

The missional relations of the Methodist Church Ghana with other Methodist bodies

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Interacting with Methodists from other countries has been part of the fabric of Ghanaian Methodism from the earliest days. For over nine generations of existence, the Methodist Church Ghana (MCG) has emerged as a robust Christian body with a significant presence throughout the country and with a sizable witness beyond. At the institutional level, the church has a long history of relating to other Methodists through official channels, yet at the grassroots it reflects an existence that may be beyond the narrow confines of territorial Christianity that has typified especially European Christianity in the age of Christendom.

Out of British Methodism

A request for Bibles in 1834 by a study group gave the impetus for Methodism in Ghana. Captain Potter of the merchant ship *Congo* approached his fellow Methodists when he returned to Bristol and the possibility of sending a missionary to accompany Bibles arose. The missionary committee acted with haste and dispatched the Revd Joseph Dunwell within about two months of Potter's return.¹ Dunwell was a missionary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS), the primary board through which members of that denomination sent out missionaries. Until the 1932 merger of the British Methodist bodies, the primary Methodist ecclesial body in Ghana² remained dynamically tied to the Wesleyan Methodists and thereafter, until its independence, to the British Methodist Church (BMC) and the Methodist Missionary Society.

Dunwell only lived for six months in the Gold Coast before being succumbed to tropical disease. Yet, the WMMS kept a supply of missionaries coming, sending others who also did not survive very long. It was after all five of his successors had given up their lives for the cause of Christ that Thomas Birch Freeman, a missionary born of racially mixed parentage in England declared, 'It may not be necessary for me to live; but it is necessary for me to go.'³

With Freeman's arrival as the new superintendent of work based at Cape Coast, he encouraged the small body to go forward with mission to far off lands. With the de Grafts, he set out to establish Methodism in present day Nigeria, and also took a bold move of penetrating into the mighty Asante Kingdom. Ministry throughout the West African region grew, sometimes persevering through slower periods of expansion. Ties were kept back to the Wesleyan Methodists in the United Kingdom, and Freeman went back to raise money and awareness for the work.⁴

¹ Robert Kwasi Aboagye-Mensah, 'The world our parish': Christian mission and the Wesleyan heritage in a Ghanaian context', in Darrell L. Whiteman and Gerald H. Anderson (eds.), *World mission in the Wesleyan spirit* (American Society of Missiology; Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 2009), p. 53, Arthur Eustace Southon, *Gold Coast Methodism* (Cape Coast; London: Methodist Book Depot; The Cargate Press, 1934), p. 34, Francis L. Bartels, *The roots of Ghana Methodism* (Cambridge: University Press, 1965), p. 11.

² I use Gold Coast and Ghana synonymously in this paper, though technically the Gold Coast Colony along with British Togoland became the current Ghana in 1957. The Gold Coast Colony did not encompass the Asante Empire in the mid-nineteenth century, making Freeman's journey an 'international' one.

³ N. Allen Birtwhistle, *Thomas Birch Freeman, West African pioneer* (London: Cargate Press, 1950), p. 4.

⁴ Michael Mozley, 'Thomas Birch Freeman: the most famous Wesleyan missionary of West Africa you have never heard of', in Darrell L. Whiteman and Gerald H. Anderson (eds.), *World mission in the*

Methodism in the Gold Coast progressed over the succeeding generations, in patterns typical of the Modern Missionary Movement (MMM).⁵ In broad generalisations, the MMM has been the distinguishable unidirectional mode of financially supported, strategized, and directed Christian mission of professional missionaries from the West to the non-West through missionary agencies particularly over the last few centuries.⁶ As Andrew Walls points out, the whole approach ‘arose in a particular period of Western social, political, and economic development and was shaped by that period. It was providentially used in God's purpose for the redemption of the world.’⁷ This movement was begun in Germany and Central Europe among the Halle and Herrnhut faith communities and began to gain traction in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the English-speaking world, particularly following Carey’s *Enquiry*.⁸ Organisation of voluntary societies was for the purpose of spreading the Gospel, but it must not be overlooked that these groups emerged with the concomitance of the rise of European imperialism. It was a day and age that was rife with the ideas of Christendom, or territorial Christianity, and it was understandable to use ‘the means’ to extend the dominion of the Christian world.⁹

Without going into too much critique of this paradigm, which reflected ideas of its day, it is essential to note that the relationship with the Wesleyan Methodists was generally unidirectional, with decisions made in London affecting the church in West Africa. Bluntly put, the British Conference was the parent of Ghanaian Methodism. Hints of this were even present in the passing of the reigns of leadership when the Revd G. Thackray Eddy, the last missionary district chairman, cautioned, ‘it will be a long time yet before we can produce out of the resources of the Church in Ghana alone all the wisdom and theological and spiritual insight we need.’¹⁰ Yet, by other actions, he also took a very trusting and submissive role to the Ghanaian Synod’s wishes. For instance, it was clear that he represented the wishes and desires of the

Wesleyan spirit (American Society of Missiology; Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 2009), pp. 206-208.

