

**CHRISTIAN SERVICE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**

**Department of Theology**



**THE CHALLENGES OF CHURCH GROWTH: EBENEZER METHODIST  
CHURCH, OBUASI ESTATE.**

**PROJECT WORK**

**(LONG ESSAY)**

**BY**

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**JULY, 2015**

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**A long essay submitted to Christian Service University College in partial  
fulfillment of the requirement for the award of degree in Bachelor of Arts in  
Theology with Administration.**

**JULY, 2015**

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this Long Essay is the result of my own original research, except for sections for which references have been duly made, and to the best of my knowledge, no part of it has been presented to this University College or any other institution for the award of a degree.

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## **DEDICATION**

First and foremost, I dedicate this piece of work to God for His care, blessing and protection during the period of my study. This work is dedicated to my wife Mrs. Beatice Aba Amissah, and my children, Ransford, Rexford, Raymond and Rubby.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

To God almighty be the glory honour and praise for his continuous protection and bountiful sustenance of our lives. Never would I have come this far without God's abundance of mercy and glory.

I am grateful and indebted to many people who have helped me to come this far in life. We are all influenced by the thought and ideas of other people from all walks of life. In particular my supervisor, Rev. Mrs. Christine Adjei Glover, whose comments, criticisms and suggestions have enable me to come this far. Everyone who in any way contributed to my university education I say may God richly bless you all.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

The Christian climate in Ghana is characterized by different forms of denominations which are currently grouped as Protestant, Pentecostal, Charismatic and Neo-prophetic churches. The charismatic churches after its emergence in the late 1970s have spread to many parts of the country. Mostly, they are often seen in the cities and town with their mega church buildings. Despite their influence in the cities as a result of active membership, they mostly not seen in the villages.<sup>1</sup>

However, this newest form of Ghana's new Christianity, the neo-Pentecostals or the charismatic's which emerged in the late 1970s, has had an indelible mark on Christianity in Ghana. These new churches which emerged in the late 1970s with much vitality and fervour characterized by massive evangelism campaigns and revivals started drawing members of the old existing church. At the time that the charismatic churches emerged, the old mission churches for their long existence in the nation had not fully met the needs of the people especially in the area of spiritual or power encounter. Spiritual things were given little or no attention. Individual gifts and talents were also not given full expression.<sup>2</sup> The charismatic movement therefore, came as a liberationist movement, and a response to it was more of a spontaneous response to the needs of people which gave a desire to freely express one's conviction and also see to the speedy conversion of souls. The period was

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<sup>1</sup>J.K., Asamoah-Gyadu, "Of faith and Visual Alertness: the message of "Mediatized" Religion in an African Pentecostal Context", *Material Religion*, Vol. 1(3), 2005, 338.

<sup>2</sup>Emmanuel K. Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*, (Accra: Blessed Publication, 2001), 290.

also associated with intensive prayer, which was believed to be a result of the precarious economic situation in Ghana at the time. Larbi describes it as “...the worst economic crisis the nation had ever seen”.<sup>3</sup> These and among other things saw most members of the old mission established churches drifting to the charismatic churches. This incidence till now, have continued to affect the growth of some of the mainline churches in Ghana not excluding the Methodist church, Ghana.

However, in the case of the Ebenezer Methodist church, not only has the activities of the charismatic churches affected the growth of the church, but also, issues such as mining in the area has also contributed to the decline. This is as a result of the fact that most people who happen to be part of the church are migrant and when they leave after they have completed their work, it affects church attendance.

Generally, the Concept Growth is understood to mean an increase in size, number and significance.<sup>4</sup> When the word growth is used in reference to the church, scholars have identified several dimensions with which the idea of church growth can be envisaged. According to J. B. Leonard, the Christian church is a community founded on the teachings of Jesus Christ and strove to bear witness to Christ’s gospel in its worship and faith, work and memory. The New Testament, which informs the Christian understanding of the church, speaks of it as a living organism of persons closely related to Christ and to one another. It also provides important images by which the church has come to understand its life. As a living organism, the church must grow as is the case with every normal living organism.<sup>5</sup> Paul’s address to the Corinthian church points to the fact that church growth is

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<sup>3</sup>Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*, 295.

<sup>4</sup>Catherine Love Collins *English Dictionary* (Glasgow: Harper Collins Publishers, 2005), 725.

<sup>5</sup>E. K. Gbordzoe, *Prayer and Church Growth: A Practical Model*, (Accra: GEC Press, 2010), 63.

possible through the combination of human and divine efforts when he writes ‘I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth (1cor. 3: 6)’. Hence, there is sense in talking about church growth as well as the means by which people create its nurturing. The British Church Growth Association also defines Church Growth as having to do with an investigation of the nature, function, structure, health and multiplication of Christian churches as they relate to the effective implementation of Christ’s commission to go then to all peoples everywhere and make them his disciples (Matt 28:19-20).<sup>6</sup>

However, just like any normal growth of an organism which comes with different challenges in life, the church also faces a lot of challenges as part of its growth. Some of these challenges may include human personnel that are leadership, inadequate facilities for expansion, inadequate funds for evangelism, galamsey mining, transfer growth, among many others.

The Ebenezer Methodist Society, Obuasi, which serves as a case study of this work underwent a rapid growth in membership between 1992 and 1997, when the Society started worshipping at the current chapel. The membership of 40 rose to about 300 within that period of time. The following factors contributed to the repaid growth by the Grace of the almighty God. Some of the factors that contributed to the growth of the church at the time included, intensive evangelism campaign in the form of dawn broadcasting service, evening prayers, new convert class, long hours of fasting and prayers etc. However, these elements which served as a catalyst to move the church to its stage now seems to be abandoned and is somehow impeding the growth of the church. The researcher therefore

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<sup>6</sup>Roy Pointer, *How Do Churches Grow?* (Basingstoke, Hants: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1984), 17.

seeks to investigate the challenges that are currently facing church and come out with some solutions to promote the church's growth both physically and spiritually.

### **1.2 Problem Statement**

The Ebenezer society started as one of the home cell prayer groups of the Obuasi Wesley Methodist Church, now Wesley Cathedral, for members residing at Old Estate, New Estate, Emuye and New Nsuta on 20<sup>th</sup> June, 1970. Since the emergences of the church in the 1970s, the church has witnessed a considerable amount of growth from the year 1992 to 1997. However, it seems that, from this period of time in which the church witnessed its rapid growth, there has not been any remarkable growth from that time onwards.

There have been a number of issues that seems to confront the growth of the church. The researcher seeks to undertake this study to find out what is accounting for such challenges and best solution that can be offered to curb the situation.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

- i. What are the Challenges facing the growth of Ebenezer Methodist Church Obuasi?
- ii. What is accounting for the challenges of church growth in the Ebenezer Methodist church?
- iii. How is the Ebenezer Methodist Church dealing with the challenges that confront its growth?
- iv. To what extent has these Challenges affected the growth of Ebenezer Methodist Church Obuasi for the past five years?

### **1.4 Aim of the Study**

- i. To find out the challenges facing the growth of Ebenezer Methodist Church, Obuasi.

- ii. To examine the extent to which the challenges has affected the growth of the Ebenezer Methodist Church and the solutions the church intends to provide to curtail the situation

### **Objectives of the Study**

- iii. To find out how the Ebenezer Methodist church is dealing with issues that confront it growth.
- iv. To know which of these challenges have affected the growth of the Ebenezer Methodist church.
- v. To know the concept of church growth.

### **1.5 Scope and Focus of the Study**

This work particularly focuses on the Ebenezer Methodist Church, Obuasi, and the challenges that impede its growth. The study particularly looks at the historical background of the church, the factors that contributed to the growth of the church in its early beginnings, and finally what is accounting for the challenges of its growth in the Ebenezer Methodist church.

### **1.6 Research Methodology**

Essentially, this work is a phenomenological study and therefore employs a historical and theological mode of approach.

A phenomenological study involves trying to understand the essence of a phenomenon by examining the views of people who have experienced that phenomenon. Or it examines human experiences through the descriptions provided by the people involved. These

experiences are called lived experiences. The goal of phenomenological studies is to describe the meaning that experiences hold for each subject.<sup>7</sup>

Historical studies concern the identification, location, evaluation, and synthesis of data from the past. Historical research seeks not only to discover the events of the past but to relate these past happenings to the present and to the future.

These methods are relevant for the study in the sense that they will help to analyze the issues that are central to this work.

### **1.6.1 Methods of Data Collection**

Accordingly, existing sources that shed light on the area of the study have also been relied upon as much as possible. These include both primary sources and secondary sources.

#### ***1.6.1.1 Primary Sources***

In this study, the researcher mainly used unstructured interview. The personal interview included having a personal interaction with some leaders of the Ebenezer Methodist Church, especially those in charge of the evangelism committee. The researcher also had interaction with some circuit ministers in the circuit to mainly find out their views with regards to the growth of the circuit and the challenges facing it as well. Questionnaires were also sent out for respondents to answer some questions regarding the growth of the Ebenezer society.

