

PASTORAL TRANSFERS IN CLASSICAL PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES IN GHANA: IMPLICATIONS FOR MISSION AND THE PASTORAL FAMILY

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Abstract: *Transfers are part of the life of every worker including Pastors. Pastors of churches that practice Pastoral transfer go through the same exercise and experience as any other worker. From the Bible, we learn that some of the people used by God for his missional purposes were called and sent from one region to the other. This article investigates Pastoral transfer in Classical Pentecostal Churches in Ghana and its missional implications for the church and the development of the pastoral family. The article examines some of the policies and reasons for Pastoral transfer, the missional and financial implications as well as the developmental implications it has on pastors involved and their families. Interviews and literature study were the tools used for data collection. Though several dynamics come to play in the transfer of Pastors, I argue that the missional agenda of God as well as the holistic development of the pastoral family must be the prime consideration.*

Key Words: Pastoral transfer; mission; Classical Pentecostal Churches; Ghana; Pastoral family.

Introduction

Internal or external transfers are part of the life of every worker. Internal transfer is what is usually referred to as ‘reshuffling’ while external transfer has to do with being sent outside your context. Murugesan defines transfer as ‘a lateral shift causing movement of individuals from one position or geographical area to another usually without involving change in duties, responsibilities, skills needed or compensation’¹. Transfer may be initiated either by the company or the employee. It can also be temporary or permanent. Worker transfer is a way to help an employee gain a wider and broader experience within an organisation.

¹ G. Murugesan, *Human Resource Management* (New Delhi: Laxmi Publications, 2011), 144.

Transfer is not a contemporary issue. Even in the Old Testament, we can find a sort of ‘transfer’ when God called Abraham to go from his homeland to the Promised land (Gen. 12) to fulfill the missional plan of God. The same could be said of Moses and the Israelites both in Egypt and in the wilderness. In the New Testament, the disciples were sent from one region to the other by Jesus Christ. Jesus’ statement ‘when the Spirit comes upon you, you shall be my witness from Jerusalem, Judea and the outermost part of the world’, has an implication for ministerial and missional transfer (Acts 1:8). The same could be said of the Great Commission to go to all nations and make disciples (Matt. 28:18-20).

The Acts of the Apostles suggests that while the early church felt reluctant to move out of their comfort zones, God used persecution to scatter them abroad. This, therefore, led to the spread of the word of God to many places (Acts 8). Although in the context of the Bible, God called people and sent them to places for missional purposes, the same cannot be said of the contemporary churches. In contemporary times, transfer of Pastors is carried out by church leadership for various reasons. Some of these transfers come with diverse effects (both positive and negative) on the church, the Pastor’s personal life and the development of the pastoral family.

Although there are many articles and academic publications and research on mission, hardly would one see such academic publications on the transfer of Pastors (ministers of the gospel) and its missional implications. Similarly, academic literature on issues related to the transfer of workers are few, and often kept in policy documents of the concerned organisations. This article, therefore, seeks to close this research gap by studying pastoral transfer and its missional implication on the church and the development of the Pastoral family, by focusing on the Classical Pentecostal Churches in Ghana. The study would serve as a platform for further study and would possibly make Churches re-examine their policies on the transfer of Pastors.

The Classical Pentecostal Churches in Ghana are Christ Apostolic Church International; The Apostolic Church, Ghana; The Church of Pentecost; and Assemblies of God, Ghana. The Assemblies of God,

Ghana was not considered for the study because they do not practice transfer of Pastors as is carried out in the rest of the Churches mentioned.

Except for the Assemblies of God church, Classical Pentecostal Churches in Ghana have an approximate hierarchy of ministers made up of Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Overseers. Many of their church documents often use the term, ‘ministers’ to refer to all the categories in the hierarchy. For this paper, ‘Pastors’ will be used to refer to all ministers in the hierarchy since all of them do perform pastoral duties either in a local church or churches. However, in some instances, relevant titles would be mentioned when the need arises.

Literature studies and interviews were used for the study. The author interviewed some area/territorial Apostles and Pastors of the churches under discussion in Kumasi and Accra, Ghana. The interviews and data gathering took place from November 2016 to January 2017. Children of some of the Pastors were also interviewed.

Due to the sensitive nature of the issues being discussed, some of the Pastors /Apostles were hesitant to respond, except in the context of anonymity. For the purposes of this study, the titles: ‘Pastor’ and ‘Apostle’ are therefore used to avoid any direct link to the interviewees and informants.

Church documents and policies of the various Classical Pentecostal Churches were also considered.

