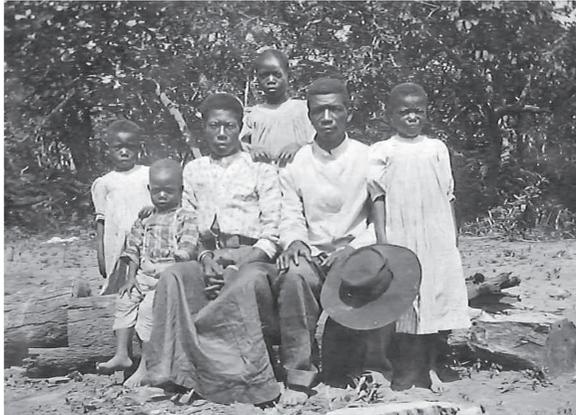


# BISHOP JOHN SPRINGER, HELEN SPRINGER AND TSHANGAND KAYEKE



Tshangand Kayeke and his wife, Nasala, with their children, Sala, Rachel, Esther, and Moses, in 1911.



Helen Chapman Rasmussen Springer and Bishop John McKendree Springer.

## Founders of Congolese Methodism

Missionaries John Springer and Helen Chapman Rasmussen Springer are credited with founding the present-day United Methodist Church in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Tshangand Kayeke, a former slave, was among their leading indigenous partners.

**Helen Chapman** was inspired by Bishop William Taylor to go as a self-supporting missionary to Congo in 1891. She married William Rasmussen, a Danish missionary she met on the voyage. Their initial time in Congo lasted only six months due to illness. The couple returned to Congo in 1894 and William died in 1895. Helen and their son left the field. After her son died, she sailed to Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) in 1901 where she translated the Bible and hymns into Shona and laid the foundation for Methodist girls' education.

**John Springer**, who went to Africa in 1901, was a third-generation Methodist preacher from Wisconsin. He sailed after graduating from Northwestern University and Garrett Biblical Institute with the task of reconstituting the remains of what Bishop Taylor had started in the 1880s. He was assigned to Old Umtali (Mutare, Zimbabwe).

Helen and William married in 1905 and engaged in a series of long evangelistic expeditions supported in part by offerings from American congregations.

The Springers relocated to Congo in 1910 to organize a network of mission stations staffed by a few missionaries and many Congolese workers. Some of the latter had been sold into slavery in Angola, encountered Methodism there, bought emancipation and returned home to work at the missions. **Tshangand Kayeke**, who served among the Lunda people at Musumba, was one of these indigenous evangelists. Kayeke was a passionate preacher, song writer and strong leader for emerging Congolese Methodism.

Springer was elected bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Africa Mission in 1936. In that role, he combined the MEC and MECS work in Congo and led the episcopal area until 1944.

Source for Chapman: Dana Robert, in *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, with modifications.