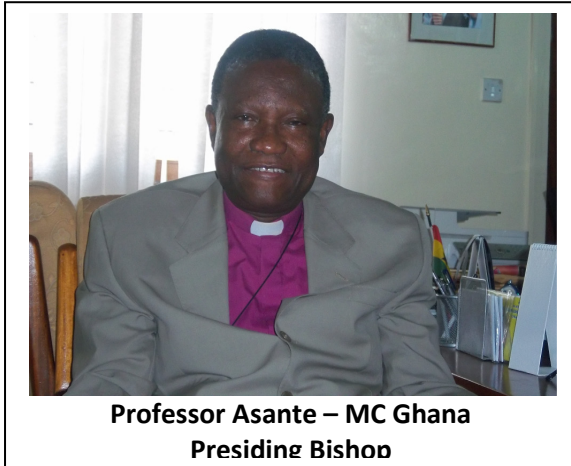


Partnership visit to Ghana 7 – 13 March 2013

The purposes of the visit were to strengthen existing partnership between the Ghanaian and British Methodists as well as establish relations between the Methodist Women in Britain and the Women Fellowship of Ghana. The visit also offered the opportunity to meet past and prospective **SALT** (Scholarship and Leadership Training) students funded by the World Mission Fund (WMF), visit recipients of Nationals in Mission Appointments grants and see programmes funded by WMF.



**Professor Asante – MC Ghana
Presiding Bishop**



**Mrs Araba – Director of Social Services MC Ghana
with Bunmi**

7th – 9th March

Arrived Accra late on Thursday night.

Meeting with MC Ghana's Presiding Bishop, Professor Emmanuel Asante and Administrative Bishop, Kwaoku

MCG mission priorities:

- Self sustainability and supporting its mission station at Burkina Faso, West Africa
- Half of the Ghanaian populace resides in the North yet there is only one diocese to cover the whole of the north. MCG seeks to split the diocese into two and create an administrative office closer to the growing church there for effective communication and relations. Its mission office at Burkina Faso (French speaking) would be supported from the Northern Office to cut down on travelling expenses and other running costs.
- Supernumerary Ministers' housing – requires strategic planning and investments to care for its growing number of retired ministers. MCG plans to embark on capital projects to provide pension and housing for such ministers and their families
- Mission education for Evangelists' children – Providing education for Evangelists' children involved in rural ministry is a major challenge. MCG seeks to provide education with residential facilities for its mission personnel
- Endowment fund – MCG endowment funds with MCB to be transferred
- SALT support - training for MCSL probationers serving in Ghana and sending of superintendents to assist MCSL in its capacity building programme
- Mission personnel opportunities - request for Agriculturist, Botanist or Horticulturalist interested in academic or training position at tertiary level. Short or long term opportunities available. Specialist volunteers welcome to up-skill at the Mission Hospital, Wenchi e.g. a consultant neurologist visits twice a year to up-skill junior colleagues twice a year
- Grants – we discussed the new three year rolling grant application plus other grants available to partners

Meeting with the Lay President of MCG.

This post was known as the Vice President of Conference and has a 'three-year' tenure with limited resources to support the office. Therefore the post holder volunteers on a part time basis and serves as the Head of the Lay council that consists of 16 lay chairpersons from the Dioceses and ten lay group leaders e.g. Choir, Men's Fellowship, Women's Fellowship, Youth Fellowship etc. Since the Methodist Church Ghana members are mostly laity, every third Sunday of the month offers an opportunity to fundraise for the Lay movement. A week long programme is also scheduled annually - the third week of March for members to come together for outdoor activities as well as organise a memorial lecture. The church selects a topic to consider how the Church could positively influence the government or contribute to prevailing social or justice issues.



MC Ghana Lay President



Accra District officers with Bishop Pratt

Meeting with Bishop of Accra – Bishop Pratt

Street Kids project: commenced in 2011 and was supported by a general grant from the WMF. The project is still going strong with 40 street kids from age 14 – 17 benefiting from the programme. The children are from all over Ghana and they end up in Accra due to family breakdown, death in the family or poverty – inability to be catered for. The project is managed by Ghanaian volunteers, headed by the Lay Chairperson of the Accra Diocese of the Methodist Church Ghana – Mrs Gladys Odoi.

The kids are fed and taught on Saturdays and Sundays using school infrastructure for Hopes for Teens. The boys have their baths, hearty meals and some form of education/ sports on Saturday and fellowship on Sundays. They sometimes benefit from T-shirts donated by supporters. Unfortunately these were often stolen or taken by bullies when back to the streets. There have limited facilities to keep their belongings safe. It is not uncommon to see the young boys without tops all day or they wash their clothes on Saturday morning, for Sunday service so as to blend with others in Sunday school. The street kids were very grateful for the programme. There is a dedicated football coach for those interested in football. They could also participate in drama and drumming. The long term strategy is to try re-integrating each child back into his community by keeping a case file on each child and link up with Social Services. The children also get NHS health insurance paid when there is available funding. At the moment, the children live on selling scrap metals during the week to pay for rent, baths and food during the week.

