

Partnership Coordinator for Africa
West Africa Visit
Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Togo, Cameroon.

18 May – 12 June 2022

Purpose of Visit:

- **To meet with Church leaders in partner countries and build relationships.**
 - **To understand local context and current issues.**
 - **To visit partner churches and partner projects.**
 - **To meet with Mission partners ‘in situ’.**
 - **To attend the Sierra Leone Conference.**
 - **To follow up in Ghana with AMC.**
 - **To discuss and share vision for future partnership.**



GAMBIA
18 – 21 May 2022.

Programme:

- Wednesday 18 May Arrive Banjul early evening
Dinner at Hotel with Presiding Bishop Most Rev. Bannie Manga; Rev Rodney Louis Prom, Secretary of Conference; and Rev Pierre , Bishop's Chaplain
- Thursday 19 May All day journey to Central River Region. Visit oldest Methodist Church in Gambia at Janjanbureh and District Superintendent, Rev. Malanding Mendey. Visit rural societies at Banni, Pallang and Wassu, including Janjanbureh and Banni schools. En-route visit Mansakoko church.
- Friday 20 May Visit to Kombo Western Circuit in Greater Banjul Area. Visit 3 schools, Health and Dental Clinic at Marakassa, and MMAP (Methodist Mission Agricultural Programme) at Brekama.
Lunch at Gambia Methodist Academy, Bakau.
Dinner with Clergy from the Connexion at a local restaurant.
- Saturday 21 May Meeting with Methodist Conference Officers at Connexional Office in Banjul.
Lunch with Bishop and transfer to airport.



Introduction:

In 1818, the British Brigadier-General and Governor of the Colonies of Sierra Leone and The Gambia invited the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (and other missionary agencies) to operate in Sierra Leone and The Gambia in order to rehabilitate liberated slaves and provide work, house, education and fellowship for these dispossessed peoples. The WMMS responded in 1821 by sending Rev John Morgan and Rev John Baker to begin their work in Kombo, St. Mary Island. Two years after their arrival in 1823, Leman Island, also known as Georgetown (now Janjanbureh) in Central River Region, was identified as a suitable settlement for the newly liberated slaves. It was here that the first Wesleyan Methodist Church in Gambia was built. In 1824, Rev. John Morgan opened a school for liberated African children and a mixed-farming agricultural project, in order develop skills, work and food for the liberated slaves. The school continues to be an important institution for the region. Within 14 years of its arrival and establishment in The Gambia, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary

Conference had completed several churches and established new schools and social projects in several parts of the country, including Bathurst, (now Banjul). Education continued to remain central to the work of the Methodist Church in The Gambia. Under the Chairmanship of Revd John Naylor (1956-1966), a Health Programme was initiated to accompany evangelical work at Marakissa, Kombo Central District, and further clinics were established in the Central River Region. In 1970, an Agricultural and Environmental Mission was established at Brekama, creating wood-lots and market gardens in the Western Division, North Bank Division and Central River Division.

The Methodist Church The Gambia gained autonomy on 24th May 2009. It has continued to undertake its primary missions of evangelism, education, training health care and agricultural development, all of which it seeks to expand and develop. The current Presiding Bishop is Most Rev. Bannie EF Manga.

Current MCB Grant Contributions to the Methodist Church in The Gambia:

Annual Grant: 3046. 2020-2021. £30,000

Essential Assistance Grant. (Jan 2022) £20,000

NMAs. (Nationals in Mission)

1836 Mr. Ade Edmond T. Shonobi. Librarian 2016-221 (£30,500). Funding completed but post continuing, funded by MCTG.

2735 Child Protection/ Safeguarding Officer. 2019-2024. (£28,000). In post and fully operational.

Janjanbureh (Formerly Georgetown).

Leaving Banjul at 6am, it was a 4 hour journey to reach Janjanbureh in the east of the country, and after visiting the local societies, we returned to Banjul. Today, Janjanbureh, where the first Methodist Church in Gambia was built in 1823 is at the heart of the Central River Region Circuit, which includes a number of remote societies, serving isolated communities and Methodist families in the surrounding area. The Circuit Superintendent at Janjanbureh, Rev Malanding Mendey has a ministry focusing on pastoral care, education, building up the schools and the life of the churches, agricultural development, and offering meetings and services for families in villages that have no church. The church is proud to be a place that trains ministers and lay preachers who serve the outlying areas.



Methodist Church, Janjanbureh. Oldest in The Gambia.



Rev. Malanding Mendey, Superintendent of Janjanbureh & Rev Pierre

The Methodist School at Janjanbureh, founded in 1824, currently has 591 students on role and 20 teachers and operates 3 shifts between 10am and 10pm. Like most church schools in Gambia, about 90% of the pupils are Muslim, but their parents actively seek a Methodist education. A new school block and a borehole to ensure adequate water supply are needed.



Staff at Janjanbureh School.



Gambia River Crossing. Janbureh.



Old Slave House. Janjanbureh

Banni, Pallang and Wasu

It was a privilege to visit three isolated rural communities north of the river in Central River Region. In Banni, the church, which was rebuilt in 1999 on the site of an older building, serves a wide area and is overseen by the Minister Rev. Peter Colley. The immediate area has about 150 Methodist members, some of whom walk from surrounding villages to attend worship. There is an active Women's group. The local school is sponsored and its main building built by the Cornwall link. In the small village of Pallang several miles from Banni, there are another three Christian families who live in a predominantly Muslim village. A few miles further on in Wasu, one family live in a fenced compound. Rev. Colley walks or takes a bicycle on a regular basis to take services in these remote societies. The priorities for the Methodist church in these remote communities are education, training of ministers to continue and expand the ministerial and pastoral work, effective Christian teaching so that Christian families can stand up to the pressure of Muslim ascendancy, agricultural development and environmental awareness. The impact of climate change and human degradation of the environment are all too visible across most of Gambia where the forests are denuded. There continues to be widespread burning of land and chopping of trees for charcoal production, water resources are increasingly scarce and the land is increasingly parched and bare. The Methodist church seeks to play a significant role in teaching environmental awareness and the Christian imperative to be wise stewards of the earth's resources.



Methodist family compound, Banni.



Methodist Society. Wasu village.



Rev. Peter Colley, Banni Methodist Church.

Konbo West Circuit.

The second full day of my visit to Gambia was spent visiting some of the 11 churches, and the clinics and schools in the Kombo West Circuit, which is part of the Greater Banjul area, under the leadership of the Superintendent, Rev. James Jackson. The ministries in Kombo West include the three primary areas of focus of the Methodist Church in The Gambia. These are as follows:

1. Education

Since its arrival in The Gambia in 1821, Methodism was committed to placing the church in the forefront of the continent's rehabilitation after slavery. African leadership, achieved through education, was considered crucial to achieving this. The first school at Janjanbureh (then Georgetown) has already been mentioned. Once Bathurst (now Banjul) became the centre, Methodist educational institutions were established and soon became some of the most respected in the country. Methodist education is distinctive for its ecumenical and interfaith approach. Children from Anglican and Muslim backgrounds are enrolled alongside Methodist children without any mandate of conversion and there is no confessional requirement in the schools even though they are based on a strong Christian foundation. Methodism has therefore set an example of interreligious harmony and consequently, as Bishop Manga says, the Methodist church is recognised for its enormous contribution to education in the country. Indeed, many leading figures in the country and representatives on national bodies in political, economic and civil service fields were educated in Methodist schools and are Methodists.



Banni Village Primary School



Marakissa School. W. Kombo Circuit.

The Longman Memorial Methodist Preparatory and Kindergarten School in Brikama in the Kombo West Circuit is a good example of the continuing of that tradition. It started as a nursery of only 5 children in the church building in 1999. Today, the school has 810 children and 32 staff, overseen by the Head Teacher, Mrs Eglah Sharpe-Smith. Link circuits in the UK have funded most of the classroom buildings in the sizeable compound. The school is by necessity a fee-paying school, which remains popular even though there are several non fee-paying government schools in the area. However, there is only one working computer in the school (even that was out of order when I visited), and a priority for the school is to provide a computer room and a staff room.



Head Teacher, Longman School, Brikama.



Longman School Classroom. Brikama.



Longman School Library, Brikama.

2. Medical Work

There has been a long history of medical missionary work in The Gambia. The first Methodist medical missionary from the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society was Edna Green, who served in The Gambia from 1926-1927. The mother-child clinic that she set up in Bathurst (Banjul) lasted until 1940.

Medical work was revived in the 1960s when the Medical Research Centre was established at Marakissa in the West Kombo Circuit. The work of this Medical Centre continues serving an area of several thousand people offering a range of services including Maternal and child Health, growth monitoring, providing preventative medicines and vaccinations, antenatal and postnatal care and counselling and health education. I also visited the Dental Clinic 6 miles away at Brikama. Whilst the Director of these services is clearly diligent and efficient and systems operate under careful processes, it is clear that resources are very tight indeed. Facilities are extremely basic and equipment is dated and of poor quality. The whole set up appears to be under-funded.

Health clinics also operate in the western region.



Health Clinic, Marakissa. West Kombo Circuit.



Mother & Baby monitoring Unit. Marakissa, Kombo Circuit.

