CHRISTIAN SERVICE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

CHILDREN’S MINISTRY AND ITS EFFECT ON CHURCH GROWTH: A
CASE STUDY OF ASSEMBLIES OF GOD, GHANA GLORY HOUSE
CHAPEL, PATASI-KUMASI

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DECLARATION

I Kwame Ofori Atta do hereby declare that this thesis report is the result of my own original research, except for sections for which references have been 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

This work is dedicated to all Children’s Ministry Workers in Assemblies of God, Ghana and the world at large. I also dedicate it to my wonderful wife Rev. Mrs. Doris Ofori Atta and our three lovely children, Emmanuel, Esther and Eunice and finally to the Glory House Chapel family.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am highly indebted to God Almighty for His bountiful grace and love shown me to pursue this MA program. I also wish to express my deepest appreciation to my supervisor Rev. Mrs. Christine Adjei Glover for her expert direction and words of encouragement. I will forever remember our meetings. I finally thank my wife Rev. Mrs. Doris Ofori Atta for the interest shown in my academic pursuits. May God bless you, dear.
ABSTRACT

The church has a responsibility towards children and this is done through the Children’s Ministry. This makes the church a vital agent in the development of the child. Any effective church-based children’s ministry helps in church growth. Therefore, this study examines the impact of children’s ministry on church growth in the Assemblies of God, Ghana Glory House Chapel, Patasi-Kumasi. Questionnaires and interviews were the main research tool used on selected participants in the Kumasi metropolis per the administrative jurisdiction of the church. The outcome of the study points to the fact that church growth and children’s ministry are two inseparable entities. The church has a role to play so far as the development of children in the society is concerned. Any church that develops its children’s ministry threads the path of growth. The study recommends that The Assemblies of God Church has a mandate to focus on the priority of children’s ministry through the development and implementation of effective programs in order to ensure sustained growth.
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CHAPTER ONE
GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Christians believe that children are a blessing from God. With this blessing also come responsibilities. As stewards of God’s children, parents are responsible for helping children grow physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. The church also has a responsibility toward children too and this is done through the Children’s Ministry.

McGavran and Wagner, in *Understanding Church Growth*, comment on three types of church growth: biological, transfer and conversion. “Biological growth derives from those born into Christian families,” meaning most children are inducted into Christianity by virtue of their parents’ affiliation. This admission makes the church a vital agent in the development of the child. The church, as an agent of child development plays a vital role, in conjunction with other stakeholders, not only in the spiritual and moral aspects of the child’s development, but also the social, educational and psychological status of the child through its (the church’s) tangential functions.

Any effective church-based children’s ministry helps in church growth both externally and internally. Externally, a children’s ministry that is active and planning ahead has a great opportunity for activities that assist the church in spreading the gospel. Children of non-Christians can be invited to activities without feeling threatened. Likewise, internally, Children’s ministry helps the church’s biological growth because it teaches children about their Savior. It gives them facts and experiences that help them learn about Christ and respond to Him. The existence of a children’s ministry helps validate

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the importance of children within the church. As a result, children feel welcomed and loved at church.  

From the above, it is obvious that the churches must understand that they cannot neglect their children without squandering the present and jeopardizing the future and therefore should wake up to curb the possible menace.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The need for effective church-based Children’s Ministry towards church growth is evident in that many young people reach adulthood and decide not to follow Christ. They had not been prepared to accept him as their Savior. One reason for this is that some churches do not have an effective ministry to children — do not have a program to help them receive Jesus into their lives. 3 Some churches have not bothered to see that impact and have neglected their Children's Ministry.

The Children's Ministry concept in many of our various churches draws a clear picture of the blatant neglect of children. They have been relegated to the background, and they are not even considered when the churches are planning and strategizing for growth. In other words, if the church is to have a healthy future, it is essential that it has a viable children’s ministry. It is in the light of finding answers to this and many other related questions that has prompted this research on the effects of children’s ministry on church growth using Glory House Chapel as a case study.

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1.3 Research Questions

From the above statement of the problem, the possible research questions were:

1. What is the children’s Ministry?
2. How is the children’s Ministry organized in the Assemblies of God, Ghana?
3. What are the challenges facing the children’s ministry in the church?
4. What are the impacts of the children’s Ministry on the growth and development of the Assemblies of God, Ghana?

1.4 Objectives of the Research

This research work seeks to:

1. Present a systematic overview of the effects of church-based Children's Ministry on the growth of churches.
2. Identify major trends and issues in children’s ministry vis-à-vis the growth of the church.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study focuses largely on children’s ministry and its effects on church growth of the Assemblies of God, Ghana, Glory House Chapel, Patasi, Kumasi. The issue of effective church-based children’s ministry has become so paramount that there is a need to undertake a study of this nature. In this research paper, children refer to all male and female kids within the ages of two (2) to eighteen (18).

The researcher did not aim at bringing an all-embracing manual for children’s ministry and church growth in Assemblies of God, Ghana in general. However, in context, the target was Glory House Chapel, a local assembly within Santasi District where the writer has lived and worked as a pastor for several years and has acted as a
facilitator and promoter of child related programs in the church and the larger community. In this sense, the study was limited because it was not extended to the other regions of Ghana. A further delimitation of the study was that, it covers only one local Assembly within the larger Assemblies of God organization. However, brief comparisons and references to the subject matter among other branches in other local churches of Assemblies of God, Ghana, were made in some specified areas in this study.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research provides an assessment of the role of church-based Children’s Ministry in enhancing church growth. The study enables the church to think thoroughly through its beliefs and practices in order to arrive at a more relevant theological stance on the issue of equipping the various ministries for effective development. It also provides information that will enable the church gain a proper perspective of its practices and programs especially those that involve children. This work throws more light on the current scientific analysis of the need to place the child at the center of human social development and also to educate the entire Christian community and the general public on the role of the church in effective child development. The research will also benefit academia as it will contribute to the existing store of knowledge and information in the area under research.

1.7 Methodology

The researcher recognizes the importance of research work from various sources to get data to validate the credibility of the thesis topic. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were employed in this work. The researcher used the knowledge and experience of the participants as its playing field to enable him capture what
people say and do, and to interpret them in order to understand events from the viewpoints of participants. In order to be able to write narrative report with contextual description and direct quotations from research participants, the researcher used questionnaires supplemented by field interviews and observations to generate data.

Both primary and secondary sources were used for the study. The bulk of data for the study came from primary sources. However, secondary sources were used to critically assess the information that will be gathered from the primary sources.

1.7.1 Primary Sources

The researcher used structured and unstructured interview. Both interview formats involved having interaction ‘one on one’ with a respondent. With the structured interview, there were interview questions that the researcher used as a guide to solicit information from the respondent. With the unstructured interviews, there were no guided questions. This was to enable the researcher and respondents to develop a personal friendship and rapport which in turn created a conducive environment for the researcher to meet the respondents to elicit relevant pieces of information.

In the entire study, the researcher interviewed ten people and administered fifty questionnaires. These persons included pastors, children’s ministry leaders, past members of the children’s ministry. The remaining respondents comprised of twenty-five selected children and twenty-five members of the selected churches.

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1.7.2 Secondary Sources

The researcher also used different secondary sources including books, thesis, journals, articles etc. relevant to this work. These are published and unpublished materials of scholarly opinion. In addition, the researcher consulted dictionaries, encyclopedia, newspaper publication and articles. The secondary sources also helped in a way to provide views on the issue of Children’s Ministry within the church and how the church is responding to the issues. The researcher took up this challenge to research into the children’s ministry and its effects on church growth. This is because, it is believed that if this assessment was done and emerging issues addressed, the church would wake up and effectively plays its complementary role towards the overall development of the Children’s Ministry.

1.7.3 Sample/Sampling Technique

In this study, the researcher employed the purposive sampling technique to select his respondents. In the work, Research Methods Techniques of Social Research, it has been stated that in purposive sampling, “the units of the sample are selected not by a random procedure, but they are intentionally picked for study because they satisfy certain qualities which are not randomly distributed but they are typical or they exhibit most of the characteristics of interest to the study.”5 The categories of people that were interviewed included pastors, leaders, and children workers within the Assemblies of God church Glory House Chapel, Patasi-Kumasi. These respondents were selected on the basis that they possessed relevant information and opinions that were considered to be essential to the study.

5Tom K.B. Kumekpor, Research Methods and Techniques of Social Research (Accra: Son Life Press and Services, 1999), 72.
1.7.4 Data Collection

Questionnaires and interview guides were the main research instruments for the collection of data for the study. They thoroughly covered the areas of the study – Children’s ministry and its effects on church growth.

1.7.5 Analysis Procedure

The analyses were done mainly along the lines of the selected local assembly of the church. However, when the need arose, names of individual respondents and their respective churches or capacities were mentioned. Also, frequencies and simple percentages were the main statistical tools to be used to analyze the data. These was to enable the researcher identify trends and to display relationships between parts of the findings.

1.8 Literature Review

Some people have studied the subject and have laid foundation for my work; this literature review is to give credit to them. It is also to open up the areas that could be of immense benefit for more study. Since, this is not the first and that, many scholars have already researched into this concept, there would be improvement upon them where necessary.

1.9 Organization of the Study

The research is divided into five (5) chapters. The first chapter considers the introduction to the research detailing the direction of the thesis. It gives out the background to the study, the statement of problem, research questions, purpose and objectives of the study, methodology and the significance of the study. The second chapter examines the theoretical aspects of the thesis. It examines Children’s Ministry
and church growth, which are relevant to the study. It also take a look at what the Bible says about the upbringing of children. Chapter three presents an overview of the children’s ministry of the Assemblies of God, Ghana andin the Glory House Chapel as well as some selected theological issues in the children’s ministry of the church. The forth chapter discusses findings from the field, whereas chapter five concludes the research by presenting a summary of the research and discussing issues emerging out of the study and gives recommendations.
CHAPTER TWO
CHILDREN’S MINISTRY AND CHURCH GROWTH

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter looked at the general introduction of the study and the direction to which this research is taking. The purpose of this present chapter is to examine children’s ministry and church growth which are relevant to the study and also take a look at what the Bible says about the upbringing of children.

