least in theory) by all guild members. This was particularly valuable to women living and working on the mainland during the 1910s, when German political rule and the threat of war made movement and travel increasingly perilous. When physical travel to one's friends and colleagues was impossible, prayers and spiritual bonds provided comfort and sustenance.

Yet despite all this, we can imagine that guild prayer and the spiritual community it purported to uphold was only a moderately satisfying stand-in for a physical community. For women living in communities where they did not speak the language or have many confidants, we can imagine (and imagine we must, for no women's voices were recorded on this point) that consorting with friends or seeking the advice of colleagues would have been greatly satisfying. Newlyweds or women teaching for the first time might have liked to share their frustrations or concerns, to be heard, and to have someone to commiserate with. When famine or the encroachment of German troops brought fear and threatened physical danger, as happened in Masasi in 1905 and in much of the mainland in 1914 and 1915, women likely yearned for more tactile aid rather than simply spiritual comfort. Guild prayers were a Janus-faced tool: when one is homesick or lonely, prayer—particularly prayers written by the guild's British founders—could confirm one's isolation.

Based on the success of the first, mission officials founded a professional organization for the UMCA's Industrial girls. The Guild of All Saints was founded in 1887 and quickly grew to be twice the size of its sister organization. Founders imagined that, similar to the Guild of the Good Shepherd, the Guild of All Saints would “bind” the Industrials “to us and to each other.” In keeping with the tracked system of education established a decade earlier at Mbweni, the “rules” for the Guild of All Saints seem intentionally less onerous than those for the teachers' guild. Perhaps church officials feared that less capable scholars would also prove less adept at living up to the expectations of the Guild of All Saints. Regardless, the All Saints “rules” encouraged women (1) to “try” to do “any work for God given them by the clergy”; (2) to “help” each other in sickness; (3) to say a short prayer for the guild daily; and (4) to communicate together on All Saints’ Day and the Feast of the Visitation. Although few of the members of the Guild of All Saints had explicit teacher training, many of them ultimately married teachers. (Whom their Kiungani boys fell in love with was not, as we have seen, something the church had as much
control over as they would have liked.) Thus, although officials’ expectations for the evangelical capacity of the Industrial guild were lower than for the teachers’ guild, the women were still encouraged to attend church regularly, to “choose good friends,” to “be very careful about their conversation,” and to “try and draw others to lead a holy life.” The Industrials were evangelists in their own right, for they were expected to invite “people from house to house to special services,” to help with mothers’ meetings, to meet for prayer, and to meditate and give advice on “the duties of wives and mothers.” Indeed, membership in a guild might have been even more valuable to Industrial women, who could not fall back on teacher training or the cultivation the mission provided to clerics’ wives.

Informal Training for Mainland Preachers’ Wives

Whereas Mbweni’s formal guilds bound Christian-educated, professional women together spiritually and emotionally across great distances around the turn of the century, the mission’s theological colleges struggled with the challenges of initiating a very different type of woman into the ideological community. During
the first several decades of the mission’s work in East Africa, Zanzibar-trained evangelists left the island to establish schools and congregations on discontiguous stations throughout the mainland. As soon as the 1880s but increasingly so in the early 1900s, congregations and schools in the interior began graduating aspiring evangelists of their own. Mainland schools did not generally have the myopic focus of Mbweni in preparing women for careers as clerics’ wives and teachers; thus, many of the women who graduated from mainland mission schools needed an extra element of education to prepare them for life as a preacher’s helpmeet. They therefore often accompanied their fiancés or husbands to one of the several new theological colleges the mission opened on the mainland. While not formally enrolled in college, partners of aspiring clerics and teachers participated in what can be thought of as ad hoc support groups for mainland-born clerics’ wives.