Classical Ghanaian Pentecostal Churches and Transfer of Pastors

Reading the transfers list has always been the climax of the General and Extraordinary Council meetings of the Church of Pentecost since its inception. The list is part of the circular letter called ‘Executive Council Decisions’ released after each General Council meeting. Although it is quite lengthy, it is fully read out loud by the General Secretary of the Church. Executive Council decisions usually come with issues on transfer and promotion of Pastors in the church.

In the Church of Pentecost (CoP), Pastoral transfers refer to the process by which the executive Council moves Pastors from one station to another while filling the vacated stations usually with Pastors on transfer from other stations. In their view, the practice of the regular transfer of Pastors has played a major role in the delivery of the church's mission².

The Christ Apostolic Church International (CAC) defines transfer as a movement of an officer from one duty station to the other, or from a department to the other. It may or may not involve a change of designation or duties. Change in location resulting from transfers may not imply increased responsibility, demotion or promotion but for efficiency and exigencies of the service. According to CAC, "transfers shall be made by the Executive Council and published through circulars or written notice signed by the General Secretary to the person concerned"³.

The CoP's Ministers Handbook states that "the Church reserves the right to transfer a minister to any region/area, district or outside the country in accordance with the exigencies of the work, either permanently or temporarily"⁴. The Handbook further indicates how pastors on transfer should be taken care of to ensure minimal financial and administrative stress on both the transferred pastor and the stations of origin and destination⁵.

Although the frequency of transfers of the CoP is not regulated by any pastoral transfer policy, an examination of the church's circular letters released after the annual Council meetings shows that a Pastor can expect to be transferred at least once every five years. As at October 2016, 21 of 28 (75%) of the ministers called in 1995 were at their fifth station, 43 of 52 (83%) of those called in year 2000 were at their fourth

² The Church of Pentecost, *Administrative Manual* (Accra: Pentecost Press Ltd, 2009), 40.

³ Christ Apostolic Church International, *Administrative and financial policy Manual* (Accra: CAC Printing Press, 2005), 15

⁴ The Church of Pentecost, *Ministers' Handbook* (Accra: Pentecost Press Ltd, 2014), 33.

⁵ The Church of Pentecost, *Ministers' Handbook*, 33. Also see The Church of Pentecost, *Policy Affirmation* (Accra: Pentecost Press Ltd, nd), 18-19

station and 37 of 38 (97%) of the 2005-year group were also at their third station⁶.

The exceptions to this 5-year transfer imperative are those called to special offices of the church, such as missions or administrative roles. Except in the case of missions, the pastor being transferred moves with his entire family and the church provides vehicles to transport all belongings. In the case of transfers to stations overseas, the CoP's Handbook states, "the Church shall bear the cost of transporting the Minister, his spouse and two children below the age of twenty-one (21), who may go with them."⁷

Although churches hardly make public the reasons for specific transfers, the following were some of the reasons noted in my interaction with Senior Pastors:

Transfer of Gifts: The major reason given, usually verbally, by members of the Executive Council for transferring Pastors was to make every District or Area of the church benefit from the diversity of gifts that various Pastors have. It is a well-known fact that individual church members and especially Pastors are endowed with different gifts and talents. As Pastors are moved around, they mentor their church members especially the leadership of that particular assembly. This exercise gives the opportunity for various gifts and talents to be developed and used in churches involved for missional purposes.

Appointments: Pastors are also transferred when they are appointed or seconded to certain positions in the church or the church's affiliates that require them to live closer to such duty stations. For example, if a pastor is appointed as a Ministry Director or an Administrative Secretary attached to the Headquarters, he must necessarily reside in Accra.

⁶ See the Church of Pentecost Almanacs 1995-2016.

⁷ The Church of Pentecost, *Ministers' Handbook*, 33.

Discipline: Almost without fail, Pastors who have been warned or demoted for misconduct are consequently transferred out of their stations. Seven (7) Pastors affected from 2008 to 2016 were duly transferred within months of their reprimand.⁸

Health: Transfers could also be executed to enable a minister deal with a health problem he or a member of his family is experiencing. In such a situation, the minister will be transferred to a station where medical treatment can be easily accessed.

Divine Orchestration: Although many of the issues related to transfer of Pastors in the Classical Pentecostal Churches in Ghana are determined by the National Executive, some of the Pastors were of the view that their transfers were divinely influenced. They reported that their transfer brought positive developments to their ministerial lives. In their new stations, they witnessed progress in terms of ‘soul winning’, church planting and the working of miracles. They experienced the peace of God and enjoyed ‘divine supplies’.