2.2 What is Ministry?

Atkinson, et al., explain that ‘ministry’ is used both in broad and narrow sense. Broadly, ministry refers to mutual acts of services performed by members of the church towards God and one another. Narrowly, it refers to the service of those recognized usually by an act of ordination, as leaders within the church. 6

Ministry, according to Atkinson, varies on denominational lines and it is commonly seen as the ministry of the word and the sacraments. It is believed to be derived from the ministry of Jesus Christ in his preaching, teaching, healing and miracles as well as his sacrificial death on the cross and resurrection from death.

The Bible in Matthew 9:35–38 indicates that:

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the Kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore to send out workers into his harvest field (New International Version).

The above quotation may be referring to ministering to the spiritual and material needs of people. Like the bible tells us, when Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus’ heart overflowed with deep sense of compassion for the dispirited persons who were scattered and neglected. This should become the focus of ministry today. Unfortunately, ministry today seems to lose focus and is void of compassion, considering the behavior of some ministers.

Atkinson’s definition of compassion may have some bearing on what ministry is. According to him, compassion is experienced when a person is moved by the suffering of others and the act of entering into the suffering of another person with the purpose of relieving it. Compassion involves ‘doing’ than just saying, so is ministry. A compassionate response to suffering requires that one should be moved by the suffering of the other and act to remove the immediate effects of the suffering to correct the structures which may have given rise to the suffering itself. One who demonstrates compassion accepts the responsibility to heal, bring hope and minister justice. By this ministry, God’s grace and peace, rest upon those in need, to help them overcome their spiritual, emotional and physical needs.

MacDonald indicates that as long as we are responsible in propagating the gospel of Christ, the only way the Good news is beneficial is when it is applied to the social and economic lives of people. This presents a wholistic gospel to humankind, since God is concerned not only in meeting spiritual needs but emotional and material as well.

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However, caution should be taken not to over emphasize a particular need beyond other needs.\(^8\)

In like manner, ministry centers on the need of the other than on one’s own need. Although it is not an obligation, neither is it a passive feeling, it is an active response to need, which must not be limited to personal relationship, but rather directed to spiritual, social, economic and cultural needs, since these needs create ignorance, poverty, hunger, disease and the like.

The early church in ministry demonstrated similar traits in possessions, breaking of bread, rejoiced with those mourning, engaged in communal worship and evangelism. Their caring spirit extended to the entire community. Addai-Mensah, states that ministry embraces all activities that liberate the human person from slavery of all kinds into God’s Kingdom. According to him, the church is for service and any activity that is termed mission should have a clear purpose of serving humanity. Ministry should also have a clear sense of purpose in serving humanity. \(^9\)

2.3 Theological Foundation of Children’s Ministry

Contemporary thoughts on child development in church-based children’s ministry, like its secular counterpart, are often expressed in behavioral science terms with reference to the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. Philosophical categories like epistemology, metaphysics and axiology are the basis for presentations of the theory. Such constitutes the language of child education. \(^10\)

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In view of these differences in terminology, theological concepts are not easy to fit into educational and child development discussions. As a result, in Christian children’s ministry, theology is usually related only to the content of instruction. It is occasionally employed as a guide for theory and practice. In the researcher’s view, this should not be so because theology is significantly related to what Christian Education has been, is, and should be.

It can therefore be said that theology that is based upon accurate interpretation of the scripture is a valuable aid to Christian thought and is the content of much instruction in Christian education and child development. However, theology is not ultimate in that the interaction with behavioral science research and theory is necessary.

2.4 Children’s Ministry and Church Growth

Gangel, stresses that evangelical Christians are very quick to say that the Bible is the most important book ever written. They believe it from ‘cover to cover’, but in the reality of daily living, experiences does not always support their creed. Writing on ‘Using the Bible with children’, Gangel proposes that Christian parents should endeavor to teach their children to imbibe the teachings of the Bible rather than just admiring the Bible. She gives three basic principles that, according to her, should guide parents when teaching their children the Bible. “Children should be able to have and use their own Bible, we must teach the Bible as God’s whole revelation and not build a doctrine or teaching from one passage of scripture to the exclusion of others, children should realize that the Bible is the final authority”.

The researcher agrees with Gangel that, children need to develop their own sets of convictions and beliefs based on the scripture and not based on what their parents or teachers believe in. However, we have to admit a challenge in Gangel’s admonition for parents and the church to allow the children to develop their own beliefs based on the Bible without any indoctrination. For example, most of the junior literary materials of the Assemblies of God Church are partly developed based on the church’s doctrines, even though they may be derived from the Bible. How then can the church reconcile these two poles of opinions and how will this reconciliation help promote church growth in the Assemblies of God?

According to Stephen and Georgina Addei, the major challenge of parenting lies in the fact that the lives of couples are major determinants of a child’s own future life. According to the authors, despite the fact that we live in a world where morally corrupting forces are thrown at children from all angles, it is from the home that a child will pick up the tools to deal with these external forces or succumb to them. To conclude, they admonish that “bringing up children to be morally, intellectually and spiritually mature will require the right attitude on the part of parents so parent must know and apply time-tested biblical principles.

Indeed, parents are called upon to train their children to face challenges and win at all times. However, due to the subject matter of their study, they did acknowledge that bringing up morally upright children is also the duty of the church. Also raising children with good moral leadership in the church can enhance the growth of the church. The church through its children’s ministry set the framework for morally

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upright life of the children who will grow to become responsible adults in the church. Therefore, this thesis delved into some of the teaching modules of the children’s ministries of the Assemblies of God Church, Glory House Chapel, and how they help to promote moral uprightness among the children.

Writing on the role of the church in child upbringing, Gruber admonishes that children’s church should be allowed to be what its name is.\textsuperscript{14} When this is done, it will bring to pass the dreams of well-behaved little ones happily obeying every rule, wearing mini versions of ministerial-type attire and able to quote vast passages of Scriptures. The author pictures the main church service for adult and admits that the adults were taught in Sunday schools and children churches when they were young and as such “they have been trained in the way they should go, and now that they are old, they will not depart from it”.\textsuperscript{15}

However, the picture being painted by Gruber of ‘a perfect and grown adult church’ simply because the congregation has passed through children’s church may not necessarily apply to the selected churches in this research. Without committing any prejudice before hand, this thesis examined the life of some selected adult members of the church who have gone through the children’s ministry to validate the claims of the researcher. Practically, it is possible that some of them might have imbibed the moral standard of the Bible whereas others have fallen short in their adult life. This may be due to other factors, perhaps not only due to the children’s church.

\textsuperscript{15}Gruber, \textit{Children’s Church}, 10.
Asare states that one of the best ways in which parents can be supported to train their children is to equip them with knowledge and skills in the principles of parenting. He adds that parents who lack this knowledge, practical skills and techniques are bound to fail in their effort to raise disciplined, upright and godly children who will in turn follow their footsteps in the church. Writing on discipline as one of the principles of good parenting, the author indicates that “discipline should be considered as something positive and connected to training and guidance. It can be defined as a system of guiding individuals to a desirable behavior”. How are the parents in the Assemblies of God Church being supported to train and discipline their wards as has been alluded by Asare above? The church provides the opportunity and space for the parents to train their children through the numerous activities of the children’s’ church and this if done effectively will lead to church growth.

Joy explains that the church is caught in the magnetic field of education in general, especially with regard to the separation of teaching from active living. Explaining this assertion, he states that in any consideration of the responsibility of the church, the obligation is surely upon us to note carefully what our opportunities and what our motivation are in ministering to the child. He presents series of observations about the importance for the church in keeping faith with children in their trust. He sees children as properties of God– children are open to God, and the fact is that Jesus placed high value on children. Writing on Jesus’ commitment to child development, Joy explains that “He accepted them at their stage of development for what they were,
but saw beyond that to their potentials as full-grown creatures made in the image of God”

Feucht explains that values learned almost automatically become the integrating factor in a child’s personality. This, he states, takes place as a person internalizes the values which he perceives.19 These values become his conscience. According to the author, a child closely related to the Christian faith, thinking, and the way of life of a conscientious Christian mother will absorb more of lifelong significance from this source than from any other source. He writes that “every person needs a proper self-esteem and a sense of worth and direction. To develop such self-esteem, self-confidence, and sense of security, a child needs a happy and hopeful outlook on life”.20 The implication of Feucht’s assertion is that the religious affiliation of a child’s parent goes a long way to form the life-long values of the child. However, sometimes well committed Christian parents may bring up delinquent children and may render his assertion weaker. How can this be possible?

According to Wilson, no infant or toddler will be in church except he or she is brought there. She thus states that a church which desire to minister to children must do so through a ministry to children.21 Writing on the ministry of child department in a church, Valerie Wilson writes that “the objective of the (Children’s) ministry is not to relieve parents of their responsibilities for the religious training of their children, but to help them fulfill those responsibilities.”22 The church cannot afford to neglect a cradle roll department and the type of ministry it represents. For one thing, the future

20Feucht, Social Influence on Children, 29.
21Valerie Wilson, “Understanding Infants and Toddlers”, Child Education in the Church (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 68.
22Wilson, “Understanding Infants and Toddlers”, 68.
of both the child and the church are at stake and that the church that deliberately waits to enroll a child until he or she is aged may miss some substantial aspects of its growth. Since the main objective of children’s ministry is to help them to bring out the developmental millstone in children.

2.5 Paradigms of Church Growth

The church is fundamentally different from corporate enterprises that exist primarily for profit. Churches can no longer think of growth in terms of quantity, or size, or couched in any bureaucratic or institutional mindset such as requiring a percentage increase in attendance or giving by a certain data. These are the visions of corporations and organizations that are primarily operating for profit and not for human transformation.

Rather, church growth must be conceived as broadening horizons of ministry: spreading the gospel (which literally means “good news”) in more ways and to more people than ever before. People must experience the life-changing growth of God’s love and the wholeness that comes from living within the interdependent web created by that love. When a church is offering this kind of transformational experience, the members will be able to take care of themselves.