3. Methodist Mission Agricultural Programme (MMAP).

Since the start of the Methodist Mission in The Gambia, agricultural training and provision has gone hand in hand with Education to improve the lives of the local people. With increased environmental problems due to Climate Change and degradation of the land through indiscriminate felling of trees throughout the country, the need for land conservation and agricultural training has increased. Whilst the Methodist Mission in The Gambia was involved in agriculture since the very beginning, but a persistent drought between 1970 and 1980, combined with the effects of indiscriminate tree-felling led to the creation of the Gambia Christian Council Agricultural Project in 1974 by British agriculturalist, Bob Mann. The stipulated aims were:

- a) To improve farmer's income through food production and establishment of vegetable gardens.
- b) To protect the environment through tree planting, and
- c) To provide water for vegetable growing and tree planting through the construction of wells.

Funding for these projects came through the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the then Methodist Church Overseas Division (MCO) and has continued through the World Mission Fund. Agricultural projects all took place in the Kombo Western Circuit region, centred on what became the Methodist Mission Agricultural Programme (MMAP) at Brikama, where about 30 acres of land was set aside to promote food production, tree planting and training in protecting the environment. All of these initiatives were income-generating and had a multiplying effect in the region. Additionally, a great number of new wells were constructed.

Tragically, in recent years and due to the removal of much international funding that had been sourced in the 1990s and 2000s, the MMAP project at Brikama has gone into decline. Whilst its principles are being continued in some rural areas, the 30 acre plot of land at Brikama is no longer producing anything and has grown wild. The wall around the property has in parts fallen down and there is much

trespassing and disposal of rubbish on the land. This is a tragic state of affairs since it is the largest and only piece of natural habitat in the whole of the Greater Banjul area. It contains the last plot of original forest almost in the whole of The Gambia, and the soil where plants have previously been grown is ready for renewed cultivation. The land also contains several buildings which would be ideal for educational and eco-touristic purposes. Talking with the Bishop and Connexional team, it is clear that a radical, bold and ambitious vision for this significant plot of land as an exemplary model and resource for The Gambia of land conservation, natural forest preservation, environmental education and food production, is, with successful funding, an appropriate and realisable vision. This requires more however than a request for individual grants from church donors. It requires a strategic vision and plan that could attract attention and support from significant environmental and conservationist agencies globally. I suggested that researching such possibilities may be worthwhile.

Summary - The Gambia

On my last day in the Gambia, I met with senior staff at the Connexional Office in Banjul. We had a warm and frank exchange about the challenges facing the Methodist Church in The Gambia and in Britain. I managed to get across the message that no longer will there be significant funds to hand out to partners and that we are invited to reconsider models of partnership that break free from any colonialist or financial dependency tendencies. This message was received and Bishop Manga made it clear that the main priority in the coming years will be on how to become self-sufficient as a Church. The grants that MCB have given to the Methodist Church in The Gambia have been put to good use in the aforementioned projects.

As the number of Methodists increases through the pastoral and evangelism work of lay and ordained ministers, there is a desire to increase the number of church buildings and expand existing church buildings. One observation I made whilst going around the Circuits was that a number of church buildings have been recently renovated. Many of the schools and health clinics also desperately need funds spent on them.

Bishop Manga is a young Bishop with an inspiring vision and desire to transform the ministry and service of the Methodist Church in Gambia for the good of all, and is putting in place the administrative structures to try to do so. He wants to make sure that it will be used wisely, appropriately and effectively for the mission of the Methodist Church in The Gambia. Meanwhile, friendship, partnership and seeking a variety of ways of supporting and learning from one another will continue.



Presiding Bishop Bannie Manga.



Connexional Office, Banjul, Gambia.



Rodney Louis Prom, Conference Sec.

The Methodist Mission in The Gambia has had a distinguished and worthy history since 1821.

- Key areas, characteristics and priorities of ministry continue to be:
 - The pastoral care of societies, especially in rural areas.
 - Educational institutions.
 - Medical care.
 - Theological training for lay and ordained.
 - Building up of congregations in faith and numerically.
 - Maintaining and promoting interreligious harmony and understanding.

The Annual Grant for 2020-2021 of £30,000 was spent as follows:

Discipleship & Training	£7,000
Mission Work: Pastoral and Outreach	£5,000
Annual and Youth Conference in Provinces	£5,000
Bi-Centenary Celebrations of Methodism in The Gambia	£10,000

The Methodist Church in The Gambia works hard to serve and encourage its people to be a positive presence for all. Raising adequate resources for these ministries is a constant challenge. Nevertheless, they remain priorities for the Presiding Bishop, Most. Rev. Bannie E.F. Manga and he is keen that the Methodist Church should strive to become self-sustaining. As part of this, he believes that Christian education and theological knowledge are essential for both ministers and congregations. Thus, they will be able to meet the challenges they face and continue to be a positive Christian witness and presence in the country and sustain the Methodist heritage that has been so significant and transformative a part of West Africa's history.

Finally, my thanks go to the Bishop and the Connexion, who in spite of their financial challenges and as a sign of their commitment to their ongoing partnership with the Methodist Church in Britain, generously hosted me throughout the visit.



SIERRA LEONE

21 – 31 May



Programme:

I was invited to Sierra Leone to attend the Biennial Conference in Kailahun.

Saturday 21 May	Arrive Lungi Airport, Freetown Early evening.
Sunday 22 May	Rest. Afternoon with Mission Partners Sylvester & Rachel Deigh. Evening Service at Zion Methodist Church. Freetown.
Monday 23 May	Morning meeting with Presiding Bishop Mark Ngobeh & Administrational Bishop, Ronald Bobb-Williams and Connexion Office Staff. Afternoon Reflection meeting for Sylvester & Rachel Deigh with Bishops Mark and Ronald.
Tuesday 24 May	Day in Freetown.
Wednesday 25 May	Travel to Kailahun
Thursday 26 May –	
Friday 27 May	Biennial Conference Methodist Church of Sierra Leone, Kailahun.
Saturday 28 May	Travel from Kailahun to Freetown. Visit Nixon Memorial Hospital, Segbwema.
Sunday 29/Monday 30 May	Freetown
Tuesday 31 May	Morning. Fly from Freetown to Accra. Ghana.



Introduction.

Methodism was introduced into Sierra Leone by freed slaves who served as British soldiers in the American war of independence and settled in Nova Scotia. In 1792 they were resettled in Freetown and brought with them their Methodist faith. The new Methodist congregations were served by local leaders until 1811 when failing health of the leadership prompted them to seek leadership for their society from the Methodist Conference of Britain.

On 5 July, 1806, a letter was written by Joseph Browne to Dr Coke requesting the British Conference to provide personnel for the Church in Sierra Leone. Rev. George Warren and three schoolteachers, John Healy, Joseph Rayner and Thomas Hirst, were identified and sent as the first Methodist missionaries to Sierra Leone, landing in Freetown on November 12, 1811. In time, the Church became a District of the British Conference and received a host of missionaries from Britain.

The Methodist Church Sierra Leone became an autonomous Conference in January 1967.

The Methodist Church in Sierra Leone is divided into three Districts:

Western District. (Consisting of 12 Circuits and 1 Ecumenical Station).

Bo/Kenema District. (Consisting of 7 Circuits).

Kailahun/Kono District. (Consisting of 10 Circuits).

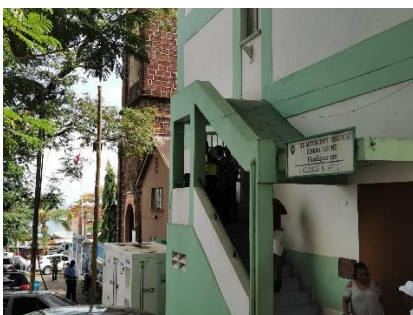
The three synods meet in a Biennial Conference. In 2021, there were 95 ministers in the MCSL, 518 Local Preachers and 23,339 members. The current Presiding Bishop is Rt. Rev. Mark K. Ngobeh. The Administrative Bishop is Rt. Rev. Ronald Bobb-Williams.

Historically, the headquarters of the Methodist Church in Sierra Leone was established in Freetown by the British for returned for returned slaves. However, most of the work of the Missionary Societies took place in the Provinces amongst those peoples who had remained in the country. It is here where many of the Connexion's church buildings, educational institutions, hospitals and clinics are situated. This historic divide physical and human between Freetown and the Provinces continues to cause significant structural, economic and 'political' stress for MCSL. Meanwhile, the Methodist Church in Sierra Leone has good ecumenical relations (I visited the office of the Sierra Leone Council of Churches) and has a development wing that works with non-governmental organisations at national and international level. Humanitarian support, legal aid systems, disaster preparedness and mitigation, maternal and child health care, are all areas in which the MCSL receives collaboration with other bodies. Following the 2022 Conference, the MCSL Relief and Development Agency will be wound up and a new body –WeDRA (Wesley Development and Relief Agency) will be established.

MCSL is jointly supported by MCB and All We Can.



Bishop Mark Ngobeh. Presiding Bishop.



Methodist HQ. Freetown.



Freetown.

Current MCB Grant Contributions to the Methodist Church in Sierra Leone:

Annual Grant: (2744: Last Grant 2020 £51,500).
(£6000 forwarded to Cliff College for Computer network.)

Essential Assistance Grant: £18.000. Jan 2022.

NMA 3057 Miss. Enitor Briggs. Gender, Youth & Children Desk Officer.
2020-2025 (£23,000) (From mid-Feb 2021)

SALT 2745 Rev John Tucker. Asian Rural Institute Rural Leader Training
Programme 2019-2020 (£15,000). Due to Covid, went to Ghana
where he undertook a 5 month ARI certificated course.