The mission founded Saint Cyprian’s College in 1929 to augment the mission’s attempts to increase the number of African clergy in southern Tanzania. Saint Cyprian’s offered a variety of informal lessons, seminars, work experience, and individualized training, as well as community-building initiatives for wives and fiancées of theological students. The college, named after the African bishop and martyr Saint Cyprian, was located near the outstations of Saidi Maumbo and Namasakata, several hours’ walk to the southwest of Tunduru, east of Masasi on the Lindi-Tunduru road. The spacious compound included a chapel, lecture room, and housing for college staff and students. The UMCA had been evangelizing in the general area of Saidi Maumbo since Bishop Steere and a group of Mbweni congregants arrived in 1876 to establish an outstation, but the work had been slow. Kolumba Msigala, an ordained graduate of Kiungani, established the outstation at Saidi Maumbo in 1924. When Msigala arrived, there were “a few scattered Christians in the new parish” and he was largely doing “pioneer work” among the residents of the area. His work was productive: not long after his arrival, houses for two English nuns who had followed him from his previous posting at Chiwata were constructed; teachers were placed in new outstations; a dispensary—which soon became a small, albeit very basic, hospital—was opened; and a girls’ school was added to the compound. Thus when the college was founded, it complemented what was already a rapidly growing, ethnically diverse Christian center.

The Saint Cyprian’s campus, a spacious plot carved out of a well-forested slope near Saidi Maumbo, was in many ways a microcosm of the diocese itself. The students came from stations and schools scattered throughout southern Tanzania, from areas as central as Tunduru and Masasi, and from outlying areas to the east
and south. The aspiring clerics were members of several different ethnolinguistic communities, but all shared a general knowledge of Kiswahili and, in some cases, English. These men joined the college’s British workers and African staff and their families on the hill; the families of teachers employed at the primary schools that were affiliated with the college lived nearby. Boys and girls from the local UMCA schools increased the bustle on campus, as did the mixture of other mission staff and congregants. And, of course, there were the wives of aspiring clerics or college staff, as well as local young women who were dating or engaged to theological students.

In keeping with the UMCA’s theological approach, college staff believed that the most effective evangelism was through a well-matched, companionate pair of educated Christian workers. It was not enough to simply prepare a man for Holy Orders, they reasoned, but they must also attend to the partners of their aspiring clerics. The wives of Saint Cyprian’s students, unlike many of the women in the earliest cohorts of Mbweni students, had generally received very little, if any, training before coming to the college. Except for women raised near a central school, many of the aspiring clerics’ wives had not received more than a cursory primary-level education. Very few had spent much time outside of their immediate villages or attained much confidence in the Kiswahili or English language. Given their lack of education, lack of fluency in the languages of mission, and lack of experience around people with whom they shared little but a nominal identification as Christians, many wives felt isolated or lonely. One student explained that many of the wives felt “as if they had been brought here in a great flying machine, and when they look round for their fellows they don’t see them.”

As a sign of their commitment to the role of women in the evangelical process, within a year of its founding the college had initiated a series of ad hoc measures aimed at increasing the general level of competency with the roles and responsibilities of a cleric’s wife. Immediately the women learned (if they did not already know) how to read and write; they received religious instruction and were taught about ministering and parish visiting. On June 18, 1931, the priest-in-charge began a series of lessons for the women “on one or two points in connection with their future position as Deacon’s wives,” which was followed by several lectures by Canon Kolumba on “certain aspects of the work a ‘minister’s wife’ could do in her husband’s parish.” In the 1940s the sardonically named Miss Wisdom offered regular talks to the students’ wives, organized special retreats for “work amongst the women,” and assisted a fledgling branch of the Mothers’ Union. The women, explained one of
Saint Cyprian’s European teachers, were “carefully instructed in the Catholic faith; they are taught how to help their fellow Christians in the parishes to which they will go; and they are also instructed in any matters that may appeal to them.” They also had special retreats and quiet days, during which they practiced these skills and learned certain rites and rituals they would use in their work.

