

## **SDA Mission in Southern Ghana Union Conference**

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*ABSTRACT—Knowing the past will influence the present and mostly importantly, guide the future. Studying church history will help identify the failures of the past so as not to repeat them in the church today. It will also help identify the successes of the past so as to modify them to ensure the success of the church today. Church history is tantamount to the success of the present day church. The history and the mission of the Southern Ghana Union Conference in modern day Ghana calls for historical evaluation. This study seeks to trace the history of the Southern Ghana Union Conference and how it has carried on its mission since its establishment. The study is a historical evaluation of Southern Ghana Union Conference from 2013 to 2015. It was discovered that the leadership of the SGUC is mission conscious and Adventism is getting more rooted in the Southern part of Ghana. The historic growth of the Southern Ghana Union Conference has been enormous over the few years of its birth and a birth to a new Union Conference was foreseen by the researchers. It was noted that the Union has challenges, even, though it is speedily growing. Also, it was identified that appetizing church houses should be built to accommodate the fast growing membership of the Union. More so, the leadership of the Union should furnish some of*

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*its existing temples to a status that can attract and retain high profile persons in the society especially the capital.*

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## **I. Introduction**

Knowing the past will influence the present and mostly importantly, guide the future. Studying church history will help identify the failures of the past so as not to repeat them in the church today. It will also help identify the successes of the past so as to modify them to ensure the success of the church today. Church history is tantamount to the success of the present day church. The history and the mission of the Southern Ghana Union Conference in modern day Ghana calls for historical evaluation.

This study seeks to trace the history of the Southern Ghana Union Conference and how it has carried on its mission since its establishment. The study is a historical evaluation of Southern Ghana Union Conference from 2013 to 2015.

The paper has been compartmentalized into seven sections. The first section will be the introduction to the study. The second section looks at the origination of Adventism in Ghana. The third section will discuss how the Southern Ghana Union Conference came about. The four section will consider how the Union has carry on its mission so far. The impact the Union has made so far will also be looked at in section five. The sixth section will look at the challenges the Union faces in carrying out its mission. The last section will give the conclusion of the study.

## **II. An Origination of Adventism in Ghana**

This section looks at the origin of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States of America and how it got to Ghana. It traces the history of foreign missionary activities and the expansion of the Church in Ghana. It gives a brief description of the nation Ghana and how Adventism had it base in Ghana.

## **A. History of Worldwide Adventist Church**

The Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) church is “a conservative Christian body, worldwide in extent, evangelical in doctrine, and professing no creed but the Bible. It places strong emphasis on the Second Advent, which it believes is near, and observes the Sabbath of the Bible, the Seventh day of the week” (Neufeld, 1976, p. 1325). As at the year 2010, the SDA church has established itself in 213 out of the 236 countries recognized by the United Nation. The Church has 70,188 organized churches and 65,157 companies, with a membership of 16, 923,239 as of December 2010 (Annual Statistical Report, 2010).

The Seventh-day Adventist originated from the Millerite Movement after the Great Disappointment in October 22, 1844. Based on Miller’s understanding of Daniel 8:14 he began preaching the Second Coming of Christ around 1843 and 1844 and had many followers. On October 22, 1844, over 100,000 Millerites with joy and great hope waited for the Advent of Jesus but unfortunately, they found themselves bitterly disappointed. This incidence has come to be called the Great Disappointment in history. After the disappointment many Millerites failed to believe in the imminent coming of Christ and left. Few saw the date as correct but the event wrongly interpreted. This few people grew and developed to become the modern day Seventh-day Adventist Church. One of the Adventists, Hiram Edson (1806–1882) wrote “Our fondest hopes and expectations were blasted, and such a spirit of weeping came over us as I never experienced before. It seemed that the loss of all earthly friends could have been no comparison. We wept, and wept, till the day dawn” (White, 1969, p. 4). This recounts how the Millerites were greatly disappointed. Edson on the morning of October 23 had a vision whilst passing through a grain field which he later shared:

We started, and while passing through a large field I was stopped about midway of the field. Heaven seemed opened to my view, and I saw distinctly and clearly that instead of our High Priest coming out of the Most Holy of the heavenly sanctuary to come to this earth on the tenth day of the seventh month, at the end of the 2300 days [calculated to be October 22, 1844], He for the first time entered on that day the second apartment of that sanctuary;

and that He had a work to perform in the Most Holy before coming to the earth (Nichol, 1945, p. 74).