#### ***1.6.1.2 Secondary Sources***

Because of the focus and scope of the study, the researcher had to consult different secondary sources encompassing books, thesis, journals, articles etc. relevant to this work.

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<sup>7</sup> G. J. Donalek, *Demystifying nursing research* (2004)

These are published and unpublished material of scholarly opinion. In addition, relevant use will be made of, dictionaries, encyclopedia, newspaper publications and articles. The secondary sources will help in a way to collate and analyze the various views on the challenges of church growth.

### ***1.6.2 Sampling Procedure/Technique***

Sampling techniques refer to the methods used in selecting a proportion or part of a given population to represent the whole population. Basically, there are two types of sampling techniques.<sup>8</sup> In this research, the researcher employed the Purposive/Judgment Sampling approach. In purposive sampling, the researcher uses his own judgment to select population members whom he feels will give him the desired or accurate information.<sup>9</sup> In this work, the categories of people that were interviewed included church leaders and reverend ministers mainly from the Obuasi Circuit of the Methodist Church Ghana. These respondents were selected on the basis that they possess relevant information and drew opinions that were considered to be essential to the study.

### ***1.6.3 Data Analysis***

The researcher seeks to analyze all the data that will be gathered as part of the study from a qualitative point of view. Since the aim of the study is not to look at how the church is growing numerically but what challenges are facing its growth, the researcher seeks to analyze the issues from a qualitative point to ascertain, analyze and discuss the main issues that confront the church's growth.

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<sup>8</sup>Kobina Impraim Adentwi and Alex Marmah Amartei A Practical Approach to Doing Educational Research (Kumasi: Ebens Printing Press, 2012), 68.

<sup>9</sup>Adentwi and Amartei, 71.

## 1.7 Literature Review

As part of the study, the researcher reviewed books on the subject of church growth.

Particularly, the researcher paid much attention to the concept of church growth. E. K.

Gbordzoe defines church growth as

The bringing of people, into a personal relationship and fellowship with Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit and into responsible church membership, such that the membership of the local congregation will increase in faith, holiness and other spiritual and material qualities while at the same time increasing in number, and also opening and multiplying other branches.<sup>10</sup>

According to Gbordzoe, the church grows when its activities are in line with the purpose for which it is established. This purpose, he explains is to fulfil the biblical mandate of the Great Commission.<sup>11</sup> The emphasis in church growth from the perspective of the Great Commission narrows Gbordzoe's yardstick in measuring church growth largely to quantitative and qualitative growths. He explained that among the activities stated in the Great Commission, the underlying factor is to make disciples.<sup>12</sup> He, further, indicates that growth in holiness, human relations, and physical wealth are other crucial perspectives from which the growth of the church can be viewed. For Gbordzoe, since all other instruction such as 'go', 'baptize' and 'teach' in the Great Commission are helping verbs to the imperative verb 'make disciples.' For Gbordzoe, 'going, baptizing and teaching are helping verbs and are the means to the end of making disciples.'<sup>13</sup>

In addition, Gbordzoe identifies what he describes as five dimensions of church growth. These dimensions include holiness, human relations, numbers, power of the Holy Spirit and

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<sup>10</sup>Gbordzoe, *Prayer and Church Growth*, 61.

<sup>11</sup>Gbordzoe, *Prayer and Church Growth*, 63.

<sup>12</sup>Gbordzoe, *Prayer and Church Growth*, 64.

<sup>13</sup>Gbordzoe, *Prayer and Church Growth*, 64.



physical wealth. He explained that a growing church must have its members ready to live a holy life and have good relationship with God and with one another. The growing church must also be increasing in number of membership and in the physical wealth of the church. Gbordzoe explain growth in the power of the Holy Spirit as believers' ability to identify and utilize the gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>14</sup> He stresses that a growing church must demonstrate an appreciable level of these elements to be described as such. In the light of these dimensions, this research looks at how different challenges can impede the growth of the church with particular reference to the Ebenezer Methodist church.

In addition, Roy Pointer discusses four dimensions of church growth.<sup>15</sup> These include numerical growth, organic growth, conceptual growth and incarnational growth. Pointer describes numerical growth, as the recruitment of individuals to active membership of the church. They are incorporated into the fellowship of believers and share its corporate life of worship and witness. Under the numerical growth, Pointer further identifies ways through which members are recruited for its realisation. The four way of recruitment are biological, transfer, restoration and conversion growth.<sup>16</sup>

Pointer identifies another dimension of church growth known as conceptual growth. This dimension of growth he describes as the personal and corporate development of Christian understanding of his faith. Pointer defines conceptual growth as the degree of consciousness that a community of faith has with regard to its nature and mission to the world. This idea is similar to Gbordzoe's proposition that the church grows only when its

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<sup>14</sup>Gbordzoe, *Prayer and Church Growth*, 81-90.

<sup>15</sup>Roy Pointer, *How Do Churches Grow?* (Great Britain: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1984), 25.

<sup>16</sup>Pointer, *How Do Churches Grow?* 26-27.

activities are aimed at fulfilling the Great Commission which is making disciples for Christ.<sup>17</sup>

Organic growth is yet another dimension identified and discussed by Pointer. He affirms that becoming and being a Christian are entirely dependent upon an intimate and personal relationship to Christ, the Christian faith can only be lived in a relationship with one another and in service to others. Commitment to Christ includes commitment to a community and organic growth describes the formation and functioning of this communal life of the local church. This perspective is similar to Gbordzoe's dimension of church growth, which he referred to as growth in human relationship.<sup>18</sup> Pointer refers to Costa's, definition of organic growth as:

The internal development of a local community of faith (that is, the system of relationships among its members), its form of government, financial structures, leadership and types of activities in which its time and resources are invested. Organic growth is concerned with such issues as depth of fellowship; quality of worship; training of new members; discovery of gifts and the exercise of ministry; appointment and role of leaders; practice of corporate prayer; celebration of the ordinance or sacraments-all that relate to the corporate organization and activity of the local church.<sup>19</sup>

The church, according to Pointer also has another dimension of growth referred to as incarnational growth.<sup>20</sup> Costas defines this as the degree of involvement of a community of faith in the life and problems of her social environment. That is her participation in the afflictions of her world; her prophetic, intercessory and liberating action on behalf of the weak and destitute; the intensity of her preaching to the poor; the broken-hearted, the

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<sup>17</sup>Gbordzoe, *Prayer and Church Growth*, 63.

<sup>18</sup>Gbordzoe, *Prayer and Church Growth*, 856.

<sup>19</sup>Pointer, *How Do Churches Grow?* 28.

<sup>20</sup>C. Peter Wagner, *Church Growth & the Whole Gospel: A Biblical Mandate* (New York: Harper & Row: 1987), 14.

captives, the blind and the oppressed.<sup>21</sup> This exposition has thrown more light on the subject matter of church growth and the extent to which the various challenges that impede church growth can be analyzed. It is significant to point out that the reviewed literature is significant to the subject matter under study. This is because it serves as secondary source of information and in addition provides the framework for this study.

### ***Factors for Church Growth***

Several scholars discuss various factors which account for church growth and under varying headings. Donald A. McGavran and Winfield C. Arn, for example, in discussing the concept of church growth, identify ten dynamics but which the authors point at as ‘far from exhaustive’ growth principles.<sup>22</sup> This is because the authors, McGavran and Arn, believed that new church growth principles were yet to be discovered and called for further search for yet to be discovered growth principles.<sup>23</sup> For McGavran and Arn, any attempt to achieve the growth of the church must follow these principles. These growth principles may also be described as factors for growth or steps to take when considering how to grow a church.

In their work, McGavran and Arn consider these factors and discuss them under the heading, ‘Steps for Church Growth’. These steps include discovering church growth principles, respecting biblical principles, yielding to God’s unswerving purpose, giving priority to effective evangelism, rightly discerning the body, rightly discerning the

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<sup>21</sup>Pointer, *How Do Churches Grow?* 29.

<sup>22</sup>Donald Anderson McGavran and Winfield C. Arn, *Ten Steps for Church Growth* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 15.

<sup>23</sup>McGavran and Arn, *Ten Steps for Church Growth*, 15.

community, finding new groups and ways to disciple, churches reproducing themselves through Planned Parenthood, structuring for growth and risking for growth.<sup>24</sup>

Pointer discusses similar factors under the heading: 'Signs of Growth'.<sup>25</sup> He identifies constant prayer, respect for biblical authority, effective leadership, mobilized membership, continuous evangelism, community life, compassionate service, openness to change and released resources as 'signs of growth'. Pointer discusses them as signs because they are observable phenomena that accompany genuine church growth.<sup>26</sup> Like McGavran and Arn, Pointer indicates that these signs are not exhaustive and explains that though a growing church may exhibit several of these signs; it may not necessarily exhibit all of them.<sup>27</sup> He argues that churches grow when they pray constantly, respect the authority of the Bible, appoint effective leaders, mobilize their membership, worship God in eventful services; engage in continuous evangelism and compassionate service, develop genuine community life; allow spirit-directed change and release the resources of God for God's mission.<sup>28</sup>

On discovering church growth principles, McGavran explains that a church growth principle is the universal truth which, when properly interpreted and applied, contributes significantly to the growth of churches and denominations. However, to discover a church growth principle, one must observe where the church is growing, where God is blessing the efforts of his servants with factual, actual church growth, where the number of members is increasing and new congregations are being born and where men and women are introduced to Jesus Christ, committing their lives to him, and becoming responsible

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<sup>24</sup>McGavran and Arn, *Ten Steps for Church Growth*, 15.

