

## Partnership visit to MC Ghana 21 - 29 January 2020

### Reasons for visit:

- To meet with MC Ghana leaders
- To meet with NMA and SALT grant beneficiaries
- To visit MCG mission programmes – Wa School of the Blind
- To meet with Dr Mbillah – PROCMURA Consultant

### Meeting with MC Ghana

At 05.00 hours, I boarded the hired vehicle taking me from Lome to Accra by road, crossing the Togo – Ghana border at Aflao. We arrived in Accra at 9.40am and was able to commence the meeting with MCG leaders at 10.00am until after noon. Bishop Paul Boafo welcomed me formally as the Presiding Bishop of MC Ghana and expressed delight in the existing relations with MC Britain. As the new Head of Church, he aims to lead a vibrant Spirit led Methodist Church that brings about transformation. He hopes that MCG ministers serving in the British Conference would be regarded as shared resource between both Conferences. He hopes the newly appointed MC Ghana UK Chaplain settles well at his new District.



MC Ghana continues to celebrate contributions made by early British mission partners and volunteers especially in the field of education. As a mission priority, MCG continues to support and provide quality education to the vulnerable in its society particularly, those living in rural dwellings where resources are scarce. In addition, MCG provides portable water, healthcare and climate smart agricultural techniques to peasant farmers. MCG's 2020 theme is to make disciples by leading everyone to live like Jesus (Col 1: 28-29). MCG Connexional Office has offered to be the new African Methodist Council headquarters. It plans to host the office of the AMC Gen Sec when appointed. Bishop Boafo seized the opportunity to ask for support for two personnel including a translator to advance relations with the African Francophone Methodists.

### Meeting with NMA recipients

Dr Ni-Addo Bruce works with Buruli ulcer patients, mostly based at riverine areas. *Mycobacterium ulcerans*, is the causative agent that produces subcutaneous ulcers if not treated immediately. This often results in deformity with pronounced scar tissue. The disease is non-communicable, however patients are stigmatised and require livelihood skills to fend for themselves and family. He had treated more than 365 patients over four years and assisted post-surgical patients, especially those with deformities caused by the disease. The Methodist Church has offered health care across affected communities and Dr Addo continues to provide preventative and curative solutions to these communities. MC Ghana was very appreciative of MC Britain support for affected patients these past years. It hopes to continue supporting the brave patients that survived surgery despite the challenge of stigma from families and communities.

Dr Michael Busia is a general practitioner at the Lake Basin region. He oversees three primary health clinics that serves more than twenty communities with a population of 15,000 and more. He treats both communicable and non-communicable diseases. The dwellers are mostly peasant farmers with poor road access. Malaria is common among children. He performs blood tests for quick malaria diagnosis and advises use of mosquito nets and various insect repellent to reduce disease incidence. There are also a few non-communicable diseases especially hypotension requiring medication as well as lifestyle changes.



### Meeting PROCMURA Consultant

Dr Johnson Mbillah lectures in Comparative Religion, Islam, World Religion and African Traditional Religion at Trinity Theological College, Accra. He is an ordained Presbyterian minister and former Gen Adviser for PROCMURA. He supervises PhD programmes in addition to serving on various global and local interfaith committees. He recently visited Jos in Nigeria, working with area representatives at Jos experiencing ongoing Boko Haram insurgencies.



Regrettably, the Nigerian government is slow at rebuking perpetrators. Rev John Shettima is the Rector of Methodist Theological College, Zonkwa, and one of the PROCMURA area representatives. He reported the kidnaping and murder of his uncle in Borno state by Boko Haram on 20 January 2020. He was one of four killed. Another Christian killed on the same day was aged 22 years and from Jos. He was traveling by bus between Damatru in Yobe to Maiduguri in Borno state. He was singled out as the only Christian in the bus and was killed by the terrorists. He was a 2<sup>nd</sup> year student at Maiduguri University. Two other Deeper Life pastors were also murdered that same day. The President of the Christian Association of Nigeria – Dr Samson Ayokunle, conducted their memorial service on Sunday 26 January 2020, since their corpses were never released. These men left behind young families.