This experience of Edson encouraged many of the local Adventists that they only got the event wrong and with Bible study a better understanding of Daniel 8:14 has been gotten. That Jesus on that day was moving from the Holy Place of the Heavenly Sanctuary to the Most Holy Place. With intensified Bible study, the group discovered several present truth from the Bible which strengthened their faith.

In October 1860, the believers formally assumed the name “Seventh-day Adventist.” This occurred in Battle Creek, United States of America. Between 1860 and 1863, various separate conferences of Seventh-day Adventist emerged in America with Michigan Conference as the pioneer Conference in October 1861 headquartered in Battle Creek. The year 1863 is crucial in history of Adventism. In that year organized Seventh-day Adventist Church work as one entity formally began in May at Battle Creek, Michigan, United States of America. The new organization became known as the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, with John Byington as the first president of the worldwide church (Owusu-Mensah, 2005, p. 7).

Seventh-day Adventists (SDA) have been blessed with two essential messages to proclaim to people everywhere including themselves. The messages are that Christ will soon appear the second time to judge all people of the earth and to give them their fair reward and that the seventh day of the week, Saturday, is the true, holy and sanctified Sabbath day of the Creator God. Anyone who accepts and believes these messages is preparing for the Second Advent of Christ and can be regarded as an Adventist. So out of these two truths came the name, Seventh-day Adventists (Owusu-Mensah, 2005, p. 7). The SDA Church accepts the Bible and the Bible only as the source of authority, the standard of faith and practice for Christians. Currently, Adventists hold 28 fundamental beliefs. The church is present in almost every country of the globe. It has thirteen world divisions and two attached fields. Ted N. C. Wilson is the current president of the world church of Seventh-day Adventists with G. T. Ng as the Secretary and Juan Rafael Prestol-Puesán as the Treasurer (<https://www.adventist.org/en/>)

## **B. Adventist Church in West Africa**

The Adventist Church after the establishment of its headquarters focused on carrying the gospel message to far and near places. The use of printed literature was employed very early in the work. With dedicated missionaries and Christian literature the Adventist church became an evangelistic and missionary movement in its formative years. On this Owusu-Mensah opined:

A crusading spirit was born which aimed at saving as many as possible, among the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, for Jesus Christ their Lord, Master and Saviour. Both men and materials were to be scattered, not just in North America, but in every nation of the earth to herald the truths and preach salvation through the blood and merits of Christ to all who cared to receive them (Owusu-Mensah, 2005, p. 8).

At the time the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist was being inaugurated in 1863, Adventism found its way into West Africa in the form literature evangelism. The person who brought the literature to West Africa was not an official SDA missionary. This missionary was called Hannah More, an American lady from Massachusetts, working for another denomination at Liberia (Owusu-Mensah, 2005, pp. 10-11).

It is believed that in 1863 Hannah More accepted the Adventist message in America when she was on holidays from Liberia which led to her sack by the British Missionary Society in 1864. Formally she was baptized into SDA Church in South Lancaster, Massachusetts. Hannah More “visited the other mission stations on the west coast of Africa and left literature at each one.” (Maxwell, n. d.). Hannah More with Christian literature, made Adventism in West Africa a reality.

## **C. Adventism in Ghana**

It was in the year 1863 that copies of *The Present Truth* and *The Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* found their way into the coast of West Africa (Maxwell, 1997). The literature Hannah More took to Liberia and other missionary stations in West Africa really sold the Adventist message. Though there is no records to tell who got converted

through her labour, but the fact that she dropped Adventist literature at several missionary stations in West Africa, suggested that she penetrated some parts of Ghana with the Adventist message or “sowed some seeds of Adventism” which sprouted years on (Owusu-Mensah, 2005, p. 11).