The women were encouraged to practice their leadership skills, which they would need as clerics’ wives among new congregations, by creating and rotating through official positions within the church. In April 1932, for example, the women of Saint Cyprian’s formed a *chama* (Kiswahili: party or group) to run the church on Sundays. An *Mkuu wa Kanisa* (Kiswahili: Head of Church) would collect alms on Sundays and keep the younger children occupied while their parents worshiped. Two-week terms were effected so that many different women could rotate through the position; Rahel Nufunga was the first to shoulder the responsibility. The women also learned the essential duties of clerics’ wives, which they would enact for the daily running of their new churches and model for their new congregations. The same *chama* that created the position of *Mkuu wa Kanisa* also arranged for the wives of students to “help their husbands to decorate the altar with flowers, so as to learn how to do it, with a view to helping in that way hereafter in their parish.” While such activities might seem mundane or even commonsensical to the modern-day churchgoer, they were not intuitive to women who had grown up on the very edges of the Christian frontier. Manual labor was required to build and maintain a proper space for worship, much of the responsibility for which fell on the shoulders of these young wives. The Saint Cyprian’s logbook is flush with concerns about the structural integrity and appearance of the mud and wattle chapel. The students’ wives were frequently recruited to perform both basic maintenance and more substantive repairs, as well as to prepare the chapel—the center of spiritual life at Saint Cyprian’s—for worship: they were tasked with mudding the floor of the chapel with local black earth; to pack white earth sent from Chidya by a British friend of the mission onto the mud walls of the chapel, especially to decorate the inside of the chapel; and to do the seasonal structural “mudding.” Their “zeal” for this work was reportedly compromised only when they were attending to other duties, such as births and deaths.

In addition to gaining competency in these skills, the act of performing the ordinary tasks of Christian living together helped the Saint Cyprian’s wives to forge bonds of friendship and personal intimacy that sustained them while at the college. This communal work also illustrated for the women, and allowed
them the opportunity to participate in the construction of, a particular ethos that underwrote the UMCA community: that of diverse, encompassing spiritual unity. To the church administrators in particular, the cross-ethnic immersion these women experienced was a valuable community-building tool. In 1932, for example, Mwalimu Gerard, an African teacher at the college, lectured the students and their wives about a troubling trend on campus. Rather than referring to teachers simply by their professional title, “Mwalimu,” or their professional title and Christian name, such as “Mwalimu Gerard,” for example, students tended to emphasize the ethnic distinctions among the class by referring to teachers by their professional title and their ethnic group, as “Mwalimu Mmakonde” or “Mwalimu Mmakuo.” Mwalimu Gerard lectured the students, wives included, about the “necessity of unity among Christians,” and called for a stop to fractious “tribal” politics. The women's engagement in these everyday acts of Christian living, such as mudding the church, attending to births, and learning to sew, was one way of emphasizing the similarities between them and promoting their shared identity as Christian clerics’ wives above all other affiliations, including ethnic. While we do not have records of wives themselves expressing such internal shifts, one church administrator described the changes that he believed they experienced over their time at the college: he saw “an enormous change in their attitude towards each other. They are learning to be sociable outside the tribe. School has brought them together: sewing on my veranda they have learnt to talk to each other. They are now very interested in each others' customs; they rock with laughter over their language differences.” This emotional connection between clerics’ wives and their shared homesickness was vital in helping them establish a sense of community. Unlike Susan Matt’s nineteenth-century immigrants to America, who were spurred by homesickness to invest in ethnic enclaves, organizations, and associations and to “recollect the past communally,” the UMCA’s clerics’ wives used homesickness, a newfound sense of interethnic camaraderie, church teachings on ethnic unity, and their shared faith to create a new form of subjectivity.

**Teacher-Disciple Relationship**

As we have seen, the UMCA's British missionaries—and in fact workers from missions throughout the continent—embraced the civilizing influence of British women missionaries as an evangelical tool, leading them to privilege an intimate
teacher-disciple relationship. British women “could reverse the dangerous effects of a heathen lifestyle and instill a Christian character in young, unlearnable girls, at once elevating their self-respect and their material condition.” In missions that followed the model of the Native Church, young African women were educated and “empowered to enact change in their own society by evangelizing others.” Assuming the missionary role themselves, the UMCA’s female lay evangelists followed their husbands to establish and serve at stations on the mainland, employing the model of the teacher-disciple relationship in their own evangelical efforts. These African women worked in homes, schools, and clinics to create the cultural institutions that would solidify their husbands’ “official” conversion campaigns.