Although the discussions above outline positive reasons for transfer of Pastors, it was also observed that some transfers are ‘ecclesiastical politically oriented’. This type of transfers occurs when some Pastors (either a subordinate or peer) are perceived as threat to leadership. Reasons given by informants are: opportunity to compete for an Executive Council position; higher education; greater exposure (i.e. Area Apostle or members of Executive Council); being tagged or perceived to be very vocal or critical.

Pastors who are perceived to be threats are, therefore, transferred to frustrate or punish them. For example, an interviewee reported how at a meeting, a senior minister of his church addressed pastors perceived to be critical of his leadership, with the statement: “If you do not change, change will change you”. In effect, the pastors who were identified as threats to this senior minister were later transferred to remote areas to punish and silence them.

⁸ The CoP Headquarters Circular Letters from 2008 to 2016.

An Executive Council member of one of the Pentecostal churches narrated how he was transferred by one of the past Chairmen of their church to prevent him from pursuing further studies. Another pastor suffered the same fate when his Area Apostle was informed that he was pursuing a Bachelor of Theology. A similar thing happened to a minister who was pursuing postgraduate studies at Christian Service University College, Kumasi, Ghana. According to him, he was transferred to a remote village as soon as his Area Apostle was informed that he was pursuing postgraduate studies.

Although the CAC administrative manual states that “an officer undergoing a study course shall not be transferred to the detriment of the course,”⁹ this policy in some instances is not followed by the leadership of the church. It was noted that one of the apostles of the CAC was transferred overseas while he was in the second year of his undergraduate studies with no explanation.

Missional Implications of Pastoral Transfer

In its deepest meaning, both missional and missionary verbalise the phenomenon that we understand as *missio Dei*.¹⁰ Without the *missio Dei*, the mission of the church would simply ‘be grasping at mere straw’; it would be salvation by works alone. Mission is more than mere human activity reliant on emotion, volition and the action of finite beings.¹¹ This, therefore, calls for missional living from both pastors and their congregation.

Missional living is the adoption of posture, thinking, behaviour, and practices of a missionary to engage others with the gospel message. To be missional therefore encompasses the entire characteristics of

⁹ Christ Apostolic Church International, *Administrative*, 15.

¹⁰ Willem Saayman, “Missionary or Missional? A Study in Terminology,” *Missionalia* 38, no. 1 (2010): 13. 15.

¹¹ Peter White and Nelus J.P. Niemandt, „The missional role of the Holy Spirit: Ghanaian Pentecostals’ View and Practice,” *In die Skriflig* 49, no. 1 (2015): 2.

the entity involved.¹² It is imperative that Christians be like Jesus Christ, by living freely within diverse cultures and being faithful to the Father and his gospel as Jesus was in his own time and place. This embodiment of the gospel is often referred to as ‘contextualisation’ or ‘inculturation.’¹³

According to one senior minister of the Church of Pentecost:

The mode of pastoral transfers in the Church of Pentecost can be said to enhance its capacity to be missional. Pastors are transferred and supported to live in places where even the local churches he superintends may not be able to support him financially. These stations are usually referred to as mission stations, and the ministers transferred there are given extra financial support termed mission support. This is expected in no small way to communicate the Church’s intention to go to where the sinners are, regardless of the cost involved.¹⁴

Apostle Michael Nimo of the Christ Apostolic Church International submits:

It is a fact that Pastors are usually transferred to mission stations regardless of their ethnic background, and many arrive only to realise that they cannot minister without the help of interpreters. This also is indicative of the Church’s commitment to mingle with unknown cultures and learn their ways of life, if that is what it takes to win them to Christ. Furthermore, beyond transfers to mission areas, pastoral transfers make many local churches more missional. This is because Pastors are expected to retain the mission fervour when they are eventually transferred to non-mission stations.¹⁵

¹² Timothy Keller, “The Missional Church,” 2009, accessed January 11, 2017, http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/learn/resources/Missional_Church-Keller.pdf

¹³ Mark Driscoll, *The Radical Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 40.

¹⁴ Apostle Ekow Badu-Woode, interview granted the author, January 13, 2017. He is a member of the Executive Council of the Church of Pentecost.

¹⁵ Apostle Michael Nimo, interview granted the author, January 13, 2017. He is a former Chairman of the Christ Apostolic Church International.

Transfer of pastors in Classical Pentecostal Churches in Ghana comes with missional targets for soul winning and sometimes church planting. Ministers in the church are therefore evaluated within this context to determine whether they are performing well or not.