At Gold Coast, now Ghana, in Apam a town in the Central part of the country, a man called Francis I. U. Dolphijn had the Advent message in a form of pamphlet in the year 1888. Edward L. Sanford and Karl G. Rudolph, as the first SDA missionaries, reached Apam on Feb. 22, 1894. Frequent malaria attack forced Sanford to leave within five months after their arrival at Apam. But Rudolf stay and made his way to Cape Coast, then the capital of Gold Coast. On Oct. 3, 1895, Cape Coast became the official headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in West Africa as a team, headed by Dudley Upton Hale of Texas who led a group of missionaries to Cape Coast the same year. Dudley U. Hale (the new mission superintendent) arrived with George and Eva Kerr (both nurses), and G. P. Riggs (a colporteur). They met Rudolph, who had previously moved there from Apam. On June 3, 1897, Hale left for home. The arrival of these missionaries marked the beginning of Adventism in Ghana. The first baptism to the SDA Church was done on March 27, 1897 and was conducted by Dudley Upton Hale before his departure. Those baptized were Francis I. U. Dolphijn, Fred and Isaac Dolphijn, and George Peter Grant. These new converts, G. P. Grant and Dolphijn, and Dawson joined in propagating Adventism on the coastal towns of Ghana. In August 1905, with the arrival of David C. Babcock and his family, the headquarters of the work in West Africa moved from Cape Coast, Ghana, to Freetown, Sierra Leone. Adventist education got started by Christian Ackah (Snr.) of Kikam, when he established a school at Cape Coast based on Adventist principles, in February 1907. Christian A. Ackah took the Advent message to his home town, Kikam, in 1907. This became the headquarters for the church in Ghana from 1908. In September of the same year, the first official SDA School which was built by C. A. Ackah started to function at Kikam with J. D. Hayford, F. Dolphijn, J. A. Bonnie, S. D. Morgue and J. K. Garbrah as the first teachers. With the leadership of William Lewis the Adventist message and education got to Agona in April 1915. On 7th May 1921, J. K. Garbrah of Shama, became the first Ghanaian minister of the Gospel to be ordained into the Gospel Ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This took place in Waterloo, Sierra

Leone at a General Conference session. Late 1922, L. F. Langford came to Gold Coast (Ghana) and took over the work as acting director. While still the general superintendent of the work in West Africa. In 1923, L. F. Langford transferred the West African Headquarters from Waterloo, Sierra Leone to Agona, Gold Coast (Ghana). At the same time, he became the Director of the Ghana Mission. Under the leadership of L. F. Langford, in 1924, the joint headquarters of the West African Field and the Ghana Mission was moved from Agona to Kumasi and the joint office became officially known as West African Union Mission. In 1927, J. J. Hide, the new superintendent of the Ghana Mission transferred the headquarters of the church from Kumasi to Agona once again. He preferred there to Kumasi. In 1933, the Mission, then based at Bekwai, was re-organized with a new name, Gold Coast Union Mission with Jesse Clifford as the Director. He was also the Director of the Ghana Mission (Owusu-Mensa, 2005, pp. 167-198).

The printing work in Ghana began in 1938 when F.L. Stokes invited Emmanuel T. Abbey from Accra to be in charge of the press at Asokore, Koforidua. That marked the beginning of the institution now known as the Advent Press. Later, the press was taken to Bekwai, then to Nigeria and finally settled in Accra. At Bekwai the first SDA Teacher Training College was established in 1939 with C. A. Bartlett, a British Missionary as the first Principal. The West African Union Mission which was based at Ibadan, Nigeria, moved the headquarters to Ghana in 1946. The new headquarters at Osu, Accra was headed by Jesse O. Gibson who was the Director of the Ghana Mission. Dr. J. A. Hyde established the Kwahu Hospital at Atibie in 1955 to meet the health needs of the people. The Hospital began officially on July 28, 1957. Later, nursing and midwifery courses began. Ghana Mission got re-organized into Ghana Conference of SDA in 1970 with J. K. Amoah as the first President and it was headquartered at Kumasi. Adventist Girls' Vocational Institute was opened on October 8, 1974 at Techiman, Brong Ahafo with Mrs. Emelia Kusi as headmistress. An Adventist Missionary College was established in 1979 at Adenta but was, later, renamed as Valley View College and finally as Valley View University. It is the first accredited and chartered private University in Ghana. W. S. Whaley served as the first Director and currently, the Vice- Chancellor is Pr. (Prof.) Daniel Kwame Bediako, an Alumnus of the University.