⁵ Walls simply uses ‘The Missionary Movement’, and Hanciles refers to it as the ‘Western Mission Movement’. Cf.: Andrew F. Walls, ‘The old age of the missionary movement’, *International Review of Mission*, 76/301 (1987), 26-3226-32); Jehu Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: globalization, African migration, and the transformation of the West* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2008), (esp. pp. 90-104).

⁶ I use this in the broadest sense, rather than breaking down this era into smaller episodic periods. Bevans and Schroeder offer several helpful ways of understanding shorter time frames in more contextual and theological terms. Stephen B. Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Constants in context: a theology of mission for today* (American Society of Missiology series; Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2004) Winter splits this epoch into three periods, the first starting with Carey. Ralph D. Winter et al., *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: a reader and study guide* (4th edn.; Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009).

⁷ Andrew F. Walls, *The missionary movement in Christian history: studies in the transmission of faith* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), (253). Cf.: Wilbert R. Shenk, *Changing frontiers of mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1999), (177).

⁸ A. Christopher Smith, ‘The legacy of William Carey’, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 16/1 (1992), 2-8, p. 2; Andrew F. Walls, *The cross-cultural process in Christian history: studies in the transmission and appropriation of faith* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2002), p. 221.

⁹ Andrew F. Walls, ‘Africa as the Theatre of Christian Engagement with Islam in the Nineteenth Century’, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 29/2 (1999), 155-174, p. 167; Walls, ‘The old age’, (27-32).

¹⁰ Quoted in Casely B. Essamuah, *Genuinely Ghanaian: a postcolonial history of the Methodist Church, Ghana, 1961-2000* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2010), p. 39.

Ghanaian Synod to the regional body, the West African Inter-District Continuation Committee, which garnered him praise from his Ghanaian colleagues.¹¹

British ecclesial paramouncy persisted in several ways. Structurally, as a district (with a high level of autonomy), the MCG remained a legal and integral part the British Methodist Church until 1961. The church was actually headed by someone from Britain until F.C.F. Grant was inducted as Chairman of the Ghana District in 1959, two years after the country had politically gained independence from the United Kingdom.¹² In 1935, nearly a decade after their Presbyterian counterparts were granted independence,¹³ the Ghanaian Methodists were celebrating their centennial jubilee. Also at that time, 'It was an unnamed secretary at the Methodist Missionary Society who first mooted the idea of autonomy.'¹⁴

Financially, the British Methodists exercised their prerogative and influence in the Gold Coast as well. For instance, in 1910, the year of the Edinburgh Conference, the Missionary Committee made £3545/18/7 in grants to the work in the district in addition to the £2127 for the 'cost of European agency' supporting the missionaries. It should be noted that the same year, £7960 was raised from 'ordinary income from Native and Mixed Societies'.¹⁵ It is clear that the local churches had taken a high ownership in regards to their financial wellbeing, but the money from Britain was still substantial generations after Dunwell and Freeman.

When the question arose about paying ministers' salaries with monies from Britain, 'Pa Grant's [first MCG president, FCF Grant] response was, "No. Part of our being autonomous was being able to financially take care of our own ministers."¹⁶ This was in contrast to some other denominations in Ghana, for example the Evangelical Presbyterian Church has struggled to make ends meet because of persisting financial dependence on the Bremen Mission.¹⁷

However, finances have continued to flow from the United Kingdom, and many of the mission areas continued to be staffed by expatriate missionaries, creating a 'dependency syndrome' in some areas.¹⁸ Proportionally much smaller, the British Methodist World Church Office has made grants totalling as much as £58,000 as late as 2006.¹⁹

¹¹ Bartels, *The roots of Ghana Methodism*, p. 304.

¹² Richard Foli, *Ghana Methodism today* (Accra, Ghana: The Methodist University College and Trust Publishers, 2008), p. 71. Essamuah, *Genuinely Ghanaian*, p. 38. This was also a decade after Nkrumah first formed a government.

¹³ The Presbyterian Church of Ghana was initiated by the Basel Mission and was under its care until the First World War, when oversight was taken over by the Church of Scotland. David Nii Anum Kpobi, *Mission in Ghana: the ecumenical heritage* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, Christian Council of Ghana, 2008), p. 77.

¹⁴ Essamuah, *Genuinely Ghanaian*, p. 36.

¹⁵ Gold Coast District Wesleyan Methodist Church, 'Reports', (Wesleyan Methodist Church, Gold Coast District, 1910).

¹⁶ Interview with a high-ranking bishop in the MCG, June 2011.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Essamuah, *Genuinely Ghanaian*, p. 41.