Mission Partners: Sylvester and Rachel Deigh.

Sylvester and Rachel arrived in Sierra Leone in November 2021. On 28 November, 2021, just a couple of weeks after their arrival, the Strategic Plan Co-Ordinator at the Conference Office with whom Sylvester was due to work, died suddenly. As Sylvester puts it: "I was thrust immediately into a crisis." And he has taken over the management of the strategic plan for MCSL. Sylvester now works closely with the leadership of the Methodist Church in Sierra Leone in developing, consulting and implementing the Strategic plan for the Conference.

Rachel in the meantime was invited to teach at the 'Methodist College of Theology and Management and Church Training Centre' in Freetown and was asked to prepare her own syllabus and course. Both Sylvester and Rachel serve in separate Circuits in Freetown. Rachel has been warmly welcomed into her Circuit and is an active minister in her church.

Sylvester and Rachel make a vital contribution to the life of the Methodist Church in Sierra Leone. Sylvester had hoped, and still hopes, to undertake some work in the Provinces, but feels the need first to settle in Freetown and to establish and embed the Strategic plan. Rachel's situation has been more frustrating. The College has lacked leadership for two years and Rachel has not had any guidance as to what she should teach or how she should mark her students. Her Circuit ministry however is deeply appreciated.

The purchase of a vehicle has helped considerably with transport and contributed to the transport capacity of the Conference Office. However, there have been questions raised within the Conference over 'ownership' and responsibility for maintenance. These issues have now been clarified by MCB.



10th Biennial Conference of the Methodist Church in Sierra Leone. Kailahun.

MCSL Conference gathered in Kailahun – a small town in the north-east of the country close to the border with Guinea and Liberia and a 7 hour road journey from Freetown – from 25-29 May. All Ministers were expected to present. And Lay Representatives from around the country attended.

On Day 2 of the Conference, I led the Morning Devotion and addressed Conference. There is considerable disappointment at the reduced funding from MCB and concern about the proposed initiative for handing World Mission Funds to AMC, on the basis that more ‘powerful’ and ‘larger’ African churches might dominate and prioritise their needs when it comes to funding. The absolute disapproval of MCSL towards MCB’s decision on same-sex marriage was made clear. However, the continued goodwill towards and desire for ongoing partnership with MCB generally and myself in particular was warmly assured.

The ministries of the Methodist Church in Sierra Leone include: Worship Services, Prayer Meetings, Bible Studies, Evangelistic Outreaches, Revivals, Men’s Fellowships, Women’s Fellowships, Youth Fellowships, Theological Training, Teaching, Schools, Hospital, Clinics.

In all areas of the work of the Methodist Church of Sierra Leone, the key challenges are as follows:

- A shortage of ordained Ministers.
- Inadequate theological training.
- Lack of funding in all areas of the Connexional ministry.
- Lack of support for probationers.
- Rural societies without ministerial or pastoral support.
- Pastoral issues with ministers and probationers (including marital problems, alcoholism etc).
- Administrational issues including poor technological provision and know-how. Lack of strategy.
- Remoteness of some rural societies and areas within Circuits.

In Order to address these challenges, the MCSL Strategic Plan has been agreed which is based on six ‘pillars’:

Pillar 1: Promoting Evangelism and Spiritual Renewal.

Including: Developing a strategy for evangelism and prayer. Creating Youth Pastors. Producing an MCSL Hymn book and book of Liturgies.

Pillar 2: Strengthening MCSL for effective delivery on its mandates

Including: Developing an effective system of numerical returns. Establishing and Implementing a Safeguarding policy. Digitalising the Conference Office.

Pillar 3: Enhancing capacity development of clergy and laity.

Including: Providing proper and continuous Ministry Training, Theological Education and Vocational Training.

Pillar 4: Promoting Community Empowerment and healthy partnerships.

Working with the 128 Primary schools that carry the name ‘Methodist’. Developing Skills Training Centre for Women. Winding up the MCSL Relief and Development Agency and creating a new WeDRA (Wesley Development and Relief Agency)... A Christian-based NGO owned by MCSL with a spiritual approach to sustainable development, a dedication to improving the quality of life in Sierra Leone and responding to disasters.

Pillar 5: Stewarding MCSL Properties and Investments.

Including: Taking an inventory of all properties and taking a new approach to Estate Management and Investments.

Pillar 6: Sustained financing of the Conference and its organs.

Including: Through planned giving, property rental, wise stewardship, Multiple partnerships, fundraising.

At the end of the Conference, the new Presiding and Administrative Bishops for the next session 2024 were Elected as follows:

Presiding Bishop-Designate from 2024:

Rev. Tom Demby. Currently Circuit Superintendent in Western District.

Administrative Bishop-Designate from 2024:

Rev. Tom Lusieni. (Currently Chair of Kono/Kailahun District)



Nixon Memorial Methodist Hospital, Segbwema.

The Nixon Memorial Hospital in Segbwema in Eastern Sierra Leone was once a Centre of Excellence to which people flocked from far and wide. Its' humble beginnings were through the wife of a British missionary in the 1930s who was a nurse and to whom local people flocked for treatment. A clinic was started from her verandah and it soon became evident that there was widespread need for medical care.

In 1950, Alderman John Nixon, previously Lord Mayor of Newcastle, approached the officers of the Methodist Missionary Society to offer to donate money for medical services to a needy place in the developing world in memory of his wife who had recently died. The need for a hospital in Segbwema

was suggested and a large sum of money was provided for the construction of wards. Both expatriate and local staff were engaged and the highly commended nursing school was established. By the 1980s, the hospital was widely acclaimed throughout Sierra Leone and was the pride and joy of the Methodist Church. But the Civil War of the 1990s changed everything. Segbwema and the nearby town of Daru were the first towns to be hit. The rebels overran the hospital. There was wanton destruction and the staff had to flee.

Gradually wards, outpatients, staff accommodation and nursing school have been re-built – much of the rebuilding financed by the government of Sierra Leone. However development of services has been very slow because of the immense poverty of the area.

Children in particular are dying frequently from preventable diseases since villages which are being re-built as simple mud structures have no clean water supply and poor sanitation.

Knowing this, a small group of people joined together and proposed setting up a UK charity to help. As a result the “Friends of Nixon” came into being with trustees composed of people who are indigenous to the area or who have worked at the hospital in better days.

In January 2012 the charity was granted UK charitable status.

The hospital currently has a desperate shortage of staff and significant funding challenges. I was told that the difficulty with staff is that they are trained by the government and tend to be employed by the local government hospital which provides free care, though of less quality. Nixon Memorial Hospital is a fee-paying hospital providing a range of preventative, surgical and midwifery services. The once thriving Nurses’ training school has had to close due to lack of funds and lies empty though the buildings are potentially a significant resource. It is recognised that reopening the Training school could transform the services offered by the hospital. The Board of the Hospital has recently appointed a new Administrator, a Finance Officer and a Matron in order to try to turn things around. The Hospital Board is working with both Government and other partners to seek funding to substantially improve the facilities and services available.

Personally, I sensed a feeling of low morale from the few staff that I met. The MCSL Strategic Plan will help Methodist Church Institutions reflect and move forward strategically with plans to address some of the many challenges that they face. Attending to the challenges facing the Health ministries of the Methodist Church in Sierra Leone is one of the key planks of the Strategic plan.

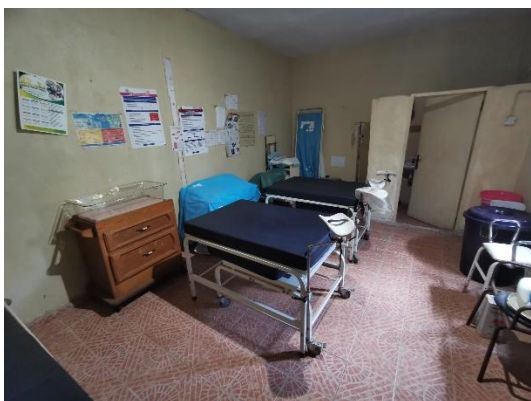


Methodist Clinic for the Poor and Needy, Freetown.

This was a good example one of the health ministries undertaken by MCSL, but of how these ministries are under-funded and possibly ill-managed. The clinic was started during the civil war as a response to the thousands of refugees fleeing rural areas and needing medical treatment. It received support from the government and from other humanitarian organisations. When the war ended, many refugees were too afraid to return and have remained in Freetown and so the need continues. The clinic seeks to serve the most needy and vulnerable. It served again as a key centre for the poorest in this part of town during the Ebola outbreak and now serves the local population offering free health care for pregnant women and medical attention for those who are physically disabled. There is a Community Health Assistant and 14 staff who work in shifts to be available 24 hours a day.



However, what is noticeable are the very poor conditions both of the building and of the facilities provided and there are only a few beds available. MCSL are well aware of this and it is part of the new Strategic plan to address and much improve the Health care facilities under their management. As always, funds are a major factor in limiting the capacity to make major improvements, but a strategy for resourcing the work is to be developed in the months and years ahead.



'New Life' Women Empowerment Centre, Freetown.

Prior to the war, the Skills Centre for Women was a flourishing project. But sadly the scheme came to a halt and then during the Ebola outbreak the buildings were used as an emergency hospital. Since then the buildings have been abandoned and become badly decayed. However, the site and the buildings, once renovated, offer a tremendous opportunity for a dynamic and successful project serving the needs of women in Freetown.