Warrenindicates that in order to build a healthy, strong and a growing church; there is the need to lay a strong and solid foundation. According to him, this is done by clarifying the minds of everyone involved to do exactly what the church exist and is supposed to do. From his book, ‘Purpose Driven Church’, he states that, once your
courses are set, decision making becomes far easier and less frustrating. The researcher agrees with the author that a clear purpose for a church, and in this case the children’s ministry, allows stronger concentration. However, Warren does not include in his writing the effect of a church not having a clearer purpose in its existence. This research will therefore identify some of the effects and examine whether the challenges that Assemblies of God, Ghana is going through in the adult church are as a result of lack of clearer purpose for the children’s church.

McGavran and Arn indicates that churches which are not growing are usually churches in which the responsibility for growth is all loaded onto one person, usually the Pastor. On the other hand, he says that “a church where everybody is working for growth, where everybody is concerned that the Gospel be known, that is a church which grows” They add that where everybody works at getting obstacles out of the way, where everybody works as much as possible about the growth of the church, there church growth occurs.

Church growth and unity can only be achieved when there is a shared responsibility. However, in a situation where much attention is paid to only one segment of the church at the expense of the others, there will be stagnation in the growth of the church. Can this be one of the factors affecting the growth of the Assemblies of God, Ghana? Seeking answers to these questions is a priority of this study.

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2.6 Ministry and Children

Asante mentions that the church is involved in children’s ministry; hence, ministry is not limited to the adults. According to him, the church’s ministry as presented in Mark and other Gospels is not limited to the adults. Asante says that children may be hindered from going to Jesus by our failure to make Jesus attractive to them. He indicates that ministry to children calls for active participation of parents and not something that can be left in the hands of child evangelists, professional Christian educationists, Sunday school teachers or those who conduct children services. In the Gospels, it was the parents who brought their children to Jesus. According to him, the dignity and protection which should be accorded children is a good example that should be followed by everyone. Society should break bounds to reach children in the street, irrespective of religion, tribe or culture.

Jesus demonstrated love for children and says that whoever welcomes a little child in his name welcomes him (Christ) (Matthew 18:5). Unfortunately, a number of children are denied access to the Lord due to probably the breakdown of some parental responsibility at home which has forced a number of them on the streets. The church and civil society should reach out to such children who roamed all day long in the streets.

2.7 Birth and Care of Children in the Bible

There was among Jewish wives a universal longing for, and joy in the giving of birth to children. Vos explains that this longing is well expressed in the words of Rachael to Jacob “give me children, or else I will die” (Gen. 30:1). Christians hold that

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children are signs of blessings from God. “Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body” (Deut. 28:4). The Psalmist pictures a man blessed of the Lord, and says of him, “Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house” (Psalm 128:3). Therefore, sterility in marriage was considered to be a divine visitation or a curse.²⁷ Care for infants in the Bible was done much as when Jesus was born. Instead of allowing the young baby the free use of its limbs, it is bound hand and foot by swaddling bands and thus made into a helpless bundle.

At birth, a child is washed and rubbed with salt and then with its legs together, and its arms at its side, it is wound around tightly with linen or cotton bandage. The prophet Ezekiel indicates that these same customs at child birth were practiced in his day. “In the day thou was born ….. thou was not washed in water to cleanse thee; thou was not salted at all, nor swaddled at all” (Ezekiel 16:4)

2.8 Duty of Parents in Training of Children in the Bible

It is quite clear from the scriptures that the mother did most of the training of children in their earlier years. The Book of Proverbs speaks of “the words of King Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him” (Prov. 31:1). Concerning Timothy, Paul said, “From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures” (2 Tim. 3:15). Earlier in the epistle, Paul refers to the faith of Timothy’s mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5). Young children were taught by their mothers. The daughters, doubtless remained under the guidance and oversight of their mothers until marriage. As the boys grew up, they were more and more taught by their fathers, although they never get away from the mother’s training altogether. Proverbs often refers to a father’s instruction of his son. (Proverbs 4:1)

²⁷Howard, New Illustrated Bible Manners and Customs, 107.
2.9 Importance of Children in the Old Testament

This session talks about how children were viewed in the Old Testament. Children are blessing, not problem, as some may think. They were included in the affairs of the kingdom, not neglected. God spoke His intentions to a child. He chose children and youth and made some kings and others prophets over his people.

2.9.1 Children are Blessing, not Burden

In the Old Testament, children were not considered as burden but a blessing. Childlessness was a reproach which every wife abhorred. Women cried to God for children because they considered them a blessing. For this reason, Hannah refused to be entertained except she had a child (1 Sam. 1; 5-7). It was therefore every woman’s pride to be a mother. In Genesis 17:16, God pronounced blessings upon Abraham which included the giving of a child. Fathers blessed their children with the blessing of having children, Genesis 28: 1-3. The Psalmist said children are a heritage from the Lord, and they are a reward, Psalm 127.

2.9.2 Children are Inclusive, not Neglected

God in his dealings with Israel did not consider age as a measure for using someone or revealing himself to someone. Many children in the Bible encountered God in diverse ways. The book of first Samuel talks about the story of Samuel who served in the Tabernacle because he had been offered to God by his mother as a fulfillment of a vow she had made. Samuel served faithfully in God’s house, and he, at a tender age experienced God speaking to him directly. He did not understand in the beginning so he kept on asking the Priest Eli if he had called but Eli replied in the negative and this continued for a third time, Eli knew it was God and told Samuel to respond that God
should speak to him for he was listening. Samuel was young but God chose to tell him His displeasure with Eli and his children (1 Samuel 3). David was very young but when Israel needed a king to sit on the throne in the stead of Saul, God bypassed every other person including the well-statured and handsome children of Jesse, and chose the youngest among them, David. God spoke concerning David that he was a man after his own heart (1 Samuel 16). God uses children.

God called Jeremiah to send him to the nations to deliver his people. But Jeremiah thought he was too young, nevertheless, that did not matter to God. God strengthened him and told him not to look down upon his age but just do what he sent him to do. He ended up a great Prophet who stood for God in very hard circumstances (Jeremiah1).

King Josiah is no exception, he became king at age eight, yet he pleased God in all his thirty one years of reign (2 Chronicles 34). Naaman received his healing through the direction of a young maid who had seen God perform miracles through his prophets. She had no doubt that if Naaman saw the prophet Elisha, he would receive his healing from leprosy and that was exactly what happened (2 Kings 5).

These aforesaid examples from the Bible indicate that God has not exempted children in His dealings with humankind so if children are taught the ways of God, they will understand God. God can also touch their lives in many wonderful ways. For God to use children, their hearts have to be prepared to receive him. The above scriptural examples are to demonstrate God’s position on matters of children; they are ranked high before Him. The church cannot ignore its responsibility to children, but to fulfill it.
2.10 The Biblical Command to Teach Children

The Bible spells out clearly what to do with children for them to grow up as adults who know God. “Train a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not turn from it” (Proverbs 22:6), “these commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deuteronomy 4:6). The above texts set the tone for the Children’s Ministry. In the verses the command to teach children is given, and must be followed.

The commandment to Israel, to teach their children the word of God came from God himself. Some will argue it was Moses’ command because it was Moses who spoke to the hearing of the people. It should be noted that Moses made it clear that he spoke for God. “These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe” (Deuteronomy. 6:1). God is the one who commanded his people to teach their children his commands, decrees and laws. It is He who instructed His people to train their children the way they should go. God is the source of the command.

To be commanded is to be given an authoritative order. Israel received an authoritative order to teach their children. What this means is that God’s people are to include the children in whatever they do, so that, they will know and understand their responsibility toward God. “One key word to express love for God is to be concerned with the spiritual welfare of our children and strive to bring them into a faithful
relationship with God. The godly training of children should be a foremost concern of parents.”

The Lord seeks universal empire, and commands his people to teach the word to everyone. Every church and every Christian must understand that they have commanding orders to fulfill. Not only is every saint commanded to go, or to take steps to take the gospel to other lands, but the objective is stated. They are to make disciples for Christ. They have entered the school of Christ and are to be taught and afterwards to be made Disciples of Christ. Not only were the Jews to benefit but all nations. Christ came to be the Savior of the world. His is a universal religion. In the Great Commission he looks beyond Judea, and commands that the Gospel should be offered to all nations.

In the words of Coleman, every child is born with innocence, though doctrinally declared sinful with an inherent sin. Nevertheless, a child comes into this world knowing nothing; his first language is from his parents. They learn everything here. The armed robbers of today were innocent children of yesterday. What went wrong is their environmental exposure. A child grows to become what he or she is exposed to. Frank Coleman said, “No child should be left to grow up in our world of unbelief and fragrant sin without having heard the gospel with a persuasive invitation to believe it and accept its salvation”

To transmit God’s word to the children is to ensure their commitment to God. God wanted his people of all generation to remain loyal to him. God’s people must love

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28Full Life Study Bible (Grand Rapids: Life Publishers Int., 1992), 262.
God with all their heart, obey him and serve him with all their might and their entire mind. To be able to do this, they needed to know God’s word to know his ways. This is the surest way to be successful, just as Joshua was commanded to meditate on God’s word to be successful.

The Hebrews were extremely successful. The reason for their success was that religious education was life oriented, not information oriented. They used context of daily life to teach about God. If you want your children to follow God, you must make it a part of your everyday experience. You must teach children diligently to see God in all aspects of life. God’s purpose in instructing his people to teach their children his word is to make them successful among other people of other nations. He wanted his people to be different and distinct. Transmitting his word to the children will guarantee continuity. Generations instructed in God’s word will benefit from it, and be blessed.

Children are the future leaders who need to be prepared for leadership. Teaching is the means to prepare the younger generation for future responsibility. The result of obeying the command to teach children is to have a people prepared to take over from the older generation. Cutty thus affirms that “the Bible is a mode of God’s self-disclosure. Through these writings he is making his nature known to man.” The future of the children depends on the training they receive today.