¹⁹ Methodist Church Ghana, '4th biennial/42nd conference Akyem Oda representative session', (Akyem Oda: Methodist Church Ghana, 2006), p. BFD 3. Five positions for 'Nationals in Mission' were salaried that year. Ibid, p. BSRRD 7.

The MCG had gained quite a level of autonomy from the BMC, both financially and with authority by the time it was granted independence. Bartels argues, ‘in actual practice the Synod had complete freedom of action over a wide range of the life of the church,’²⁰ implying a high level of independence before 1961.

However, it can be argued that it has remained tied to British Methodism in theological and emotional ways. The church also looked to Britain for its theology, liturgy, and polity.

Kwesi Dickson, who went on to lead the MCG as its president and helped push the church out of its traps by encouraging inculturation in the Ghanaian context²¹ observed, ‘the early missionaries jealously guarded their Methodism’ for they believed ‘British Methodism was worth handing down in every detail.’²² An observation of attendance at a typical church in Ghana will reveal a strong tie to forms passed on by British Methodism.

From my own observation of worshipping in churches in the MCG and the BMC,²³ Ghanaians have held on to some forms well beyond their staying power in Britain. For instance, in worship, one may quickly observe choristers donning gowns with black Oxford caps and leading the congregation in the *Te Deum* out of the 1933 Methodist Hymn Book. None of these forms is found in the mainstream of the BMC, often times by several generations, yet these particular forms and others have a somewhat sacrosanct place in Ghanaian Methodism.

As Dickson observed, British Methodism also exercised a significant emotional connection tie to Ghanaian Methodists as ministers followed ‘the Church’s unwritten sartorial laws dictate’ dark lounge suits ‘to be worn no matter how inclement the weather.’²⁴ Simply attending conference three and a half decades later would simply reinforce this, with clergy tending to wear suits despite meeting in crowded hot churches without air conditioning.

Illustrating not just a tie to, but a ‘gravitational’ pull to Britain, the Gold Coast Methodists agreed in 1948 that it should be assessed ‘as soon as possible in a [ministerial] candidate’s course as to his suitability for training in England’.²⁵ In some ways, the best must go to Europe for training. Much of the postgraduate (especially

²⁰ Bartels, *The roots of Ghana Methodism*, p. 294.

²¹ Joseph M.Y. Edusa-Eyison, ‘Some Aspects of Worship in the Methodist Church Ghana—Their Implications for Kwesi Dickson’s Theology of Worship’, *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology*, /XV (2004), 2.

²² Kwesi A. Dickson, ‘The minister--then and now’, in J. S. Pobee (ed.), *Religion in a pluralistic society: essays presented to Professor C. G. Baëta in celebration of his retirement from the service of the University of Ghana, September 1971 by friends and colleagues scattered over the globe* (Studies on religion in Africa; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), p. 174. Dickson also stated: ‘[B]y his training and habits the Methodist minister of today [1970s] is a fairly accurate copy of the Methodist minister of the time of the first Methodist missionaries in the Gold Coast.’ Ibid, p. 179.

²³ I served as a missionary in Ghana from 2005 to 2010 and resided in the UK from 2010 to 2012.

²⁴ Dickson, ‘The minister--then and now’, (178-179).

²⁵ Methodist Church Synod of the Gold Coast, *‘I will build my Church.’ The report of the Commission appointed by the Synod of the Methodist Church, Gold Coast, to consider the Life of the Church* (St. Albans: The Campfield Press, 1948), p. 50.

doctoral) undertaken by Ghanaian Methodist Ministers is done *aborɔkyiri* [overseas], though not exclusively now in the UK.²⁶

It should be noted that a tremendous investment was made by the Wesleyan Methodists in Ghana. Over the first century, the Wesleyans had made a significant contribution to Ghanaian Methodism, sending 194 missionaries to the Gold Coast in the first one hundred years alone.²⁷ The MCG honors this historical tie with a constitutionally allocated member of its conference to be sent from the British Conference.²⁸

Within Ghana

Ghana could be described as a marketplace of faith. It is no doubt that a plethora of Christian bodies exist in the country, and in course, other Methodist churches have presences in Ghana. As other ones exist in Ghana often having international ties, it is helpful to examine the relationships with them as well.

Relations with other Methodist denominations within Ghana are for the most part very cordial. The main alternative branch of Methodism in Ghana has been the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AMEZ), with whom the MCG shares a stake in the operations of Trinity Theological Seminary²⁹ as well as working with it in other ecumenical bodies.³⁰ Both churches benefited from the revivals brought forth by William Wade Harris. Yet, some of the earliest ministers and members in the AMEZ came out of the ranks of the Gold Coast Wesleyan Methodists. Some had been disaffected by the British leadership,³¹ and others were drawn to the African leadership, even attracting the scion of Ghanaian Methodism, Thomas Birch Freeman, Jr.³² Interestingly, the AMEZ is still dynamically connected to its American leadership, while the MCG has had over a half century of complete independence.