## **D. About Ghana**

Ghana which was formally called Gold Coast was under the colony of the Britain. It had its independence on March 6, 1957. Ghana which is officially called the Republic of Ghana,

is a sovereign unitary presidential constitutional democracy, located along the Gulf of Guinea and Atlantic Ocean, in the sub region of West Africa. Spanning a land mass of 238,535 km<sup>2</sup>, Ghana is bordered by the Ivory Coast in the west, Burkina Faso in the north, Togo in the east and the Gulf of Guinea and Atlantic Ocean in the south. (John, 2001)

The territory of present-day Ghana has been inhabited for millennia, with the first permanent state dating back to the 11th century. Numerous kingdoms and empires emerged over the centuries, of which the most powerful was the Kingdom of Ashanti. The country covers a total area of 238,533 square kilometers (92,090 square miles). The distance from South to North is about 670 kilometers (420 miles), and West to East is about 560 kilometers (350 miles).

The climate of Ghana is tropical, but temperatures and rainfall vary with the distance from the coast and by elevation. Except in the north, two distinct rainy seasons occur, from April to June and from September to November. In the north the rainy season begins in March and lasts until mid-September. Annual rainfall ranges from about 1,015 mm (40in) in the north to about 2,030 mm (80in) in the south-east.

Ghana is divided into ten (10) political regions: Western, Central, Greater Accra, Eastern, Volta, Ashanti, Brong-Ahafo, Northern, Upper West, and Upper East. Each of the regions has an administrative capital namely: Sekondi-Takoradi, Cape Coast, Accra, Koforidua, Ho, Kumasi, Sunyani, Tamale, Wa, and Bolgatanga respectively.

A multicultural nation, Ghana has a population of approximately 27 million, spanning a variety of ethnic, linguistic and religious groups (Ghana Statistical Report, 2014). Ghana in modern days is a multiparty as well as a multi-denominational country. Currently, John Dramani Mahama is the President of the Republic of Ghana.



## **E. Ghana Union Conference (2000-2013)**

The rapid growth of Adventism in Ghana led the leadership of the Adventist Church to consider raising Ghana to a Union status. In January, 2000, the West African Union Mission which Ghana used to be part of was re-organized and Ghana was given a Union status. Hence, Ghana Union Conference in 2000. Accra was chosen as its headquarters with P. O. Mensah as the first President, S. A. Larmie as the first Secretary and I. Owusu Amponsem as the first Treasurer. Ghana Union Conference emanated from West African Union Mission which was organized in 1973 in the year 2000 (Twum, Personal Communication, 2016). The territory of Ghana Union Conference consisted of the Central Ghana, East Ghana, Mid-West Ghana, South Ghana, South Central Ghana, and South West Ghana Conferences and the North Ghana Mission. At the genesis, it had 728 churches, 257, 852 membership and a population of 19,894,000 (Adventist YearBook, 2002). With mission consciousness and a dedicated spirit I. T. Agboka, Ambrose K. Waahu, J. A. Hagan, Kwasi Attakora, Agyemang Boateng, Ebow Bonnie, T.K. Anane-Afari, N. L. Thompson and B. K. Brobbey, who were the first department directors, joined hands with the Administration and with rapid speed Ghana Union grew. At four years old, Ghana Union had 819 churches with a membership of 283,147 and population, 20,468,000 (Adventist YearBook, 2004). This development happened because the mission of the union was in perspective. The growth so far was completed by thirty-eight Credentialed Ministers and seventeen Credential Missionaries. To minister to the academic and health needs of Ghanaians, educational institutes and healthcare centers were created by the Union. Six educational institutes were owned at this time. They are, Adventist Secondary Technical School, Techiman; Agona Seventh-day Adventist Secondary School; Akyem Sekyere Seventh-day Adventist School; Asokore Seventh-day Adventist Teacher Training College; Bantama Seventh-day Adventist Secondary School; and Bekwai Seventh-day Adventist Secondary School. The Administration of Ghana Union (2000-2004) established seven hospitals and twelve clinics. Mostly importantly, Radio-TV Production Center and Bible Correspondence School was opened to reach the masses with the true gospel of Jesus Christ (Adventist Year Book, 2004). In 2006, there were administrative changes.