<sup>25</sup>Pointer, *How do Churches Grow?*, 55-88.

<sup>26</sup>Pointer, *How do Churches Grow?*, 58.

<sup>27</sup>Pointer, *How do Churches Grow?*, 58.

<sup>28</sup>Pointer, *How do Churches Grow?*, 58.

members of his Church. Thus, to know how to grow a church, one must critically study churches which are growing so as to discover the biblical principles which account for the carefully observed growth.<sup>29</sup>

When one sees where God is blessing the church with growth, it is important that one investigates why and how the growth is occurring.<sup>30</sup> Thus when one observes and studies the various factors, efforts, prayers, witness, passion, teaching, education, biblical base and outreach from which this growth emerges and then carefully analyzes and truthfully describes the findings, one is bound to find one or more church growth principles.<sup>31</sup>

### **1.8 Significance of the Study**

This research work is very important because it contributes to the existing knowledge on the challenges that face church growth. It will also serve as a good source of material for the leadership of the church under study and the circuit as well since this research will highlight most of the challenges that the church in the local communities are facing.

It will also serve as a good source of material for those who would like to embark on further research on the subject. This research work will again highlight most of the issues that confront people in evangelistic work.

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<sup>29</sup>McGavran identified four questions which should preoccupy a generation of church scholars. These are What are the causes of church growth?, What are the barriers to church growth?, what are the factors which can make the Christian faith a movement among some populations? And what principles of church growth are reproducible?

<sup>30</sup>Norman A. Horner & James M. Phillips (eds), *Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement* (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1994), 516.

<sup>31</sup>McGavran and Arn, *Ten Steps for Church Growth*, 16.

## **1.9 Organization of Chapters**

This work will be organized under five chapters. Chapter one is the general introduction. It gives the background to the study, statement of the problem, research questions, aim and objectives of the study, research methodology employed, literature review, and significance of the study. Chapter two deals with the historical background of Obuasi Diocese.

Chapter three focus on the historical background of the Ebenezer Methodist Church. The chapter mainly touches on the events that led to the establishment of the Ebenezer Methodist Church, and various epochs that the church has passed through to this stage. However, the aim here is to situate the church within its proper historical context and find out the factors that have contributed to its growth.

Moreover, to discuss these factors that led to the growth and later look at how the current challenges has emerged. This will enable the researcher to have a vast knowledge of the issues that is confronting the church in order to propose a relevant solution if possible to the situation. Chapter four will basically deal with the analysis and critique of the issues that emerges from the chapter three and the questionnaires and interviews.

Chapter five which concludes the study gives summary, conclusion and recommendation.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **BACKGROUND HISTORY OF OBUASI DIOCESE AND EBENEZER METHODIST CHURCH OBUASI**

## **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter basically presents the historical background of the Obuasi diocese and Ebenezer Society, Obuasi of the Methodist Church Ghana. The chapter looks at the various factors that led to the establishment of the diocese and the society. It again touches on the various epochs that the diocese have gone through to achieve its current statues within the Methodist Church of Ghana. The researcher looks at this background to situate the work within its historical context.

## **2.2The Beginnings of the Obuasi Diocese**

The Roots of Methodism in the Obuasi diocese of The Methodist Church Ghana was laid by some Fante Traders from Cape Coast and its environs who commuted between the coast and the Asante Kingdom dealing in goods like sugar, salts, gunpowder and cloth in exchange for gold and other forest items.<sup>32</sup> Some of these men and women had embraced the Methodist Faith, and as they journeyed on foot through the forest, stopping over in settlements along the route to Kumasi, they introduced the communities they interacted with to the Methodist faith, winning converts for the church.<sup>33</sup>

F. L. Bartels in his book, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism* records that before the arrival of Thomas Birch Freeman in Ashanti, several members of the Methodist faith “from Cape Coast were trading in the neighbourhood and were forming an advanced guard of the church at Fomena in what later grew to the Obuasi Church.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>An Official Church Documents on the History of the Obuasi Methodist Church, 1.

<sup>33</sup>An Official Church Documents on the History of the Obuasi Methodist Church, 1.

<sup>34</sup>F. L. Bartels, *The Root of Ghana Methodism*, (London: Cambridge Uni. Press, 1965), 39.

### **2.3 Arrival of Thomas Freeman (Rev.)**

The Thomas Birch Freeman arrived at Fomena enroot to Kumasi in 1839. He got stranded on the Kusa Mountains for about six weeks because the Asantehene, Nana Kwaku Dua I had refused him entry into Kumasi. Freeman used the time of his waiting to visit communities around Fomena which included places like Obuasi, Bekwai, Brofoyedru. According to Bartels, Freeman was able to gather the faithful's from the surrounding communities at Fomena on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> February, 1839 for a church service. Freeman administered the first communion in the Ashanti kingdom to the faithful gathered at Fomena.<sup>35</sup>

That gathering at Fomena could therefore be described as the nucleus of the Obuasi Diocese which comprises, as at now, thirteen circuits. Freeman started the building of Fomena Chapel. So by the time Freeman had permission to enter Kumasi he had firmly laid the foundation of what was to become the Obuasi Diocese of the Methodist Church Ghana.<sup>36</sup>

Freeman's evangelization of the Ashanti kingdom took firm roots and Methodist societies were founded in many communities in Ashanti. The Methodist Church in Adansi and Amansie states continued to grow and expand with the Obuasi society being the most vibrant, fast-growing and prominent because of the mining activities which had attracted many coastal people into the town.

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<sup>35</sup>The Root of Ghana Methodism, 40.

<sup>36</sup>An Official Church Documents on the History of the Obuasi Methodist Church, 5.



These illustrious faithful who sowed the seed of Methodism in Obuasi included John Abu Carr Wilson, Anderson, John, Nketsia, Mathew Siebu, Turkson, Emma Arthur some of whom were educated at Cape Coast and had settled at Obuasi.<sup>37</sup>

Initially, they organized prayer meetings under a shed of bamboo and palm branches but as their number increased they erected a chapel built of swish bricks at the present site of the church. As the Obuasi church grew and expanded through evangelism and crusade other groups of believers sprang up in the villages around.

The history of the church records that by 1904, Obuasi, Bekwai, and Fomena had become outstation churches under the Kumasi Mission. It was in that year, 1904 that the first Minister was posted to Obuasi. Obuasi then became a Circuit with Bekwai and Dunkwa as sections within the Obuasi Circuit. The first Minister for the Obuasi Circuit was the Barnes. However Dunkwa seemed to have left the Obuasi Circuit early with Obuasi and Bekwai constituting the Circuit until 1918 when Bekwai attained a Circuit status from which grew the following Circuits; Bekwai, Abodom, Manso Atwere, Dominase and Jacobu Circuits in the Amansie states.<sup>38</sup>

In 1924, C. H. Bartels commenced the construction of the present chapel and was completed and dedicated by J. S. Aidom in 1932. Obuasi attained a Diocesan Status together with the following: Obuasi, Akokerri, Fomena, New Edubiase, Akrofuom and Tutuka.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>An Official Church Documents on the History of the Obuasi Methodist Church, 2.

<sup>38</sup>An Official Church Documents on the History of the Obuasi Methodist Church, 2.

<sup>39</sup>Interview with Kojo Adu-Buahen, on 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2015.

## **2.4 The Road to Diocesan (District) Status**

By the beginning of the 1990s the Kumasi district of the Methodist Church Ghana comprised over forty Circuits including eleven circuits that initially formed the Obuasi Diocese. The Church felt at the time that the Kumasi district was too large and therefore needed to be split into smaller manageable units for effective administration and growth. Consequently at the 1996 conference of the Methodist Church Ghana at Winneba, a decision was taken to split the Kumasi District. A committee set up by conference to study the issue of re-demarcation recommended that Kumasi district should be split into three separate districts, namely Kumasi, Obuasi and Effiduase districts.

This recommendation was approved by 1997 conference during the presidency of Asante Antwi. At its Synod of 1995, Kumasi was of the opinion that the two new proposed districts to be carved out of Kumasi District needed preparatory periods during which the right physical and administrative structures would be put in place and adequate preparations made for a smooth and successful take-off of the new District. Kumasi Synod thereupon decided that Obuasi and Effiduase needed gestation periods of five years and ten respectively before moving to district status. In pursuance of this objective the Kumasi District was divided into three zones namely Kumasi, Effiduase and Obuasi Zones.<sup>40</sup>

Meanwhile in expectation of its elevation, Obuasi Circuit commenced putting in place the needed structures, both physical and administrative in readiness for its impending new status. The Obuasi Circuit entered into a contractual agreement with the “Mining and Building Contractors Limited (MBC) an affiliate company of AngloGold Ashanti Company to build an office complex for the new district at a cost of one hundred million cedis

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<sup>40</sup>An Official Church Documents on the History of the Obuasi Methodist Church, 2.

