



Central Ghana Conference office building, Kumasi, Ghana.

Photo courtesy of Bernard Adjare.

Central Ghana Conference

KOFI GYIMAH YAMOA, AND KWABENA SARFO NKETIA

Kofi Gyimah Yamoah is the executive secretary of Central Ghana Conference.

Kwabena Sarfo Nketia is the administrative secretary of Central Ghana Conference.

Central Ghana Conference is part of the Northern Ghana Union Mission, which is part of the West-Central African Division. Central Ghana Conference was established 1894, organized in 1933, reorganized in 1970, 1977, 1986, and 1998, and reorganized and territory divided in 2015. The conference occupies the following territories: in the Ashanti region, a portion of Kumasi Metropolitan district (part of Bantama, Kwadaso, and Nhyiaeso); and the district of Ahafo Ano North, Ahafo Ano South, Atwima Mponua, Atwima Nwabiagya North, Atwima

Nwabiagya South, and a portion of Atwima Kwanwoma.¹

As of June 30, 2018, Central Ghana Conference had 89 churches, membership of 16,535, and total general population of 829,058. The conference headquarters is in Kumasi, Ghana.²

The Origins of Seventh-day Adventism in Ghana

Some 30 years after the Seventh-day Adventist Church was formally organized in 1863, the first missionaries, Karl G. Rudolph and Edward Leroy Sanford, were sent to Ghana (then Gold Coast). They arrived on February 22, 1894, at the request of a few Adventist believers who had accepted the faith through Adventist literature. Rudolph and Sanford established the mission headquarters for the whole of West Africa in Cape Coast. Their stay in Ghana was short-lived, as they suffered from severe fever and therefore returned home.³

On October 3, 1895, Dudley Upton Hale (the pastor who baptized the first Ghanaians on March 27, 1897) arrived in Africa, along with G. Kerr and his wife, who were both nurses, and a literature evangelist, G. P. Riggs. They all settled in Cape Coast. Though their work in Ghana was fruitful, especially the healthcare given by the Kerrs, their stay in Ghana was also short-lived due to frequent malaria attacks that resulted in the death of two of the Kerr children.

Nearly six years after Hale's departure, he and his wife, Ida Smith Hale, and their four children, returned to Cape Coast on March 3, 1903. Hale was followed by James M. Hyatt and his wife who left for Sierra Leone in 1905.

One of Hyatt's young converts in Cape Coast, Christian Abraham Ackah, brought Adventism to his hometown, Kikam, Nzimaland (then Apollonia) in about 1903. His relentless contribution to Adventism in Kikam, and Ghana as a whole, resulted in Pastor David Caldwell Babcock (Superintendent, West African Mission) organizing the first SDA church in Kikam, Ghana, with 34 members, on October 19, 1909. With the absence of a missionary in Ghana (Babcock moved the mission headquarters to Sierra Leone and visited Ghana only five times in eight years), Kikam became the hub of Adventism in Ghana.⁴

In 1913 the General Conference attached the West African Mission, composed of Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and Ghana, to the European Division of the church, which was presided over by Pastor Louis P. Conradi. On December 2 to 8, 1913, Conradi visited West Africa for a workers' conference in Freetown, Sierra Leone. At this conference the Adventist work in West Africa was divided into three fields: namely, Sierra Leone, Ghana, and Nigeria. William H. Lewis was to lead the work in Ghana.

William H. Lewis arrived in Ghana on October 3, 1914, and he and his team entered Ashanti (interior of Ghana) as resident missionaries. Lewis chose Agona, Ashanti, as the Ghana Mission headquarters. Lewis left Ghana for America following a vehicle accident in mid-1917.

The First World War disrupted communication between the West African work and the European Division since the division's headquarters was in Hamburg, Germany. After the war ended, the Adventist work in West Africa

was reorganized, and the West African Combined Mission was born in 1918 with L. F. Langford as its superintendent. The new mission was composed mainly of Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Ghana. Initially, Waterloo, Sierra Leone, hosted the headquarters until it was later transferred to Agona, Ashanti.⁵

John Kwabena Kaipro Garbrah was the first Ghanaian to be ordained as a minister. This took place on May 7, 1921, when he was working at Agona, Ashanti. On October 12, 1921, he was sent to pioneer Adventism in Kumasi, Ashanti. Pastor Garbrah's fruitful ministry in Kumasi primarily centered on establishment of schools and organization of public evangelistic campaigns. These activities brought the church to the attention of the chief commissioner of Ashanti, Mr. Harper, who recommended transferring the church headquarters from Agona to Kumasi in 1924. This recommendation was agreed to by Langford and his advisers and the move was made that year. At the time of the move, the name was changed from West African Combined Mission to West African Union Mission. This change of base lasted for the three remaining years of Langford's ministry in Ghana.⁶