Samuel A. Larmie became the second President after the establishment of Ghana Union with Ambrose K. Waahu as his Secretary and Isaac Owusu Amponsem as the Treasurer. The Union on its sixth year had a population of 22,019,000 (Adventist Year Book, 2006). With administrative example all the Ministers in the Union became evangelistic conscious and the message of Adventism was announced everywhere in Ghana through Indoor and Out-door crusades (Twum, Personal Communication, 2016). The result of this effort is seen in the rapid growth of membership of the Adventist Church in Ghana. With the new administration under the headship of S. A. Larmie conscious effort was made to train more Ministers and Missionaries at Valley View University, Department of Theology. By 2010 the number of Ministers in the Union had increased. With the imminent coming of Christ in mind, un-entered places in Ghana were entered with the Adventist message and the response was encouraging. Statistics in 2012 showed that Ghana Union Conference had accession rate of 4.77%, 0.32% death rate and 0.65% missing rate. There was a total of 377 Ministers and the ratio of church members per a Minister was 1,052.56 in 2012 (Adventist YearBook, 2012). In 2013, Ghana Union had 1,215 Adventist churches across the country with 387,883 active members and a population of 25,546,000 (Adventist YearBook, 2013). Ghana Union Conference was, indeed, pregnant at this time and needed to give birth. With 257, 852 membership at its birth in 2000, Ghana Union on its thirteen birthday had a membership of 387,883. This was a sign of mission consciousness. S. A. Lamie remained the President of Ghana Union Conference from December 2006 till its division in 2013 (Owusu-Mensah, 2005, pp. 301-314).

The idea to have another union in Ghana was introduced by P. O. Mensah, the first president of Ghana Union Conference. The reasons were that Adventism in Ghana has grown and is very strong; and also, the SDA Church in Nigeria has three Unions even though Adventists in Ghana outnumbered those in Nigeria. Pastor E. O. Abbey was appointed as the chairman of the committee to see to the realization of the division of the Union. "It took time but it eventually happened." (Yeboah, Personal Communication, 2016). The rationale for a second union in Ghana were as follows:

1. Membership of the Church in Ghana over the past 125 years, had grown to a significant 387,883 (2nd Quarter 2012). Creating a second Union Mission out of the existing Union Conference would greatly enhance administration and ministry to the membership.
2. It would ensure a greater utilization of talents for effective evangelization and expansion of the Gospel work in the country.
3. A second union mission was to ensure a more cost effective financial management and growth. A second union mission will make it easier for union personnel to travel across each territory.
4. The Church in Ghana had enough personnel to man both unions and, as usual, provide human resources for missionary work outside Ghana. For example we have Ghanaian church workers employed in Seventh day Adventist entities all over Europe, America, West Africa, WAD and GC (Ocran, personal communication, 2016).

Therefore, a meeting was held on February 18, 2013 to discuss this proposal of establishing two unions in Ghana. The Ghana Union's proposal to the General Conference, the headquarters of Adventist Church, to have two unions in Ghana was accepted on April 14, 2014. The vote to operate two unions in Ghana came into reality on December 31, 2014 (Larmie, 2013, para. 3). On November 25-28, 2013 at an End of Year Meeting and a Transitional Session was held at Valley View University, Oyibi, Accra to make the proposal for two Unions a reality. Giving his speech on November 26, 2013, Pastor Larmie, the President, said:

Lord, your grace and mercy has brought us thus far. A new chapter in the history of the church is opening before us today. Posterity will look back to this Year End Meeting and Transitional Session as the time marking the end of the use of the name Ghana Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church (GUC) and the beginning of the use of the names Southern Ghana Union Conference (SGUC) AND Northern Ghana Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventist Church (NGUM). Significantly, this year

also marks the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the existence of the church in Ghana. Today we talk of over 700, 000 worshippers, baptized and unbaptized, in Ghana; 675 basic schools; 14 senior high schools; one university; one college of education; 24 hospitals and clinics; and three levels of nursing schools (Larmie, 2013, para. 9).