Under the Leadership of Ruby Pearce, the President of the Women's Network, it is planned to restore the New Life Women's Empowerment Centre, both as a Skills Centre for Women, and as a

Headquarters for the National Methodist Women’s Network. Significant funds will be needed to restore the buildings, but it is intended, following the Strategic Plan, to take a multi-agency approach to fundraising. Can MCB help identify multi-agency grant-funding opportunities?



Ruby Pearce. President of MCSL Women’s Network.



Centre for New Life Women’s Empowerment.

Sierra Leone suffers low economic growth and 40% youth unemployment. The New Life Centre will aim to build capacity in the informal sector and aspire to advance the supply of appropriately skilled labour to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. In addition, the project will seek to improve the quality of the traditional apprenticeship system, which suffers from structural deficiencies. It is hoped to replicate the initiative across Sierra Leone, producing training, new job opportunities, and income-generating activities. The centre will seek to develop three main areas: numeracy and literacy, core skills and sales and entrepreneurship. The core skills that will be taught include: tye-dyeing, sewing, dressmaking, shirtmaking, gownmaking, hairdressing, ladies crafts, hat making etc.



Summary:

The 2020 MCB Annual Grant to Sierra Leone was distributed as follows:

Mission and Evangelism	£14,000
Conference Support to District Synods	£ 4,000
Community Empowerment	£ 4,600
Youth and Children’s Ministry.	£ 6,400
Gender Empowerment	£ 5,000
Education	£ 3,500
Personnel Capacity Building	£ 4,000
Audit	<u>£ 6,500</u>
Total:	£51,500

The use of the £18,000 Essential Assistance grant paid to MCSL in January 2022 has yet to be decided.

If I could sum up the Methodist Church in Sierra Leone in one word, it would be – ‘Potential’.

However, there are multiple challenges. Whilst funding may seem to be the primary issue and certainly, funding in all areas of the church’s ministry is a major concern, it is recognised that other factors have affected the efficiency of the church’s operations in the past. These include issues of leadership, management, division within the country and the church, and lack of direction and strategy.

It is recognised that there has been too much dependency on outside in the past. The removal of funding from MCB will impact upon MCSL significantly. However, that decision has helped to ensure that MCSL really address some of the challenges in management and strategy that need to be addressed. The MCSL possesses many physical and human resources which appear to be under-utilised and whose potential has not been tapped. It is possible that the 5 year Strategic Plan, approved at the 2022 Conference that I attended, if implemented with vigour and commitment, will be transformative for MCSL.

Meanwhile, a multi-agency approach to partnership and fundraising and a strategic approach to the management of MCSL’s own human and physical resources could reap dividends for the Church as a whole and for all the people that the Methodist Church in Sierra Leone serves.

The current leadership, with the invaluable help of our Mission partner in helping draft and implement the Strategic Plan, are committed to that task and I pray that the Church will persevere in implementing it.



GHANA
31 May – 4 June 2022



Programme:

Tuesday 31 May	Fly from Freetown, Sierra Leone to Accra, Ghana.
Wednesday 1 June	Visit Cape Coast and Elmina with Methodist Bishop of Cape Coast.
Thursday 2 June	Morning meetings with Directors of Conference Departments at Office, Accra Afternoon meetings with MCG Executive at Methodist University, Accra.
Friday 3 June	Morning Commendation Service for Final Year Students at Trinity Theological College. Visit to Youth Development Centre and Tropical Gardens in Aburi. Visit Akrofi Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission & Culture at Aburi. Meeting with Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah. (Former Director of PROCMURA).
Saturday 4 June	Travel from Accra to Lome, Togo.

Current MCB Grant Contributions to the Methodist Church in Sierra Leone:

Annual Grant: No Annual Grant.

NMAs

1837	Dr. Michael Busia. Medical Officer for Outreach Services. 2016-2020. (£26,280) Now retired.
3049	Heath System Strengthening HSS Officer. 2020-2025. (£23,000) Samuel Aduboyo. In post.

SALT

3050	Rev. Maxwell Obeng. Trinity Theological Seminary, Ghana. 2021-2026 (£47,000)
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Introduction

The first Methodist Church in Ghana was founded in 1835 in Cape Coast by Joseph Dunwell. Methodism in Ghana followed in the steps of the Anglican, Dutch Reformed, French and Portuguese Catholic and Presbyterian missions that had established a strong Christian foothold in the country. Following the abolition of slavery, African Christians had also returned from slavery to establish churches in West Africa. The Christian mission in the region was therefore an African as well as a European endeavour.



First Methodist Church in Ghana.



Grave of first Missionaries.



Cape Coast Fort.

Joseph Rhodes Dunwell was sent to the Gold Coast in January 1835 as one of nine missionaries sent by the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) to work in Africa and overseas. Unfortunately within six months he was dead as a result of malaria. But before his death, Dunwell had nurtured a few educated men later to become pillars of the church, so that within three months of his death, the Methodist society consisted of 50 members. Sadly, all the missionaries sent by Britain died within six months, but within that time they established a girls' school (that would later become Wesley Methodist Girls' High School) and societies in towns and villages along the coast.

Thomas Freeman, the son of an African father and English mother took the place of the missionaries. He arrived in Cape Coast in 1838 and died in 1890, becoming known as the 'father' of the Ghana Methodist Church. He established schools and societies from Cape Coast to Ashanti and also established the Methodist Church in Nigeria.



Thomas Freeman Memorial.



Grave of Philip Quaake, first African priest.



Bishop Richardson Hamdan, Cape Coast.

In the 1870s the Methodist Mission spread to the Volta region and it was not until the 1950s that the Methodist Church became established in Northern Ghana when Paul Adu was sent as the first African missionary to the region. There he learnt the local languages, established churches and schools and addressed some of the economic issues.

During the 1960s and '70s, the Methodist Church increased the number of Circuit ministers and intensified training for lay leaders. Urban migration impacted rural ministries and the Church consequently expanded its neighbourhood ministries. The 1990s saw a focus on evangelism and a substantial increase in societies and ministries across the country.

The Methodist Church Ghana gained autonomy in 1961. From autonomy onwards, the Church recognised the need for effective planning and evangelism. The Church leadership also recognised the need for the church to play a role in shaping godly governance in the country. The church takes a political stance on national issues and programmes and engages society with a theology that seeks to relate faith to the totality of life. As a mouthpiece of the nation, the Church has sought to be a strong advocate for justice and respect for human rights and democracy.

The Methodist Church Ghana relates well with other Christian bodies both at home and abroad, including: the Christian Council of Ghana; the Council of the Methodist Church in West Africa; All Africa Conference of Churches; the World Methodist Council and the World Council of Churches.

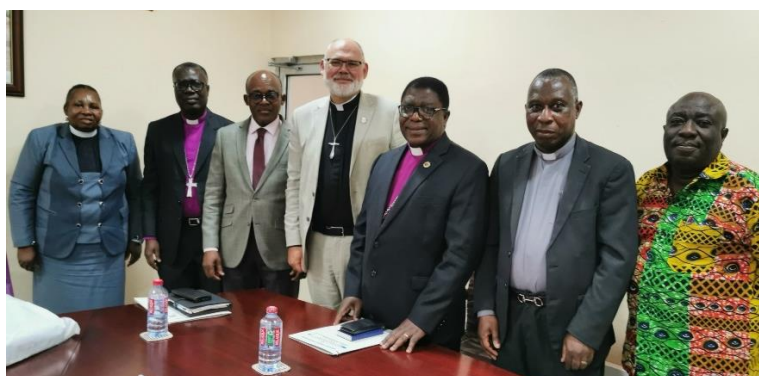
Today, the Methodist Church Ghana comprises just under a million members. The Church has 20 Dioceses, (plus a Missionary Diocese in USA); 350 Circuits; and over 4934 Societies. Its' ministries include: Over 2700 Primary Schools; 30 Secondary and Tertiary Schools; 4 Colleges; 1 University; 7 Regional and Teaching hospitals.

The Current Executive are:

Presiding Bishop:	Most Revd. Dr. Paul Kwabena Boafo
Administrative Bishop:	Rt Revd. Michael Agyakwa Bossman
Lay President:	Bernard Clement Kwasi Botwe.



Presiding & Administrative Bishops.
And President of Methodist University of Ghana, Very Rev. Professor John Ekem.



Ghana Methodist Church Executive.

Connection Office, Accra.

The Methodist Church Ghana is a large and growing church. Its departments are as follows:

- Ministry: Ordained and Lay ministries, Children's ministry and Pastoral Care.
- Health & Environment: Health, Environment, Agriculture, Rural Development, Gender and Family Life.
- Education and Youth: Youth Development Ministry, Tertiary Education, Primary Education.
- Finance and Development: Property, Finance, Procurement & Projects, Resource mobilisation. Methodist Development Fund (MDF).

Director of Ministry: Very Rev. William Mpere-Gyetye.

There are two tracks towards ordination: By seminary, or through Theological Training by Extension. A major focus is on Evangelism and Children's ministry.

The number of Ministers being ordained each year illustrates the growth of the Methodist Church in Ghana. They are as follows:

2022	58 ordinations
2023	68 ordinations
2024	67 ordinations.

There are about 1200 Ministers in Ghana and they target a 7% growth annually.

Ministry includes active Men's, Women's and Children's ministries.

A new Centre for Continuing Education for Ministers is being established.

The Methodist Church in Ghana has a vision to exchange ministers with Europe.