In 1927 the new superintendent of the Ghana Mission, J. J. Hyde, returned the headquarters to Agona. Jesse Clifford had left Ghana in 1923, but he returned in 1931 as the head of the Ghana Mission and he resided at Agona, Ashanti. Clifford's return came with strategies to reach other unentered areas of Ashanti with Adventism. He was attracted by the location and communication links between Asante Bekwai in the interior and Sekondi-Takoradi. In 1932 Jesse Clifford moved the headquarters from Agona to Bekwai, Ashanti Region of Ghana.⁷

In late 1948, Jesse O. Gibson was appointed to succeed Jesse Clifford as president of the Ghana Mission headquartered at Asante Bekwai. After a three-month transitional period, Gibson officially took over in 1949. He spent three eventful years in office and made some purposeful decisions. Gibson relocated the Ghana Mission from Asante Bekwai to Kumasi, a move which foresaw the transition of the Gold Coast into independent Ghana; hence, the move to Kwadaso, Kumasi, the capital of the would-be Ashanti region. He reorganized the mission operation by introducing, in 1949, the division of the mission into seven districts, mostly headed by indigenes (five indigenes, two foreign missionaries).

Africanizing of Leadership

Gibson requested the union mission in Accra to appoint an indigenous Ghanaian worker to work with him as a vice president. As a result, Pastor C. B. Mensah was appointed and designated "associate president."

His vision was to enter the northern part of the country, so in 1950 Emmanuel Bruce Akyiano was sent to pioneer the entry of Adventism in northern Ghana.⁸

Gibson was appointed as president of the West African Union Mission in Accra in late 1951. A. J. Mustard was appointed to replace Gibson, and he worked from 1952 to 1954 in Kumasi. After Mustard came Howard Welch, from 1954 to 1956. W. J. Newman took over in 1956 and served as a transitional leader and the last foreign leader of the mission.⁹

Pastor Charles Bennett Mensah became the first indigenous son of Ghana to become president of the Ghana Mission during the West African Union Mission constituency session at Ihie in eastern Nigeria, January 7-18, 1959. Pastor Mensah moved from Kumasi Mission to Accra Union in 1965, ending his presidency at the Ghana Mission.

Pastor John Kenneth Amoah, on January 30, 1965, moved from his position as the Mampong district leader to the Ghana Mission president in Kumasi. He served in this capacity for ten years. During his term of office, two special events took place.¹⁰

The mission reorganized its administrative work, which resulted in the North Ghana Mission being established in 1968, with headquarters in Tamale and presided over by Johannes Onjukka. The second event was the Ghana Mission attaining conference status.

Ghana Conference

On December 25, 1970, the Ghana Conference was born at the Asokore SDA Training College, Koforidua, Eastern region during the 11th biennial constituency session of the Ghana Mission. Ghana Conference became the first conference in the history of Adventism in Africa. This landmark achievement was declared by Pastor W. Duncan Eva, president of the Northern European West Africa Division.

Pastor J. K. Amoah was the first president of the Ghana Conference, with P. R. Lindstrom as the secretary-treasurer. At its inception, the conference reported a total of 15,448 baptized members and more than 34,000 Sabbath School members, one hospital, three training colleges, and one secondary school. Pastor Amoah served as the president until 1974.

In December 1974, at the 2nd biennial constituency meeting of the Ghana Conference at Agona, Ashanti, Pastor Matthew A. Bediako was elected president of the conference. His secretary-treasurer was David Kwabena Amponsah, Jr. During Pastor Bediako's tenure, the conference reorganized its administrative work, giving birth to the South Ghana Mission on March 27, 1977, headquartered at La Bone church, Accra. The new mission took ten of the 26 districts that had constituted the Ghana Conference. Pastor Andrew Narh Daitey became president of the new mission.

Central Ghana Conference

After the organization of the South Ghana Mission in 1977, the Ghana Conference became officially known as the Central Ghana Conference, still headquartered at Kwadaso, Kumasi, and presided over by Pastor Matthew A. Bediako. He held this office until November 1980, when he was elected president of the West African Union Mission in Accra. He left Kumasi in early 1981.

Pastor H. V. A. Kumah was chosen to replace Pastor Bediako after two years of service as president of the Sierra Leone Mission. Pastor Kumah served as president of Central Ghana Conference for almost three years before he left to join the Adventist Seminary of West Africa (ASWA) faculty in March 1984.