God’s word which came to His people through Moses was received and practiced among God’s people. Moses repeated the instruction as a reminder to the people when he got close to the end of his life. The aftermath of Moses’ life and the people’s response to the command needs to be discussed. A careful observation reveals, at least, two different levels of response.

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30 Life Application Bible, 274.
There was an indication that the command was fully carried out. In an attempt to fulfill God’s word the Israelites established the synagogue schools. It was the practice that every Jewish child was to be trained in the synagogue school from a very tender age. Historical events were told and retold to enable listeners to paint a mental picture of the event in their minds. The event of the crossing of the red sea was to be preserved and narrated to their children’s children. God commanded them to pick up twelve stones from the middle of the river. These stones were going to be point of reference to their posterity about what God did for them. All proper care should be taken to keep in mind the mercies of the Lord; and to transmit knowledge of them to their children and all coming generations. Commenting further on this historical incidence, William indicates that

The LORD directed that twelve men (one man from every tribe) should carry one stone apiece out of the bed of the Jordan and erect a memorial marker where Israel first camped west of the Jordan. Accordingly, the monument was set up at Gilgal as a permanent reminder to future generations of God’s miraculous stopping of the Jordan so that the Israelites could cross over ... on dry land.  

Children were the main focus of their education because they were going to be the leaders of the next generation. Jewish education took place in the midst of living. The parent, prophet, and priest were their teachers. “Education was not lifted out or segregated from the other major sectors of life. It was so intricately interwoven with life that to fail in teaching and learning was to fail in life itself.”  

After some years had elapsed in the history of the Jews, the leaders relaxed in their obligations toward God and the people. The situation worsened after the passing away of God’s great leaders such as Moses and Joshua. The book of Judges records the

outcome of Israel’s failure. Chapter 2: 8-10 state it clearly: the next generation did not know the God of their fathers. Their fathers did not teach them about the God of heaven who delivered them and brought them to where they are. MacDonald notes that,

Failure to obey God’s command led to the sad state of affairs described in verse 10, where a lack of spiritual leadership is seen to result in a corresponding lack of obedience on the part of God’s people. The previous generation had not taught their children to fear the LORD and to keep His commandments. The neglect of the fathers led to the apostasy of their sons.  

The next generation did evil in the sight of God, because they were ignorant of his word and his ways. Their parents deprived them of understanding, which resulted in darkness upon the nation. They forsook God and turned to other gods and worshiped Baal. Their action provoked God’s anger, and they were sold into captivity. Describing the Israelites in these times Walvoord says that “they knew neither the LORD nor what He had done for Israel could imply a failure of the older generation to communicate God’s acts to them.  

Human beings are the same everywhere; therefore, if the church of today wants the children to hold on to the faith and continue in its teachings, it must make Children’s Ministry very important. It must find a way to communicate God’s word to the next generation, for it is said “children are the single most important population group for the Church to focus upon, because what you believe by the time you are 13 is what you will die believing.” Children’s Ministry is important in fulfilling the great commission. Ministry to children was commanded by God in the Old Testament. It was intended to achieve godliness in all Israel throughout their generations. Israel’s

34 William, Believer’s Bible Commentary, 1372.
obedience to the command brought blessing to the nation, but their disobedience resulted in backsliding, sin and captivity.

2.11 The New Testament and the Children’s Ministry

“And he said unto them, Go ye into the entire world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mk. 16: 15) Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, (Mt. 28: 19). The great commission has its justification on the above texts. Within these texts are clear indications of all inclusive ministries: Jews and Gentiles, blacks and whites, Asians and Arabs, Europeans and Africans, adults as well as children. Barnes explains, ‘into all the world’, To every sinner he offers life; and all the world is included in the message of mercy, and every child of Adam offered eternal salvation. ‘to every creature’, that is, to every human being. Man has no right to limit this offer to any class of men, God commands his servants to offer his salvation to all men.37

Though the command was to benefit all, yet the people at the time discriminated against children because they were not children friendly. Craig confirms, “This commandment of the Lord was given against a background of hostility and discrimination against children. Leaders of the time had a negative attitude towards children. “In first-century, people’s thought about children were often of very little esteemed.”38

2.11.1 Jesus’ Attitude towards Children

Jesus said ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” (Matt. 19: 14). These are Jesus' words when his

disciples prevented parents from bringing their children to him. Jesus loves children too and not only adults. He sets children as the measure of reliance on God and calls on adults to be childlike in order to gain entrance into the kingdom of God. At the triumphant entry when the children shouted hosanna and the people complained, Jesus said that God has ordained praise in the mouth of children. “From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise” (Matt .21: 16). How he must have loved to hear the children shout hosanna. Jesus fed the multitudes from five loaves of bread and two fishes he collected from a boy.

Jesus used children as a channel to perform miracles (Mark. 6:35-44, 8:1-10). Jesus expected adults to treat children kindly just as He would. He emphasized “And whoever welcomes a little child welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matt. 18: 6). This shows that Jesus cares so much about children. Children are dear to Jesus; let not the church look down upon them.

2.11.2 The Disciples’ Attitude towards Children

Jesus was in the middle of another teaching session, and all of a sudden women were seen making their way toward the master with their children. They wanted Jesus to lay his hands on them to bless them. But when the disciples saw it they quickly stopped them (Mk. 10: 13, 14). In the candid view of Craig, ‘the disciples evidently felt that children were too insignificant to be allowed to interrupt the work of Jesus.’ This attitude of the disciples is prevalent in the church today. Ushers do everything they can to prevent children from participating in church programs. Craig thus condemns

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the disciple of Jesus that “their action was actually an abuse of authority.” To play down the Children’s Ministry is to deprive them of their godly right.

2.12 The Early Church and Children

This segment examines the ministry of the Children’s Ministry in the early church. Observation revealed the early church held teaching very high and this included the children. They did not push the children to the background as some churches do today. On the day of Pentecost, Peter, explaining the phenomenon to the people, brought to view the promise of the father from the Prophet Joel (Joel 2: 28). He emphasized an all-inclusive ministry: sons and daughters, old and young. The youth also have true representations of divine things made upon their imaginations by the power of God; that they shall have as full an evidence of them as they could have of any thing that came to the adults. “Children are part of God’s original plan. Joel’s prophecy underscores this. Ministry of children is to fulfill God’s plan. In this great prophetic promise of all–inclusive ministry, the role of children is clearly stated.”

Teaching the word of God was central in the early church.

The apostles were ready to sacrifice other things for the preaching and teaching of God’s word. In Acts 6, the apostles made it clear to the church that teaching was essential to fulfilling the great commission. They requested that other people be selected to assume responsibility of social matters of the church to allow them ample time for prayer, preaching, and teaching of God’s word, (Acts 6). Teaching the word of God was characteristic of the early church. “They gave themselves to the apostles’ teachings and to the fellowship.” (Acts 2:42) They continued in that foundation of

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40 Craig, Matthew: The New American Commentary, 273.
41 Andrew Murray, How to Bring Your Children to Christ (Texas: Whitaker House, 1984), 152.
teaching laid down by their Jewish ancestors. “Christians of the New Testament essentially followed in the directions, if not all the forms, of their Jewish predecessors in teaching and learning about the faith.”  

Teaching in the early church was not limited to the adults only. Paul, writing to the church in Ephesus, called upon fathers to train their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6: 4). Matthew Henry subscribes to this;

Not only bring them up, as the brutes do, taking care to provide for them; but bring them up in nurture and admonition, in such a manner as is suitable to their reasonable natures. Nay, not only bring them up as men, in nurture and admonition, but as Christians, in the admonition of the Lord. Let them have a religious education. Instruct them to fear sinning; and inform them of, and excite them to, the whole of their duty towards God. 

The above quote confirms that teaching was important in the early church, and children were included to give them the prerequisite information for a better future. Parents were called upon to discharge their responsibility to their children by teaching them the word of God. Parents were responsible for training and instructing their children concerning the Lord. The early church knew that children are important to fulfill the great commission.

Peter’s sermon on the Day of Pentecost alluded to Joel’s prophecy as an all-inclusive prediction. The teaching ministry of the early church included the children. The Apostle Paul instructed parents to train their children in fulfillment of God’s command.

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2.13 The Sunday School/Children Fellowship in Churches

Sunday school or children’s fellowship could be found in almost every Christian church today. It is the educational wing of the church. A quick look at its history reveals that Sunday school was established, primarily, for the children of the poor. A sizeable portion of the education program was religious in nature. It was established because there was the fear that “evil” doctrines, unorthodox knowledge and a general lack of knowledge of the scriptures which prevailed at the time will engulf the future generation.44

Robert Raikes of Gloucester45, the founder of the Sunday School Union, from 1782 established classes, often on Saturdays as well as Sundays, for children of the poor who were in employment for the rest of the week. Before the advent of "Sunday Schools," the earliest mandate for education of children was passed in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1647. Notably, a sizable portion of this education program was religious in nature.46

In 1780, Raikes gathered the little children on Sunday to give them instructions. He did not have it easy initially; he faced stiff opposition by churches and clergy, but by the help of John Wesley, the new movement thrived. According to Steve Durasoff, “Sunday schools were set up apart from church. Concerned lay people were trying to make up for the church’s failure to teach children Bible truth.”47 Not too long after this noble experience, other societies adopted the system to educate children on

45Robert Raikes (14th September 1736 – 5th April 1811) was an English philanthropist and Anglican layman, noted for his promotion of Sunday schools. Pre-dating state schooling and by 1831 schooling 1,250,000 children, they are seen as the first schools of the English state school system.
Sunday throughout Great Britain. In the early 1800s, the Sunday schools were started by most churches with emphasis on basic doctrine common to all Evangelicals. Later, the Sunday school spread to America. The Methodist Conference endorsed and encouraged its preachers to promote it in 1790. The Sunday school concept was accepted in other parts of the world including Philadelphia.48 This small beginning of the Sunday school has developed into a worldwide ministry. It can be found in every nation and in every church denomination. Nevertheless, emphasis has shifted from children to adults and establishment of Bible schools. The adult Sunday school and establishment of Bible schools are not bad developments, but these should not be done to the detriment of the children.