Within the Christian Council of Ghana, the MCG shares fellowship with the AMEZ and the much smaller African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME).³³ Two other Methodist bodies should be noted here. A disagreement which led to the expulsion of

²⁶ Many of requests for permission to pursue masters degrees in 2009 were to schools in Ghana, while all of the ones for doctoral degrees were to schools in the Global North. Board of Ministries, 'Further training of church personnel interview - 2009', *5th Expanded General Purposes Council Meeting at the Calvary Methodist Chapel, North Accra Circuit* (Accra: Methodist Church Ghana, 2009), BOM 16 - BOM 22.

²⁷ Southon, *Gold Coast Methodism*, pp. 156-157. This included 110 missionaries, 42 women workers and 42 listed as 'and wife' with an asterisk next to the name of the male missionaries.

²⁸ Methodist Church Ghana, *The constitution and standing orders of the Methodist Church Ghana, 2000 revised edition* (Accra, Ghana: Wesley Printing Press, 2001), Section One, A.3.(1), p. 20.

²⁹ James Anquandah, *Agenda Extraordinaire: 80 years of the Christian Council of Ghana (1929-2009)* (Accra: Asempa, 2009), pp. 15-19.

³⁰ Anquandah, *Agenda Extraordinaire*. Kpobi, *Mission in Ghana*.

³¹ R. W. Wyllie, 'Some Contradictions in Missionizing', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 46/2 (1976), 196-204, p. 202.

³² Harris W. Mobley, *The Ghanaian's image of the missionary: an analysis of the published critiques of Christian missionaries by Ghanaians 1897-1965* (Studies on religion in Africa; Leiden: Brill, 1970), pp. 80-81.

³³ The AMEZ is obviously the second largest other Methodist presence in Ghana with approximately 250,000 members compared to the 1,980 of the AME. The MCG had a membership of 584,969 in 2009. Anquandah, *Agenda Extraordinaire*, pp. 172-173, 178.

District Chairman Revd Edu-Buandoh in 1986 caused several hundred members in the Cape Coast area to leave to form the Evangelical Methodist Church of Christ. During the presidency of Kwesi Dickson in the 1990s, two of the three ministers were reconciled back to the MCG.³⁴ A recent and small Free Methodist presence with ties to Canada has also been birthed in particular part of Accra.³⁵ The MCG remains the most sizable Methodist presence in the country.

Beyond Ghana

Dating back to Freeman, the MCG has had relations with other West African Methodist Churches. Relationships with them were strengthened during the 1950s amid talk of a potential union of the districts into a pan-West African Conference.³⁶ As that idea did not materialize and the independent conference based in Accra emerged, Ghana Methodists were keenly aware of the potential of isolation.

The Methodist Church Ghana maintains formal ties with Methodist denominations in other countries. It does this in multilateral and bilateral ways. It very much sees itself as part of the World Methodist community, being a member of the World Methodist Council and other regional bodies. This goes along with the institutional ecumenism typical of many mainline denominations, both inside and outside Ghana. It is common for high ranking leaders in the Methodists Church Ghana to attend the conferences of the sister churches, especially in West Africa and for the same denominations to send representatives to the Ghanaian Conference as well.³⁷

Receiving missionaries has also been a way by which the MCG has related to other Methodist bodies. Missionaries have, for the most part, come from the British and American Methodist denominations, yet some West Africans have been supplied by these denominations.³⁸ For instance, John Yambasu was serving in Ghana as a missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) of The United Methodist Church (UMC) when he was elected to the episcopacy of his denomination in Sierra Leone.³⁹ Within the last few decades, the bulk of the mission force has come out of the UMC especially through the voluntary faith mission, the Mission

³⁴ Essamuah, *Genuinely Ghanaian*, pp. 114, 249.

³⁵ Free Methodist Church, 'Ghana Mission District', <<http://fmcusa.org/fmwm/countries/ghana/>>, accessed 28 September 2012. The Church has 213 members and was established in Ghana in 1998.

³⁶ Bartels, *The roots of Ghana Methodism*, pp. 293 ff.

³⁷ Methodist Church Ghana, 'Thanksgiving service to God and valedictory service in honour of Most Rev. Dr. Robert Kwasi Aboagye-Mensah for the end of tenure as Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church Ghana from 2003-2009', in Methodist Church Ghana (ed.), (Accra, Ghana: Methodist Church Ghana, 2009) p. 13. Ecumenical Relations Committee, 'Ecumenical Relations Committee Report', *Methodist Church Ghana, 5th Biennial/43rd Conference Agenda* (1; Winneba, Ghana: The Methodist Church Ghana, 2008), GPC 15- GPC 16. Methodist Church Ghana, 'Thanksgiving service to God and valedictory service in honour of Most Rev. Dr. Robert Kwasi Aboagye-Mensah for the end of tenure as Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church Ghana from 2003-2009', pp. 13-14.