Social Services ministry includes Health and Sanitation; Environment and Rural Development; Agriculture and Project Management.

Projects include training in technology, farming, skills-training, livelihood empowerment.

Some Dioceses have developed commercial farms that provide employment and are income-generating.

Gender and family life Department includes projects for Women and Girls' Empowerment, Development of Women's Leadership; Youth Leadership Development; Marriage Counselling; Support for Teenage and Elderly groups. The Church is starting to address the issue of special needs and support for people with disabilities or disadvantaged people. Much work is done in supporting orphans.

The need for sharing of expertise and training in the fields of Gender and Family life is identified as a possible area for partnership and development.

The Heritage Department of the Methodist Church in Ghana, headed by Rev. Daniel French, seeks to record, disseminate and make relevant the important history and heritage of the Methodist Church. Dioceses have been encouraged to share their story, through writing, art, displays, music. Heritage is seen as a catalyst for societal development. The roots in Britain of the Methodist Church in Ghana are also considered important. There is a desire to trace the journey and the story of Rev. Joseph Dunwell, the founder of the Methodist Church in Ghana. As yet, there is no single work that tells that story.

Communications. Head of Communications: Rev. Emmanuel Asenso.

The Methodist Church Ghana has an active communications department, including a TV Station, Social media platforms, a Youtube channel, Facebook, Instagram and Website.



Rev. Emmanuel Asenso. Communications Director.



Wesley TV Station Editor, Ghana.

Methodist Development and Relief Services (MDRS). Director: Rev. Enoch Osafo.

This is a Charity NGO of the Church serving the poor and vulnerable 'for dignified living'. Seeks to lift people out of poverty and nurture livelihoods. It partners with government agencies in projects with young people, farmers (sustainable farming practices), enterprises for small businesses, grants for

equipment for small-scale businesses and cooperatives, water projects (providing wells and bore holes to remote poor communities), relief in disaster situations, child protection for orphans. MDRS seeks a holistic, transformative approach in its mission and ministry.

Director of Education and Youth Development.

The Methodist Church in Ghana manages 2700 Primary Schools, 30 Senior Schools, 4 Colleges and 1 University, which is just qualifying to run its own degree programme.

Education in MCG seeks to bridge the gap between knowledge and piety. The majority of children are Muslim, but the schools have a Christian ethos and all parents sign an agreement to adhere to the school principles and practices. All schools have chaplains who lead spiritual events and who report on the number of baptisms and confirmations that take place each year. Weekly bible studies and devotions and hymn practices are held in schools to which parents agree for their children to attend. Apparently, most senior positions in Ghana's Civil Society are held by people who attended Methodist Schools.

Meanwhile the Youth Department offers entrepreneurship and training skills, and programmes for young people to survive within the context of 21st century society. Special attention is given to those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged.

SALT & NMA Partners, Ghana

Rev Maxwell Obeng. Trinity Theological College, Accra.



Rev. Maxwell Obeng is just starting a 4 year Theology course at Trinity College, funded by the SALT programme. He has completed his first semester and is much enjoying the work. He has been in ministry for 10 years and is totally committed to achieving the results required and “helping build the Methodist Church and Christianity in West Africa.”

Once he has completed his studies, the Methodist Church plan for him to teach at the Theological Seminary or at the Methodist University. He is clearly an extremely intelligent and able young Minister and a potential future senior leader of the church.

Samuel Adubuyo. NMA Health System Strengthening HSS Officer.



Samuel started at the HSS desk in September 2020 and he loves his job. He is undertaking the data management and training of medical staff for data collection for all the Health Services in the Methodist Church in Ghana. This involves a lot of hands-on, grassroots work ‘in the field’ which he

really enjoys. There has in the past been inadequate data collection in the health systems and it has not been part of the culture. But data collection has multiple benefits as well as for record-keeping and all medical fields are being trained in appropriate and accurate data collection and management. The challenge is poor internet connectivity and lack of technological capacity (few computers). But one of the church's partners is providing tablets for medical institutions to use.

The key challenge that Samuel identifies is resources for training nurses who are working in rural areas. Samuel is implementing a new system appropriate to rural services, but there are no qualified health information officers in these areas. So nurses are being asked to do data collection and management. Samuel asked if any of our grant categories may be able to fund training, either in person or online, for this purpose. The answer is that it would have to wait until the funds have been transferred to AMC and application then made.

Former NMA Dr. Michael Busia, whose funding stopped in 2020, has now retired. However, he is doing a focussed programme in Family medicine and hopes to come back to help out in the Medical department.

Methodist University, Accra.

I met with the Executive of the Methodist Church Ghana at the Methodist University in Accra, a prestigious and highly regarded Institution. The Methodist Church in Ghana makes a substantial contribution to Education and Health in Ghana with over 2700 schools all over the country. The University I was told is 'the Pride of Ghana.' It was established in 2000 and will shortly be authorised to offer its own degrees and certificates. It has other campuses in Tema and Wenchi and serves over 2500 students. There are 231 full-time staff and 78 part-time staff. There are Faculties in Business and Administration; Arts and Social Sciences; Education and Entrepreneurship; and Sciences. Studies include Human Resources Management, Psychology, Counselling, Communication Studies, Education Studies, I.T. and Multi-Media, Agriculture, Nursing and Midwiferty, Public Health, Pharmacy, Music, Theatre. And a new Medical School and Law School are being planned.

Facilities on the large main campus are of a high standard and the vision of the Principal is to internationalise the University. Certainly, the University was mentioned several times during my travels across West Africa.



Methodist University Hall of Residence.



With Bishop Boafo & President of University

Trinity Theological Seminary, Accra

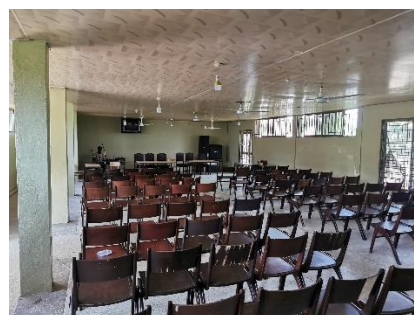
Trinity is one of the most highly regarded Theological Training Colleges in West Africa. Established by the Presbyterian Church over 80 years ago in Kumasi in Central Ghana, it was moved in the 1960s to Accra. It is now an Ecumenical Institution training ministers from the Presbyterian, Methodist, Anglican, and some other Independent and Evangelical churches in West Africa. There are currently 600 students from across West Africa, including both residential and day students. The Seminary offers both a Certificate in Ministry and PhD qualifications in Theology.

I was privileged to attend the Commendation/Leaving Service for Final Year students when over 60 students were graduating and being ‘sent out’ to commence their ministries in their respective churches. It was a moving and inspiring 2 hour long service focussed on Service and Christian ministry.



Youth Development Centre, Aburi.

From Trinity Theological Seminary, we travelled for a couple of hours to the town of Aburi in the hills outside Accra. Across West Africa, ministry amongst Youth is a priority. Youth Development centres are a ministry that seek to provide a ‘space’ for young people to gather for Christian education, fellowship and training on all sorts of aspects of life and on life-skills. The Youth Centre at Aburi has fairly basic facilities and is also rented out to the wider community for community use. The size of the plot has potential for further development.



Meeting with Professor Dr. Mbillah, Former Director of PROCMURA. Expert on Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa and Director of Centre for Interfaith Studies and Engagement in Africa at Aburi.

I had a wide-ranging discussion with Dr. Mbillah during a 90 minute meeting on the development of Christian-Muslim relations across Africa and the increase in extremism. We talked of the rise in Al-Qa’eda-linked terrorist groups spreading systematically across the Sahel region and the Greater Sahel basin. These are spreading south. Countering radicalisation in the region is a priority for inter and intra-religious engagement. It is vital that Ecumenical, Interreligious and Education authorities are brought together to discuss key issues and agree a strategy for addressing the problem in various fields.

This is why the Centre for Interfaith Studies and Engagement in Africa has been developed in Ghana, as a place in West Africa to complement the work that is done in East Africa. Dr. Mbillah stressed that it is not just Interreligious engagement that is needed, but that *Intra* religious dialogue is needed within Christian and Muslim communities to address these issues and the way each of the communities address them.

Summary

Methodist Church Ghana is a growing and well-resourced Church. The new 16-storey Conference Headquarters that is being built in the Centre of Accra is witness to the vision of growth and the important status that the Methodist Church Ghana holds within the country. Nevertheless, the Executive are saddened and concerned (like all the Conferences with whom I have spoken) at the reduction of financial support from MCB, particularly the removal of support for scholarships and Mission Partners. The Executive identified the following suggestions from their perspective for moving forward:

- The importance of meaningful continued partnership and relationship.
- The importance of exposure of the Church in Ghana to the global church through people. Therefore, continuing to support scholarships and the movement of people between Africa and UK, recognising the global relationship and the importance of the global Christian dynamic.
- The Church in Ghana is open to ministers from England coming to Ghana for short-stay visits to learn about the Church and to learn about local practices of evangelism and teaching.
- The Church in Ghana would like to share with the UK their ‘Wesleyan zeal’. They would be happy to have opportunities for ‘reverse evangelism’.
- Opportunities for helping Ghanaians in the UK to integrate within the Methodist Church in the UK and to visit MCB churches.
- Explore the question: ‘What can Ghanaians bring to the UK?’
- The biggest question which MCB needs to ask and to consult closely with the Church in Africa: ‘What does meaningful partnership mean in the new relational dynamic that will exist beyond 2024?’ There is a need to develop some concrete, practical principles and suggestions for sustaining relationship and meaningful engagement, especially through people and the sharing of human resources and the developing of skills.