2.14 Church Growth

Although the Bible does not specifically address church growth, the principle of church growth is the understanding that Jesus said, “I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:18). Paul confirmed that the church has its foundation in Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11). Jesus Christ is also the head of the church (Ephesians 1:18-23) and the church’s life (John 10:10). Having said that, it should be remembered that ‘growth’ can be a relative term. There are different kinds of growth, spiritual, financial, grow in love, growing in the knowledge and grace etc, some of which have nothing to do with numbers.49

A church can be alive and growing even though the number of members/attendees is not changing. If those in the church are growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus, submitting to His will for their lives, both individually and corporately,

that is a church that is experiencing true growth. At the same time, a church can be adding to its rolls weekly, have huge numbers, and still be spiritually stagnant.

Growth of any kind follows a typical pattern. As with a growing organism, the local church has those who plant the seed (evangelists), those who water the seed (pastor/teachers), and others who use their spiritual gifts for the growth of those in the local church. But note that it is God who gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:7). Those who plant and those who water will each receive their own reward according to their labor (1 Corinthians 3:8).\textsuperscript{50}

There has to be a balance between planting and watering for a local church to grow, which means that in a healthy church each person must know what his/her spiritual gift is so that he/she can best function within the body of Christ. If the planting and watering get out of balance, the church will not prosper as God intended. Of course, there has to be daily dependence upon and obedience to the Holy Spirit so His power can be released in those who plant and water in order for God's increase to come.

Finally, the description of a living and growing church is found in Acts 2:42-47 where the believers “devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” They were serving one another and reaching out to those who needed to know the Lord, for the Lord “added to their number daily those who were being saved.” When these things are present, the church will experience spiritual growth, whether or not there is numerical increase.\textsuperscript{51}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{50}http://www.gotquestions.org/church growth. Accessed, 12th March, 2017
\textsuperscript{51}http://www.gotquestions.org/church growth. Accessed, 12th March, 2017}
2.15 Conclusion

The optimal development of children is considered vital to society and so it is important to understand the social, cognitive, emotional, and educational development of children. The purpose of this chapter was to present a general overview of the concept and theology of the development of children. In doing this, the role of the church as an agent of child development cannot be ignored. What are liturgy and practices of the Assemblies of God Church which help in bringing out holistically developed children in their fold? The next chapter therefore looks at the history and ethos of the Assemblies of God church.
CHAPTER THREE

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD, GHANA GLORY HOUSE CHAPEL, PATASI

3.1 Introduction
In the previous chapter, the concept and theology of children’s ministry and church growth were discussed. In that chapter, it was established that one of the agents of child development is the church. The church as an agent of child development is crucial considering the fact that it has a strong influence on a religiously pervasive society like ours. This present chapter, therefore, takes an overview of the children’s ministry of Assemblies of God Ghana in general and that of the Glory House Chapel, Patasi in particular. The chapter begins with a brief history of the Assemblies of God Church in Ghana and narrowed down to the children’s ministries in the sampled assemblies in this study.

3.2 Brief history of the Assemblies of God, Ghana
The Assemblies of God, Ghana is a member of the worldwide fellowship of Assemblies of God spread in two hundred and twelve (212) countries of the world. Missionaries from Assemblies of God, U.S.A. in the persons of Rev. Lloyd and Margaret Shirer, who were then in Moshiland, Ouagadougou now Burkina Faso crossed over to the Northern Region of the then Gold Coast on horse backs in the early 1931. With their first recruits, Miss Beulah Buchhwalter and Guy Hickok, they started the first Assemblies of God congregation in Yendi.52

To give practical meaning to the Biblical teaching of caring for the needy and alleviating the suffering of the people, the female missionaries organized literacy

classes for the indigenous women whiles the men organized work crews teaching their male counterparts to make swish blocks, door and window frames, and roof trusses. This improved the economic lives of the people tremendously.\textsuperscript{53}

The missionaries believed a medical work among the Kokomba would be a real asset to the whole mission as well as the needs of the people, many of whom had never heard the name of Jesus nor did they have any medical help closer than Yendi. The first Assemblies of God Clinic was therefore built in 1948 in Saboba in the Northern Region by the Missionaries.

All along the activities of the missionaries had been confined to the north. Southerners domiciled in the north on their return to the south shared the gospel with their kinsmen. This led to the establishment of Assemblies of God Churches. As a result, the Accra and Kumasi stations were opened in 1944, followed by the Takoradi station in 1945. Subsequently, the Southern Ghana District Council was inaugurated in 1950, a year after the official inauguration of the then Northern Ghana District Council. The first official General Council meeting was held in 1964. Prior to that, the Northern and Southern District Councils held their meetings separately. From Accra, Kumasi, and Takoradi the Church spread to the Eastern, Central, Volta and Brong Ahafo Regions.\textsuperscript{54}

\textbf{3.3 Children’s Ministry of the Assemblies of God, Ghana}

“Train up a child, the way he should go so that when he grows he may not depart from it”. Prov. 22:6. In this light, the church has established a children’s ministry to


steer the affairs of children. It is their responsibility as church ministry to see to the spiritual and physical needs of our children.

The goal of the ministry is to “reach the unreached children with the saving knowledge of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and to prepare by training up these children in the fear of God to become responsible and faithful Christian adults in future for the Lord Almighty, the church and the nation as a whole.”\(^5^5\) The core mission is therefore to train, encourage, motivate and network all who minister unto children for Christ; “to seek and find the lost children, and prepare them for heaven.”\(^5^6\)

The above mentioned mandate of the children’s ministry is carried out in the church by working to meet spiritual and physical needs of all children through evangelism and discipleship. They also organize vacation Bible classes, children’s camps, rallies, picnics, as a means to nurture our children for a better future. Other activities include leadership training, workshops, retreat and seminars for children teachers and children workers. The ministry also seeks to reach children through children annual camp meetings, Bible quiz competition, rallies, games, excursion and visitations action and special songs, annual children get-together as well as contribute and advice on children’s growth structure in Assemblies of God, Ghana. Below is the general structure and composition of the children’s ministry.

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In addition, it is estimated that currently, about 125,000 children are recognized as Assemblies of God children throughout the 10 regions in Ghana.\textsuperscript{57} The regions are categorized into 3 major groups:

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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Estimated Total Number of Children Assemblies of Ghana = 125,000

\textsuperscript{57}http/www.assembliesofgodghana.org/children’s ministry. Accessed on 12\textsuperscript{th} March, 2017)
3.4 Sub-Ministries under the Children’s Ministry of the Assemblies of God Ghana

3.4.1 Missionettes
Missionettes Girls Club is part of a worldwide program directed by National Girls Ministries within the Assemblies of God. The Clubs were created to allow girls an opportunity to discuss issues that matter to them and learn how to live according to Biblical principles given by Jesus. The name was changed from Missionettes to “Mpact” Girls Clubs in March 2007 as part of a strategic plan to reach girls in a more holistic manner. The club exists in all the branches selected for the study. The purpose of the club was to win girls to Jesus Christ through love and acceptance, teach the girls to obey everything Jesus commanded us—developing girls spiritually and mentally as well as to provide encouragement, support and accountability through lasting Christian relationships.

3.4.2 Royal Rangers
Royal Rangers is a worldwide ministry of the Assemblies of God and is designed to provide youth with challenging activities while providing them with Christian instruction. Royal Rangers International is open to participation of boys. Royal Rangers provides Christ-like character formation and servant leadership development for boys and young men in a highly relational and fun environment. The Royal Rangers mission is to evangelize, equip, and empower the next generation of Christ like men and lifelong servant leaders.

3.5 History of Assemblies of God, Ghana Glory House Chapel, Patasi
Glory House Chapel Assemblies of God started as Calvary Redemption Worship Centre Assemblies of God on 5th March, 2006 at the kindergarten
classroom of Patasi M/A Primary School, Kumasi. The current name was adopted on 27th December, 2008.

The church started with a total membership of twelve (12) people and the Holy Spirit whom the church could not and cannot do anything without Him. This number was maintained for four (4) weeks. The following people were the pioneer congregants; Rev. Kwame Ofori Atta (The researcher), Rev. Mrs Doris Ofori Atta (Pastor's wife), Emmanuel Ofori Atta, Esther Ofori Atta and Eunice Ofori Atta (Pastor's children), Doris Adu and six (6) other youth members from Upper Room Revival Assemblies of God Church. The church service started at 8:00am and activities like prayers, worship and praises, Sunday school, offering were done till 10:00am when closing prayers and benediction were said and shared respectively.

After the fourth week, the number had reduced to six (6); they were the minister, his wife, his three children and Doris Adu when the youth members returned to their former place of worship. In anticipation to gain them back, Rev. Kwame Ofori Atta asked these members to declare their stand whether they will be with him or not but the youth members left just as it is written in John 6:66 " From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (KJV).

After two (2) months in fellowship, Our Faithful God answered our prayers with the coming of the following brethren in Christ; Esther Opoku, Emmanuel Obiri Yeboah, Madam Janet Forkuoh (Late), Madam Agnes Opoku, Mr. Richard Nyamekye, and four children namely, Nana Bonsu, Obed Oduro, Lady
Akosua Amankwaa and Allen Yaw Opoku. All these brethren are still part of the congregational membership to date except Madam Janet Forkuoh of the blessed memory.

In September 2006, with the favour of God through the Headmistress of Patasi M/A School, the place of worship was changed from the KG to the Basic 2 classroom where decorations were made to befit the status of worship. With this new development and commitment in prayers, the attendance level begun to rise. At the right season He makes all things beautiful.

