

## Ghana report – 14 to 20 February 2015

Report by Karen Burke

### Introduction

How is the World Mission Fund helping to support Methodist Churches in West Africa? I travelled to Ghana with David Friswell, World Church Relationships Team Leader, and the Revd William Davies, Chaplain to the Methodist Ghanaian Fellowship in Britain, in order to find out.

As well as forming closer relationships with our Methodist brothers and sisters, we were also in Ghana to gain a greater understanding of Methodism in another part of the world. Over the course of a week, we travelled to Accra, Cape Coast, Ampfi-Ajumako, Winneba, Adjamesu, Wenchi, Kumasi, Wa and Lawra, visiting Methodist social action projects and meeting with senior church leaders. This report contains a day by day diary featuring some of the people, projects and places that we saw.

### Ghana – Day 1

The first day began with a discussion over breakfast at St Martin's Hotel in Accra about the Ghanaian Methodist Fellowship in Britain. The Revd William Davies, Chaplain to the Ghanaian Methodist Fellowship in Britain, gave an overview of the Methodist Church in Ghana in relation to the Ghanaian Methodist Fellowship. The discussion touched on the Methodist Church in Britain's (MCB) Belonging Together project – a three year project that ended in 2012 – and the legacy left by that diversity and inclusion initiative.



We left the hotel to travel to the Methodist HQ in another part of Accra. There, David Friswell, World Church Team Leader; William Davies and I met with the Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church in Ghana; the Most Revd Emmanuel Asante; the Administrative Bishop, the Rt Revd Dr Kwaku Asamoah-Okyene; the Connexional Treasurer, the Very Revd Anthony Kwamena Cobbah; the Director of Human Resources, the Very Revd Samuel Mensah and the Director of Investment, the Very Revd Bright Obeng Bvampong – among others. We sat in the Bishop's office and talked at length about the Methodist Church in Ghana – its history, its current projects and its plans for the future. The photo above shows some of the delegates at that conversation.



After lunch with the senior leaders of the Methodist Church in Ghana, we hit the road, heading west along the coast towards Cape Coast. Along the way, we visited Rafiki Village in Winneba Diocese – an orphanage run by the Methodist Church in Ghana. The village is home to 35 children who attend schools on the 50 acre plot of land (see the photo on the left). Rafiki Village was founded in 2006 by the Rafiki Foundation in America. Now it is funded by the Church with the help of donations, including grants from the World

Mission Fund. The Director of Rafiki Village, the Methodist minister, the Very Revd Ekow Sey, hopes that the Church will one day be able to fund the village's expansion so that it can provide a home and an education for up to 100 children.

After leaving the village, we carried on our way towards Cape Coast, stopping off at the Methodist Heritage and cultural Museum in Ampí-Ajumako.

## Ghana - Day 2

On our second morning, we rose at 5.30am to arrive in time for the 7am English-speaking service at Wesley Methodist Cathedral in Cape Coast. Cape Coast used to be the capital of Ghana and some of the buildings in the town dated back to the 19th century. We arrived early and were shown the resting place (under the pulpit) of five of the first Methodist missionaries to Cape Coast. At 7am, the procession began and we filed into the church, singing. David Friswell preached the sermon during the two hour service, after which I passed on greetings from the Methodist Church in Britain. The service was focused on Children's Day and, to mark the occasion, children recited scripture to the congregation – passages that they had learned by heart. We were all very impressed and the applause filled the cathedral. The church was full and everyone was dressed in their Sunday Church Best. Music was performed by the Methodist Church Choir, the Children's Choir and the Wesleyan Gospel Band.

We were warmly welcomed by everyone we met, including the Very Revd Richardson Andam and the Very Revd Mrs Beauty Eleanor Adoley Hope (pictured right) who told me that she had visited Britain on an exchange three years ago – hosted by the Methodist Church in Britain.



Following the church service, we hit the road again, travelling north towards Kumasi in the Ashanti region. On the way, we stopped off at the Wesley Methodist Cathedral in Obuasi where the Revd Abraham Eduafo-Mensah welcomed us and offered us lunch.

We also stopped for some time in the small town of Adjamesu for the funeral of an elder who died three months ago at the estimated age of 120! We were surprised to see Godfried Addo, Property Services Director for Methodist Ministers Housing Society, at the funeral. Godfried, a member of the Methodist Ghanaian Fellowship in Britain, told us that he had been in Ghana since February 4th for the one year commemoration of his father's death, and had stayed on to pay his respects to the family of the town elder. Also at the funeral were four other members of the Ghanaian Methodist Fellowship in Britain – Faustina Kwakye and her husband; Kweku Duah and Connie Fordjour.

After the funeral, we continued on our way to Kumasi.