Where are the girls you say? Well they came forward initially but when they start sharing their experiences on the streets, they become ashamed and back out. The girls are referred to Hopes for Teens for skill acquisition classes in tailoring and hairdressing classes by enrolling them in 6 months – 1 year programme subject to fundraising. The boys could also benefit from carpentry and masonry skills for self-sustainability in future.

The Diocese was very proud of its positive contribution in the lives of the kids. The feedback from the children has been very good and they were delighted to enjoy a Christmas party specially arranged for them in December 2012. A success story was that a mother showed up to reclaim her son.

The project organisers welcome the participation of volunteers from within and without Ghana and they are constantly fundraising to meet the needs of these kids. The number of street kids benefiting from the programme has been kept to 40 for accountability and monitoring. There is still need to offer the children counselling and train youth workers in safeguard training. On the whole the Church seeks to be the 'salt' and 'light' in its community.

I visited the Street Kids project at Accra on Saturday morning -9th March at the Methodist School premises. The boys were led in a worship session by volunteers after which, they got a bath package each. They received hot meals followed by a resting period since they all sleep rough. A lovely lady brought a bag of fairly used clothes for the boys. They sometime get the opportunity to change clothing and wash dirty ones. Later in the afternoon they enjoyed a game of football.



Street kids worship session



Mrs Mensah donating garments to the boys



Street kids offered food

Rafiki Satellite Orphanage, Winneba

Travelled two hours from Accra and met with the Rafiki Orphanage Chaplain, three of the house mothers plus two assistants and the Child Centre Director; Mrs Rejoice Forson— a recipient of the NMA grant, as well as thirty three children from seven months of age up till age twelve. The children lived in three homesteads headed by a house mother. The Chaplain is a trained child evangelist as well as having a degree in Social Care. The orphans were well cared for and kept in contact with at least one relative where holidays are spent when possible. Other children from the community school with the orphans to establish networks and raise some funds for the centre. The Methodist Church Ghana pays monthly staff salaries of about US \$9,000 however the centre has to raise its operational costs itself. Referrals are from all over the country mostly done by Social services, Community leaders and/ or other ministers. The Centre was taken to court on several occasions for failing to pay its tax or bills due to insufficient funds but were bailed out by individual supporters or unexpected gifts. The staff are committed to working with the orphans despite no financial help from the Social services and limited help from the church – the just shall live by faith! Volunteers and supporters are welcome.

9th – 11th March – Kumasi

Wesley Cathedral, Kumasi

I arrived at Kumasi at 7.30pm; after a five-hour journey from Winneba and celebrated Mothers' day/ Women's Sunday at Wesley Cathedral, Kumasi. The Superintendent minister was Rt Rev Nyarko Andam, an ex-SALT student of Birmingham University in 2006 where he pursued Development

Studies. The Church had a congregation of over 500 members at the 7am – 9.30am Holy Communion service followed by the main service afterward. I was accompanied by Mrs Araba and Aretha from the Women’s centre.

Methodist Women Training Centre, Kumasi

I met with Mrs Aretha – the Principal of the Centre to discuss the aspirations and challenges facing the Methodist Women Training Centre. The institution was started by the British Methodist Women in 1951 aimed at equipping Ministers wives to support their spouses’ ministries. However the Centre has evolved to help girls and women unable to obtain or finish formal education, teenage mothers, single parents struggling to make ends meet and unskilled young ladies. The centre has about nine teaching staff, eleven support staff and 211 students. The dining hall is too cramped therefore Aretha, the staff with the consent of Church leadership and students agreed to convert the old chapel built sixty one years ago (which is now too small for assemblies) into a multipurpose hall for the expanding student population. The project would support student activities e.g. fashion shows, food tasting/ sales, fundraising activities, group meetings as well as make it child friendly for child-minding activities. The Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB) grant given would help start this project.

Most of the girls are unable to afford the school fees therefore the centre continually seeks creative ways of generating income. The church gives a small grant every quarter to help with staff salaries but the centre has to fundraise for its operating cost. Aretha has started a child minding programme to offer child-care training at the Centre. However she asked if three staff members could be funded to visit a successful child-care programme in Africa run by a Partner Church and examine formulation and implementation of safeguarding policies with the view of standardising good practice in Ghana. I promised to look into this.