The first generation of African women educated by the UMCA at Mbweni transformed the teacher-disciple relationship from one between British civilizing missionaries and “heathen” Africans to one between two African women, one the embodiment of a compendium of Christian values and African tradition, and the other a mainland inquirer motivated by a host of complicated goals and desires. Kathleen Mkwarasho (the young Makua woman whom we met in chapter 3 just after she arrived at the mission on HMS Briton in 1874 from the general area of what is today southern Tanzania or neighboring Mozambique) was on the front lines of this change. Although Kathleen was a pupil-teacher at Mbweni, her evangelical career began in earnest after she returned from her trip to England with Caroline Thackeray in 1883 and married Nicholas Mkwarasho. Nicholas trained in the mission’s Industrial program and, after their marriage, volunteered to work in the print shop at the central station on Likoma Island in Lake Malawi, some five hundred miles inland from Zanzibar.

The pair undertook an arduous voyage by sea, up the Zambesi River to the Upper Shire River, and finally to the shores of Lake Malawi, where they boarded the UMCA’s steamer and traveling mission station, the Charles Janson. Aside from the few other Zanzibar-trained teachers, the newlyweds were now largely among strangers on the island; it seemed “to them a foreign country full of people speaking a strange language.” Until they learned the local language, Nicholas was hampered in his outreach efforts. Kathleen, however, had the skills she needed to begin her work immediately. Each time the mission expanded to a new station or community, workers relied on the performative work of educated Christian women to bridge linguistic and cultural divides. Without a shared language or cultural practice, evangelists were forced to rely on their domestic skills, rather than on formal proselytization, to attract new followers. As we have seen, this approach
FIGURE 11. Kathleen and her husband Nicholas at Likoma, standing at right, accompanied by two other teachers.
fit with the mission's Tractarianism: evangelists were theologically disposed to the “formation of moral character by habit” over an indiscriminate revelation of the core of the faith to inquirers. A sense of obligation to her evangelical duty likely combined with emotions of loneliness or isolation, despite the presence of a few Zanzibar-educated Christians in the area, to spur Kathleen to reach out to her new neighbors in whatever way she could to increase the number of like-minded individuals around her.

Thus central to Kathleen's work, and to the work of other Mbweni-trained teachers building relationships on the mainland, was the ongoing practice and modeling of Christian living. The daily performance of particular "cultural politics and practices" for the creation and contestation of nationalist ideology is a "potent vehicle for inculcating and mobilizing" new forms of consciousness. This is especially true, she proposes, in areas where literacy (or, in this case, even a shared language) is not widespread. Kathleen, for her part, would have had to live out the virtues of a Christian education and model the role of Christian motherhood that missionaries believed would expand the mission. In order to increase the size of her local community, to decrease her sense of homesickness and isolation, and to attend to her evangelical duties, she would have imparted to her students, disciples, and protégées the ideals that defined UMCA Christianity. In this the teacher-disciple relationship was the relationship at the heart of the expansion of mission through the reproduction of certain core values.

Immediately upon arriving, then, Kathleen began the difficult work of building up a girls' school, "hunting up scholars from the villages near Likoma station," and teaching local women in informal settings. By 1892 Kathleen was single-handedly running the girls' boarding school. In the rough stone and mortar schoolroom, Kathleen helped an ever-rotating staff of European missionaries teach English, Kiswahili, and the local tongue, Chinyanja, as well as the full syllabus of academic subjects, sewing, cookery, and, above all, scripture. By 1902 Kathleen was the “Head Native Woman Teacher” at Likoma Central School, a position in which she would remain for the rest of her career. In this role Kathleen was responsible for the education of all of the other African women working at the school, as well as many in village schools. She was, missionaries reported, a “good example of conscientious work to the young teachers, and of humility.” Kathleen was deeply embedded in the local community; she led classes for the young woman “hearers” and “catechumens” and “did very useful work as a woman elder among the women.”

By 1906, Mwalimu Kathleen and the local mission staff could boast some four
hundred names on the Likoma Girls' School roster (although the highest daily attendance was but 256). Kathleen's school was having a significant impact on the area: That same year, mission sources reported that the boarding school was smaller than it had been, largely because the students had been granted permission to sleep at home in their villages rather than at the school. The villages on the island, wrote the missionary, “are so much more Christian than they used to be, so that old objections to their sleeping at home do not now apply.” By the end of her career, there was “hardly a woman or girl at Likoma who has not been taught by her, and many others round the lake have learnt from her pupils.” Kathleen’s daughters went through teacher training under their mother’s watchful eye, and in 1928 Kathleen and two of her daughters, together with twelve other women, received government recognition for having served the mission for over twenty years. Her British colleagues conceded that Kathleen so perfectly embodied the balance of the UMCA’s Native Church that she was “indeed a ‘Mama’ to the Nyasa girls in a way we could not hope to be.”