The new 16-storey Conference HQ for Methodist Church in Ghana. Accra.

TOGO

4 – 7 June, 2022



Prince Regent of Aneho with Presiding Bishop of Togo at Aneho, first Church in Togo.

Programme

Saturday 4 June	Travel by road from Accra to Lome. (3 hours) Meeting with Michael & Joanna Tettey.
Sunday 5 June	Preach at Lome Cathedral. Communion for Welcome into Methodist Church for 95 year old. Travel to Aneho. Meeting with Prince Regent. Visit to first Church in Togo at Aneho.
Monday 6 June	Travel by road to Zouvi Health Centre (3 hours north of Lome) Meet with Village Chief Return to Lome. Meeting with WCC Office, Lome Meeting with NMA and SALT Beneficiaries. Dinner with members of the Togo Church Executive.
Tuesday 7 June	Morning to Airport for flight to Cameroon.

Current MCB Grant Contributions to the Methodist Church in Togo:

Annual Grant: £32,000

Essential Assistance: £21,000

<u>NMAs</u>	1838	Nadou Senade P. Claudine Lawson-B. Manager of the Department of Biblical and Financial Awareness. 2016-2021. (£27,500) (Complete)
	2246	Rev. Prince-Emmanuel Dogbe. Director of the Department of Training, Christian Education and Theology. 2017-2022. (£23,000) (Complete)

2538 Conflict, Management and Peace Maintenance Trainer. (£55,000) 5 years. (£11000 sent at end of last year). Report Required. Shared with Benin.

SALT 2749 Mr. Ekoue Mawubedjro Koutremon. Masters of Sustainable Development at IFORDO. (Institut de formation et de la recherche pour le développement). 2019-2021. (£7,200) (Complete)

Introduction

The Methodist Church in Togo was founded in 1843, when Thomas Birch Freeman of the Methodist Church in Britain, who came from Lagos, Nigeria, visited Aneho and received permission from the King of Aneho to establish a Methodist Church in the Palace Compound. The Methodist Church in Togo is an evangelical church that believes in and proclaims the universality of the grace of God who saves and sets free whoever believes and repents before the Lord Jesus Christ. At the beginning, the Methodist Church of Togo was under the authority of Nigeria-Dahomey-Togo District which later became Dahomey-Togo District. In 1978 that the Methodist Church of Togo was separated from the Methodist Church of Benin and became an independent district of the British Conference. Togo received autonomy in 2000. The Conference has 64 pastors, 300 lay preachers and 150,000 members. The Presiding Bishop is Revd. Godson Dogbeda Teyi Lawson Kpavuvu.

Mission Partners Michael & Joanna Tettey.



Michael has been helping with development projects and fundraising for projects locally and globally, managing NMAs and acting as Assistant to the Head of Church. Joanna has been advising in Health Development work within the Methodist Church in Togo. Their daughters, Janelle and Joelle have been at school in Togo. At the end of June 2022, Michael and Joanna return to England. Joanna and the girls return permanently in order for the girls to complete their education in England. Michael will return to Togo after furlough until 2024 to take a lead role in Safeguarding Training internationally, based from Togo.

NMA & SALT Partners Togo



Ekou Koutremon



Prince Emmanuel Dogbe

NMA. 2246. Rev. Prince-Emmanuel Dogbe. Director of Training, Christian Education and Theology.

Rev. Dogbe is a well-spoken, enthusiastic educator who is grateful for the support given to this ministry. He says that this grant has been essential for enabling the development of the future ministry in Togo. He is responsible for the training of Pastors and Lay Preachers and has completed the training for over 40 Lay Preachers across Togo. He has also trained choristers in Christian Education. His training programme started in Lome and then extended to the historic capital of Togo, along the coast in Aneho. It has now extended to other parts of Togo. Many ministers across Togo have benefitted from the training and education that he has been able to provide and develop.

SALT. 2749. Mr. Ekoue Mawubedjor Koutremon.

Ekoue has only just been able to re-start his course after a break, due to both Covid stopping the Course, and due to an accident that put him in hospital. He is enjoying the Course and will complete it next year. His interest is in development and he intends to use what he has learned to work with the Church in Togo in the development field.

NMA 1838. Nadou Lawson B. Manager of the Department of Biblical and Financial Awareness. Support is now complete. She was not present as she is based outside Lome. She is a Lay Preacher and is mobilising teaching and financial awareness training in the east of the country.

NMA 2538. Conflict Management and Peace Maintenance Trainee.

This programme is still being initiated under the organisation of Michael Tettey. He will be writing a report and will update us on progress when he visits London next month.

Visit to Aneho.

On Sunday 5 June, I had the privilege of preaching in Lome Methodist Cathedral. Afterwards, I joined Bishop Kpavuvu in a convoy of vehicles, including some of the Cathedral choir, first to take Communion to a 90 year old who was being welcomed into the Methodist Church, and then to Aneho, where the Methodist Church was first established in Togo in 1843.

At Aneho, we processed with singing to the Palace of the Prince Regent for an audience with the Royal family, before visiting the first Methodist Church in Togo in the Palace Compound and the school that had been established by the King of Aneho before the Methodist missionaries arrived. There is a strong sense of pride in the history of Methodism in this place, which was brought by a leading light of West African Methodist history – Thomas Freeman.



Lome Cathedral. 5 June 2022.



Aneho, Togo. With Prince Regent & Bishop.

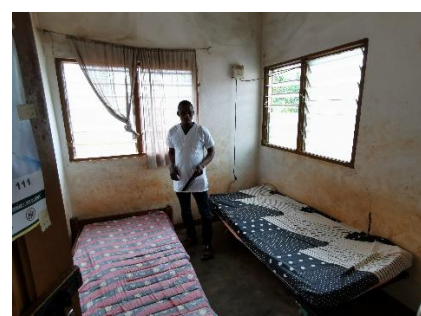
Zouvi Clinic. Rural Togo.

I was taken on a 130km, 2 hour journey north-east from Lome to a remote village close to the border with Benin. Here, we visited a Clinic/Health Centre that was established in 2009. The land had been given by the local chief and the facility serves an immediate area with a population of 2776 people who live at least a day's walk along very poor roads from the nearest small town and other health facilities. The clinic offers basic Primary Health Care services with a nurse who lives on site and a dedicated health worker who manages the Centre. The government provides vaccinations that are administered by the two staff. The clinic offers free pre-natal and post-natal services to mothers and children, but because the clinic is still not officially registered (though is recognised by the Health Authority), deliveries are undertaken at one of the District Government Hospitals. At the time of visiting, 583 children were under the care of the clinic.

Facilities are basic. The generator had broken down when we visited and there was no fridge for storing vaccines, which means vaccines have to be collected from the nearest town and then administered to patients within a few days, either by offering a clinic, or visiting homes on foot. Solar panels have been installed on the roof of the clinic and are providing emergency power.

The clinic is unable to meet the demand that exists, but sits on a sizeable piece of land that could easily be developed. There is a need to build a new child/maternity unit and to expand. It would not take a vast amount of resources to do so and there are a number of modest improvements that could be made that would improve the facilities available.

This is a good example of the kind of ministry undertaken by the Methodist Church in Togo, with limited resources. We visited the local chief who told us that the clinic offers an essential service to the wider community and that he would be willing to give more land if more facilities could be constructed.



Zouvi Health Clinic and village.

Summary of meeting with Church Executive of Eglise Methodiste du Togo. 6 June 2022.

Main foci of the Methodist Church in Togo are:

- Community Development.
- Christian nurture and discipleship.
- Women's programmes
- Health services
- Pastoral Activities.
- Evangelism.
- Teaching/Education. 31 Primary Schools and 10 Secondary Schools.
- Children's work
- Media.. Radio Station and online social media.
- Human resources/Management.

The Methodist Church are keen to establish an English-Speaking international congregation in Lome and requested an English-speaking minister to come and help set this up for a year or two and train a local minister to continue the work.

The leadership expressed concern about the AMC proposal for the World Mission Africa Fund, raising concerns about equitable distribution, the 'voice' and needs of the smaller churches being represented and heard.

Their message to the MCB in the light of the reduction in funding:

- Meaningful Partnership and friendship are vital. What does partnership mean beyond 2024?
- People are vital. The loss of NMA and SALT scholarships will significantly impact the human resource development of the Church in Togo.
- Explore Joint Young people/Women's fellowship meetings/conferences.
- Develop south to south engagement and support.
- Share spirituality. Learn from the Church in Africa.
- Develop online connectivity. Use Zoom etc. (Preaching/meetings/groups/bible study) between churches/groups.
- Strengthen and develop the exchange of persons both ways for experience and development.
- 2-way exchange of ministers.
- Togo will be deeply impacted by the loss of grants. Can a transitional capacity-building grant be provided next year?
- Bishop Kpavuvu will visit Europe in September. He would like to visit UK to meet with leadership at Church House.