³⁸ Methodist Church Ghana, '4th biennial/42nd conference Akyem Oda representative session', pp. GPC 72-GPC 85.

³⁹ Phileas Jusu, 'United Methodists elect bishop for Sierra Leone', <<http://www.umc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=lwL4KnN1LtH&b=2072519&ct=6470237>>, accessed 25 October 2012.

Society, which had eighteen career and multi-year term adult missionaries in 2008.⁴⁰ Missionaries with these boards have typically served in supportive roles in areas ranging from education to health care to well drilling to evangelism. These are very much traditional relationships a mainline denomination in Africa would expect. It is also common for individual congregations in the Global North to partner by sending work teams and financial resources to individual congregations in Ghana. A handful of these congregations have also entered into formal relationships of being twinned.⁴¹

Since independence, the MCG has come to express its presence in other countries through one of five different means. These models have come about because of circumstance, history, and local preference. They contain two major factors: who are the recipients of ministry and through which denomination is ministry done. At times, the Methodist Church Ghana works through local Methodist denominations in the new country, while other times, it ministers in ways tied to the church based in Accra. A secondary factor is by what means the ministry takes place.

The first type I would introduce is *Ghanaian affiliation, ministering to locals*. This is an approach by which the church sets out to serve indigenous populations with churches dynamically tied to the Methodist Church Ghana. The foreign Methodist entity to which it relates actually is itself.

This can be seen in diagram A. The church in Ghana works with the MCG, but a population set different from the cultural makeup of the MCG in Ghana.

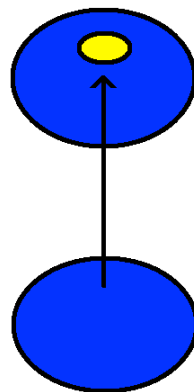


Diagram A

This typology is found in two West African countries, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso. Both instances are contexts where the Methodists in Ghana have crossed international borders with the intention of planting churches amongst indigenous populations in their new countries. In Burkina Faso, the initiative was at the denominational level through the Evangelism, Mission and Renewal Division.⁴²

⁴⁰ Kirk S. Sims, 'Mission Society for United Methodists Report for 2007-2008', *The Methodist Church Ghana, 5th Biennial/43rd Conference Agenda, Representative, Session 2* (Winneba, Ghana: The Methodist Church Ghana, 2008), GPC 13-GPC14.

⁴¹ Robert Kwasi Aboagye-Mensah, 'Address to the Methodist Church Ghana Missions II Conference', (Kumasi, Ghana: Methodist Church Ghana, 2008), p. 5.

⁴² Emmanuel K. Asare-Kusi, 'Report of missions trip to Burkina Faso', (Evangelism, Mission, and Renewal Division, Methodist Church Ghana, 2009). Emmanuel K. Asare-Kusi, 'Report on outreach to Po, Burkina Faso', (Accra, Ghana: Methodist Church Ghana, 2006). Monica A. Achana, 'Report of

Work in Côte d'Ivoire has been at the instigation of the Sunyani Diocese.⁴³ No known significant Methodist presence was known to exist in Burkina Faso, and where the church moved into Côte d'Ivoire, the local United Methodist Church does not seem to have a presence in that part of the country.

A second approach would be *Ghanaian affiliation, ministering to Ghanaians*. This approach occurs when Ghanaian Methodists have gathered in another country, often times where no other significant Methodist presence is known.⁴⁴ The congregations remain dynamically connected to the Methodist Church Ghana and report to no local denomination. This expression is generally found outside the West African region and in the Global North, where Ghanaians have migrated. This typology can be explained in diagram B.

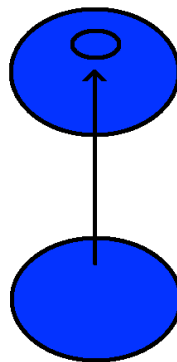


Diagram B

The church in the new context is the Methodist Church Ghana, filled with Ghanaian Methodists. This is the expression in the Netherlands and Belgium,⁴⁵ though it is known in various parts of North America as well, but it depends especially how a regional conference in The United Methodist Church affiliates with local Ghanaian congregations.⁴⁶

Also found in Europe and North America is the third expression, *local affiliation, ministering to Ghanaians*. This is when Ghanaian Methodists are given a level of autonomy to minister to their expatriates through the auspices of another Methodist denomination. Such is seen primarily in the Evangelisch-methodistische Kirche in

Burkina Faso societies', in Emmanuel K. Asare-Kusi (ed.), (e-mail correspondence edn.; Navrongo, Ghana, 2012).