(¢100,000,000.00) under a very good favourable terms through the instrumentality of Joseph K. Eduam who works with the company and also the Circuit Steward for Obuasi at the time.<sup>41</sup>

The Office complex was started in 1995 under the superintendence minister George Boampong. In October 1996 Boampong was replaced by. Nicholas K. Asane who continued with the preparation. Besides the on-going office complex Asane commenced the expansion of the Obuasi Wesley Chapel to befit its new status as the Cathedral of the would-be district. He also strengthened the administrative structures of the church and embarked on a programme of grooming personnel that would be needed for the demands of district status.<sup>42</sup>

Meanwhile early February 1996, Conference dispatched a fact finding committee of eminent persons to ascertain Obuasi for District status in view of Kumasi Synod's recommendation of five years preparatory period for Obuasi. On the strength of the eminent persons report, Obuasi was elevated to a district with eleven circuits constituting; Abodom, Akrofuom, Akrokerri, Bekwai, Dominase, Jacobu, Manso Atwere, New Edubiase Obuasi and Tutuka.<sup>43</sup>

The following brethren played significant roles in the attainment of the district status and need to be commended. They include, Joseph M. Donkor, George K. Boampong, Nicholas

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<sup>41</sup>An Official Church Documents on the History of the Obuasi Methodist Church, 3.

<sup>42</sup>An Official Church Documents on the History of the Obuasi Methodist Church, 3

<sup>43</sup>An Official Church Documents on the History of the Obuasi Methodist Church, 4.

K. Asane, Brothers Kojo Hayford, Joseph K. Eduam, J. B. Marful Carr, Samuel Clarke and Nana Jacob Nsafoah.<sup>44</sup>

## **2.5 Inauguration of Obuasi District**

Feverish preparations started in earnest for the inauguration of the New District. A trial Synod was held for Obuasi, as part of preparations, in March 1997 at the Obuasi Cathedral presided over by Chairman of Kumasi district Kwaku Asamoah Okyere. At the trial Synod, Samuel N. Agyei-Mensah was elected to be the first Chairman and General Superintendent of the new Obuasi district. N. K. Asane was elected as Synod Secretary. By this time, the office complex had been completed and the Obuasi Circuit Manse was renovated to receive the Chairman and General Superintendent while the Obuasi Superintendent move into rented quarters. Nicholas K. Asane was transferred to Tutuka Circuit.<sup>45</sup>

On February 8, 1998 the new Obuasi district was inaugurated at a colourful open-air service at the Obuasi Len Clay Stadium, and the Chairman elect Samuel N. Agyei-Mensah was inducted into office as the first Chairman and General Superintendent of the new District.<sup>46</sup>

## **2.6 Ten Years after Inauguration**

In May 1998 the Obuasi district held its maiden Synod, and from then on Obuasi did not look back. Obuasi under Agyei-Mensah (Rev.) started the Watreso clinic in Manso Atwere Circuit and launched a Diocesan Development Fund during 2001 Annual Synod at Tutuka. With the advent of episcopacy the Methodist Church had adopted in January 2000, some staunch and devoted members from the Laity were elected by the various dioceses within

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<sup>44</sup>An Official Church Documents on the History of the Obuasi Methodist Church, 4.

<sup>45</sup>Interview with Joseph Kobina Eduam, Past Lay Chairman of the Obuasi Diocese on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2015.

<sup>46</sup>Interview with Joseph Kobina Eduam, on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2015.

the Connexion as Diocesan Lay Chairpersons. In the case of Obuasi Diocese, Joseph Kobina Eduam who was then the Diocesan Treasurer was elected as the first Lay Chairman at the Tutuka Synod in 2001. On October 7, 2001, Conference inducted all the elected Lay Chairpersons into office.<sup>47</sup>

In October 2003 the Benjamin K. Asare (Rev.) replaced Samuel N. Agyei-Mensah as Bishop of Obuasi. In 2004 Augustus Kwaku Badu replaced Joseph Kobina Eduam as the Lay Chairman of the Obuasi diocese. The stewardship of the then Benjamin K. Asare saw accelerated development on various fronts in the Diocese. On the administrative front, diocesan and Circuit administrative committee were strengthened and made more efficient; financial management of the diocese was streamlined.

Prudent management of the administration and finances of the diocese led to honouring diocesan and connexional commitments promptly and embarking of a number of projects to satisfy the developmental needs of the diocese. They included paving of the diocesan office compound with concrete cement slabs and rebuilding of the wall at the entrance of the office; procurement of a Rexton four wheel vehicle to facilitate the movement and work of the Bishop and the construction of a new Manse for the Bishop. On the education front, a diocesan scholarship scheme was instituted and the Obuasi Corner Memorial Kindergarten School which had been lost to the Obuasi Municipal Assembly was repossessed.<sup>48</sup>

In spite of numerous teething problems Obuasi continued to operate its two clinics at Watreso and Nsuaem to serve the health needs of the people. The diocese again embarked

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<sup>47</sup>Interview with Joseph Kobina Eduam, on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2015.

<sup>48</sup>An Official Church Documents on the History of the Obuasi Methodist Church, 4.

on a twenty-five acre cocoa farm at Kusa on a land released to the Church by the Kusa stool in appreciation for establishment of the Freeman prayer centre on the Kusa Mountains.<sup>49</sup>

In the area of evangelism and church expansion, by the year 2007 two more circuits Anyinam 2005 and Anwhiaso-2007 had been added to original eleven Circuits that initially formed the diocese. Church planting which had been pursued vigorously by the diocese received a boost with the Cedii Williamson's Crusade in 2007 which gave birth to the planting of ten (10) more societies in the diocese.

Again Local preachers' Schools were established in all circuits. In Obuasi Township a Northern community society was started to cater for the spiritual needs of the people from the three Northern Regions of Ghana residing in the Obuasi Township.<sup>50</sup>

## **2.7 Kusa Prayer Centre**

A prayer centre was started by the diocese at Kusa on the slopes of the Kusa Mountains reputed to the spot where Thomas Birch Freeman stayed for over weeks waiting for the Asantehene's permission to enter Kumasi. The centre is manned by a full-time Evangelist. The Kusa Centre is projected to be developed into a connexional retreat Centre.<sup>51</sup>

The next section takes a closer look at a brief historical background of the Ebenezer Methodist Church which serves a case study for this work.

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<sup>49</sup>Interview with Joseph Kobina Eduam, on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2015.

<sup>50</sup>An Official Church Documents on the History of the Obuasi Methodist Church, 5.1

<sup>51</sup>An Official Church Documents on the History of the Obuasi Methodist Church, 5.

## **2.8 History/Beginning of the Ebenezer Society**

The society started as one of the home cell prayer groups of the Obuasi Wesley Methodist Church, now Wesley Cathedral, for members residing at Old Estate, New Estate, Emuye and New Nsuta on 20<sup>th</sup> June, 1970. This was during the time J.A. Hammond was the Superintendent Minister of the Obuasi Circuit and Minister in Charge of the Wesley Society. The group was meeting for prayer sessions during the week days but worshipped at Wesley Society on Sundays.<sup>52</sup>

The following people were founding members; Joseph Duke Bray, Samuel Archer, Emma Arthur, Mary Adansi, Sarah Amoah, Mary Acquah, Mary Bray, Samuel Archer, Mary Essien, Georgina Aikins, Elizabeth Quansah, Juliana Sackey, and Efua Akuwaah.<sup>53</sup>

The members were having prayer meetings at late Emma Arthur's residence. As the membership grew it became necessary to look for a suitable place of worship. The leader, in the person of the late Joseph Duke Bray, sought permission from the Leaders' meeting of the Wesley Society to use the old Baptist Chapel. This chapel was left in the custody of the Wesley Society when all the worshipers had left for their homeland, Nigeria, after the Aliens compliance Order by the Busia government in 1969.<sup>54</sup>

Permission was granted by the Wesley Society and the group worshiped there until some Baptist members from Kumasi came to take over the Baptist chapel. The following were members who later joined the group when they were worshipping at the old Baptist Church; J. b. Winful, Daniel K. Essel, Grace Ekuban, Mary Boateng, Sopiah Anamuah, Mildred Acquah, Agnes Mensah and Susanna Adansi. The leadership consisted of the

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<sup>52</sup>A brochure of the Dedication of Ebenezer Estate Methodist Church, on 26<sup>th</sup> September, 2013, 1.

<sup>53</sup>A brochure of the Dedication of Ebenezer Estate Methodist Church, 2.