This profound and inspirational speech of the last President of Ghana Union Conference is a sign of the rapid growth of Adventism in Ghana. The mission of the church in Ghana was on course.

### **III. A History of Southern Ghana Union Conference**

On November 26, 2013 Southern Ghana Union Conference was born. **The Southern Ghana Union Conference (SGUC)** of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, was organized in 2013 after the Ghana Union Conference was fragmented into two. The Union oversees the activities of seven administrative fields in the five southern regions of Ghana namely: Greater Accra, Western, Eastern, Volta and Central regions. SGUC comprises of four Conferences and five Administrative units (Southern Ghana Union Conference, 2016). The Conferences it mines are South Ghana, East Ghana, South West Ghana and Mid-South Ghana Conference. Its Administrative units includes South East Ghana, Volta Ghana, Diamond Field Ghana, Eastern View Ghana, Western North Ghana, West-Central Ghana and Pioneer Ghana Administrative Units. An interview with George Owusu-Ansah, a Security Personnel at the Union, reveals that “the SGUC is in charge of the local churches and holds monthly meetings to listen to their problems and then forward to USA” (Owusu-Ansah, personal communication, 2016). Elizabeth Osei, a non-Adventist and a Resident of the headquarters of the Union, on the other hand, said she has no idea of what goes on at the office of the SGUC when she was interviewed.” (Osei E., personal communication, 2016). The Southern Ghana Union Conference, currently, has one hundred districts and a membership of 123, 713 as at the end of the year 2015.

The Southern Ghana Union Conference commenced operations in 2014 with an opening membership of 139, 878 as at the fourth quarter of 2014. From January to June 2014 the Membership Audit

was carried out with the collaboration of the Stewardship and Strategic Planning Department with the assistance of field officers. The first assignment was to review the previously audited membership. At the end of the audit, our membership stood at 97, 202 losing 44,236 (Ocran, 2015, para. 2).

The Union has eleven pastors at its headquarters and eighteen other workers (Abuka, personal communication, 2016). Southern Ghana Union Conference has its base at Osu, Accra. Geographically, it is located at Abdul Nasser Gamel Street, near SNNIT Guest House. Its sister union, Northern Ghana Union Mission, is headquartered at Kumasi comprising of the northern regions of Ghana namely, Ashanti, Brong Ahafo, Upper West, Upper East and Northern regions. The Southern Ghana Union Conference, currently, has one hundred and sixty districts. The Southern Ghana Union Conference identifies itself as:

A branch of remnant church of end-time Bible prophecy. Its members, individually and collectively understands their special roles as ambassadors of God's kingdom and as messengers of the soon return of Jesus Christ. Members have enlisted as coworkers with God in His mission of reclaiming the field from the power and presence of evil, as part of the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan (<http://adventistgh.org>).

Pastor S. A. Larmie, the last President of Ghana Union Conference, remained after the division as the pioneer President of the Southern Ghana Union Conference until the end of his quinquennium in 2015 (Yeboah, 2016). Currently, the SGUC is under the leadership of Pastor (Dr.) T. T. Ocran, the President; Pastor (Dr.) Chris Annan- Nunoo, the Secretary; and Elder E. A. Odonkor, the Treasurer. SGUC has two hundred and one Primary and Junior High Schools, four Senior High Schools, One College of Education (Asokore) and one Nursing College (Asanta). It also oversees a Television program, Encounter with the Truth, and other evangelistic Radio programs across its territory.

#### **IV. The Mission of Southern Ghana Union Conference**

This section traces the missionary activities of Southern Ghana Union Conference. It looks at what the Union has achieved in terms of mission

from 2014 to 2015. The mission statement of Southern Ghana Union Conference reads:

“to call all people within our territory to become disciples of Jesus Christ, to proclaim the everlasting Gospel embraced in the three angel’s message (Revelation 14:6-12), and to prepare the entire field for Christ soon coming. Guided by the Bible and Holy Spirit, the Southern Ghana Union Conference pursues this mission through Christ-like living, communication, discipleship, teaching, healing and serving” (<http://adventistgh.org>).