## Ghana - Day 3



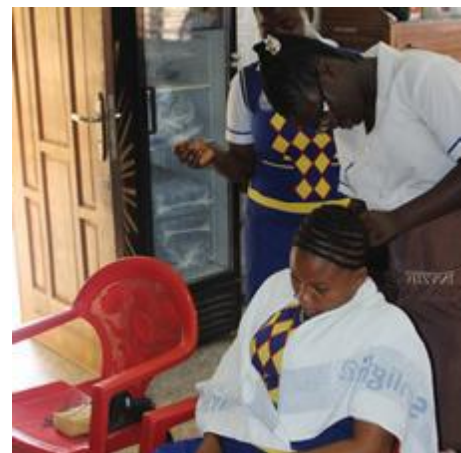
In the morning, we left the Freeman Centre – the Methodist conference centre – for the Methodist Women’s Training Centre in Kumasi. We were greeted by Mrs Aretha Graham Addai, the college principal, who explained the history of the centre (see the photo on the left).

The centre was originally built as a training institute for the wives of Ghanaian Methodist ministers back in 1947. British missionaries would teach ministers’ wives the skills they would need to run a household. In the 1960s, the centre was turned into a training college for women, teaching them vocational employment skills.

Today, the college runs high school-level courses in fashion, hairdressing and catering, and has a student population of 167 women. The three-year courses are recognised by the polytechnics, and the four year advanced courses prepare students for universities. There are also two-week courses that teach women the basics of making bead jewelry and handbags, and how to decorate flip-flops. Many of the women board at the college, sleeping 10 to a room with their single trunk functioning as a wardrobe. Besides their core subject, the women are given an education in English (all the lessons are taught in English), mathematics, Information and Communication Technology and science. They visit a better-equipped school in Kumasi if they need to use a science lab. Many of the computers, sewing machines and hair setters that we saw had been provided by funding from the Methodist Church in Britain.

Mrs Graham Addai explained how heartbreaking it is when a woman at the college is forced to leave because she cannot pay the fees, which amount to around £255 a term for boarders and £150 for day-students. There are plans to build a wash room with flush toilets when the money is available.

We left the college around 11am to travel to Wa in the North West of the country. The catering students provided us with many delicious snacks for our journey, for which we were very thankful.



Along the route, we stopped by the Wenchi Methodist Hospital in the town of Wenchi. We were shown around the hospital by Bernard Clement Kwasi, the CEO, who told us that there had been many improvements since he started in the job 18 years ago; from the provision of facilities to the numbers of staff. We met with medical staff, with builders of a new facility for patients’ families and with the hospital’s two chaplains. Bernard outlined the hospital’s current situation, explaining what was working well and what needed to be improved.

Shortly before 5pm, we were back on the road once more, heading north to Wa in the Upper West region of Ghana.

#### **Ghana - Day 4**

We arrived in Wa, in the Upper West Region of Ghana, late the night before. After breakfast, we went to meet the Bishop's Deputy of the Upper Ghana Mission Diocese at the Methodist Cathedral of the Wa Mission – the Very Revd Francis Andoh – who explained Methodism in the north part of Ghana.

The north half of the country currently forms one diocese. The other 15 Methodist dioceses are all in the Southern half of the country. Official recognition of Methodist circuits in the north dates back to the 1950s.

Methodist ministers in the south, from Cape Coast for example, would be sent to the north to preach, eventually being able to form a circuit. The Northern Ghana Diocese was formed 25 years ago. Within that Diocese, there is the Upper Ghana Mission Diocese, which is made up of six circuits. However, the Upper Ghana Mission Diocese is now hoping to split from the Northern Ghana Diocese, which will mean that the North half of the country will soon consist of two Methodist dioceses. This is due to happen on October 1 this year: the beginning of the new Connexional year for the Methodist Church in Ghana. When this happens, the Upper Ghana Mission Diocese will lose the word “mission” from its title and the Very Revd Francis Andoh will become the first Bishop of the newly created diocese.

The Very Revd Francis then led the way to the Methodist Primary and Junior School in Wa. The Revd Isaak Baah-Yanney, who is the Regional Manager for the Methodist Educational Unit for the Upper West Region of Ghana, showed us around the school. The headmasters of the two schools called the children to assemble for the presentation of gifts from the Ghanaian Methodist Fellowship on behalf of the Methodist Church in Britain. The Methodist schools are inclusive: Muslims and children of other faiths also attend Methodist schools, some of them becoming Methodist through their education.



We left Wa for Lawra – a town very close to the border with Burkina Faso. We were in Lawra to visit the Methodist Health Institution and the neighbouring Methodist pre school and junior school. As we approached, the tarmac gave way to a red dust road – the only way into the town.