<sup>54</sup>A brochure of the Dedication of Ebenezer Estate Methodist Church, 3.

following people; Rockson Odoom was the Leaders' Meeting Secretary and members included the following; S.B. Aibu Car, Grace Ekuban, Richmond Mintah, Mary Adansi, Dinah Archer, Felicia Aibu and Susanna Adansi.

Joseph K. Eduam played a pivotal role in assisting the society leaders' meeting in decision making which brought the society to an appreciable level.<sup>55</sup>

## **2.9 Conclusion**

To sum up, this chapter has looked at the historical background of the Obuasi diocese of the Methodist Church, Ghana and the Ebenezer Methodist church as well. The researcher can conclude that despite its initial challenges, the Obuasi diocese have grown to become one the admirable diocese in the Methodist Church, Ghana.

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<sup>55</sup>A brochure of the Dedication of Ebenezer Estate Methodist Church, 3.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **FACTORS AND CHALLENGES OF CHURCH GROWTH AT EBENEZER SOCIETY, OBUASI**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter of the study looks at the factors and challenges of growth at the Ebenezer Methodist Church in Obuasi, which happens to be nucleus of this study. The chapter presents various factors that contributed to the growth of Ebenezer Methodist and the challenges that is affecting its growth currently. Some of the issues raised were observations made by the researcher and others were through interviews the researcher had with some leaders in the church.

#### **3.2 Factors that contributed to the growth of Ebenezer Methodist Church, Obuasi.**

The Ebenezer Society underwent a rapid growth in membership between 1992 and 1997, when the Society started worshipping at the current chapel. The membership of 40 rose to about 300 within that period of time. The following factors contributed to the repaid growth.

##### ***3.2.1 Class Meetings***

Bible class meetings were formed according to where members lived. The following classes were formed;

##### **CLASS**

Bedieso, Gausu, New Nsuta, Old Estate, New Estate and Kokoteasua.

### ***3.2.2 The Establishment of New Converts Class***

New Members' Class was established in 1995 to cater for all new members who became members of the Society. This class was handled by Frederick K. Amakye and Jonathan Polley-Kwofie. The members were taken through teachings on Salvation, Assurance of Salvation, Christian Growth and God's Love. Through this class a lot of the new members were equipped with the word of God for the spiritual battle ahead and abandoned their worldliness voluntarily.

### ***3.2.3 Evening services, Dawn services and Prayer Meetings***

There were evening services from 7.0 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. on Sundays, Wednesday and Friday. The dawn services were organized between 5.00 a.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. Attendance to both evening and dawn services were very encouraging. Bible studies and prayer meetings were the main programmes for those services.

There was also the daily prayer time (10 p.m.).<sup>56</sup>

The Leaders' Meeting declared the period between 10p.m. and 11p.m as a daily prayer hour for all members. During this time members were tasked to pray for the spiritual and physical growth of the Ebenezer Society, Obuasi circuit, Obuasi Diocese and the Methodist Church, Ghana as a whole. There was a three-month fasting and prayer for the hand of God to move mighty in the society. This took place from 1<sup>st</sup> July to 1<sup>st</sup> October 2004.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>A brochure of the Dedication of Ebenezer Estate Methodist Church, 4.

<sup>57</sup>Interview with Joseph Kobina Eduam, Past Lay Chairman of the Obuasi Diocese on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2015.

### ***3.2.4 Acquisition of a Plot of Land for Building a Chapel***

As the membership of the Society grew the leadership foresaw that the classroom they were using for worship would not be convenient for worship in the near future. Hence, there was the need to look for a big plot of land to build a mighty chapel to accommodate the growing numbers for worship. Consequently, the plot of land acquired at New Estate was abandoned due to litigations.<sup>58</sup> A new plot of land was acquired at the present site, through the effort of the late S.B. Aibu Carr and Nelson Hammond Armaah with the help of the Adansi West District Council. The plot was very marshy yet it was accepted on the grounds of proximity. Wesley society under the able leadership of the late P. K. Y. Eshun paid for the Land Acquisition.<sup>59</sup>

The leaders' meeting formed a building committee in March, 1995. The necessary preparation for building a chapel was entrusted to the committee. The church through the effort of its members and some loves ones contributed greatly to the building. The sources of funding were harvest proceeds, members' contributions and donations.<sup>60</sup>

### ***3.2.5 Construction Takeover by MBC Ltd.***

The construction of the chapel was handed over to MBC Ltd. 'through the initiative of the Nicholas K. Asane, the then Superintendent Minister of Obuasi Circuit, in consultation with J.K. Eduam the Circuit Steward and Management Staff of the Company with the approval of the Ebenezer Leaders' Meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1997. The MBC Ltd. Takeover was timely since the Society was then cash striped. The Company Pre-financed the construction works with their own resources under very favourable terms of repayment.

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<sup>58</sup>Interview with Joseph KobinaEduam, on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2015.

<sup>59</sup>Interview with Joseph Kobina Eduam, on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2015.

<sup>60</sup>Interview with Joseph Kobina Eduam, on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2015.

It must be placed on record the good works done by the company through the initiative of the Nicholas Asane and Joseph K. Eduam respectively.<sup>61</sup>

### **3.3 Formation of organization in the society**

#### ***3.3.1 Singing Band***

The Singing Band was started with 20 members on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1993 with Justice Kofi Annan as the leader. The Band increased in membership with 30 members in 1994. However, preparation for formal inauguration was delayed. It was formally inaugurated on 27<sup>th</sup> April, 1997. Its membership grew up to 65 and they performed wonderfully during that time. The Singing Band helped the Society with ₦500,000 in 1996 when it needed money to continue the chapel project.<sup>62</sup>

The aim of the singing band is to worship God through singing, to bring together all the people who have interest in singing and to also use that means to draw members to the church.

Since its establishment, the group has been able to embark on evangelistic campaigns and also support the church financially.

#### ***3.3.2 Women fellowship***

The formation of the Women's Fellowship started in the early part of 1980, during the formative years of the Ebenezer Society. At that time, the pioneers were using the old Baptist Chapel for Dawn Prayer Meetings and evening Services. 15 women in the Society

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<sup>61</sup>Interview with Kojo Adu-Buahen, A Steward of the Ebenezer Methodist Church, on 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2015.

<sup>62</sup>Interview with Kojo Adu-Buahen, on 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2015.

started to organize themselves to form a Women's Fellowship, since some of them were already members of the Wesley Society Women's Fellowship.

The women's fellowship was established by the church to unite Christian women in the church one with another, and with Jesus Christ, so that the spiritual life of each member may be enriched, and that, all working together, will joyfully give the fullest support to the Church in Christ.

The fellowship has been training women in the church on various programmes such as soap making, textiles and how to keep one's home. They also organize workshop and seminars on how to generate income through small business among many others. With such activities, the fellowship has been able to bring some people into the church thereby helping its growth.

### ***3.3.3 The Methodist Guild***

This organization was launched by Daniel Botchwey of Wesley Cathedral in 1996 and inaugurated on 29<sup>th</sup> June 1997. Through the good work of the leadership, the membership grew to 60 by the year 2000.

As the church choir was formed mainly with literate members of the Church, it became apparent that a similar organization would be needed for the illiterate youth. Incidentally, adult illiterate church members also joined in, even with children of about eight years old.

This group has a particular method of teaching and learning. That is they use the *Twi* language as a medium of instruction for its members. This has helped the group to attract a lot of members who have not received a formal education to be part of the group.

### ***3.3.4 Men's Fellowship***

The idea to form Men's Fellowship at Ebenezer was conceived by the late Nuako Albert Gwira and Eric Sackey in 1996, a nursery branch was formed with the following as some of the pioneer members: J.B.B. Bandoh, J.B. Winful, John Boakye, Albert Gwira, Jonathan Polley-Kwafie, Thomas Owusu, Matthew Awuah and the late E.K. Annan. The Men's Fellowship was formally inaugurated on 14<sup>th</sup> December, 1997 with the late Nuako as the first chairman. This organization has helped the Ebenezer Society in the following ways; Initiating the purchases of a set of drums for church use, Initiating the purchase of a generator for the Society, Initiating the formation of the Tuesday/Workers Class, A set of drums for the Brigade Band and A double-cabin fridge for the Society.

The aim for establishing the group was to help men acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ; To follow the life of Jesus and to discuss His works and teaching at meetings of the Fellowship; To assist in the spiritual and moral growth of members in our Lord Jesus Christ; To mobilize the men of the Church in fellowship with Jesus Christ and with one another and help alleviate hardship in times of need; To promote activities to raise funds for the furtherance of God's work in all its aspects and To promote lectures, debates seminars and discussions in religion, culture, world affairs and their relevance to Christian teachings and practices.

The fellowship through its various activities such as evangelism, fundraising and anniversary has helped in contribution to the growth of the Ebenezer Methodist Church.