Within the period mentioned, the Union hosted students from Babcock University, Nigeria and Valley View University, Ghana and within three to four months sold books contributing to 11.5% of the total sales of the Department. Through the tireless effort many Ghanaian literates had access to the gospel in a form of literature (Thompson, 2015, para. 7). To assist district pastors in their missionary activities, a two-week intensive training session was held at East Ghana Conference multipurpose campsite at Kwukwramtumi in the Eastern Region for Global Mission Pioneers (Thompson, 2015, para. 8). In 2014 and 2015 many baptisms were made in all the educational institutions under the Union a week of spiritual emphasis. Also a Primary and Junior High School was commissioned to operate at Oyibi campus of Valley View University. The school commenced with a population of 786 students (Fremphah, 2015 para. 5).

To involve women in the ministry, Preachers’ workshops was organized to build the capacity of women to lead evangelistic programs. Again, a special seminar was organized for young ladies where they were inspired and encouraged to take part in church activities. Four hundred ladies were in attendance. In addition, altruistic activities are engaged in by the Women Ministries. Donations were made to 125 widows and orphans (Osei, 2015, para. 4).

Small Group Ministry activities were intensified within 2014 and 2015. Lay congress was held to train the laity for evangelism. Adventist Men embarked on community service at various fields of the Union. Revivals, retreats, Sunday Bible studies, fasting and prayers, mid-week prayer sessions and all night prayer sessions were used to disciple and retain church members. Public and temple crusades were held at various venues across the field of the Union (Mensah, 2015, para. 6).

Youth Camps and Camporees were held at various venue across the fields of the Union to empower the youth for the Second Advent of Christ. Several seminars and workshops were organized in the various fields to train the youth leaders to take care of the youth societies. More Adventurers, Pathfinders and Masters Guides were invested. Youth and community services were held at cities and villages by the youth department (Mensah, 2015, para. 7).

Health evangelism was also organized at various fields of the Union. The Health Department engaged specialists in screening Adventists and non-Adventists. In 2014, over 1,200 people benefitted from the initiative. A directory was made for Adventist Health Professionals so that they can organize themselves for evangelism (Brown, 2015, para. 3).

On May 19, 2016, a Campus Ministry Forum was held at Institute of Local Government, Madina to appraise the challenges of campus ministries and how to improve it. This was the first of its kind. Dr. Samuel Pipim and Chaplain Greg Davis served as the facilitators. May 29, 2016 marked the first Revival and Evangelism Conference in the history of the Union. The purpose was to equip the pastors and the elders to double the membership of the church in the next five years. Pastors Lawrence Ewoo and Vincent Same served as the facilitators. It was held at Valley View Campus, Oyibi (Bont, personal comuincation, 2016).

On June 14, 2016, the Executive Secretary, Pastor (Dr.) Chris Annan-Nunoo and some other officers were at the field putting things in order to get some of the Administrative Units re-organized into Conference status. These activities of the Union suggest that they are mission conscious.

## **V. The Impact of Southern Ghana Union Conference (2014-2016)**

This section highpoints the impact of the Union in its territory in Ghana from 2014 to 2016.

The Union affected the lives of many Ghanaians by distributing 77,000 missionary books across the country during the “Accra for Christ” Evangelistic campaign held at Independence Square in Accra in the year 2014. Also, 195,000,000 copies of the Missionary Book of the year, Health and Wellness, was distributed across the Union in the year 2015 (Thompson, 2015, para. 9). Most of these copies went to non-Adventists across Ghana, though there was not any immediate conversion but the seed has been sowed. Trained Global Mission Pioneers were sent to man

seven areas in the fields of the Union, Omamdjor, Kwamoso, Sege, Adaklu, Abora, Damitsi and Surano (Thompson, 2015, para. 11). These trained Missionaries are making tremendous impact in their assigned areas.

In 2014 and 2015 baptisms recorded were 476 and 537 respectively after a Week of Emphasis across the various educational institutions in the Union. Three teachers of Nsawam SDA School emerged as the best teachers in the Municipality. Mr. Eric Gernoy, the head teacher, was voted the best head teacher in his Educational Directorate. Adventist education is highly patronized by Ghanaians and it's really making impact with its holistic training (Frempah, 2015, para. 10).