The Very Revd Ernest Baiden, Superintendent Minister for the Lawra Mission Circuit, welcomed us to his manse next to the clinic. Mrs Margerie Nintori, the health centre educator, and Vincent de Paul Anyintuo, physician assistant at the clinic, explained that malaria was still the biggest problem for the area – 12,315 cases in 2014. Mrs Nintori said that cases of malnutrition and HIV had fallen since she started working at the clinic in 2007. The number of HIV cases in Lawra seen by the clinic had dropped from 84 a year to 12. The clinic itself has had a massive impact on malnutrition in the area. When it was built in 1958, the primary concern was malnutrition. In the 1970s, malnutrition affected 47% of children

in Lawra. Now, the problem still exists and is still a real concern for the Church, but not on the same scale as in the past.

After visiting the clinic, we walked over to the Methodist school and gave gifts of pens, pencils and a football to the children. We met the head teacher, Madame Veronica, who told us that the education of girls was still not seen as being as important as the education of boys in the poorer communities.

When we returned to the Superintendent's manse for refreshments, David Friswell, World Church Team Leader, talked through the needs and priorities of the school and the clinic with the Very Revd Francis Andoh and the Very Revd Ernest Baiden.



From Lawra, we took the same route back to Wa to visit the Methodist School for the Blind (the photo on the left shows me walking with the school's head teacher - Madame Grace Amoako). The school was founded by the Methodist Church in 1958 and now receives assistance from the Ghanaian government. None of the 250 students are required to pay school fees for boarding. The school caters for pupils up to high school level. It also rehabilitates young people who have gone blind since birth. We met two sisters who both went blind from glaucoma after passing their nursing exams – their mother was not able to pay for their

treatment so they were accepted by the Methodist School for the Blind. While we were there, the head teacher, Madame Grace Amoako, told us that a female doctor at a teaching hospital had recently screened the students and was due to operate on a selection of them the following day – the first time this has happened.

The Methodist School for the Blind is one of the two only schools for the blind in Ghana. One member of the school's alumni is Dr Seidu Danaae, a lawyer working as the Government Minister for Chiefdom Affairs. His success is a dream for many of the school's current pupils. Some of the less academic students are taught how to weave stools and chairs so that they will have an employable skill when they leave.

After dinner, we headed back to the Methodist Cathedral of the Wa Mission for a special evening service.



## Ghana - Day 5

Our fifth day in Ghana began with an early morning visit to the Methodist agricultural programme in Wa. We met with Martin Defiin Jatoe, the programme manager, who told us that the centre currently runs 40 agricultural programmes for 788 people who live within a 25 kilometre radius of Wa. The programmes teach farmers how to make the most of the land, as well as how to read and write. Albida trees are planted for building canopies, licinia trees for firewood and nitrogen-fixing acacia trees, which are resistant to bush fires, improve the fertility of the soil. In the garden surrounding Mr Jatoe's office, we saw pawpaws, peppers and moringa trees whose leaves are used in teas and soups because of their

nutritional qualities. Mr Jatoe said that he hoped to be able to expand the outreach of the programmes beyond the current 25km radius.

We then headed further out of town to a village called Mangu. In Ghana, wherever you find a Methodist manse, you will often find a Methodist primary school and a Methodist church within the vicinity. This was the case in Mangu. We were introduced to the head teacher of Mangu Methodist Primary School, Mr Abdullah Froko, in his office. Mr Froko, a Muslim who has been the head teacher at the school for the past 15 years, told us about the school's immediate needs: chalk, text books, electricity, fridges and computers. David Friswell, World Church Relationships Team Leader, asked about the possibility of installing solar panels on the school roof. While this would initially be expensive, solar-powered electricity would be sustainable in the long term. We also learned that the current Bishop of the Northern Ghana Diocese, the Rt Revd Nathan Iddrisu, had attended Mangu Methodist Primary School as a boy. Mangu Methodist Primary School was founded in 1961.

After presenting the children with pens, pencils and a football – gifts from the Ghanaian Methodist Fellowship on behalf of the Methodist Church in Britain – we set off for another village on the outskirts of Wa. Vieri is located about 50 km North West of Wa. The set-up in Vieri was the same as in Mangu – a Methodist manse, school and church within short walking distance of one another. Just as we had done in Mangu, we passed on gifts from the Methodist Ghanaian fellowship to the 273 children at the school in Vieri.

Our final stop of the morning was back at the office of the Bishop's Deputy of the Upper Ghana Mission Diocese – the Very Revd Francis Andoh – who had led the special service at the Wa Methodist Cathedral next to his manse yesterday evening. The Very Revd Francis Andoh (pictured on the right in the purple Bishop's shirt with the Revd William Davies) explained that the location of some of the newly formed Methodist societies in the northern region were so remote that we would only be able to travel to them by motorbike. In these areas, the people rarely speak any other language other than their own local dialect, so a Ghanaian Methodist minister preaching in these areas may need someone local to translate. These societies often meet under trees or in borrowed buildings to learn about Jesus and Methodism. When there are a number of societies meeting in an area, then a Methodist circuit will form.