### ***3.3.5 Susanna Wesley Auxiliary (Suwma)***

In November, 1998 Esther Odoom and Dorothy Taylor of the Obuasi Wesley Cathedral Suwma visited the Estate Ebenezer Society to brief the entire Society on the activities of SUWMA in the Methodist Church. How these activities could be of benefit to the Ebenezer Society as a whole was also explained. This yielded some fruit since some female members became interested in forming the organization in the society.

These members organized themselves and formed a nursery branch which was inaugurated on 9<sup>th</sup> April, 2000 with about 30 members.

The Susana Wesley group was established to promote advancement of women by teaching them skills for self-employment; to engage charitable works such as hospital visits; to promote better understanding and appreciation of dignity in serving God; to arouse greater interest in younger women of the church.

In addition to their objectives, summa have adopted a policy of decorating and furnishing chapels and manses for the benefit of the church and clergy and their families.

### ***3.3.6 Youth fellowship***

This fellowship was founded by some inspiration and energetic youth of the Ebenezer Society, namely, Enoch Obeng-Dompim, Samuel Winful, Mabel Ampofo, Richmond Adu, Yaw Kordie others who started organizing themselves to form the Youth Fellowship in 1997.

The youth fellowship was also established to enable young people to grow spiritually by coming to a personal faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour; to provide a fellowship which would enable members to share and discuss ideas and their feelings; to provide a

place where they can talk to sympathetic adults about their problems and hopes; to provide members with the opportunity to share games, creative activities and fun in a good and healthy moral atmosphere; to give the youth an opportunity to contribute to the life, worship and witness of the church and to help young people to show their concern and interest in others by giving practical service in the community.

The fellowship since its establishment has been helping the church through its various programmes such as crusades, evangelism among many others. The youth in the church mostly embark on evangelism both in the city and rural areas around the Obuasi municipality which has contributed to the growth of the church.

### **3.4 Challenges affecting the Growth of the Ebenezer Methodist Church**

In every church, there are certain issues that might confront it or impede its growth. Some of these challenges, sometimes are peculiar to churches while others are also sometimes general. Some of the reasons that the researcher has identified as issues impeding the growth of the church include the following;

First, it can be that they are victims of defeatism or they may have a fatalistic attitude this means the “It can't be done here syndrome” or “It's impossible to grow here”. This kind of attitude is what is hindering many churches from growing which the Ebenezer Methodist church is no exception. Sometimes some leaders and old people are very difficult in accepting or adapting to new things that might affect the church's growth. This sometimes in one way or the other leads to slow growth since some people especially the youth turn to leave the church upon such attitude by leaders.



Again, one of the issues that is impeding the growth of the church is mobility. Some churches fail to grow because they have lost mobility. They have reduced their activities to the four walls of their building. In its initial beginnings, the Ebenezer Methodist church was consistently embarking on outreach programmes such as dawn evangelism, crusades, home cell meetings, which gradually drew a lot of members to the church. However, in these days, the church seems to relax with such programme which in one way or the other is affecting its growth. The researcher can argue that they have become “Prisoners of a building” that is the church building. They have withdrawn from the areas around it where the people are, the streets, markets places etc. The Pentecostal and charismatic that are growing rapidly were built on street meetings, cottage prayer meeting and visitation. The extent of reaching outside their walls of many churches today has contributed to their growth.

Another situation which hinders church growth is, “A Family-Clan Mentality”. Some churches will grow rapidly for a while and then level off its growth because the people feel at home with one another. How welcome does a visitor feel? Does it disturb the security and fellowship of those who are already a part of the church there? The church needs more bridges to the outside world. A fire needs new material or it will begin to burn low. The church needs new material or it will begin to burn low.

To add up, a church also fails to grow when it is self-centered. According to one leader interviewed, the church’s work should be like “breathing” in a person. According to him, one must breathe in and out. For the church, “breathing out” is perfecting the saints in

Christian graces and “breathing in” is evangelism.<sup>63</sup> He disclosed that the temptation is to withdraw from the rugged task of winning the lost, and retreat into the enjoyment of the presence of gifts the Holy Spirit. He is of the opinion that the church should be concerned about “the maturity of the saints,” to help other members of the church grow and which lead them to also reach out and bring more members into the church.

The researcher is of the opinion that, real church growth occurs when believers realize their responsibility and go out into the streets and market places to share their faith. It is important that the message of the church is taken out to the people. Proclamation or evangelism is God’s method of letting people know that He cares for them. Evangelism is not complete, however, until disciples are made.

In the researchers own opinion, it is possible that a church might fail to grow because of a weak spiritual incentive. The spiritual dynamics of prayer, intercession and waiting upon God has been lost. There is a tendency to substitute the natural for the spiritual that is, attempting to carry out the work of God on a natural plane. Some churches have such a round of activities that there is no time left for the important things. It is possible that churches do not grow because they are in bondage to traditions and religious habits. They begin following certain routines and lose the freshness of God's touch.

Finally, one reason that might also affect the growth of the Ebenezer Methodist church is migration. This is because, the Obuasi municipality in which the church is situated is a mining community with a lot of people migrating from different places to come and work. as a result of this, many people who are already Methodist joins the church when they come to the community to work and after they are done with their jobs or been transferred

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<sup>63</sup> Interview with Mr. KojoAdu-Buahen, A Steward of the Ebenezer Methodist Church, on 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2015.

they leave to their various towns. Consequently, there is automatic kind of growth when people who are transferred from various places to come and work in the town joins the church and they go back it also affect the church. This is what other sometimes called transfer growth which is always not sustainable.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

In a whole, this chapter has looked at the various factors that contributed to the growth of the Ebenezer Methodist Church in Obuasi and the challenges affecting its growth at the moment. The chapter again touched on various developmental issues that took place in the society. Since the study is looking at the challenges of growth within the society, the issues that are highlighted in this chapter as some of the factors which contributed to the growth of the society will be used to analyze the challenges the church is facing currently towards the issue of growth. The researcher is of the opinion that, the decline or the inadequate attention given to some of the earlier issues that accounted for the growth of the society might be one of the causes of the challenges.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **CHALLENGES OF CHURCH GROWTH IN THE EBENEZER METHODIST CHURCH**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Though many churches may be able to overcome whatever growth barriers they face if they are willing to make key adjustments in their practices, some churches may also be in areas where numerical growth is extremely unlikely. Assuming that a church is located in an area where growth beyond a numerical barrier is possible, there are several factors that must be considered. The goal of this chapter is to discuss and analyze various dimension of church growth, identify the reasons or the factors accounting for the challenges of church growth in the Ebenezer Methodist society and various ways the church can adopt to help the church solve such challenges.

This chapter attempts to offer several key issues, listed by Church Growth scholars, which must be considered by any church that can be revitalized for effective church growth.

The chapter also presents a data analysis on the views of leaders and members in the church regarding church growth issues.

#### **4.2 General Analysis of Responses**

In order to find out whether or not the Ebenezer Methodist church was growing, 60 questionnaires were sent out to solicit the views of members and leaders in the church to determine whether their views also correspond with some of the issues that the researcher is looking at. Out of the 60 questionnaires that was sent out, 55 was collected and analyzed.

The following are the responses from the respondents. The first two tables or graphic presentation deals with the background of the respondents which include their ages and educational attainment.

**Table 1. Age of Respondents**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Number (#)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
18 – 25	19	34.5
26 – 35	24	43.6
36 – 45	10	18.2
45 – and above	2	3.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field work 2015

The researcher found it necessary to find out the age distribution of the respondents because of his interest in which age group constitutes the highest number of membership in the church. As shown in the table above, 34.5% of the respondents ranged between the ages of 18 and 25, 43.6% were between the ages of 26 and 35, 18.2% fell between ages 36 and 45 while 3.6% fell between the ages of 46 and above. The results show that the youth are those with high membership in the church.

**Table 2. Educational Attainment**

<b>Educational level</b>	<b>Number (#)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
JHS (Junior High School)	0	0
SHS/GCE O' level/A level	19	34.5
Degree Holder	21	38.2
Diploma	15	27.3
Any other	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field work 2015

The researcher also found the educational level of the respondents. As shown in the table, 19 of the respondents representing 34.5% had their level up to the SHS/GCE O' level or A level, 38.2% of the respondents also had degrees while 27.3% had also obtained their diplomas.

**Table 4. Period of respondent's membership in the church**

<b>Period of membership</b>	<b>Number (#)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1– 5 years	11	20
5 – 10years	28	50.9
10– 15years	16	29.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field work 2015

The study also sought to find out how long the respondents had been members of the church in order to ascertain their commitment and the credibility of the answers some of

them gave. In answer to this, 20% indicated that they had been members within a period of one to five years. 50.9% indicated that they had been with the church within a period of 5 to 10 years while 29.1% indicated that they had been members between 5 to 10 years. All things being equal, a relatively longer stay in the church assures some high level of consistency and loyalty to the church. This will help the person to be very familiar with some of the activities that goes on in the church and also be abreast with current issues that is affecting the growth of the church.

The next tables present the responses that were given by the respondents regarding their views on issues that is affecting the growth of the church. The questionnaires were tailored along the areas of performance and church growth.