Bunmi with ex-SALT student – Rev Andam



Renovating old chapel as multi-purpose centre



Advanced students at the Women Training Centre

Freeman Centre, Kumasi

Freeman Centre is a Methodist Training institute for its laity. Participants from all over the country attend as it offers residential courses. It serves as a retreat centre and all study resources for church activities are written and produced at the centre. I saw a picture of Rev Thomas Birch Freeman – the Methodist minister of mixed race who brought Methodism to Ghana, Nigeria, Benin and Togo in the 1840s. The photograph was in need of restoration and preservation for archive purposes. I later made a courtesy call to the Bishop of Kumasi before travelling to Wenchi, a three-hour journey by road from Kumasi.

Wenchi Methodist Hospital: 12 – 13 March 2013

Wenchi Methodist Hospital was started at the request of its indigenes. They asked Captain Dixon, an Irish minister settled at Wenchi about building an infirmary because the closest was over 120 kilometres away. Rev Dixon asked the community to help build a church and he would convince his

sister, a medical practitioner in London to come start the infirmary. An existing block of classroom was donated at the site and converted into the clinic before it expanded to a regional hospital site. The Irish Methodists still maintain contact and Mr Millar, a consultant urologist visits the hospital twice a year to up-skill junior doctors since 1991.

Wenchi hospital is a compact hospital conducting mobile clinics as part of its outreach activities. 60% of its cases are malaria related however there is increasing request for gynaecological services from over 700 patients in the community. It also wishes to establish a specialist centre for Buruli ulcer by training nurses on disease awareness, early detection and intervention of this disease caused by *Mycobacterium ulceran*. Cote d'Ivoire has the highest incidence in West Africa followed by Ghana. The disease was first reported in Australia in 1938? The Director of Administration has requested funding support to **train three specialists** at Obom, near Accra where a specialist doctor manages such cases as well as the microbiologist from Logon University Microbiology department collects samples from patients In support of treatment and record keeping.



Paediatric Ward, Wenchi Hospital



Physiotherapy unit, Wenchi Hospital

The hospital treated over **285** accidents last year due to the highway that runs through Wenchi to other towns. There is Wa 160 kilometres in one direction and 60 kilometres from Sunyan in another direction. Visits by Orthopaedic surgeons are most welcome. Also any help in equipping the orthopaedic ward and physiotherapy unit for the use of patients would be very much appreciated.

There are currently four doctors, 28 midwives, 37 general nurses, 18 community health nurses, 5 clinical health staff, two pharmacists whose salaries are paid by the government. The hospital is responsible for raising its own funds and paying its administrative staff plus two Methodist Chaplains working with bereaved patients, suicidal patients etc. it also receives donations and support from the church from time to time. It obtains loans to finance its capital projects and depends on the goodwill of partners to equip and maintain its wards. Its public health unit has a mobile unit to educate, offer nutritional therapy and motivational talks to lactating mothers. A major challenge is that family planning supplies are limited plus challenges to maintain child weight records. Two dedicated laptops should be sufficient for this exercise because there are about 10 births per day in the hospital.

Wenchi Methodist School of Agriculture and School of Nursing

The Methodist Hospital also works closely with the School of Agriculture to address malnutrition and improve food security for residents that are mostly farmers e.g. the use of Moringa leaves as food supplements. The School is also able to pass on successful research finding to the community during field demonstrations and workshops to improve quality and quality of farm products. There were

currently 100 students enrolled this year of which 10% were females. I also visited the proposed school of nursing hoping to start in September 2013.

Community Health Centre, Obom 13 March 2013

I visited this Centre with Mr Ben Oche – the Buruli Ulcer co-ordinator. I had the opportunity to meet with the medical staff and saw few of the out patients attending for wound dressing or prophylactic treatment. Some of the patients had to be offered food and accommodation due to mobility problems and transportation costs. The disease is very debilitating as it could take over one year for the wound to heal and it sometimes requires plastic surgery, amputation or skin grafting if the disease is detected at a late stage. It is difficult to detect early signs because the mode of transmission is unknown and victims experience no pain or rash at the early stage. Buruli Ulcer is endemic in the West African region and currently receiving attention from World Health Organisation to alleviate suffering of the victims. Recovered victims were often disfigured and therefore stigmatised and/or ostracised from the society.



Buruli Ulcer patient responding to treatment



Disfigured members of the community after Buruli Ulcer infection

Hope for teens, Accra

I met with the NMA grant recipient in Accra with fifteen girls participating in the one year programme. Each girl spends nine months specialising in a trade e.g. tailoring, beautician or catering but gets exposed to other skills during team work. However all the girls come together every Wednesday for a 'beads making' exercise and the beads are sold to raise fund for the programme. The girls then spend the last three months as apprentices in their chosen vocation so as to learn the entrepreneurial aspect of the business. Examiners were invited to assess their projects, which were also displayed on graduation to attract potential employers. Mrs Acheamong plans to add photography training next year when the scheme is able to acquire another classroom. MC Ghana was very appreciative of the grant support and Mrs Akaba the Director of Social Services mentioned how helpful the programme was to girls unable to attend school due to unexpected responsibilities such as caring for a sick parent or relative etc.