⁴³ Committee on Ministries Sunyani Diocese, 'Diocesan Evangelism Report', *32nd Annual Synod of the Sunyani Diocese* (Sunyani, Ghana: Methodist Church Ghana, 2011), COM 46- COM 47. Committee on Ministries Sunyani Diocese, 'Diocesan Evangelism Report', *31st Annual Synod of the Sunyani Diocese* (Sunyani, Ghana: Methodist Church Ghana, 2010), COM 10- COM 11.

⁴⁴ In the case of The Netherlands, a Methodist presence from the Caribbean predated the MCG by a few years, but there was no long-term sizable indigenous Methodist denomination in that country when the MCG entered. Holland Methodist Church, 'History of the Methodist Church in Holland', <<http://hollandmethodistchurch.org/about-us/history/>>, accessed 4 November 2012, cf. Wesley Methodist Church Amsterdam, 'Brief History', <<http://www.hmc-methodistchurch.nl/index.php/Information/brief-history.html>>, accessed 28 November 2012.

⁴⁵ Isaac S. Amoah, 'Biennial Report of the Holland Mission Circuit 2008-1010', *6th Biennial/ 44th Conference* (Cape Coast: Methodist Church Ghana, 2010), GPC 47- GPC 50.

⁴⁶ Methodist Church Ghana, 'Roundtable conference/consultation on Methodist Church Ghana's relationship with Ghanaian Methodist Churches in North America at Aburi, Ghana 13-16 May 2010', *ibid.*, GPC 54- GPC 77.

Germany and in The United Methodist Church and the United Church of Canada for the North America contexts. (see diagram C)

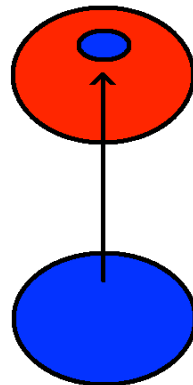


Diagram C

A fourth expression would be *local affiliation, ministering to locals*. From time to time requests are sent to the MCG for personnel to be sent to serve in the Methodist denomination in a new country. The MCG has a long history of this sharing of personnel. In fact, on two different occasions, the MCG supplied the district chair of The Gambia District (then part of the British Methodist Church and now recently independent).⁴⁷ Lay and clergy members have been shared with sister bodies, for instance Dr Nii Addo Bruce, the church's agriculture consultant has been loaned out to the Gambian Methodists to assist with their agricultural projects.⁴⁸ It may be understood in diagram D.

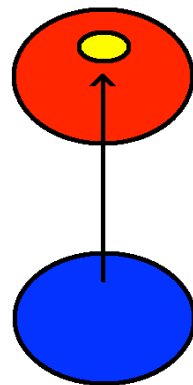


Diagram D

⁴⁷ Charles A. Pratt did this in the 1970s. Methodist Church Ghana, 'Thirteenth annual conference agenda representative session Wesley Church Sekondi Friday, 9th August, 1974-8.30 a.m.', (Sekondi, 1974), Stationing of ministers. And later his son, Titus Pratt, filled the same role. Methodist Church Ghana, 'Stationing of Ministers: Outside Ghana', *Thirty-Sixth Annual Conference* (Cape Coast: Methodist Church Ghana, 1997).

⁴⁸ Board of Social Responsibility and Rural Development, 'Report of the Board of Social Responsibility and Rural Development', *The Methodist Church Ghana, 5th Biennial/43rd Conference Agenda, Representative, Session 1* (Winneba, Ghana: The Methodist Church Ghana, 2008), BSRRD 14.

As of late, the MCG has found expression in this way in Sierra Leone, Barbados, and The Gambia and arguably the Methodist-Waldensian Church in Italy.⁴⁹ In the latter, we have seen that Ghanaians have become a sizable population within that church.⁵⁰

A fifth model is found in the United Kingdom. It is *local affiliation, dual-purpose ministry*. This is when personnel are sent to serve in another denomination as pastors of local churches and are permitted to facilitate ethnic fellowships outside the confines of local congregations. It is open that the clergy person(s) sent from Ghana are to be chaplains to Ghanaians, but not to pastor in Ghanaian congregations.

This may be understood through diagram E.