With the promise of God in the Holy Bible for his children, stating that, ‘He is able to do exceedingly abundantly more than we can think of’, and the scripture ‘for the lack of vision my people perish”, the members were challenged to set out a vision to get a permanent place of worship in serving Almighty God. As the fellowship continued in the classroom there were many challenges before and after service since there was the need to arrange the venue for the pupils to use in the following day. Despite all these challenges the church never lost sight of the awesome faithfulness of our Almighty God through his son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit who has been our companion through these periods. Through the direction of the Holy Spirit, we approached the then Regional Superintendent, who is now the General Superintendent of Assemblies of God Ghana, Rev. Dr. Paul Frimpong Manso to secure a loan from Ecobank Ghana. This loan favourably enabled the church to negotiate for an upper terrace floor on which a temporary church building which currently serve as a place of worship was put.
It was on 11th January, 2009 that the church moved from the school premises to commence worship at the church's temporary building project site. The church then appointed five (5) members to serve as deacons and deaconess to support the pastor in the ministry. They were Ebenezer Mensah (Late), Gideon Antwi Bosiako, Richard Nyamekye, Theodore Boakye Yiadom and Doris Adu.

From 5th March, 2006 to 31st December, 2007, the church was made to render its accounts to the mother church, Upper Room Revival Assemblies of God Church. It was the mother church which was catering for Rev. Kwame Ofori Atta and his family during that period. By the grace of God, from 1st January, 2008 up till date, Glory House Chapel Assemblies of God has taken over the mantle of catering for the minister and his family from the mother church.

Currently the church has about four hundred and thirty (430) members with three (3) associate pastors (including the head pastor's wife), five (5) deacons and deaconesses, fourteen (14) Sunday school teachers and almost all the departmental sections of the Assemblies of God Church functioning in it.

3.6 Children’s Ministry
The Children's Ministry of Glory House Chapel Assemblies of God, Patasi was started by Doris Adu (now a deaconess of the church) at the same time the church was started (in 2006) with seven (7) children; three of them being the pastor's children. The founding children were Emmanuel Ofori Atta, Esther Ofori Atta, Eunice Ofori Atta, Lady Akosua Amankwaa Oduro, Nana Bonsu Oduro, Obed Oduro and Allen Yaw Opoku.
Later on, Desmond Agyei Mensah, Emmanuel Quasie and Sister Ernestina Hagan joined the Children's Ministry as teachers. In 2007, Emmanuel Quasie with the support of Ernestina Hagan took over the leadership of the ministry till 2013 when the former handed over to the latter.

The Children's Ministry trains children along biblical precepts of balanced growth. This includes lessons on Salvation, Worship and Obedience. It also organizes Sunday school for children in the church to train and educate them to adopt a Christ-like character. The Children's Ministry occasionally organizes quizzes, sword drill, and other Bible competition to increase the children's biblical knowledge. The current membership of the Children Ministry has increased to 100.

3.7 Theological Issues in the Children’s Ministry of the Church

When it comes to the church and child development, there are certain theological issues that cannot be overlooked. Some of the issues include the meaning of church, and the church being an agent for transformation. A brief discussion of the two issues follow below.

3.7.1 The Church: Its Meaning

Organization and programme for child development must be understood and planned in the light of the nature and purpose of the Church. The children’s ministry of the church is created by the Church and has no independent life of its own. It exists only within the total life and work of the Church. According to Vieth, the Church is maintained in obedience to Christ's command "Go therefore ... teaching them to
observe all things I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20).

The nature of the Church and the quality of life in the Church determine the kind of child development efforts that go on. This means that one cannot talk about Christian child development without talking about the Church and vice versa. It is, therefore, important to know what the Church is, its marks and purpose. According to Grenze the Greek word translated "Church" in the New Testament is ekklesia, a compound word composed of ek, meaning "from" or "out of," and kaleo "to call." Together, the two words mean, called from, or out of, denoting a company of people chosen and called. There are three stages of meaning from the perspective of the Greeks, Jews and Christians. In the understanding of the Greeks, it specifies a lawful assembly of persons assembled in a city to transact a business. They are called out of the whole population.

In addition, early Jewish scholars, translating the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek (the Septuagint), chose ekklesia to render the Hebrew word qahal "assembly" as indicated by Grenze. In the context of the OT the term was applied to the company of Israelites in the wilderness, whom God had chosen and called out of Egypt (Acts 7:38). When employed in the Christian or New Testament sense, ekklesia designates a company, assembly, or congregation of people chosen by God, whom he had called and separated from the world. Considering ekklesia from all the three perspectives we realize that the assembly was called out for a purpose. The word "Church" is used in two ways in the NT. In its primary sense it means a visible, local congregation, or an organized company of disciples meeting at a given place and for a given purpose:

58 H. P. Vieth, The Church and Christian Education (St. Louise: Bethany, 1947), 34.
More than ninety of the hundred and fifteen instances in which "ekklesia is rendered Church in the NT," says Scott and Liddel,⁶⁰ are applied to a visible, local congregation or assembly. A Church is a congregation of baptized believers united by covenant to carry into effect the will of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The visible Church is known as the Church militant. Needless to say, one particular group, organization or denomination cannot claim to be the visible Church. On the other hand the word "Church" according to Wyckoff is "the true Church which includes the cloud of witnesses who have gone before us, and even now surround us as believers".⁶¹ For him, the visible Church that we see is only a reflection of the true and invisible Church. The invisible Church is known as the Church triumphant.

3.7.2 The Church as an Agent of Transformation

The attention is now focused on how the Church functions as agent of transformation. By transformation is meant the process of changing the whole person to become healthier, lighter, more energized and aware.⁶² In transformation one's awareness expands, mindset is redirected, and emotional bumps and past bruises are healed. The real transformation has spiritual connection and takes place inside in one's being. This means that one begins to awake and become aware of his true nature, purpose, strengths, as well as potentials. There is a change in old beliefs, habits, and life style. One experiences spiritual rebirth and decides to make an effort to live a life full of joy, love and purity.

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⁶² S. Philips, Transformation: The Mindset You Need (Los Angeles: Santa Monica Boulevard, 2010), 1.
From the perspective of the Christian faith, transformation simply means being ‘born again’ or experiencing a change from within. According to Obed, to be born again means the Holy Spirit quickens one's spirit and becomes spiritually alive and renewed.\(^{63}\) He continues to affirm that if genuine change fails to occur at the point where one claims to have received Jesus as his personal Lord and Saviour, then no transformation will follow in his life. The Church then has a significant role to play in the transformation process. It must be noted that much of child development agenda is concerned with helping children know what their teachers or facilitators know.

The children’s ministry of the church is concerned with transformation. They teach the children to communicate and to build up the life of God which faith in Christ firmly plants in them. Gradually the child is driven to Jesus' words to capture the meaning of teaching and learning as they are understood. The identity of the individual remains the same but his spirit and life are so renewed and changed (transformed) that he may in a very genuine sense think of himself as a new person. It should, however, be noted that the Holy Spirit operating constantly in the Church is the agent of transformation.

### 3.8 Theological Foundation of Children’s Ministry

Contemporary thoughts on Christian child development agenda, like its secular counterpart, are often expressed in behavioral science terms with reference to the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. Philosophical categories like epistemology, metaphysics and axiology are the basis for presentations of the theory. Such constitutes the language of child education.\(^{64}\)

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In view of these differences in terminology, theological concepts are not easy to fit into educational and child development discussions. As a result, in Christian child development, theology is usually related only to the content of instruction. It is occasionally employed as a guide for theory and practice. This should not be so because theology is significantly related to what Christian Education has been, is, and should be.

It can therefore be said that theology that is based upon accurate interpretation of the scripture is a valuable aid to Christian thought and is the content of much instruction in Christian education and child development. However, theology is not ultimate in that the interaction with behavioral science research and theory is necessary. Epistemology, metaphysics, and axiology govern educational theory and practice.

3.9 Children’s Ministry Educators and their Qualification

There are key players in the child development ministry of every church. First to consider is the Pastor. He or she is the key to effective Christian education in the church. The Pastor's support of and involvement in church and child development set the tone for its success or failure. The second key players are the directors of the children’s ministry (in case of the Assemblies of God, ministers in charge of children’s ministry). These persons have the responsibility of taking the mission of the church and translating it into structure through people, programmes and resources. This position is highly people oriented because there should be a coordination and involvement of many people, training of teachers, and workers, administering programmes and playing a supervisory role as well. The Director/Minister is supposed to also work closely with the children’s teachers as well as the families from which
It is also worthy of note, that Christian child development facilitators must first of all be Christian. This is because a person's relationship with Jesus Christ plays a pivotal role in how he/she approaches ministry. The Scriptures makes a clear distinction between the flesh and the spirit. The person must also be a matured Christian. In this context, the emphasis is not on age but how the person is progressing in his/her walk with the Lord.

Any person involved in child development ministry of the church must be submissive and teachable. The person must also be children oriented. This is because children’s ministry is about children, for whose sake Christ came to die. Christ did not die for programmes but for people. The concerns of people must move him to want to help. The educator/facilitator must be a team player. Cooperation is crucial if any success is to be anticipated. Above all, the educator must be continually dependent on God and in step with the Holy Spirit.

3.10 Theological Paradigms in Church and Child Development

Child development in the church does not go on in a vacuum; it is carried out using some paradigms from the Bible. The child developer should consider the personality of Jesus, the role of the Holy Spirit as well as the instrumentality of prayers as foundations for effective Christian child development.

3.10.1 Jesus the Master Teacher

Jesus Christ remains one person who all Christians and even all teachers are to
emulate. Hayes has observed that Christian education had its beginning with Jesus. This is not to ignore the past but Jesus brought unique freshness to the child development task. He came from God, and brought unique freshness to the teaching task.

Christians are to module their ministries after Him. Jesus is the standard of reflective evaluation. His teaching ministry cannot be separated from the larger context of His life. He always builds into people’s lives principles that will endure and transcends the existential moments. Those who walk with Him become a community of learners. He is the teacher whose teaching principle would never be outdated. Some teaching principles that can be deduced from the life of Jesus as the Master teacher are:

i. Jesus knew how to adapt to the level of understanding of his learners.

ii. He used the familiar to explain the profound.

iii. He modeled the truth in an ultimate sense.

iv. Jesus never lost touch with those He was teaching despite the loftiness of His content or the holiness of His character.

v. He used His teaching/learning strategy within the existing social, economic, political and educational and religiously combined context.