We also learned that Methodist Church in Ghana had moved away from the British governance system, which they had been using since their Church became independent in 1961, to the episcopal system in 2000. The decision was taken in order to make their leadership positions more comprehensible to other Christian denominations in the country, and also to conform to other African Methodist Churches, such as Nigeria.

It was then time to say our goodbyes as we prepared to leave the North and return to Kumasi in the Ashanti region. We ate lunch and hit the road once more, ready for a six/seven hour ride back to Kumasi.

### **Ghana - Day 6**

We returned to the Freeman Centre – the Methodist Conference Centre – when we arrived in Kumasi the evening before. Although we got up early, we weren't on the road until just before 9am as our jeep had overheated during the long drive and now needed more coolant. As we were leaving Kumasi, we saw a large piece of land owned by the Methodist Church in Ghana that the church leadership plans to lease out for the development of shopping mall. The idea is that a shopping mall would be a good investment asset for the Church.

We arrived in Accra – 170 miles south of Kumasi – by the middle of the afternoon, travelling down through the Eastern Region. We spent the rest of the day reflecting on what we had seen and experienced this week, as well as organising our final schedule for tomorrow. During our time in Ghana, we experienced a number of power cuts at the various places we stayed, and also at the Methodist Cathedral in Wa moments before the start of the evening service. On the day we arrived back in Accra, the Daily Graphic – a widely read newspaper in Ghana – was reporting on a mass demonstration that had taken place in the capital the day before; a demonstration held partly in protest against the power blackouts and the impact they have been having on the economy.

### **Ghana - Day 7**

Our final day in Ghana began with a visit to the incoming Presiding Bishop, the Rt Revd Titus Awotwi Pratt, whose office is situated within the grounds of the Wesley Grammar School and Methodist University College in Accra. The Rt Revd Titus (who will become the Presiding Bishop on 1 October) introduced us to the Very Revd Eric Asante Danquah, the District Administrator for Accra, and Solomon Quaye Lartey, Lay Chairman of the Accra Diocese (see the photo on the right).



We sat down to a conversation that covered the people and projects we had seen during the week, the deprived areas on the outskirts of Accra (such as Ga East, Ga West and Ga South), the need for a laboratory at the health clinic we visited in Lawra, the Rt Revd Titus's aspirations for his three year term as Presiding Bishop, and the past and present mission partners and British Methodist leaders known to the leaders of the Methodist Church in Ghana. The Rt Revd Titus said that he wanted to make poverty and Church investment his two main priorities during his three year term (the usual term for the Presiding Bishop in Ghana is six years, but the Rt Revd Titus will reach his retirement age in three years time).

After signing the visitors' book and taking a few photos, we jumped back in the jeep to travel the short distance from the Bishop's office to the Methodist University College compound. There, we were met by the Principal of the university college, the Very Revd Professor Samuel Adjepong and the Vice Principal, the Very Revd Professor Joseph M.Y. Edusa-Eyison.

The Very Revd Professor Samuel Adjepong gave us a brief overview of the university college, which he hopes will become a fully accredited university next year. The university college, which was founded 14 years ago with funding from the Methodist Church in Ghana, is currently affiliated to the University of Ghana, but this will change when it becomes independent. There are three campuses across the country – in Accra, Tema and Wenchi – with Accra holding the highest number of students. Most of the students are working to fund their fees, and their fees keep the college functioning – it receives little by way of bursaries. The current student population is around 4,800 with an almost 50/50 male/female split. Foreign students tend to come from neighbouring West African countries, numbering around 150 in total. The principal said that roughly 60 per cent of the students are already employed; around 20% find jobs within the first year of graduation, and a further 20 per cent a year later. We then explained the university education system in the UK, in comparison to other European countries, before leaving the principal's office for a tour around the campus.

It was then time to head back to St Martin's Hotel, via the Conference Office, for lunch. We were coming to the end of our visit in Ghana. With a few hours to kill before we had to depart for the airport, we headed to the beach. Local traders I spoke to said that Ebola was keeping tourists away, even though Ghana is, to date, an Ebola-free zone.

By 5pm we were at the airport, several hours ahead of 22.50 flight. Our visit to Ghana was immensely worthwhile. Ghana is a wonderful country. The Revd William Davies was an excellent guide, our driver, Kwesi Rockson from the Methodist Church in Ghana, drove us tirelessly around the country and the welcome we received from all the Ghanaians we met "strangely warmed" the heart.

Karen Burke – Media Officer, Methodist Church in Britain.

February 2015

For more photos, scroll through the World Church Blog:

<https://worldchurchrelationships.wordpress.com>