Dr Mbillah also offered professional insights to government officials from Chad, Cameroon and Burkina Faso as PROCMURA consultant. There is current tension in Burkina Faso with Christian-Muslim relations. The whole of the Sahel region has been very difficult attracting French troops to suppress constant terrorist insurgencies in Mali, Cote d'Ivoire and Niger. Northeast of Nigeria is sadly degenerating into a fragile place with terrible killings, beheading and kidnaping of Christians. Dr Mbillah recently lost his wife – Rose Mbillah and I seized the opportunity to offer my condolences as one of PROCMURA's partners.

Dr Mbillah briefed the Christian Council of Ghana on how to avert insurgency attacks in Ghana. Bishop Swamini, the MCB Bishop of Northern Ghana, proactively asked to visit Zonkwa Theological College in Nigeria, to observe how locals were sensitively trained in evangelism and ministry as a minority faith in the Sahel region. The Bishop of Northern Nigeria – Bishop Idoko also asked to understudy the Catholics assisting Accra street kids. This is to equip the Methodist Church in Nigeria to support increasing numbers of orphans and displaced children flooding the streets of Northern Nigeria. The attacks have displaced many families and hampered commerce. All the Bishops actively participate in PROCMURA programmes. Many Muslims have also lost their lives, nevertheless more than 3,700 Christians were killed in 2019 and are still being intentionally targeted, with slow response from the Nigerian government reprimanding the perpetrators.



### Meeting with ex-SALT students

I met with Rev Clara Danguah, Rev Trudy Right and Rev John Addo, who all completed a Masters' programme at Queen's Foundation and Cliff College. Clara is a chaplain of the Ghana Police Church. Trudy is a Superintendent with MC Ghana and John recently completed his PhD at Pretoria University and currently serves as a Synod Clerk. They thanked MCB for their training and commented that they learnt a good practical approach to addressing issues, it offered a positive learning environment, it provided a wider perspective on children and youth ministry and they all valued the global cultural settings among other students. Their aspirations are to intentionally increase

youth participation at higher structural levels as well as support smooth transitions between youth and adult services to avoid losing youths to other ministries. They shared that the language in sermons and Christian formation should be youth friendly. Also capacity building initiatives for youths should be rich in sound Scriptural content. Finally, they remarked that MCG strategic direction should be guided by policies that promote commitment with Christian values to enable them diffuse throughout the church to members. We then shared a prayer before departed to enable me prepare for an early start (i.e. 04.30 hours) to Tamale the next morning.

### Visit to Wa Methodist School of the Blind

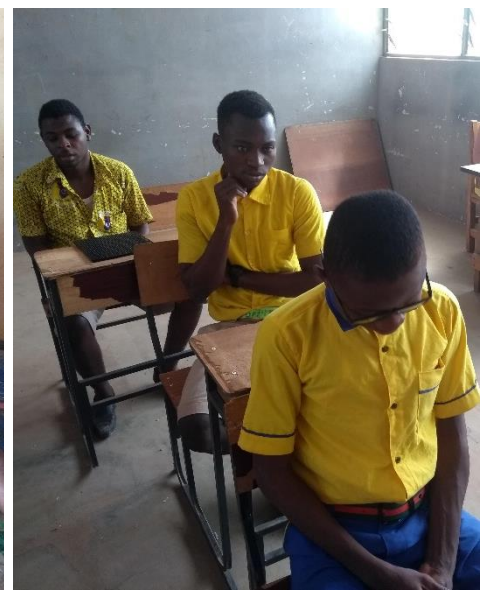
Life is full of unpredictable events. Bishop Nathan and myself travelled by air from Accra to Tamale, touched down at 07.30 hours on transit. The flight to Wa was to commence by 11.00hours but it was cancelled due to poor visibility. We then travelled by bus and arrived at our destination at 19.00hours – the whole day gone. The next day, we visited the School for the Blind. It was an amazing experience walking through the school with no blind student using a white stick because they have memorised their routes. Also possibly because many may be unable to afford one. The school was a large campus with classrooms and dormitories on site. It had a vocational skills unit for craft-making and an ICT computer suite that was popular with students. Their ages range from 4 to 21 years of age. Students were only accepted when referred by a doctor at the Wa hospital. Nonetheless, students travelled from all over Ghana to attend the school. Integrating them into the school was a big challenge because many