A ten-year study was conducted in Korea to determine what positively affects the growth of churches. The study was conducted among congregation sizes ranging from 200 to 10,000. At the end of the study, leadership was found to be the number one influencer of church growth.¹⁶ Schwarz suggests that empowerment is one leadership quality that has a positive effect on church growth. He stated that when the pastor stays for a longer period, the congregation is empowered and develops.¹⁷ This example emphasizes the fact that leadership has an important role to play in forming a missional congregation. When pastors are transferred frequently, it affects the missional culture of the congregation since every new pastor comes with a new idea and style of leadership.

Besides the positive missional purposes of transfer, there are also some negative aspects that should be noted. It is a clear fact that transfers many times have placed pastors and their families in the context of learning new cultures and languages. This, therefore, requires personal adjustment of the ministerial family in every area of their lives.

In such contexts, it takes a while for the pastor to know his district/area, to discern the spiritual needs of the community and to prepare an appropriate pastoral plan. In a similar way, bonding between the members of the church and their newly transferred pastor is a gradual process. Unfortunately, as soon as a good working relationship is established, the pastor is transferred, and the process starts all over again. One retired pastor of the CoP expressed the view that “in reality it makes less and less sense to call us shepherds because no

¹⁶ Young-Gi Hong, “Models of the Church Growth Movement,” *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 21, no. 2 (2004): 103-108.

¹⁷ Kristin Schwarz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches*, 4th ed. (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2000), 22-23.

true shepherd can have such a brief relationship with his sheep (their local church)". Frequent changes are not healthy for the growth of churches and pastoral relationship with their congregants.

I agree with the informant to some extent because the calling of a pastor is that of shepherding, feeding and guarding the flock of God. S/he is to give proper attention to people and be accessible to them. Pastors offer counselling and prayer, and restore 'lost souls.'¹⁸ Due to the short permanence of some of them, these roles are not experienced by the flock.

Furtermore, church leadership plays an irreplaceable role in the planting and configuration of the missional congregation.¹⁹ Developing missional communities becomes difficult when pastors are moved indiscriminately.

In Pilon's view, the adjustments that take place when a pastor is transferred are often massive, given the diversity in mission stations (churches) and community life. He further argues that even when such changes take place every five, six or ten years, it should not surprise us that some pastors suffer from a lack of stability in their personal lives and their roles.²⁰ Instability often affects their output.

Financial Implications of Pastoral Transfer

Transfers have financial implications for the pastoral families. Pastors that are 'fortunate' to be sent to a community composed of 'influential and rich people', have their financial status improved. Futhermore, when they are transferred, they received 'a good send-off'. On the other hand, pastors transferred to less endowed churches experience financial difficulties.

¹⁸ Allan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 170.

¹⁹ Peter White, 'A Missional Study of Ghanaian Pentecostal Churches' Leadership and Leadership Formation', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 71, no.3 (2005): 1.

²⁰ Mark A. Pilon, "Pastors and Stability of Office," *Homiletics and Pastoral Review*, 2009, <http://www.hprweb.com/category/magazine/editorial/> (Accessed 10 January, 2017).

Implications on the Development of the Pastor

The development of people is a process. Personal development is, in fact, the process of becoming who we aspire to be in life. In the process of personal development, we learn the skills, knowledge, and aptitudes necessary to live a fulfilling, satisfying, and happy lives. We give ourselves the opportunity to realise our full potential.²¹ Thus, transfer of pastors can have positive or negative effects on their development depending on the circumstances for the transfer, the pastor's personal decision and attitude towards capacity building.

Although some transfers arise from a negative agenda, the positives outweigh the negative motive: often the church leadership intends to help the pastor to develop his leadership abilities and gifts. According to Edström and Galbraith, many organisations use transfers to maintain or develop an organisational structure. They argue that to succeed one must be able not only to affect individual behaviour but also assure that the change in individual behaviour will have an organisational impact.²²

It should be noted that leadership development expands the capacity of individuals to perform in leadership roles within organisations. Traditionally, leadership development has focused on developing the leadership abilities and attitudes of individuals. Leadership can also be developed by strengthening the connection between, and alignment of, the efforts of individual leaders and the systems through which they influence organisational operations.²³

²¹ Linda L. Tarr, *Student Success: Motivating Middle School Students through Personal Development*, 2005, accessed January 12, 2017, <http://www.studentmindset.com/Article-Motivating-Middle-School-Students.pdf>

²² Anders Edström and Jay Galbraith, "Alternative Policies for International Transfers of Managers," *Management International Review* 34, no. 1 (1994): 74.