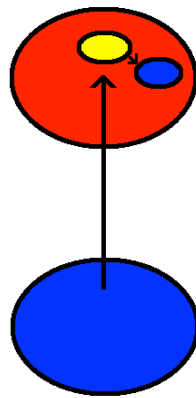


Diagram E

It is a 'chaplaincy model - which encourages full integration of Ghanaian members in local Methodist Churches'⁵¹ In other words, rather than encouraging a plurality of ethnically diverse congregations, the primary aim is to appeal to people to become British Methodists. This can be seen in the taxonomy used by the British Methodists. Instead of being listed as congregations, they are termed as ethnic minority 'groups' and 'fellowships'.⁵² The Ghanaian fellowship is the most frequently reported minority fellowship in three urban districts of the British Methodist Church.⁵³

At the institutional level, the Methodist Church Ghana has followed the lead of the ecumenical movement, by respecting the territorial integrity of the main Methodist entity in a given country. According to the Most Revd Prof. Emmanuel Asante, the presiding bishop of the MCG, 'The Methodist Church Ghana has always been in

⁴⁹ Methodist Church Ghana, 'The Station of Ministers 2010', (updated 16 March 2010) <<http://www.methodistchurch-gh.org/stationofministers.html>>. Gladys Afarchoe Odoi, 'Five ministers sent on mission abroad', *The Christian Sentinel*, 18/4 (2009).

⁵⁰ George G. Ennin, 'Chiesa Evangelica Metodista-Italia Report to the 6th Biennial Conference, the Methodist Church Ghana', *6th Biennial/ 44th Conference* (Cape Coast: Methodist Church Ghana, 2010), GPC 51- GPC 53.

⁵¹ Emmanuel Aggrey-Ogie, 'Ghanaian Methodist Fellowships [GMF]-United Kingdom Chaplaincy Report to the 5th Biennial/43rd Conference of the Methodist Church Ghana', *The Methodist Church Ghana, 5th Biennial/43rd Conference Agenda, Representative Session* (1; Winneba, Ghana: The Methodist Church Ghana, 2008), GPC 33-GPC 35.

⁵² Belonging Together Partnership Steering Group, 'Belonging Together Partnership Document 2010-2013 (2011 Revision)', (London: Methodist Church of Great Britain, 2011), pp. 18-19.

⁵³ Methodist Church (Great Britain), 'Conference Agenda', (Southport: Methodist Church (Great Britain), 2011), pp. 668-669.

Ecumenical communion with Methodist Conferences and other Christian Communities world wide.⁵⁴ This is evident in the way requests for ministerial personnel are sent, especially in the three latter types. Yet, the majority of ministers serving in other conferences are not there to serve indigenous populations, but their own living abroad. The fact is that Ghanaians group together when they migrate to new lands, and a central part of the community is the church.

A common pattern starts with the formation of a prayer group that evolves into a church, all because of the natural relations of those who are every day Christians. Usually, this is not a clergy, mission agency, church hierarchy driven activity, but one simply taking place by believers who go to a new place and take the initiative to reach out to those around them. Naturally, this is often among their own ethnic groups or among those with similar journeys of migration from similar parts of the world. Order is maintained because of the great draw to be connected to their home denomination or sister denomination in the new host country. Eventually the denomination sends a pastor to tend to the new flock and the polity and discipline of the church is enforced.⁵⁵

It is important to look at the way discipline is enforced. At the institutional level, it appears that maintaining territorial integrity seems to have been the line of thinking in the MCG since ‘in the Netherlands, the Ghanaian Methodists function under the Ghana Conference because there is no Methodist Conference in that country.’⁵⁶ Conversely, it could be assumed that the church would have worked to fall under the auspices of a Methodist denomination in the Netherlands if a long-standing one had been present.⁵⁷ The rules of the dominant Methodist denomination in a new country seem to take over, especially in European contexts.

Despite the fact that a covenant agreement was signed over two decades ago between The United Methodist Church and the MCG to agree to ‘the assumption of pastoral care of members visiting or residing in each other’s countries’,⁵⁸ the territorial confines have not always been maintained. It has not been as if it would be difficult to find United Methodist congregations in any part of the United States, since historically, they have been found in virtually every county in every state in the country.⁵⁹ Yet, the MCG had to have a ‘roundtable discussion’ to work out how all

⁵⁴ Methodist Church Ghana, 'Roundtable conference', GPC 56. This and other quotes from the Roundtable conference are quotes from the report and may not be exact quotes of the person to whom they are attributed.

⁵⁵ Moses O. Biney, *From Africa to America: religion and adaptation among Ghanaian immigrants in New York* (Religion, race, and ethnicity; New York: New York University Press, 2011), pp. 68-72. Essamuah, *Genuinely Ghanaian*, pp. 50-54.

⁵⁶ Methodist Church Ghana, 'Roundtable conference', GPC 57.

⁵⁷ It was discussed in footnote 44 that the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and Americas had a presence that predated the MCG in The Netherlands by a few years.

⁵⁸ ‘Act of Covenant between the United Methodist Church and MCG’. Reprinted in Essamuah, *Genuinely Ghanaian*, Appendix H, pp. 207-209.