The activities of the Small Group Ministry led to the baptism of 2543 souls in 2014 and 2630 souls in 2015. 98 churches have been planted in the years 2014 and 2015. Donations were made by the Adventist Men to 37 Military Hospital totaling GHC 93, 485.00. The Union had a goal to win 2,500 souls per quarter which is 10, 000 souls per year. At the end of 2014, 13, 703 souls were baptized, the goal was exceeded by 3, 703 souls. At the end of 2015, 10, 185 people were baptized. The total baptism for the years 2014 and 2015 is 23,888 (Larmie, 2015, para. 8). This is a sign of a rapid growth of Adventism in the Southern part of Ghana. From October 1-12, 2014, the SGUC mounted a city campaign at the largest national ceremonial grounds in Ghana- the Black Star Square in Accra. The turn-out was very great. It had the attention of both Christians and Moslems and at the end 2,215 souls gave their lives to Jesus. Community services by the various departments of the Union have improve the image of the church in Ghana. The Bible society in Ghana has been joining the SDA Church in celebrating the Bible Sabbath each year (Larmie, 2015, para. 11).

Investiture services held in the Union invested 265 young people as Master Guides on 2015. At Effiankwanta Hospital in the Central Region, the youth donated 200 prints of blood to the blood bank (Mensah, 2015, para. 8). Through the activities of GNASS Adventist Senior High Schools of the SGUC 270 souls were won into the Adventist Church. At a GNASS Congress at Kukurantumi in the Eastern Region 25 souls were baptized. Twenty soldiers were baptized at Michael Camp at Accra after accepting the Adventist faith (Duodu, 2015, para. 10).

An appraisal of the impact of Southern Ghana Union Conference shows that the Conference is mission focused. This can be seen in its interventions in the spiritual, physical and social life of Ghanaians as at the year 2015.



## **VI. Challenges**

Though the Union is making tremendous impact, it is not without challenges. One major challenge of the Union is the unavailability of funds. The broken economy of Ghana has affected its citizens as well as all its religious denominations. There is a decline in tithe and offering returns which are the main sources of income for the church.

Again, there are inadequate church buildings to house the fast growing membership. Many churches hold worship in classrooms and under raised structures. There is also few well-furnished standard church buildings to house the Upper class of the Ghanaian society. Many of the church buildings in the Union are uncompleted buildings with the inside not well furnished. This marks it difficult to attract and win high profile persons of the country.

Lastly, increase in Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements in Ghana especially in Greater Accra region with their emphasis on healing, prophecy, speaking in tongues, and singing and dancing at church has been another great challenge to the Union. The Seventh-day Adventist church is seen to be dull, cold and sometimes, not even filled with the Holy Spirit by many of these Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. These and others have been the troubles of the Union.

## **VII. Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to give a historical evaluation of the mission of Southern Ghana Union Conference from its birth (2013) to 2015. When Adventism got to Ghana it grew rapidly. To take Adventism to every corner of Ghana, Adventism in Ghana was given a Union status in the year 2000. The purpose for which Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ghana was given a Union status was achieved. The church grew speedily and numerous converts were won. To make the work easier, more effective and efficient in Ghana, the leadership saw the need to split the current Union into two Unions. Thus, the Southern Ghana Union Conference and Northern Ghana Union Mission emerged. The Southern Ghana Union Conference since its commencement in December 2013 has undertaken various missionary activities and its remarkable impact have been visible.

In conclusion, we can assert that Southern Ghana Union Conference has made and is making fantastic impact in the southern regions of

Ghana in spite of its challenges. The leadership is mission conscious and Adventism is getting more rooted in the Southern part of Ghana. The historic growth of the Southern Ghana Union Conference has been enormous over the few years of its birth. It can, therefore, be foreseen by the researchers that SGUC will for few years give birth to another Union Conference. The church leadership of SGUC should look at building appetizing church houses to accommodate its fast growing membership and, also furnish some of its existing temples to a status that can attract and retain high profile persons of the society especially the capital. Moreover, the leadership should look at building more schools and healthcare centers to create employment for its members which will in the long run increase the amount it has in its coffers due to the tithe and offering returns it will gain from its employees.

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