Mission sources attribute the relative success of women's education in the Likoma area to an intellectual genealogy traceable to Kathleen and her training at Mbweni. Kathleen's influence remained strong in Likoma even after her death. In 1932, a report on the education of Christian women on Likoma credited the long history of women's education on the island to the “early pioneers” like Mwalimu Kathleen, who “herself bringing from Zanzibar a tradition of education as desirable for even mere womenkind, popularized it for ever in this island.” In the 1930s, the main Likoma school compound, with its airy classrooms and wide verandas, had room enough for the 394 girls on the books and sixty to seventy pupil-teachers. Five village schools educating a mix of boys and girls brought the number of women enrolled in schools at Likoma to between six hundred and seven hundred. Even the infamous Phelps-Stokes Commission recognized the firmly established tradition of women's education in Likoma; when the commission asked “how it was that the women in this part were so much keener on education than in some other parts of Africa,” mission leaders credited the responsibility that women felt for educating the next generation of Christian mothers. The region's success in educating women was “because they themselves have been so very instrumental in their own progress, for in the early days almost as soon as one could read for herself she was used to teach others.” This habit of mentorship between teachers and protégées extended the intellectual genealogy traceable to Mbweni, rooting both female teacher and the mission deeper into mainland communities.
Intergenerational Fosterage and Friendships

Just as their Zanzibar-trained mentors had, the first generation of women educated by the UMCA on the mainland—women like Kathleen’s disciples—eventually came to think of themselves as members of a broad, united UMCA community. Women were brought into the UMCA’s deterritorialized affective networks through informal intergenerational relationships that grew up between not only teachers and their students, but also between foster parents, mentors, and young girls from the mainland. These relationships were yet another way that Mbweni-educated women living on the mainland after 1890 used affective spiritual ties to bridge enclaves of believers living on discontiguous lands, and to incorporate new generations of believers into the deterritorialized community.

A young woman named (perhaps pseudonymously) “Sikujua” (Kiswahili: “I did not know”) was incorporated into the mission community through an informal, intergenerational fosterage relationship. The Kiungani-educated freed slave Paul Kangai returned to his childhood home near Chitangali, a village in what is now southern Tanzania, about five days’ walk from the coast near Masasi, to take up evangelical work in the late 1800s. Here Paul met and befriended the Majaliwas. Soon after returning home, Paul learned that a woman he had known and loved before his capture, kidnapping, and life on Zanzibar was still living in the area. Kangai committed to finding her, and to marrying her. At the time the woman, Sikujua, was enslaved to a local man. She was not a Christian, and Cecil attempted to dissuade Paul from marrying her. She was “a heathen,” he told Paul, “and you cannot marry a heathen.” Enamored and undeterred, Paul developed a plan to buy Sikujua’s freedom. Once he did, he took Sikujua to live with Cecil and Lucy Majaliwa and their children. Lucy was a freed slave who had been educated at Mbweni; she was not a regularly trained pupil-teacher, having attended Mbweni before the teacher track was established. The pair married in 1879 and eventually moved to Chitangali, where they very soon had the first of their eight children. Things at Chitangali were challenging for the Majaliwas. Cecil was reportedly intensely lonely and had forgotten his childhood language; he experienced anxiety and depression. “I am left alone in the midst of the heathen, he wrote, “like a cottage in the middle of a forest.” Further solidifying their feelings of marginality, the Ngoni raid occurred soon after their arrival and forced them to hide in the bush for a month. Lucy pined for Zanzibar and longed to bring up her children in a “civilized” environment. Lucy Majaliwa was said to have taken “a deeply religious view of a teacher’s work,” and
filled her house even further with local young inquirers and children interested in the mission who were facing opposition at home. While in exile from Zanzibar, Lucy’s ministry to inquiring girls was likely another way to keep her spirits up and to extend the community of like-minded people around her, and her young daughters. In the Majaliwas’ home, Sikujua would learn the faith and ways of a Christian. In assuming this relationship with Sikujua, Lucy reaffirmed her commitment to the continuity of the church and the perpetuity of the values and practices she herself saw as fundamental to living a Christian life. Indeed, the capacity to influence the nature of an inquirer’s belief through quotidian practice was not only inherently Tractarian, but was also a prerogative women assumed when negotiating these intimate fosterage relationships.

