

Church News

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GENERAL CHURCH IN GHANA (Conclusion)

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In my first article under the heading “The Establishment of the General Church in Ghana” (*New Church Life*, June 2006, p.230), I chronicled salient events that contributed and also led to the establishment of the General Church in Ghana. During the period 1986 to 1991 three members of the clergy, Bishop Louis King, the Rev. Willard Heinrichs, and the Rev. Robert Junge, visited the newly established church. Dr. Bill Radcliffe, a great friend of the church in Ghana, also paid a visit.

In this second and final article I am going to discuss the development and growth of the church in Ghana from 1991 to the present. During this fifteen-year period, four ministers completed their theological studies and returned to Ghana. They are the Rev. Messrs. Martin Gyamfi, Simpson Kwasi Darkwah, Nicholas Anochi, and Jacob Borketey-Kwaku.

1991 – Rev. Gyamfi Returns to Ghana

The first to arrive was the Rev. Martin Kofi Gyamfi. He arrived in July 1991 after about five and half years’ studies in both Bryn Athyn College and the Academy of the New Church Theological School.

Rev. Gyamfi’s transition from the academic life in Bryn Athyn to full time work as a minister was smoother than mine. I was not assigned to any group because the General Church had not been established yet in Ghana. On the other hand, Mr. Gyamfi was assigned to Oframase where he used to teach and farm, so he was familiar with the people and the terrain. He also started a group there prior to his going to Bryn Athyn to study. On top of

all this, I had, before his return to Ghana, baptized twenty-four adults at Kwahu Tafo. Mr. Gyamfi took over the administration of that group in 1991, and it has since been under his care.

A year or two after Mr. Gyamfi's return to Ghana, he established the General Church in Asakraka, his hometown, where he now resides with his wife, Joyce, and their eleven-year-old daughter, Nina. The Asakraka church is firmly established. A church with a congregation of well over a hundred members has been built. The church and the town can also boast of a beautiful school with a population of two hundred students and twenty-three staff, teaching and non-teaching. The school was opened on September 11, 2001 and, in addition to his heavy schedule, Mr. Gyamfi is its first principal. Mr. Gyamfi also has started a pre-theological training for four students.

Mr. Gyamfi, in my opinion, has been a successful minister judging from all the uses he performs for the church. He serves several groups, serves as the principal of the New Church School, and he is training future New Church ministers. Some of his students are lay leaders of the groups under his care.

1992 – Rev. Darkwah returns to Ghana

A year after the arrival of the Rev. Martin Kofi Gyamfi to Ghana, the Rev. Simpson Kwasi Darkwah came back and immediately started work. "I started my ministry with two families forming the remnant of the declined Tema congregation," says Mr. Darkwah. The two families included his own family. Because there was no church building, Mr. Darkwah had classes and worship services in private homes, and he says, "several relocations went on in response to steady growth and corresponding needs."

In addition to the Tema group another group at Madina was growing side by side with the Tema congregation. "I used to conduct worship at both places every Sunday," the Rev.

Darkwah informs me. The Madina group used to be led by the late Pastor Garna. For some time the group used a poultry farm facility at Adenta as a place of worship before it moved to the house of one Mr. Adotey at Madina in 1994. Both the Tema and Madina groups continued to grow steadily under Mr. Darkwah's leadership and by 1997 well over a hundred people had been baptized into the church.

New Church School at Tema Established

When the Tema School was established in August 1999, Mr. Darkwah had to give up his weekly presence in Madina and rely on the assistance of lay leadership. Also, he had to give up the teaching service he had been rendering to the Ghanaian Theological School for several years when he assumed responsibility as the first principal of the Tema New Church School. Some of the problems facing the principal were the problems of accommodation, suitable teaching staff, and funding. "We were challenged to build an excellent and competitive New Church School that can stand the test of time," Mr. Darkwah says. He adds, "Supported by generous individuals and the General Church, we have come a long way and we are on course to achieving full success."

We recognize, acknowledge, and appreciate the support from friends in the US, and their frequent visits. They came with constructive ideas, valuable materials and generous donations.

Presently the school can boast of being a grade "A" school with a population of two hundred sixty pupils. Five times we have participated in the BECE exams, and the school came out with encouraging results.

I am reliably informed by Mr. Darkwah that "The Tema congregation has been growing steadily with a current membership level of one hundred eighty, including about one hundred General Church members, plus children, and inquirers."

While tremendous progress has been made in terms of physical growth of the school and structures, the same cannot be said of the church. Worship services and other church activities are squeezed into a small place in the school building. A modest start has been made to put up a suitable Church facility, but this is halted for lack of funding. It is our hope that, at the appropriate time, we will receive more funding to continue the Church building.

To conclude this segment of the article let me quote Mr. Darkwah. He says that, in spite of the lack of proper place of worship, “We feel satisfied with the state of the New Church and its uses. We are by no means resting on our oars. We are committed to further growth and development of our two institutions. We believe that when our dreams for the school and church buildings come true, the Tema church and school will be another success story of the General Church outreach development.”

1995 – Rev. Anochi Returns to Ghana

Three years after Rev. Darkwah had arrived in Ghana, the Rev. Nicholas Wiredu Anochi returned home after his ordination in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. He immediately started working with and under me in my ministry at Abelenkpe in Accra, the capital city of Ghana. He did not confine himself to Abelenkpe alone; he visited other ministers already in the field—such as the Rev. Darkwah and the Rev. Gyamfi—and preached to their congregations. The congregations he preached to include that of Tema, Madina, Asakraka, and Nteso.