The principle number five stated above can be described as the principle of contextualization in Christian education. According to Pazmino, “Contextualization”, as a popular term in current theological discussions, refers to the application and adaptation of truth to specific contexts or situations and the emergence of truth from specific contexts. Jesus’ teaching was adapted to his audience and often emerged from

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questions posed by his audience. He personalized his teaching by establishing points of contact with various persons and groups and by gaining their involvement. Jesus placed himself at the point of his hearers and started from there. He was sensitive to what they were able to receive. What this means is that Jesus sought to be understood and communicated effectively by contextualizing his teaching. An example in this regard is Jesus’ teaching of the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4). Jesus’ point of contact is the water available at the well and the experience of thirst. Jesus progressively responds to the woman and reveals her spiritual needs. The concluding truth he offers is his very person as Messiah. Jesus tailored his teaching to address this woman’s needs in those areas where she needed instruction and, ultimately transformation.

The implication is that Christian teachers (especially those in the African context) must contextualize their teaching to address the needs and understandings of those with whom they seek to communicate. This presents the challenge of getting to know their context by addressing the issue and problems with which the students are grappling with for effective teaching.

3.10.2 Holy Spirit in the Teaching and Learning Process

Dickson in his submission on the Holy Spirit in education points out that the often neglected person in the teaching/learning process is actually the most important. The Holy Spirit is the sovereign, most wise and ultimate teacher of spiritual truth. He makes God’s truth relevant to the persons involved and enables application that

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causes life and growth. Thus, child development efforts are in vain unless there is a
corporation with the spirit.

Zuck identifies one Scriptural principle by which the Spirit operates in the teaching
role. This is the principle of personal cooperation whereby the Holy Spirit seeks to
teach through Christian teachers. Christian teachers are therefore called upon to be
under the full employment of the Spirit as clean and capable instruments. What this
means is that it is not they who teach but the Spirit. As instruments of the divine
teacher, they teach what the Spirit of God has revealed in His word. The Holy Spirit is
a person who enables the learner and the teacher to work together for the interest of
corporate growth.\textsuperscript{68}

Similarly, Williams identifies the role of the Holy Spirit as a major factor in
determining the difference between Christian holistic child development and a secular
one.\textsuperscript{69} Through the Spirit’s illumination, believers are shown the truth of God’s Word,
and this is not present in the secular milieu. Secular and Christian child development
facilitators may use similar methodologies, but this does not make them the same. In
this regard, one cannot agree more with Williams that “Christian education is
Christian when teachers and learners are dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit in
the learning environment.”

Life transformation is the need, Christ likeness is the goal, and the Holy Spirit is the
key factor. The researcher, therefore, says effective child development ministry in the

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Press, 1998), 81.
69 E. D. Williams, “Christian Education” In David Horton, Gen. Editor, \textit{The Portable Seminary}.
church is dependent on the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit then plays a vital role in child
development.

3.10.3 The Importance of Prayer in the Transformational Process

According to De Beer and Jaarsma, every Christian activity has some dimension of
prayer in it.\textsuperscript{70} The teaching and learning process in child development in the church is
no exception. Prayer and the word give the education process its power. The
Christian child development structure which is desired to build in the life of a
Christian child is based on prayer and the word. In the word God speaks to Christian
learners and in prayer they speak to God. Through prayer God implants the new life
that must ever constitute the basis for Christian nurture.

In this sense, the saying "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that
build it" (Ps127:1) becomes relevant.

The Christian teacher takes the needs of his pupils to the Lord in prayer in his
personal devotions. Parents pray for their child's teacher and the child is to be
encouraged to pray for his teacher. The researcher thinks strongly therefore that there
can be no effective holistic child development efforts without prayer.

3.11 Special Activities Performed at Glory House Chapel

Glory House Chapel, over the years has experienced tremendous growth in their
Children’s Ministry which has resulted to the growth of the Church. This growth has
come due to some special activities that the church adopted to do.

\textsuperscript{70}J.C. De Beer, \textit{Towards a Philosophy of Christian Education}(Washington: National Union of
Christian Schools, 2000), 12.
One of the activities that have brought about growth in the Children’s ministry is Children’s day celebration; in every year, a special week is set aside for the children to exhibit their talents. On this occasion, parents whose children are involved are invited to witness the special gifts and abilities Lord has deposited in their children. Many parents who were members already had given testimonies that they have remained in the church because of what the church had impacted in their children.

Another activity that has also added to the number of children is “operations eat and worship” in this program, food are served every Sunday to all children who attended church. These children go out to tell their friends who also come to enjoy. There are also special groups like ‘youth choir’, ‘the pace setters’ and ‘the platform’ solely for children to unearth their talents. Also, in 2014, the church embarked on area activity called “operations know your bible”, which seeks to train the children on how to know and understand the scriptures, so that they can preach and teach the word of God.

Many children and parents have joined the church because they have seen the change of other children who are part of that activity. Lastly, a special activity called “my session” has also helped to contribute to the growth of both the children and adult at Glory House Chapel. This program “my session”, children are selected and trained to preach at the adult church. When a child is picked and trained to preach, both parents and children invite their friends to come. When these people come, some of them then join the church. From the aforementioned facts, it is clear that when children are well catered and their ministry is well managed in the church, it can result in church growth.
3.12 Conclusion

Effective children’s ministry in the church is vital for the total growth of the church. This chapter traced the beginning of the Children’s Ministry from the word of God, the Bible, in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. It also presented the historical overview of the Assemblies of God Church vis-à-vis their children’s ministry. It ends with some theological issues which the church needs to consider critically in the child development enterprise. The next chapter will look at the findings from the field.
CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapters the study delved into the meaning and the concept of children’s ministry and church growth. The study also considered a brief history of Assemblies of God and their children ministry vis a vis church growth. In this present chapter, the work proceeds to analyze, interpret and discuss the data gathered. The purpose of the field research is to test whether the research problem stated earlier have bearing on the findings from the field and also to provide any answers to the thesis questions.

4.2 Methodology

Qualitative research method was used. The researcher used questionnaire supplemented by field interviews and observation in generating the data. The population for the study was made up of selected pastors, children’s ministry instructors as well as some selected members of the church who have passed through the children’s ministry.

The sample size was fifty (50); comprising nine (9) pastors, seven (7) women leaders, and two (2) selected children’s ministry instructors from each of the seven (7) selected local assemblies. One (1) district children’s instructors’ representatives and the Ashanti Regional Children’s Ministry representative were also part of the sample. The main instrument of data gathering from the above respondents was personal interviews. Nineteen (19) former members of the children’s ministry also responded to questionnaire.
Pastors and children ministry teachers were chosen because they are with the children, and in one way or the other, the stakeholders in the development of the children. The Regional Director together with the district representatives were selected to give us administrative sides of the church’s children’s ministry drive. Finally, the past members of the children’s ministry were chosen to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the children’s ministry and church growth.

4.3 Findings and Discussions
Children’s ministry has a bearing on church growth. The findings from the field raised several issues which are discussed below.

4.3.1 Impact of Children’s Ministry on Church Growth in Assemblies of God, Ghana Glory House Chapel, Patasi

4.3.1.1 Children’s Ministry is a Major Conduit for getting Families involved in Ministry
Families selected in this study indicated that they were tuned in to the presence and role of the children’s ministry. They also assessed it as a high-value ministry, with 76% stating that children’s ministry plays a key role in their churches. Not only does the children’s ministry get kids involved in church, but it’s also a significant influence in getting parents involved in ministry, too. One of the Children’s ministers resonates with this finding: “When it comes to impact of children’s ministry on the overall church, I like to believe that it helped create a culture that elevated the importance of children and families in the over-all church body.
4.3.1.2 Families with kids in the Children’s Ministry are some of the most active and Committed Members in a Church

When we looked at the characteristics of families, three significant characteristics stood out: long-term commitment, financial investment in the church, and loyalty to the ministry. The research found that 52% of families have been members of their current church for 10 years or more. In addition, 57% of the families surveyed said they tithe weekly and 24% say they give financial support when they can. Sixty-three percent of families said their financial support of the church has increased since they began attending.

The families also indicated a strong attachment to the children’s ministry, with 62% saying the ministry is very important to whether they’ll remain involved in their current church. In a nutshell, these statistics show that families with kids in the children’s ministry are more likely to be committed, loyal, financially supportive participants in the church.

4.3.1.3 A Healthy Children’s Ministry Attracts Families to Church

This research revealed that families place high regard to their kids’ children’s ministry experience. The majority (66%) said the children’s ministry program was “very important” in their overall consideration when they chose their current church. Children’s ministry is a growth engine for church growth. Parents also ranked “the children’s ministry” as the third most important reason they joined their current church—only marginally behind “the church’s emphases” and “preaching.”
4.3.1.4 An Unhealthy or Declining Children’s Ministry Program may result in Families leaving a Church

A weak children’s ministry has negative impacts on church growth. The quality and health of a children’s ministry program strongly influences families’ views on staying—or leaving—their church. The majority (69%) said that if their current church did not have a strong children’s ministry program, they would have had second thoughts about joining in the first place. Sixty-one percent said that if the current children’s ministry program ever diminished or died, it would definitely influence their decision to stay at the church. A whopping 66% of parents said the children’s ministry was a very important factor in whether they had stay at the church, and another 24% said it was moderately important.

These findings underscore how important children are to families—so important, in fact, that parents will sacrifice other priorities to ensure that their children have positive, nurturing experiences in their faith community. Parents welcome partners in helping their children develop in their faith and in their lives.

4.3.1.5 Children’s Ministry has made Positive Impact in Children’s Life

As the research delved into children’s ministry’s impact in kids’ day-to-day lives, parents had positive things to report. Forty-six percent said they frequently participate in the children’s ministry activities and their kids look forward to and typically attend programs and events. They also said they were mostly aware of what’s happening in the ministry. Forty-one percent said the ministry is a central component in their family’s discussions, planning, and activities and that their family is very aware of what’s going on in the ministry. When parents ranked the three greatest benefits their
current children’s ministry offers, by far the number one benefit was this: “It helps my kids develop a personal, growing faith.