²³ David V. Day, "Leadership Development: A Review in Context," *The Leadership Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (2000): 581-613.

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One interviewee stated that although many of his transfers were for ‘crisis management’, the transfers gave him the opportunity to develop his capacity to tolerate and manage difficult people (trouble makers) of the various churches he was posted to.

Implications on the Development of the Pastoral Family

The term pastoral family refers to the pastor, his wife and children. The pastoral family play a very important role as far as the ministry of the pastor is concerned.²⁴

Transfers can have negative or positive impact on the Pastoral family based on the circumstances of the transfer. For example, if a pastor’s family accepts the transfer and are not negatively impacted by it, they can contribute to the success of the pastor’s mission. For this reason, the policy for the transfer of pastors in the Classical Pentecostal Churches in Ghana makes provision for the movement of the pastor’s family — accommodation, educational support for his children and other requirements based on the status of the minister.

The 42nd General Council Meeting of the CoP held in May 2016, at the Pentecost Convention Center (PCC), reports that by December 2015, 942 (79.3%) District pastors in Ghana lived in church-owned mission houses; 781 (67.9%) had cars provided by the church. All these are to enhance and ensure some level of equality when Pastors are transferred.

In spite of the support, transfer can have psychological, emotional, educational effects and impact the career of the spouse. For example, in a situation where a pastor is being transferred to a city with all the necessary basic facilities, these facilities do have a positive influence on the educational and career prospects of the pastoral family. The

²⁴ Paul writes: “One that rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?” (2 Timothy 3:5-6 - NKJV).

situation, however, turns negative when the transfer is to a smaller community with little or no basic facilities.

Children of pastors were seen not to be doing well academically. The reason could be the numerous transfers of the Pastoral family to locations with diverse educational facilities (good and bad depending on the location). In an interview with one of the pastors, he narrated how his transfer to Guinea-Bissau affected their family life. According to him, due to the language barrier in educating his children in Guinea-Bissau, he left his children in Ghana in the care of a family member. This affected the family bond, the educational, emotional and social development of his children.

Another pastor also shared the difficulties his children had gone through in learning the languages of places he has been transferred to. According to him, the transfer made it difficult for the children to specialise in a particular language that they could easily express themselves in. Another explained how his transfer to a Ga-Adangbe speaking area affected the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) of his daughter. He reported that his daughter had schooled in an Asante-Twi speaking area and she was about to enter 2nd year of Junior High School, when he (the Pastor) was transferred. The child enrolled in a school of their new location and registered for the BECE. Due to the examination requirements that she has to write in a Ghanaian language, she wrote the paper in the language of Ga-Adangbe and failed.

Interviews conducted in Kumasi and Accra with 43 children of pastors show that about 72% of the children was seriously affected in their academic life due to the numerous transfers of their fathers. Some reported that they were made to repeat classes and others had to struggle with language and social life. All these affected their emotional and academic well being.

The Way Forward

My recommendation to all stakeholders involved in the exercising and benefiting from the pastoral transfer (that is management, ministers, and members) are the following:

- a) Pastoral transfer should be conducted with a missional motive and must be managed well to enhance church growth. This implies that missional principles must be used together with the church's policy, procedures, practices, and without favouritism.
- b) Stakeholders' interest (pastors, churches, and Pastoral family) must be considered together with the will of God, when initiating pastoral transfer.
- c) Intercultural studies should be part of the programme for pastoral development workshop or seminar of the various churches. In a similar way, theological institutions should also include such courses in their curricula. This would help pastors to have a socio-cultural and psychological preparation for and towards their transfer to various regions and cultures.
- d) Churches should think of better conditions of service for pastors being transferred to villages.

Conclusion

The article discussed issues related to the transfer of pastors in Classical Pentecostal Churches in Ghana. It outlined some of the reasons or factors for the transfer of pastors. Although there are many good reasons, some transfers are ill motivated. However, the positive reasons outweigh the negative.

The second part of the article focused on some of the implications of Pastoral transfer on the church, the family of the pastors and personal development of the pastor. It was argued that although transfers have several effects, the sending church usually looks at the missional purpose and the development of the pastor rather than the pastoral family.

In view of the implications of pastoral transfer on the church, the pastor and his family, it was suggested that transfer should be carried out

in a balanced and unbiased manner. Thus, missional principles must be used together with the church's policy, procedures, practices, and without favouritism.

Finally, intercultural studies should be part of the programme for pastoral development workshops or seminars of the various churches.