⁵⁹ ‘The United Methodist Church is uniquely situated to respond to disasters because we have churches (mission stations) in every county and in almost every town and village across the United States.’ The United Methodist Church, 'Disaster Relief: Overview', <http://www.umc.org/site/c.lwL4KnN1LtH/b.1363965/k.68EE/Disaster_Relief_Overview.htm>, accessed 31 October 2012. However, after looking through an excel spreadsheet prepared by the UMC GCFA for the 2010 Religious Congregations and Membership Study, it is clear that almost every county has a UM congregation. For instance in sparsely populated Wyoming, Niobarra, Sublette,

the churches in North America would relate to the MCG, UMC or United Church of Canada (UCC) since so many were outside the polity of the UMC and UCC. The grassroots desire of Ghanaians to network and to form churches seems more pressing than honouring turf.

As a result of the 'Roundtable discussion' a formal entity has been set up, the Methodist Church Ghana North America Mission, headed by the former Bishop of Obuasi, the Rt Revd B.K. Asare. One purpose of this body is 'To facilitate and ensure cordial fellowship among all Ghanaian Methodists in North America', which includes those Ghanaian congregations in the UMC, the UCC, the ones directly under the MCG, and Ghanaians who belong to congregations that are not primarily 'Ghanaian' in nature.⁶⁰

Why develop a structure in North America recognising that much of the MCG's presence does not abide by the covenant agreement between the UMC and the MCG? It could reflect an apathy of some American UM conferences to welcome migrants or insist on conformity to their polity. However, it could also be the fact that Ghanaians recognise that the US is also a marketplace of faiths and UM conferences are not offended by not respecting their jurisdictional boundaries. This situation does not appear to be in theological defiance as seen by Church of Nigeria in the Anglican Communion, especially in its relationship to the Anglicans in the United States. No great row in the UMC has emerged because of these efforts or because of the Sunyani Diocese's presence in another UM country, Côte d'Ivoire.

Perhaps in the 'free, competitive environment of American religious life',⁶¹ a *laissez faire* approach has been adapted by the UMC since the American church has typically assumed a 'Denominational Church' typology. According to Craig Van Gelder, a denominational church 'exists as an organization with a purposive intent to accomplish something on behalf of God in the world, with this role being legitimated on a voluntary basis.'⁶²

In Europe, where the church's relevance and church attendance have been in steady decline, the church has continued in a protectionistic stance. It has been very important that competitive Methodist bodies not be set up in places such as Britain or Germany. It would be understandable that the British and German Methodists have borrowed a mind-set of territoriality from the established Anglican and Lutheran churches in their respective countries. According to Van Gelder, 'in the established church, the church's self-understanding is that it serves as the primary location of God's presence on earth through which God can be encountered.'⁶³ It could be

Teton, and Uinta counties do not have a UM congregation. Personal communication 31 October 2012 between Laura Chambers of the GCFA and Kirk S. Sims.

⁶⁰ The Methodist Church Ghana, 'Mission work in North America policy document', <<http://www.ghanamethodistsinamerica.org/ABOUTUS/NAMPolicyPaper/tabid/94/Default.aspx>>, accessed 31 October 2012.

⁶¹ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The social sources of denominationalism* (Hamden, Conn: Shoe String Press, 1954), p. 203.

⁶² Craig Van Gelder, 'An ecclesiastical gen-project: unpacking the DNA of denominations and denominationalism', in Craig Van Gelder (ed.), *The missional church and denominations: helping congregations develop a missional identity* (Missional church series; Grand Rapids, Mich.; Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), 12-45, p. 18.

⁶³ Van Gelder, 'An ecclesiastical gen-project', (17).

reckoned that the Methodist Church of Britain or the Evangelisch-methodistische Kirche are the primary locations of God's 'Methodist' presence in Britain or Germany through which God can be encountered.

Yet the somewhat bombastic ordinary Ghanaian Methodists may be shedding the cloak of territorial Christianity and even the voluntary society of the North American church. They are not working through a mission agency, which was the demonstrative evidence of international mission emanating from Christian lands over the last few centuries. They are simply being missional where they find themselves. They do not 'target' unreached people groups, go out with armies of professional missionaries, build clinics or schools, but they take their faith with them and gather people into community. Their mission is much more organic, based on the missional impulses of ordinary Christians. In some ways, this is reminiscent of how the Pre-Constantinian church spread through the Roman Empire.⁶⁴ Though mission is very much present in the other categories and the Holy Spirit works through them, perhaps from the grassroots, the Ghanaian Methodists should be classified as falling into Van Gelder's category of 'Missional Church'. A missional church 'exists as a community created by the Spirit that is missionary by nature in being called and sent to participate in God's mission in the world.'⁶⁵

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⁶⁴ Rodney Stark, *The rise of Christianity: a sociologist reconsiders history* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).

⁶⁵ Van Gelder, 'An ecclesiastical gen-project', (43).

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