CAMEROON

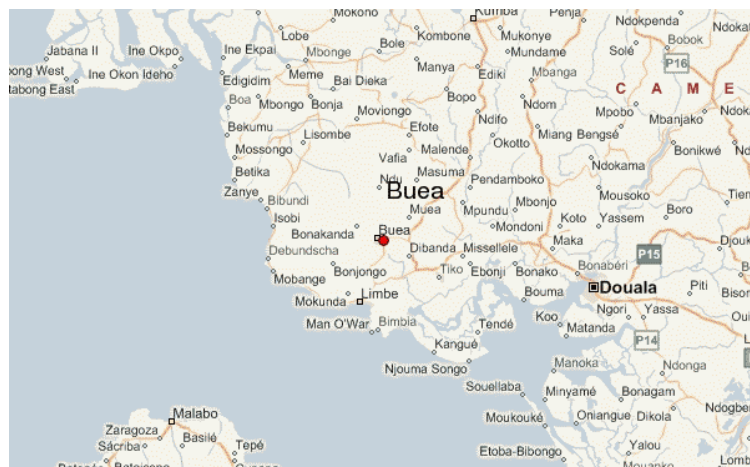
7-12 June 2022



View of Mt. Cameroon. Buea.

Programme

Tuesday 7 June	Pick up at Douala international Airport. Travel to Buea. (2 hours)
Wednesday 8 June	Morning at Synod Offices meeting Synod Staff Discussion with NMA Beneficiaries
Thursday 9 June	Visits to PCC projects in Buea. Interview on PCC Radio Station, IT Centre, PresMifi, PresInsurance, Presbook. Dinner with Development Secretary
Friday 10 June	Visit to Woodwork Training Centre Travel to Limbe. Eye Clinic. Limbe Girls Secondary School. Nurses Training Centre Pharmacy. Youth Complex. Presprint.
Saturday 11 June	Attend Wedding of Bishop's daughter. Buea. Travel to Douala for return flight to Paris and London.



Current MCB Grant Contributions to the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon:

- Annual Grant** £20,550. (For Pastoral Training)
3063 £10,000 Faculty of Protestant Theology, Yaounde (UPAC).
2020-2021.
- Essential Grant:** Faculty of Protestant Theology. £15,000 (Jan 2022)
Presbyterian Church of Cameroon. £25,000 (Jan 2022)
- Solidarity Grant:** Emergency medication and treatment nationally for Cholera Outbreak in
March 2022. £15,000.

NMAs

- 2180 Mr. Ngiengue Messina Gael. Agricultural Technician, Monitoring and Evaluation
Officer. 2017-2022 (£23,000)
- 2499 Mr. Joseph Malafa Esuka. Small Business Credit Manager. 2018-2023 (£24,000)
- 2500 Mr. Agwa Linus. Public Affairs Officer. 2018-2023. (£25,000)
- 2728 Mr. Esemé Elias Tong. Process Engineer & Operations Officer. 2019-2024. (£23,500)
- 3042 Kelly Kah Gwan Valla. Relationship Officer at Press Micro-Finance
Institution. 2020-2025. (£23,000)
- 2193 Dr. Alagbada. Director of the Centre of Evangelical Literature. Faculty of Protestant
Theology. Yaounde (UPAC). 2018-2022 (£41,940)

SALT

- 2501 Mrs. Mokoko Grace Emade. 3 yr PhD in Education Management, Law and Policy at the
University of Pretoria from Jan 2020-Dec 2022. 2019-2023 (£56,800)
- 2736 Rev. Emmanuel Kongnyuh. 4 yr FT PhD OT Study at Stellenbosch University SA.
From Jan 2021. 2020 -2025. (£63,950)
- 3044 SALT2 Group Training of Leadership Development Programme (80 leaders)
Feb 2021. 8 days. (£16,794)

Introduction

The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon was founded by the Basel Missionaries who arrived on the coast of Cameroon on 23 December, 1886. English Baptists had first come to this part of West Africa in 1845, but in 1884 the territory came under German protection and it was agreed, at a conference of European Missionary Societies, that the Basel Mission should take over the work of the English Baptists. Of the first four ministers who arrived, one died within four days of arrival, which actually emboldened the remaining missionaries. During the First World War Britain and France partitioned the territory and the German missionaries were forced to leave. The mission was left in the hands of indigenous teachers and catechists and many Basel Missionary stations were left unattended. It was not until 1925 that permission was granted for the return of the Basel missionaries. With the support of sister missions abroad and local congregations, the church spread across towns and villages in Cameroon. The second world war again disrupted church life, but this was followed by a period of intense activity and growth. The church, after drawing up and adopting a new constitution, became autonomous in 1957. The Synod of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon has since grown to 30 presbyteries, about 1000 churches and about 1500 worship groups, with 567 ministers and a total registered membership of over 1,500,000. The church runs three general hospitals, a rehabilitation center for leprosy patients, 10 eye hospitals, 12 Clinics and one national Pharmaceutical dispensary.

Much emphasis is placed on primary health care in the villages. In the educational field the church has 23 nursery schools, 153 primary schools, (only 52 of which are currently open. The remainder are in conflict zones and have been temporarily closed), 14 secondary/high schools, a teacher training college and a University. There is also a centre for agricultural and employment training; youth centres and the Church runs its own Radio Station. The pastors receive their training at the theological seminary in Kumba. Some are still being trained outside Cameroon, in Africa and overseas.

Priorities of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) include:

- Evangelism and Lay Training
- Women's Work
- Men's Work
- Youth and Children's Department.
- Education
- Communication
- Finance
- Peace Division
- Business Units

The Anglophone conflict has had a devastating political, social and economic impact on the country and has led to the displacement and death of tens of thousands of people, the evacuation of villages, the closing down of countless businesses and schools and the loss of livelihoods in the Northwest and Southwest regions where most of the PCC's institutions are located. The crisis has been compounded by Covid and by the increase in sectarian Islamist attacks from neighbouring countries.

The PCC and other religious leaders play an important role on the national stage and the Bishop, Rt. Revd Fonki Samuel Forba is the elected Chair of the National Peace Process.

During my visit, I was hosted in Buea, the centre of the Anglophone region in Southwest Cameroon. The area is still unstable, though Buea itself is safe. I stayed within the immediate area of Buea and Limbe on the coast and was not taken beyond these areas, as it was considered unsafe to travel outside of these immediate areas. This is a major challenge for the work of the PCC, whose institutions and churches are situated across the country and in areas of conflict.

The following are the current strategic priorities for the Church in Cameroon:

- Strategic leadership and management.
- Financial management and re-orientation. (The impact of the reduction of grants from MCB will be significant).
- Strategic emergency prevention, response and reconstruction.
- Community engagement for sustainable health, wellbeing and livelihood.
- Partnership and resource mobilisation.



First PCC Church in Cameroon. Buea.



PCC Church Head Office. Buea.



With PCC Financial & Dvlpmt Secretary

Annual grants of the MCB have been used for:

- Building capacity, leadership and long-term stability, including attendance at international Methodist and ecumenical gatherings.
- Mission work. Eg. Encouraging evangelism, outreach and engagement with wider society, including interfaith and peace initiatives.
- Supporting social justice initiatives. Eg. Inclusion, education, health and empowerment and those who are marginalised because of their identity, faith, ethnicity, gender or economic status.

The Financial Secretary of the PCC, Mr. Ngole Mosuka told me: *“The Annual grant of the MCB has been essential for the life of the PCC. The power of the Central Office in Buea and the Theological College has been provided by the MCB. The software that manages the provision of medicines and patient data to and in all the hospitals in Cameroon was provided by the MCB. The training for Ear, Nose and Throat treatment across Cameroon was provided by MCB. The Cholera grant in March 2022 saved many lives. The NMAs and SALT grants have been instrumental in resourcing the PCC.”*

NMAs and SALT Partners.

 <p>Besonge Delphine. Data Officer.</p> <p>Since 2020, Besonge has managed the Data for the PCC Human Resources department, inputting all the data for every employee in the PCC nationally and producing a full range of HR policies for the PCC. This has been a huge task but has transformed the capacity to manage and look after the well-being of PCC employees.</p>	 <p>Numfer Godwin. Webmaster.</p> <p>Numfer Godwin has transformed the online presence of the PCC. He has updated the connectivity and email systems for PCC staff and established social media accounts for the PCC. PCC radio is now listened to across a substantial part of the country. The website provides up to date information including daily worship, information, publications and links to church media.</p>	 <p>Joseph Esuku. Small Business Manager.</p> <p>Joseph is an inspiring entrepreneur who has set up a flourishing Financial Advice and Micro-finance institution for the Presbyterian Church (PresMFI). In 2021, his initiative assisted 78 small businesses and 54 in 2020. Micro-finance loans have benefited over 2500 individuals and over 800 institutions, providing the lowest interest rates in the country. 121 scholarships have been given to internally displaced children and housing loans have been provided to dozens of church workers. The funds generated by these initiatives have supported Church projects, including the building of hospitals and establishing of social programmes.</p>
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PCC Ministries

All the following Institutions and Ministries have been supported/enabled by MCB grants.

PCC Radio Station.

It was a pleasure to give a 15 minute radio interview on the PCC Radio Station which has been broadcasting since 2014 and has listeners across the southern, littoral and central regions of Cameroon. The Radio station broadcasts 24/7 and has 5 full-time journalists and three sound engineers. It streams online for the Cameroon Diaspora and offers religious, news, community and social broadcasting.



I.T. Centre

The I.T. Centre in Buea serves less advantaged and IDP persons in Buea and the surrounding region, offering young people and other training in I.T. and certificated training in Office management and computer skills. It also refurbishes old computers and supplies computers and supplies to the surrounding areas for those who do not have access to computers.