## PERFORMANCE

		<i>Responses</i>				
	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Uncertain</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Statement</i>						
	<i>(%) of</i>	<i>(%) of</i>	<i>(%) of</i>	<i>Total</i>		
	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>respondents</i>	<i>respondents</i>	<i>(%)</i>		
Everyone is busy in my church, there is little idle time.	38.2	12.7	27.3	7.3	14.5	100
In my church, work quality is a high priority for all members.		29.1	34.5	36.4		100
In my church, everyone gives his/her best efforts.			27.3	54.5	18.2	100
My church is very productive.			45.5	30.9	23.6	100
My church is very efficient in getting maximum output from the resources (money, people, equipment etc.) it has available.			25.5	47.2	27.3	100
My church really cares about his people.			50.9	29.1	20	100



## CHURCH GROWTH

		<i>Responses</i>				
<i>Statement</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Uncertain</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>(%) of</i>	<i>(%) of</i>	<i>(%) of</i>	<i>Total</i>		
	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>respondents</i>	<i>respondents</i>	<i>(%)</i>		
I am fully aware that our church plan is leading to church growth.	27.3	12.7	18.2	32.7	9.1	100
I know that my church has become stagnant to growth.		12.7	23.6	27.3	36.4	100
The organizational structure of our church does not lead to church growth.		18.2	20	23.6	38.2	100
The activities of our church are characterized by successful planning and organization.		16.4	25.5	45.5	12.7	100
My church takes church growth activities very seriously.		38.2	32.7	10.9	18.2	100
My church has experience an increase in membership for the past five (5) years.		43.6	32.7	9.1	14.5	100

## **Detailed Analysis of Responses to Questionnaires**

The following were the responses given by the respondent to the various questions that were put before them regarding their views on the challenges of growth in the Ebenezer Methodist Church. When the respondents were asked if everyone is busy in the church, with little or idle time, the responses from the table indicated that 21 of the respondents representing 38.2% indicated that they strongly disagree, 12.7% indicated disagree, 27.3% were uncertain, 7.3% said they agree and 14.5% said they strongly agree. When they were asked whether work quality in the church is a high priority of all members, 29.1% disagreed, 34.5% were uncertain and 36.4% agreed.

In order to find out whether every individual in the church was contributing to the growth of the church, the researcher asked the respondents to indicate if every member of the church gives his or her best effort in improving the performance of the church towards church growth, 27.3% were uncertain, 54.5% agreed and 18.2% strongly agreed. In my church, work quality is a high priority for all members. A follow up question to this was to find out if the church was productive from the view of the respondents, in a response to this 45.5% of the respondents were uncertain, 30.9% indicated agreed and 23.6% indicated strongly agreed.

The researcher also tried to find out whether the church was very efficient in getting maximum output from the resources such as money, people and equipment that they had at their disposal. From the question posed, 25.5% were uncertain, 47.2% indicated agreed and 27.3% said they strongly agreed. The study also find out whether the church was really catering for her people which is fundamental strategy to church growth. From the question posed, the table shows that 50.9% were uncertain, 29.1% indicated agreed and 20% said indicated strongly agreed.

A good performance from the various questions raised will alternatively lead to a growth in every church. However, a bad performance might hinder the growth of the church.

The study also sought to find out how the church is putting strategies in place to promote the growth of the church in the Obuasi municipality. The study found out from the respondents whether the plan being put in place by the church is leading to church growth. From the table, 12.7% disagreed, 18.2% were uncertain, 32.7% agreed while 9.1% strongly agreed.

The study also found out from the respondents whether they were aware that the church has become stagnant to growth. From the table, 12.7% disagreed, 23.6% were uncertain, 27.3% agreed while 36.4% strongly agreed. The researcher also tried to find out whether the organizational structure of the church is leading to church growth. From the question posed, 18.2% disagreed, 20% were uncertain, 23.6% agreed and 38.2% strongly agreed.

The researcher also found out whether the activities of the church geared toward church growth are characterized by successful planning and organization. From the question asked, 16.4% disagreed, 25.5% were uncertain, 45.5% agreed and 12.7% strongly agreed. In a follow up question asked, the researcher found out whether the church takes church growth activities seriously. From the question posed, 38.2% disagreed, 32.7% were uncertain, 10.9% agreed, 18.2% strongly agreed. Finally, the researcher also tried to find out if the church has been able to increase its membership within the last five years. In a response to this question, 43.6% disagreed, 32.7% were uncertain, 9.1% agreed and 14.5% strongly agreed.

### **4.3 What the Church can do to Grow**

There are many strategies that the church can adopt to help deal with the challenges that confronts its growth. One of such strategies is the development of leadership strategy. Most churches today including the Methodist church are clear on mission and vision. What most churches lack is a widely shared and agreed-upon strategy to accomplish most of the vision and mission. The vision and mission answers the why and what of your organization. Your strategy answers how and how critical. There is the need for the church to spend time working through its strategy and plan very hard towards the achievements of its goals. The church must be clear on how they will accomplish their mission and must not rest until the mission, vision and strategy reside in every single member and leader.

Leadership positions must be given to people who are ready to lead. In every church, there are people who hold position of leadership and then there are people who are truly leaders (who may not hold any position in the church. The church must release people who hold titles but aren't advancing the mission and hand the job over to real leaders. Look for people who have track record of handling responsibilities in other areas of life and give them the job of leading the church into the future. If the church actually has leaders leading, it will make a huge difference and consequently lead to growth. In the Methodist church, there are a lot of leaders who are just holding position but are not advancing any course that leads to church growth. The researcher can argue that they might just be enjoying the prestige of being leaders in the church without any work to promote church growth.

Through observation, one challenge that the researcher can argue affecting church growth is organization of too many events and programs that lead nowhere. In the Methodist Church, there are a lot of programmes and events that are organize but does

not yield or promote any church growth. One can argue that activity does not equal accomplishment. Just because one is busy organizing programmes doesn't mean one is being effective. The church must spend time and plan well to develop programmes that will attract and draw more members to the church.

#### **4.4 Effective Strategies for Church Growth**

There is the need for leadership responsibilities in church growth. Leadership is one of the most important factors of church growth. Elmer Towns says that growing churches have spiritual leadership, effective pastoral and lay leadership because the leadership is the length and shadow of the work which he or she builds for God. Church growth reflects a pastor's leadership growth. That is, if pastor grows, church will also grow. Myung Sung Hun says, "Principle of pastoral leadership is primary catalyst and church growth is the result of pastor's growth."<sup>64</sup> Carl George states, "Church growth is like planted grass. If you stand on the seeded bed, the new green shoots do not have a chance. Give them water and light, and they will grow naturally. I believe it describes what God wants to do for His church."<sup>65</sup> The problem is that pastors know their barriers, but they do not have any will to overcome their barriers. Pastors have to grow before their churches grow.

Positive pastoral leadership is essential if any local fellowship of believers is to experience genuine church growth. There is no quick way to build a successful church, but it is observed that wherever growth takes place there is a called person who has an urgent burden to win souls for Christ. To achieve optimum results, the pastor needs to

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<sup>64</sup>Myung Sung Hun, *Church Growth Mind* (Seoul: Institute for Church Growth, 2003), 155. He explains more that principle of pastoral leadership is that pastor loves people and people are proud of their pastor and gifts of faith and leadership.

<sup>65</sup>Carl F. George & Warren, Bird, *How to Break Growth Barriers* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1992), 18. He is director of the Charles E. Fuller Institute of evangelism and church growth and adjunct professor of church growth at Fuller Seminary.

be a strong leader in mobilizing and motivating people around workable goals. This pastoral leadership involves an investment of time and effort in instilling a vision for souls, setting goals, and developing ministry gifts. Positive leadership is a dynamic ability to see and plan ahead without becoming bogged down by the present circumstances.<sup>66</sup>

Upon the researchers observation of ministers who have experienced growth in their churches, reveals the following characteristics: (a) The minister has prayerfully sought to know what God is doing in that particular locality. He has then co—operated with the Lord in that work. (b) The minister has displayed an energetic and enthusiastic personality. (c) The minister has regarded every problem as an opportunity for growth rather than as a reason to quit. (d) The minister is regarded as a pacesetter before people — in spiritual discipline, management of time, and lifestyle. (e) The minister has gained authority in leadership because of his own faithfulness in the realm of encouraging church growth.