As in Sikujua’s experience, the UMCA’s Christian women also assisted in raising young inquirers or mission school children with heathen parents, teaching

**FIGURE 12.** The Majaliwa family, minus Cecil. *Clockwise from upper left:* Florence, Agnes, Lucy, baby Bartlett, Mona, John, Eliza, Margaret, and Louisa.
lessons about religion and Christian life that the girls’ heathen parents could not teach. Ajanjeuli Achitiano was one such girl. Ajanjeuli was born around 1883 in Chitangali. The Achitiano family was Makua, descendants of an elephant-hunting clan whose involvement with the ivory trade before the middle of the nineteenth century brought them from south of the Ruvuma River, in what is now Mozambique, northeast toward the coast to eventually settle in the Masasi district. Bishop Steere’s party had arrived in Masasi from Mbweni in 1876 and was slowly making advances among the local population; it was not for several years, however, that Cecil Majaliwa was able to convince the people around Chitangali to build a church. One of Ajanjeuli’s extended relatives, Barnaba Matuka—eventually Barnaba Nakaam, for his ascendency to a local titled position—affiliated with the church and attended Kiungani on Zanzibar as one of its first freeborn students. Ajanjeuli’s parents were not among Majaliwa’s early converts.

Cecil’s early support of young Ajanjeuli prompted the mission to connect her with a British patron who would support her education, and by 1890 she had enrolled in the village school. The updates Cecil provided to her patrons and the letters Ajanjeuli later wrote provide much of the information we have about her life. In 1897, after a delay caused by her parents’ insistence that she continue to perform what Cecil called “their wicked heathen customs” at home, Ajanjeuli was baptized and took the Christian name Agnes, reportedly for her sponsors from St. Agnes’ School in Trimingham, England. At some point Agnes’s family moved and she enrolled in school at the Chiwata outstation under the tutelage of Christabel Matoka, an Mbweni-educated wife of a Zanzibar-trained deacon. At fourteen, Agnes was “delightfully promising . . . bright—clever so much above the average.” Christabel knew that at Mbweni anyone “as clever at learning as Agnes” would have been promoted to the teacher-training track, but at Chiwata there was no such option and Agnes’s school days were officially over. Not content to send her back to the village and, very likely, into an early marriage, Christabel promoted Agnes to the specially created position of pupil-teacher. It was through these relationships with Lucy and Christabel that Agnes eventually committed to the church, in spite of her parents’ resistance. Lucy and Christabel also introduced Agnes to the profession of teacher and to the idea of a companionate Christian marriage, providing her with an opportunity for both.

Lucy and Christabel were not the only two people looking out for Agnes. Barnaba Nakaam, a convert not only to Christianity but to the virtues of women’s education, supported the mission’s efforts to arrange marriages between its male
teachers/clergy and educated Christian women. Nakaam was also determined that his nephew, Francis, should marry a girl who “was not only an educated Christian but a mwungwana (a freeborn person, as opposed to one who had been a slave).”

Agnes apparently fit the bill, and the match was made. The pair did not marry for several years, however, in part because Sapuli was preparing for Holy Orders at Kiungani, and in part because church officials were worried about Agnes’s relative youth at the time of her engagement.

Well before her marriage, Agnes had taken over the patron updates from Cecil Majaliwa. These letters, apparently dictated by Agnes but penned by an amanuensis in Kiswahili, reveal Agnes’s longing to find and build a community, and to forge relationships with other Christians, women in particular. Soon after their marriage, the Sapulis moved from their home at Chiwata to the Mwiti outstation. Although she had moved several times before her marriage, Agnes was now a teacher and a cleric’s wife, responsible for evangelism of her own. This appears to have been both an isolating and a challenging time for the new bride. For example, not long after their marriage, Mwiti’s resident deacon, Kolumba Yohana Msigala, left for Zanzibar to make his final preparations for the priesthood, leaving Agnes and Francis alone at Mwiti.