Pres Insurance

The Presbyterian Church runs its own Insurance company. It has been running for 4 years and offers Life Insurance, Car Insurance, Health Insurance, Travel Insurance, School Insurance, Construction Insurance. Its most popular policy is Car Insurance for which it holds just under 10,000 policies, with several thousand policies in each of the other categories. Profits from PresInsurance are ploughed back into the Presbyterian Institutions.



Presbyterian Book Centre

This Educational bookshop is over 50 years old and is one of the oldest in Cameroon. It is one of 4 Christian bookshops in Cameroon run by the Presbyterian Church. The bookshop is also a publishing house which supplies schools nationally with books, stationery and teaching resources and churches nationally with Bibles and hymnbooks.



Freemind Centre

The Freemind Centre is a remarkable Youth Centre set up as a 'safe-space' for young people to gather for information, education, counselling and training in life skills, sexuality and reproductive health. The Centre promotes sex education and HIV prevention and offers training to regional secondary and high schools. It is successfully breaking through taboos and promoting healthy sexual behaviours and pregnancy prevention. It also educates on gender-based violence, enabling conversations with and between young people and with teachers and parents. 33 schools in 5 regions have been involved. Over 200 teachers have been trained.



Preswood Youth Training Centre

A major woodworking and training centre run and owned by the PCC. The Centre makes quality furniture and trains young people in the manufacture. It offers free training to underprivileged and displaced young people for 3 years. At the end of the training, certificates are provided. The Centre provides furniture to churches, schools, offices across the country.



Limbe Secondary Girls School

Limbe Secondary Girls' School is one of the PCC's most respected Educational Institutions. It has 360 students between the ages of 9-18 and 40 staff. Children attend from all over the country and are from all religions and denominations. There is no discrimination. The school teaches up to 'A' level standard with a focus on academic and moral education. It is one of the PCC's 10 operational Secondary schools, two of which are in Limbe, the coastal town where the first missionaries arrived in Cameroon.



PCC Drug Dispensary, Limbe



The PCC Pharmacy Distribution Centre in Limbe distributes drugs to 18 hospitals nationally. The Centre arranges the import of drugs – many from India because western drugs are too expensive. The Centre also manufactures drugs and undertakes drug testing to ensure that drugs that are supplied are genuine and not contaminated in any way. The Centre has minimal technological facilities.. most of its administration is done by paperwork, and space is extremely limited. There is a need to expand. Demands for the services are increasing.

Limbe Nursing School,

The Nursing School in Limbe was opened in 2020 with 79 students in the first year. Training is for 3 years and offers degrees in Nursing Science. Courses include training in Psychiatric nursing, geriatric nursing, ophthalmic nursing, infectious disease nursing and anaesthetics. All degrees are recognised by the State and the training is undertaken by blending theory with practice, including field trips, industrial postings and immersion schemes for language courses.



PCC Publishing House, Limbe



PresPrint has the strapline: "If its thinkable, it's printable." The PCC print is one of the largest printing centres in Cameroon and is used by many Institutions. When I visited, the vast printing presses were printing all the exam papers for the National schools exams which Presprint are contracted to publish. The Printers publish for companies, schools and churches nationally. Presprint also print publicity items – pens, umbrellas, T-shirts, cups, badges, banners, backdrops – anything that is requested.

Limbe Eye Hospital

The PCC Eye Hospital in Limbe is a nationally-recognised institution, treating 150 patients a day for a wide range of eye conditions. It has the facilities to undertake minor and major eye surgery. As well as regular eyesight tests, it provides and makes lenses. Parasitic eye disease, rare in other places, is fairly common in this area, as are chronic eye conditions due to dust and hygiene conditions. 80% of adults have ocular surface problems. The hospital deals with between 32-40 cataracts per day. Patients often come for eye complaints but are diagnosed with other conditions such as very high blood pressure or malnutrition which requires hospital treatment.



Youth Vocational Centre, Limbe



The Presbyterian Youth Complex in Limbe is another thriving Institution serving young people in the coastal region. It offers vocational training in Catering, Fashion Design, I.T, and Hairdressing as well as a place where young people can gather for fellowship and advice. The Institution is situated in the centre of town and has a café open to the public as an income-generating initiative.

Summary

The following are the main conclusions and messages conveyed from my time in Cameroon:

- The PCC are proud of their long and respected heritage in Cameroon.
- The Church's national role is of increasing importance in the midst of the conflict. Ecumenism, Interreligious dialogue and peacemaking are vital functions of the church.
- MCB Grants and the NMA and SALT schemes have contributed enormously to the life of the Church and expanded its capacity and ministries.
- The Church is seeking to strengthen its self-sustainability and has an impressive array of income-generating projects that are also focussed on providing a service to the most vulnerable in society.
- The PCC deeply value the relationship with the MCB and are very concerned that we continue a meaningful relationship and partnership. Whilst the reduction of financial support will significantly impact ministries in Cameroon in the short-term, the exchange of people, human resources and mutual engagement are vital to the ongoing relationship and to the development of the Church's work in Cameroon. Clarity on what partnership will look like in the future would be appreciated.



With Rt. Rev. Fonki Samuel Forba, Moderator.
And Mrs. Jessy Eben Mpwate, Development Sec.



Limbe Town. SW Cameroon.

West Africa Visit Conclusions and Summary

- The diversity of the Church Conferences across West Africa and other regions is under-recognised. The differences of capacity between the ‘bigger’ Connexions in Africa and their smaller sister churches are immense.
- Many of the smaller Church Conferences in West Africa face acute challenges in funding their ministry and work. These poorer churches suffer a severe shortage of ministers and difficulty in recruiting due to the extremely poor level of stipends offered.
- Some of the Methodist Churches in West Africa will be deeply impacted by the reduction of funding from MCB. There is grave concern across the region for what this will mean, not only for the ministries and individuals that have been supported, but the longer-term understanding and expression of partnership and relationship between the MCB and the churches in Africa.
- The NMA and SALT scholarship initiatives have been transformative and invaluable, not just for the individuals who have benefitted, but for the churches to which they belong. These are seen as essential resources for building capacity and training in the poorer Church connexions. Their loss will be acutely felt and will impact the invaluable training that can be shared with churches through these schemes.
- Mission Partners are considered a vital and invaluable part of the ministry of the Church. They represent an invaluable ‘bridge’ between the Methodist Church in the countries in which they serve and the Methodist Church elsewhere. They bring skills, insights and global perspectives that are essential for the development of the churches in which they serve. None of the churches that I visited wish to see the sending of Mission Partners ended. On the contrary, most would like to welcome Mission partners and see more sent as a profoundly constructive outworking of global partnership, solidarity and shared Christian witness.
- The Churches in West Africa are totally committed to continuing partnership and relationship with the MCB. But what will meaningful partnership and relationship mean beyond 2024? This is a vital question that must be explored. The role of human resources, human exchange, networking and encounter are considered essential to the health and development of the global church community.
- The Churches in West Africa would like to see a regional Consultation with the Churches in Africa on the issue of partnership and to help develop concrete proposals for ways in which this partnership can be developed and be mutually beneficial for the global church community. Consideration will need to include the question, not just ‘How can MCB help the churches in Africa?’ but, ‘How can the churches in Africa bring support and renew Wesleyan zeal within the life of the MCB?’
- Considerable concern was expressed by most church leaders, Conference Executives, and many leading ordained and lay figures across the region about the proposed transfer of the Africa fund to the AMC. There is real concern about the equitability and accountability of how those funds will be managed, and a worry that the ‘smaller’ Conferences, whose needs are arguably greater and capacity far less than the larger, more powerful Conferences in Africa, will be under-represented in the decision making and distribution of funds, and over-shadowed by the ‘bigger,’ more powerful churches. This is a matter that has been raised with the AMC and needs careful consideration within the creation of the Constitution of the new fund.
- Many of the churches in West Africa manage inspiring ministries that offer transformative service to their local communities. These are often under-funded and require strategies for growth and development. Assisting strategy is a key way in which human resources may help in continuing partnership across African churches.

- There is considerable scope for Africa to Africa partnership and collaboration. This is being increasingly discussed in the continent. Networking in this way is something the MCB can support, be engaged with, and help manage.
- Despite the many challenges facing the African churches, there is an inspiring faith and zeal in their commitment, their under-resourced ministries and their worship, from which the MCB could learn. Can the Global Relationships Team develop more effective ways of sharing the story of our global partners with the MCB, with the Conference, and through our communications?
- The Methodist Churches in West Africa are all seeking to become more self-sufficient and many run remarkable income-generating projects. Others have plans for income-generating projects that require initial funding to enable them to begin. The churches feel that a multi-agency approach to seeking support may be fruitful. Can the MCB provide a central resource/advice/information of multi-agencies bodies/NGOs/charities that might be able to assist in a variety of projects, whether educational, health or social welfare? If not, is that something that could be considered/explored?
- Whilst there may be some differences between African Methodist communities and the MCB, such as the recent decisions on human relationships, goodwill, respect, and desire for relationship and partnership remain undiminished.
- On a personal level, the visit was extremely demanding, especially in terms of the climate and the constant travelling, but it confirmed my view that the strategy of visiting all the partners is correct. Every country is different, and without having visited partner churches and met partners in person, I could not hope to have an informed understanding of the different contexts or make informed recommendations to MCB. So the visit has been extremely worthwhile, and, whilst challenging at times, often humbling and inspiring. I am grateful for the experience, moved and challenged by much of what I have seen, and inspired by the history of the Methodist Church in West Africa.