Another strategy that the church can adopt to ensure church growth is planning. Without proper planning and vision there would be no real growth in the church. To ensure growth there must be effective planning. Even though this is the primary role of the pastor, he must share this aspect of ministry with his co— workers, that is the leaders. Arguably, strategies for church growth can be exercised just as a company initiates a sales drive, the essential difference, however, is in the realm of prayer. The church must plan to pray and pray to plan. All plans for church growth must be truly divinely inspired from conception to inception. Following prayer, the leadership team must apply itself to four tasks that is; Determining and understanding objectives. This is crucial to both the ultimate achievement and the continuing morale of those involved in

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<sup>66</sup>Form Church Growth 1: Spiritual Foundations of Church Growth, Elmer Towns, Fall 2004.

the project. Each person must understand and also identify with the objectives. Second, setting realistic time targets. Each stage of the plan must be given estimated times to ensure each part fits together. Time scales must be realistic. If they are too short it will result in nervous exhaustion. If they are too long it will lead to procrastination. Third, there must be division of responsibility within the group. Individuals must feel that the work load is fairly distributed. No one must feel that he is being expected to do too much, and no one must feel that they are merely peripheral to the task. Some suggested areas of responsibility are as follows: prayer, publicity, music, and counseling, follow up and finance.

One factor that the church must also consider in their attempt to enhance growth is an understanding of contemporary cultural practices. It is essential that the church has an understanding of contemporary culture if it is to experience real church growth.<sup>67</sup> Whilst it is recognized that there are, in fact, many sub-cultures it must also be recognized that we have a pervading contemporary culture which has been molded by peoples' history and experiences.

An analysis of contemporary culture as a result of modernity and secularization shows that people have experienced several trends. Now the use of the mass media is gradually altering the way people think and behave. If the church wants to attract the young people of today, then it must plan well to use modern media technologies to attract the young people.

Finally, one strategy that can also improve church growth is effective Communication. Elmer Towns says, "People follow a leader who effectively communicates his plan to reach the objective so the leader must effectively communicate his plans to reach the

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<sup>67</sup>A Strategy for Church Growthfile:///C:/Users/jen/Desktop/church-growth.pdf (Accessed on 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2015).

objective.”<sup>68</sup> John Maxwell says that since communication is a two-way street, the leader must be close enough to followers to get information to them and from them. The leader must also be close enough to God to get dreams and goals.<sup>69</sup> John Haggai states “Since the leader transfers his or her thoughts to his or her group through communication, it follows that only effective communication can make clear to the group their real needs and move them toward the appropriate goals to fulfill those needs.”<sup>70</sup>

To summarize, without effective communication with God, and then people, the leader and the church will not grow. Because the ability to communicate is the leader’s most valuable asset, it is one of the most important factors that a leader needs. Good leaders should use words that are understood by the followers and the leader must understand the words used by the followers. Moreover, the foundation of fellowship and preaching is communication. If people do not understand the pastor’s teaching and preaching, they will leave the church or they will be bored during the worship time. Without communication in community, the church can’t grow in a healthy, effective manner.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

Generally, this chapter has dealt with a discussion and analysis of issues that confront church growth. The chapter looked at dimension of church, challenges of church growth in the Ebenezer Methodist Church and the various strategies the church can adopt to improve on its growth. It is the opinion of the researcher that, if proper structures and plans are put in place, the church can experience a dramatic growth despite many challenges that seem to stand on the way of the church.

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<sup>68</sup>Elmer, Town, *The 8 Law of Leadership*(Lynchburg: Church Growth Institute, 1992), 61. He also gave his slogan; “People follow a leader who gives clear directions to his followers.”

<sup>69</sup>Town, *The 8 Laws of Leadership*, 61.

<sup>70</sup>John Haggai, *Lead On!*(Waco, TX: Word Incorporated, 1986), 103.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Summary**

This study has looked at the challenges of church growth in the Ebenezer Methodist Church at Obuasi. The study was conducted by employing a historical method approach as research methodology for the study. It also used both the primary and secondary sources as a method of data collection for the study. The first part of this study looked at the background issues which included research questions, aims and objectives, methodology and related literature of the subject under study.

The work also presented a historical background of the Obuasi diocese of the Methodist Church, Ghana. It again touched on the various factors that led to the establishment of the Obuasi diocese and the various epochs that the diocese have gone through to achieve its current status within the Methodist Church of Ghana.

As the main focus of the study, the work also looked at the historical background of Ebenezer Methodist Church in Obuasi, which happens to be nucleus of this study. The researcher presented a brief historical background of the establishment of the church and various factors that contributed to its growth. The work also touched on the establishment of various organizations in the church which in one way or the other precipitated the growth of the Ebenezer society within the Obuasi diocese of the Methodist Church, Ghana. All these historical facts were given to enable the researcher determine the actual factors that accounted for the growth of the church in its initial stages and those that are confronting its growth currently. The study also discussed various issues that is confronting the growth of the church and suggested various strategies that the church can adopt to help achieve its targeted growth.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

This study has looked at the challenges of church growth at the Ebenezer society of the Methodist Church in Obuasi and the factors that contributed to its growth. This study showed that the Ebenezer Methodist church in its initial stages experienced a dramatic growth due to certain measures and strategies that were put in place by the leadership of the church in its early beginnings. Some of these strategies include the establishment of various organizations in the church, prayer meetings, home cell meetings, dawn broadcasting among many others.

However, the church seems to have experience some sort of decline which can attributed to a strong oversight for the continuance of certain programmes that precipitated the development and growth of the church. The researcher is of the opinion that, the decline or the inadequate attention given to some of the earlier issues that accounted for the growth of the society might be one of the causes of the challenges.

The researcher also found out that, migration on some part of members or people in the community also contribute to the challenges of church growth in the town.

## **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the above issues, the researcher wish to make the following recommendations

- Church leaders must put in place necessary plans to sustain programmes that lead to the growth of the church.
- The church should initiate strategies that will serve as a guide to promote growth in the church.
- The church should appoint leaders that are committed to work to promote the growth of the church but not leaders who will use their position as prestige but will not work.

- Finally, the researcher recommends that further studies can be undertaken to find out why certain programmes that serve a major tool for growth cannot be sustained by Ebenezer Methodist Church in Obuasi Estate.

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## **INTERNET SOURCE**

A Strategy for Church Growthfile:///C:/Users/jen/Desktop/church-growth.pdf  
(Accessed on 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2015).

## **BROCHURE**

An Official Church Documents on the History of the Obuasi Methodist Church.

A Brochure of the Dedication of Ebenezer Estate Methodist Church, on 26<sup>th</sup> September, 2013.

Form Church Growth 1: Spiritual Foundations of Church Growth, Elmer Towns, Fall 2004.

## **PERSONALITIES INTERVIEWED**

Kobina Eduam Joseph, Past Lay Chairman of the Obuasi Diocese on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2015.

Adu-Buahen Kojo, A Steward of the Ebenezer Methodist Church, on 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2015

## **APPENDIX I**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE**

I am an undergraduate student of the above mentioned school reading B.A in Theology with Administration. I am writing a research on the above mentioned topic. The purpose of this study is to look at the challenges affecting the growth of the Ebenezer Methodist church in Obuasi. Please take some time off your busy schedule and answer the following questions for me.

I assure you that all the information that will be provided will be kept confidential and used for academic purpose only.

#### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

- Please tick [☐] your choice in the box.
- Attempt and respond to all the questions.
- Do not write your name anywhere in the questionnaire.
- Age: (a) 18- 25 [☐] b. 26-35 [☐] 36- 45 [☐] d. 45 and above [☐]
- Highest level of education
  - (a) JHS [☐]
  - (b) SHS/GCE O' level/A' level [☐]
  - (c) Middle school [☐]
  - (d) Degree holder [☐]
  - (e) Diploma holder [☐]
  - (f) Any other.....

## I. PERFORMANCE

		<i>Responses</i>				
	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Uncertain</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Statement</i>						
	<i>(%) of</i>	<i>(%) of</i>	<i>(%) of</i>	<i>Total</i>		
	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>respondents</i>	<i>respondents</i>	<i>(%)</i>		
Everyone is busy in my church, there is little idle time.						
In my church, work quality is a high priority for all members.						
In my church, everyone gives his/her best efforts.						
My church is very productive.						
My church is very efficient in getting maximum output from the resources (money, people, equipment etc.) it has available.						
My church really cares about his people.						

## J. CHURCH GROWTH

		<i>Responses</i>				
	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Uncertain</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Statement</i>						
	<i>(%) of</i>	<i>(%) of</i>	<i>(%) of</i>	<i>Total</i>		
	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>respondents</i>	<i>respondents</i>	<i>(%)</i>		
I am fully aware that our church plan is leading to church growth.						
I know that my church has become stagnant to growth.						
The organizational structure of our church does not lead to church growth.						
The activities of our church are characterized by successful planning and organization.						
My church takes church growth activities very seriously.						
My church has experience an increase in membership for the past five (5) years.						



## **APPENDIX**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE**

1. When was this church established?
2. What was the reason for the establishment of the church?
3. How long have you been a member of this church?
4. What is your understanding of church growth?
5. Since you became a member of this church, have notify and factors that may account for the challenges of growth in this church?
6. Do you think the leaders are putting in place to ensure a sustainable growth of the church?
7. How will you assess the contribution of the various organization in the church to the growth of the church
8. What will be general assessment of the policies been put in place by the church to ensure growth.
9. Significantly, do you think the church has increase in number for the past 5 years?
10. What do you think will be a solution to some of the issues you have raised in the interview?