Soon the couple took up the life of itinerant evangelists themselves, moving from station to station at the instruction of the church administration. Agnes recounted their movements for her patrons: “When we left Mwiti, we were sent to Luwatala after my husband was appointed to the work of a reader. We were 9 months at Luwatala, and now we have been sent to a place called Chilimba. Chilimba is a little hill at the foot of . . . the river Mwiti which is near the Rouvuma river.”

The very work Agnes and Francis were sent to Chilimba to do exacerbated Agnes’s sense of isolation. Francis was on a mission to “try and restore those Christians who have fallen and who were lost without a shepherd.” Those whom he succeeded in returning to the church were “obstinate and are angry at being told to repent,” which did not leave the couple with many companionable neighbors.

While maintaining a professional relationship with her congregants, Agnes also looked to other evangelists for friendship, support, and companionship. In her letters, Agnes recounted what Benedict Anderson might call a “consciousness of connectedness” to other itinerant teachers. “Many teachers are being moved to other places,” she wrote, and “perhaps next year we shall be sent to a different place, we do not know.” In the mission field, the rituals of Christian life and the loneliness of itinerancy forged relationships among individuals and communities.
whose members did not necessarily interact face-to-face. In fact, Agnes’s sense of belonging to the UMCA’s spiritual community was so strong that it inspired her to pursue spiritual and personal relationships with British women.

In writing about Anglican evangelization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the British historian Elizabeth Prevost has reported that British female missionaries became deeply invested in creating a sense of shared womanhood with their African disciples, a multiracial community bound by gender and religion. The Anglican missionary Gertrude King, for example, who served in the Ladies’ Association (after 1894, the Women’s Mission Association) of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (an Anglican mission organization) in Madagascar around the turn of the twentieth century, understood that for women the “deepest value of mission work” was “the spiritual connection that she had forged with African women.” So, too, it was in Uganda where Dora Skipper of the Church Missionary Society was moved by the discovery of a shared womanhood in the mission field: she wrote of her first days in Nabumale that she attended “a lovely service this morning, a native communion. The church was full and it was so nice to feel the oneness of black and white as we knelt together.”

Prevost states that through their work with African women, many missionary women ultimately “reconfigured their mission work as a medium for religious exchange with African women.” This affective spirituality, in turn, created a “mutual space wherein British and African women interacted on a number of levels, infusing mission Christianity with a dynamic female religiosity which was capable of mediating divergent cultural and religious expressions, effectively blurring the sacred and the secular, European and African, Christian and non-Christian dimensions of the mission encounter.”

Agnes’s letters personally addressed her British patrons and friends in Kiswahili, rather than in Yao, a language that would have been much more accessible through the translations of returned missionaries. In maintaining a correspondence with her British patrons, Agnes Sapuli crossed cultural and racial divides to incorporate herself into a much broader communion of Anglican women.

Agnes died in 1918, but not before her daughter Rose Annie left Chilimba to attend boarding school at the central station at Masasi. Rose’s departure was the intended result of the investment female evangelists made in affective evangelical relationships, and marked the start of another generation of women who were connected through education, itinerancy, and the affective spirituality of the mission. Lucy
Majaliwa and her husband Cecil offer another example of the intellectual and affective lineage Mbweni graduates brokered. To maintain their ties to Zanzibar, and to provide their children with what they saw as an adequate education, the Majaliwas sent each of their children back to Kiungani and Mbweni as boarding students. Because of their parents’ status in the mission, Florence Flower, Agnes, and Mona were placed among the small group of pupil-teachers in the Mbweni schoolhouse, rather than in the much larger Industrial Wing.

In addition to what they believed were the obvious educational benefits, the Majaliwas’ decision to send their children to boarding school at Zanzibar helped the family solidify ties with families in other parts of the diasporic community of Christians. Each of the Majaliwa daughters completed teacher training and married a Kiungani student, men who envisaged careers in the church administration. Cultivating these ties with other families was not unlike the hopes for increased lineage ties, wealth and knowledge, and dependence that motivated Africans to forge marriage alliances in the precolonial period, and not unlike the strategies of imputing kinship and constructing familial ties that refugee women adopted as a means to incorporate more fully into the evangelical strategy. In the new context, however, the Majaliwas were using marriage alliances and the affective kinship ties that attended them to reinforce their bonds to other members of the spiritual community, and to embed themselves more firmly in the mission despite their distance from its figurative center.