In January 1984, Pastor Paul K. Asareh succeeded Pastor Kumah, after having served as department director for seven years at the union mission. It was during Pastor Asareh's tenure that the Techiman Adventist Vocational Institute and Asaman Clinic were officially opened on March 18, 1984, and March 20, 1984, respectively. Pastor Asareh left office as president of the Central Ghana Conference in late 1985, following his appointment as president of the West African Union Mission.¹¹ Pastor W. G. Mensah, who had served with Pastor Asareh as secretary at the conference, succeeded him as president in January 1986. Pastor O. K. Kumah became the secretary.

In January 1987, under Pastor Mensah's presidency, the conference underwent a reorganization that gave birth to two fields. Sunyani, the capital of the Brong Ahafo region of Ghana, became the headquarters of the newly created Mid-West Ghana Mission, and Pastor K. O. Ameyaw became its president. South-Central Ghana Administrative Unit was the second field. It was created in 1998, and had its headquarters at Amakom, Kumasi. The first director of South-Central Ghana Administrative Unit was Pastor Israel Nana-Tuffour.

Organizations and Institutions

During his Pastor W.G. Mensah's term in office, many health clinics were set up. The Bekwai Dominase clinic began December 8, 1989. The Kumasi SDA Clinic, Kwadaso, was started in June 1991 in an area previously used as a bakery within the conference building. Dr. Boateng served as a visiting doctor and was present every Thursday, and Annabella Aboagye was the nurse. In addition, the Sefwi Kofikrom SDA Clinic and the Sefwi Asawinso SDA Clinic were opened on February 11, 1992, and August 1, 1993, respectively.

Pastor Abraham Peter Mensah succeeded Pastor W. G. Mensah in 1999. His term of office saw the establishment in 2005 of the SDA Nursing Training College at Kwadaso. It was the first such institution established by Adventists in Ghana.

The Suaman Dadieso SDA Clinic was opened on November 13, 2003.

Pastor Emmanuel Denteh became president in 2005. He began the conference office complex building construction project. Also under his administration, the Offinso Namong SDA Clinic was established on April 1, 2011.

When Pastor Denteh retired in October 2012, he was succeeded by Pastor Anthony Kwame Yeboah-Amoako. Pastor Yeboah-Amoako's tenure witnessed two major changes:

1. In January 2014, the territory of the Ghana Union Conference was reorganized to create the North Ghana Union Mission, Kumasi. This resulted in Central Ghana relinquishing the whole of the northwestern part of Ghana, Sefwi area (ten districts) to South West Ghana Conference, and the districts of Atebubu, Yeji, and Kwame Danso to Mid-West Ghana Conference. At the same time, the Central Ghana Conference gained Tepa and Akomadan districts from the Mid-West Ghana Conference.
2. In 2015 the Central Ghana Conference was reorganized to create two fields: Mid-Central Ghana Administrative Unit, Kwadaso; and North-Central Ghana Administrative Unit (later, Mountain View Ghana Conference), Agona, Ashanti. Central Ghana Conference was then left with 16 districts.

During the conference's 2nd quadrennial constituency session on August 30 to September 3, 2016, at Adventist Girls' Senior High School, Ntonso, Ashanti, the following officers were elected: Pastor Yaw Asamoah Kwarteng, president; Pastor Kofi Gyimah Yamoah, executive secretary; and Pastor Joseph Opoku-Acheampong, treasurer.

As of June 2018, the conference had 17 districts with a total of 16,535 baptized members, 89 organized churches, 124 companies, one hospital, and 15 basic schools with a total enrollment of 4,544 pupils at the end of the 2017/2018 academic year.¹²

SOURCES

Central Ghana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists records for 2018. Office of Secretary, Kumasi, Kwadaso. Central Ghana Conference archives, Kumasi, Ghana.

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NOTES

1. "Central Ghana Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2019), 398.

2. Ibid.

3. Kofi Owusu Mensah, *Ghana Seventh-day Adventism, A History* (Accra: Advent Press, 2005), 18-19.

4. Ibid., 71.

5. Mensah, 28

6. Ibid, 167.
 7. Ibid, 179.
 8. C. B. Mensah, "Ghana Asafo Abakosem ne Memeneda Akwanhwefo Gyidi" (unpublished manuscript written in Kumase, Ghana, 1962), 2.
 9. Ibid., 3.
 10. Ibid., 4-5.
 11. Pastor P. K. Asare, interview by author at Kokofu near Bekwai, October 13, 2018.
 12. Central Ghana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists records for 2018, office of Secretary, Kumasi, Kwadaso, Central Ghana Conference archives, Kumasi, Ghana.
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