4.3.1.6 Children’s Ministry has Changed Families’ Behavior at Home

Overall, 60% of families told us that the ministry has impacted them moderately or somewhat and that they have done some or many of the at-home activities suggested by the ministry. Another 20% said the ministry has impacted their family significantly and that they regularly incorporate ministry suggestions into their family life.

4.4 Challenges in Children’s and related issues in the Church and the way Forward

From observations, financial and human resource constraints appeared to be two major challenges being faced by the church and most of the parents in the church. Aside the above, inferiority complex due to low financial and social status of parents, lower intelligence quotient and physical disabilities have been identified as some of the challenges. Issues like low self-esteem on the part of the children were noticed among some of the children in the church.

On the larger scale, the study discovered that the church does not take it upon herself to sponsor the children to the various camp meetings organized in the region. The church lacks adequate and dedicated teachers at the local levels due to poor remuneration and motivation. In addition, the church has no recreational center for their children and as a result they have to pay huge sum of money to organize programmes for the children. The teachers mentioned inadequate teaching and learning materials, as well as lack of proper and spacious meeting places. “The space provided for them is not enough and we find it difficult to group the children
appropriately.” As a result of the inadequate space, some of the children are sometimes compelled to graduate into the adult church in order to create space for the increasing number.

All the teachers complained of lack of musical instrument for the children and as a result the children run away to the adult church to enjoy themselves when they (the adult church) are singing.

As to the way forward, the Regional Children’s director called for a restructuring of the church to reflect the need of the contemporary time. This restructuring should be child-centered.

4.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to present and discuss the data gathered. The purpose of our field research was to explore whether the research problem stated earlier had any bearing on the findings from the field and also to provide any answers to the thesis questions as far as the concept of the child and child development is concerned. The study was done from the angle of the children’s ministry of the Assemblies of God church.

The researcher discovered that the church growth and children’s ministry are two inseparable entities in every human settlement. The church has a role to play so far as the development of children in the society is concerned. The researcher identified resources available to the church and areas in which the church can facilitate the total development of the children’s ministry. The effort being made by the church in the area of children’s ministry development is greatly hampered by limited resources and
inadequate attention given to the issue. Can the church do more than what they are doing currently? What are the areas that need their attention? The purpose of the next concluding chapter presents the summary of the research, issues emerging and conclusion of the study.
CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of the Research
The researcher set out the research with the definition that children’s ministry has a rewarding impact on the growth of the church. There is the need for the church to pull resources together to uncover the challenges of children’s ministry in order to bring about development. After reviewing the literature, the study concluded that children’s ministry is a very significant aspect of the church’s growth agenda and there is therefore the need for the Assemblies of God Church in Ghana and for that matter all Churches in the country to take the ministry seriously. Various scholars and respondents from the various branches of the church showed that the church still has more room for improvement on the issue of children’s ministry and church growth. It is from this perspective that the researcher has discussed some issues from the study, recommended and concluded this research.

5.2 Conclusion
The researcher realizes that children’s ministry will bring God's blessings upon the church. Look what Jesus said. “And anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf is welcoming me.”\(^{71}\)When you welcome children into your church, you are welcoming Jesus. Ministry to children ushers in Jesus' presence. Nothing grows a church like a vibrant children's ministry. One of the top reasons families pick a church is the children's ministry. Focus on growing your children's ministry and your entire church will grow. The best way to reach ‘unchurched’ parents is through their children. When you take a child by the hand, you take a parent by the heart. No matter how lost a father is, he has a soft spot in his heart for his child. Likewise no

\(^{71}\)Matthew 18:5.
matter how far away from God a mother is, she cares about what her daughter is
interested in. Focus on reaching kids and you will reach parents. Children's ministry
helps people grow as disciples through serving. One of the keys to spiritual growth is
serving. Children's ministry offers many opportunities for people to serve. Serving in
children's ministry can deepen the spiritual walk of your entire church.

Also, children's ministry will bring life and vitality to your church. The future of any
church is found in the young families and children who attend. Without them, your
church is just one generation from closing its doors. The sounds of children laughing,
giggling and talking in the hallways of your church are life-giving. One of the best
ways to help families get connected once they start attending is through their
children. Focus on providing ways for kids to get connected through small groups,
family activities, family classes and more. When kids get connected, parents get
connected. When you involve the entire church in the spiritual milestones of children,
it makes a significant impact. Here is an example, if you hold child dedication during
a service and as part of the dedication, you ask the entire church to pray for and invest
in the children, it raises the spiritual commitment of the church as a whole. The fastest
growing churches in the country have something in common. They have dynamic
children's ministries that are impacting their entire church.

The Assemblies of God Church as a community of faith, witness, and service has
responsibilities toward people of all ages and of all walks of life. But the young
members of the Church, facing a changing and troubled period in their human
development in which their identity and values are formed, need both special attention
by the Church as well as special challenges from the Church.
It is unfortunately true that children in the Assemblies of God have not been spared the litany of problems facing young people in Ghana today. The Church could and should be an important source of support, guidance, inspiration, and meaningful challenge for the children in these changing times. However, there is evidence from the study of general lack of both understanding and commitment to child development. Hence, the next generation of the church and Christianity in general is in danger of being isolated, if not alienated, from the values, influence, and support of the Church and the traditional community, and the future of the Church is at risk.

The future of the Church in Ghana and the contributions of its members to the Ghanaian society can be as bright and distinguished as those of its past, but only if leadership from both clergy and lay members of the church commit themselves to addressing the problems of child development identified in this study in a sustained and long-term fashion. Denial or neglect of these issues, on the other hand, raises serious doubts about the future vitality and survival of the Assemblies of God Church and Christianity as a whole.

Finally, the church as a dynamic community with considerable human and financial resources can effectively carry out a critically needed ministry to children. A community focused on children’s ministry with a sense of urgency and permanent commitment, supported by appropriate structures and programs, and above all supervised and guided by inspired and trained leaders and personnel, will not only bring about essential benefits in the holistic development of the children but will also beckon the Church to a more secure future in the fulfillment of its mission.
5.3 Recommendations

The Assemblies of God Church has a mandate to focus on the priority of children’s ministry through the development and implementation of effective programs, coordinated by the Regional children’s Department. The leadership of the Assemblies of God Church in the assembly under study and for that matter all churches in Ghana should make it a point to develop and expand their children’s ministry at all levels. Part-time or full-time child development facilitators and educators and children’s ministry directors should be engaged by the church in order to give systematic attention to child guidance and growth. The era of voluntary participation in child development efforts should give way to full time commitment.

Professional teachers and child development facilitators must be connected to the appropriate Seminary or Theological institution which should serve as the highest center for research, publications, and training pertaining to child development and children’s ministry. Teachers and child development facilitators should be given adequate training in a seminary-type institution so that they can be up to date as the church has for the ordained ministers.

The researcher also realized that some of the programs designed by the church for the children were not directly geared towards the developmental needs of the children. Therefore, it is recommended that the church should develop new programs in child development based on the Bible and, on the other hand, the reality of children’s needs and problems according to specific issues and data in contemporary traditional society. Such programs must directly involve children themselves to an extent, including their representation at committee levels if possible.
These programs should also contain major emphases on children’s ministry and church growth. The Ashanti Regional and the national children’s directorate of the Assemblies of God Church should establish a process of evaluation and lines of accountability involving all personnel and programs at the national and local levels through such means as meetings, reports, and seminars.
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APPENDIX I
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide to Women Leaders

1. How should Christian parents bring up their children?

2. What are some of the programs in your church that help mothers in bringing up their children well?

3. What are some of the challenges you face in your ministry in bringing up the children?

4. Any other comment?

Interview Guide to Past Members of the Children’s Ministry

1. Name
   (optional)…………………………………………………………………………………

2. In which year did you complete the children’s ministry? …………………

3. What are some of your fondest moment in the children’s ministry that helped in shaping your life for the better?
   [  ] Rallies and Camps [  ] Children’s Day [  ] Vacation Bible school [  ] Royal Rangers meetings and training [  ] Excursion [  ] Holidays fun fair

4. Were the materials used in teaching beneficial to you at that time? [  ] Yes [  ] No

5. If yes, how. [  ] the content and illustrations in them made it more interesting [  ] the teachers made the lesson more interesting and practical.
   [  ] others (specify) ………………………………………………………………………

6. If no, how? [  ] the materials were too difficult for us. [  ] the teachers were not friendly. [  ] others (specify)……………………………………………………………………
7. What were some of your challenges when you were in the children’s ministry?
   [ ] inadequate seats [ ] poor ventilation in our meeting place [ ] inadequate learning materials. [ ] Unfriendly teachers [ ] lack of support from my parents
   [ ] others (specify) .................................................................

8. What do you think could be done to help the children in the church develop holistically? [ ] by training more teachers to handle the children’s ministry [ ] by committing more resources into the children’s ministry [ ] parents should support the church in developing the children.

Interview Guide to Teachers and Child Development Facilitators

1. What is child development?

2. What are some of the Biblical resources for the development of Christian children?

3. How are children supposed to be brought up in the Assemblies of God Church?

4. How is the children’s ministry in the Assemblies of God Church organized?

5. What are some of the programs and facilities available in your outfit towards the development of the children?

6. What are some of the developmental challenges facing some of the children in your ministry?

7. What is the Assemblies of God Church doing in addressing the challenges?

8. How is your ministry helping in developing the children in the following areas?
   • Physical growth
   • Cognitive/intellectual development
   • Motor development
- Social development
- Spiritual development

9. Do you have any educational experience in child development? If yes, what is it?

10. In your view, is the church doing enough to make sure that at least the children of their members are holistically developed into meaningful adulthood?

11. What are some of the challenges facing your children’s ministry?

12. Any other comment?