Further, the choice of men with whom the Majaliwa family forged marriage alliances and extended kinship ties was significant. They were highly educated men who were destined to be community leaders, but who turned out to invest in the community-building project in a way wholly unlike that which the missionaries and their African congregants would have been likely to imagine at the time. Florence Flower married the Reverend Daudi Machina, a priest who would be active in local politics of the Magila area during the First World War. Her sister Mona married Daudi’s brother, the Reverend Samuel Chiponde, the first African editor of the Msimulizi newspaper and a government interpreter involved in the African Civil Servants Association (ACSA). The UMCA-sponsored Msimulizi (“storyteller” or “narrator”) was the first Swahili language newspaper, and the ACSA was an outgrowth of protests by Chiponde and two other progressive UMCA adherents to the chief secretary on behalf of forty African clerks regarding perceived discrimination in salaries, housing allowances, and leave arrangements when compared to their “Asiatic” counterparts. Agnes married Augustino Ramadhani, the senior head
teacher at Kiungani. Ramadhani eventually became the head of Zanzibar’s Christian community, and the leader of the Zanzibar branch of the African Association (AA). The AA was an intrareligious and intraethnic political organization that, together with the ACSA, preceded Tanzania’s anticolonial nationalist organization, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU). Through their involvement in the soccer clubs, civil servants’ associations, and other proto-nationalist organizations that coalesced in TANU, Chiponde and Ramadhani were among the earliest pioneers of modern nationalist politics in Tanzania. These early glimmers of strivings for self-rule by UMCA Christians were logical extensions of the concept of the Native Church, for they show how political innovators within the ranks of the Christian nation took the idea of the spiritual community and applied it to local and contemporary circumstances.

The homesickness, isolation, and marginalization inherent in the UMCA’s evangelical diaspora to the mainland were compounded by the effects of the consolidation of colonial power and the First World War. At the end of the war, German East Africa became the British-mandated Tanganyika Territory, and UMCA stations on the mainland came under British administrative rule for the first time. In addition to a change in authority, the new government offered novel forms and definitions of status, authority, and prestige. For many Africans, our Mbweni congregants and their descendants being a clear example, the church community had always offered much more than spiritual relief, and this period was no exception. Many Africans in the interwar era saw the church as a way to develop the skills and other knowledge and technologies that would provide them access to these new opportunities. Literacy skills taught by British missions in English and Kiswahili looked as though they would be invaluable under the new administration. Clerical and organizational skills, as well as familiarity with British ways of being, also promised to offer a leg up.

As useful as they were for extending the church and uniting evangelists across time and space, the bonds of affective spirituality employed by the UMCA’s female evangelists suggested certain limitations for their engagement with the rapidly changing world of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Africa. Indeed, there exists an irony inherent in their endeavors, which is that for all their earnest attempts to cross geographical, ethnolinguistic, and generational divides in service of a united spiritual community, the women profiled in this chapter were merely drawing new lines between “us” and “them.” In forging strong and enduring ties between one another and across space and time, Mbweni graduates
and their descendants were at the same time distancing themselves from the other communities to which they had once belonged.

As the UMCA’s community spread across the Tanzanian mainland, the UMCA’s affective spiritual community became more and more salient in the minds of its believers. The isolation, affective spirituality, and shared history that bound the UMCA’s female evangelists to their old friends and their new congregants were powerful, integral parts of building a community. It was also an exclusionary force, one that served an important role in regulating the boundaries of the community and solidifying Christian identity. Indeed, the 1920s and 1930s UMCA congregants began to direct their pedagogical, spiritual, and emotional labors toward the creation of a specific brand of African “civilization,” a form of cultural nationalism that grew increasingly salient as the colonial period progressed. Just as the community was defined by Christian modernity and a rich sense of supra-ethnic unity, the UMCA community was also defined by its congregants’ race.