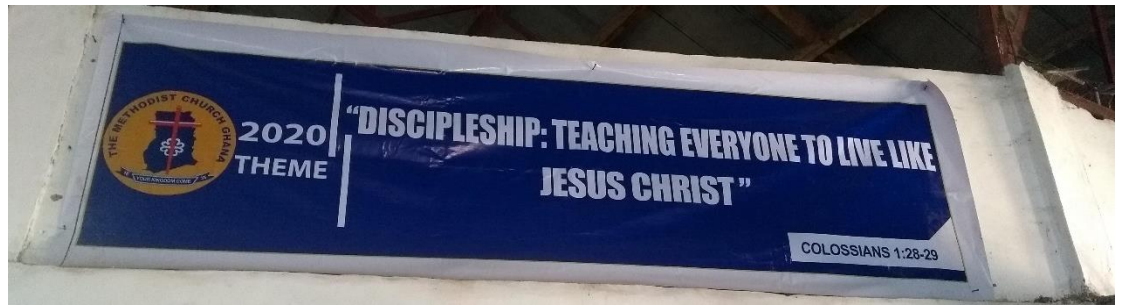
students could only understand their local dialects. In addition, the pupils started school at various ages since not all were born blind. There were stories of teachers, adults and senior students who also lost their sights as adults.

The students memorised the topography of the campus and walked about with no aid. They participate in athletics, football games, music, drama and choral activities. There was limited accommodation on site, restricting the number of adults able to enrol. I met with Mr Charles, the deputy headmaster and the school chaplain. Their main concerns were obtaining braille equipment and resources for teaching, learning and library. Volunteer personnel with specialised skills are welcome to serve at the school. The Germans plan to send someone soon. Those interested should contact the Global Relations Office for more details. Anyone able to link the students with football teams is welcome. This could offer fundraising publicity as the students get unused T-shirts for their football games at the school.



## Funeral outside Wa

On Saturday 25 January 2019, we attended a funeral service, about 30 minutes' drive outside Wa. The Director of the Methodist Agricultural Project



lost both mother and brother and the funeral service for them both took place at St Theresa Catholic Church. The priest preached in the local dialect, and Bishop Nathan interpreted a summarised version for me. He asked me to take note that the men were not singing, only the women. He later explained that the Catholic priest disapproved of wives being inherited by the brothers of the deceased, so she could stay in the family; whilst the man also maintains his own wife. Widows are free of the marriage covenant, and should decide to remain as a widow or marry someone else without pressure to marry her brother in law. That was polygamy through the back door and it displeases God. Obviously, the sermon affirmed the women who rejoiced and danced whilst the men displayed little emotions. We later visited the bereaved, people contributed money to help with the funeral. We departed and I returned to my hotel. It was an interesting insight as the practice goes on in several African cultures.



The next day, we arrived Rev. Paul Adu's Methodist Cathedral at Wa. Sunday service started at 09.15 hours with praise and worship until 10.00am. Then each member joined a discussion group in the church building. There were more than sixty people distributed across five groups. The theme was 'seeking to live as disciples of Jesus'. The three Christian values displayed by Jesus mentioned were – humility, self-denial and obedience. We then proceeded to Wa airport for our 12.05 hours flight. On arriving there, we were told it was cancelled due to the Harmattan fog, therefore we had to make our way to Tamale. We got someone to drive us from Wa at 12.00 hours and arrived Tamale at 19.00 hours.

We prayed and praised God for journey mercies, hoping the flight from Tamale to Accra would run the next day.

On Monday, I arrived at Tamale airport and was glad to get a seat on the 11.00 hours flight since the 08.30 hours one was booked up. I was glad to finally arrive at Accra airport, though I heard that my meeting was postponed to the next day.

Thank you.

*Dr Bunmi Olayisade Africa Partnership Coordinator  
December 2019*