Mr. Anochi also conducted doctrinal classes in the areas he visited, and helped the Rev. Darkwah and me in organizing several mini-crusades near church centers: many times at Abelenkpe, Tema, Haatso and Madina. The three of us traveled many times to Kumasi to organize some future members into a

coherent group. We also organized mini-crusades in some villages near Kumasi, such as Duasi, Kenyasi, Atwima-Koforidua, and Akropong. Some converts were baptized.

With vigor, Mr. Anochi established an active doctrinal class in a tailoring shop at Adabraka, a community in Accra, where we met every Friday afternoon between 1:00 and 3:00 “with faithful attendants of about fifteen adults of various religious persuasions, including Buddhists, Moslems and Christians.” In addition to these, the Rev. Anochi preached regularly on the streets, in market places, various workshops, and even on buses. By the middle of 1996, Mr. Anochi separated himself from me in order to nurse the Adabraka doctrinal class into a New Church group after baptizing some of the members of the class. Sunday church services were held in the house where the tailoring shop was located.

Mr. Anochi says, “When I moved from my temporary residence to Dome/St. Johns area I moved the Adabraka group to my residence where my spacious living room functioned well as a place of worship;” adding, “thus the Dome/St. Johns group was born in January 1997.” The Adabraka facility continued to be used for Friday afternoon doctrinal classes.

Mr. Anochi tells me, “My zeal to expose the Heavenly Doctrines to more people propelled me on to the Central Region of Ghana where I organized other mini-crusades at Kwanyaku, where I grew up, and other villages near the town.” According to Mr. Anochi, he had the privilege of preaching several times in the Kwanyaku Presbyterian Church. He also evangelized many times at Abetifi, his hometown, and traveled a few times with some of the former students of the Ghanaian Theological School; namely Godwin Zattey-Agboga and Edward Akotey. The towns they went to included Berekum in the Brong Ahafo Region. Berekum is about 300 miles away from Accra.

In spite of Mr. Anochi’s heavy schedule, he has time to nurture

the budding Dome group of very enthusiastic students of the Writings. His Wednesday doctrinal classes at Kwashieman, a suburb of Accra, sometimes attract eighteen to twenty-five people. Since the establishment of the Tema school he has been going there every Wednesday to conduct worship. Mr. Anochi also serves as the vice chairman of the board of trustees of the school.

In November 2003, a small group of “Pentecostal worshippers” joined Mr. Anochi’s congregation after they had been exposed to the Heavenly Doctrines. They have since been baptized into the New Church. In fact, it will come as a surprise to readers to learn that the Dome/St. Johns group meets in their (the former Pentecost members’) church building at Taifa, since the New Church group in Dome has no place of worship of her own. The Taifa church building is yet to be completed.

“Thanks to the Lord, some generous New Church members such as Mr. Duncan Smith of Glenview, are helping us put up a church building at Fise, a suburb of Accra to give the New Church and my ministry a permanent and decent place of worship and outreach,” Mr. Anochi states in deep appreciation. It is his firm belief that “it is the Lord who builds His church,” and that “we are only willing servants in His vineyard.”

2002– Rev. Jacob Borketey-Kwaku

Teshie-Nungua New Church is one of the newest branches in Ghana and is led by the Rev. Jacob Borketey-Kwaku. The church used to be a Pentecostal/Charismatic group led by Mr. Kwadwo Adu Amoako, currently a student in the Ghanaian Theological School. The members of his group opted to be members of the General Church when Mr. Borketey-Kwaku had the opportunity to interact with them during the latter part of the year 2000.

The small group, which formed the core of the church, has

now increased to about thirty-two baptized members, with about twenty-five adults and three adolescents. There are also four children under twelve years. Additionally, there are twelve inquirers who are potential members. Mr. Borketey-Kwaku states that, “enthusiasm and optimism are so high among members that a fast growth of the church is anticipated in the near future.”

Presently the group attends services in an elementary school classroom at Teshie, a town near Accra. Mr. Borketey-Kwaku’s group has begun reaching out to people on a wide scale, giving out write-ups of appealing doctrinal subjects. It is the group’s prayer that their efforts will be fruitful so that the General Church will grow in Ghana.

Mr. Borketey-Kwaku once told me that a co-worker of his met him and paid glowing tribute to the memory of Emanuel Swedenborg. He bought a copy of *Divine Providence* in 1995 and was highly impressed with the doctrines it teaches.

According to Mr. Borketey he has distributed dozens of the Heavenly Doctrines, including *Heaven and Hell*, and *The Four Doctrines*. These two books, together with the *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* are the favorite books of most Ghanaians.

Mr. Borketey-Kwaku’s favourite quote is: “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it”(Psalm 127:1).

Further growth of the New Church in Ghana is central in our thought. From zero membership before my arrival in 1986 to one on my arrival in Ghana, then from one to forty-one in 1991, membership has increased by leaps and bounds. Records of the number of people we have altogether baptized are not handy. I can only hazard a guess: the number should be around six hundred. Out of this number, at least half are members of the General Church.

We have achieved this result because most of the time we work in tandem, and with a high level of harmony. We have a general

board, though each group or circle has its own board, and we have cultivated an oil palm farm. This has just started bearing fruits. So far, we have successfully played our roles as workers in the Lord's vineyard. We collectively hanker after a New Church which has thousands of members, and a church that will in future be financially independent.

We take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to all members of the General Church of Ghana for their support and prayers. We also thank individuals and groups of the General Church outside Ghana, especially the United States, for their financial support and sympathy. However, our greatest financial support has come from the General Church. In addition to this, the General Church has also sent hundreds of free books to the church. For all these we collectively render our heartfelt thanks. Finally, our greatest thanks go to the Lord who, through His Divine Providence, has made the establishment of the General Church a possibility and a reality. Long live the Crown of all churches in Ghana!

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