



Pioneer Ghana Conference Headquarters.

Photo courtesy of Southern Ghana Union Conference.

# Pioneer Ghana Conference

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Pioneer Ghana Conference is an administrative unit of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ghana. Pioneer Ghana Conference is part of Southern Ghana Union Conference of the West-Central Africa Division. It was formerly part of Mid-South Ghana Conference and was organized in 2017. Pioneer Ghana Conference consists of the following territories: Agona West, and Effutu Municipalities; and the districts of Agona East,

Ajumako/Enyam/Essiam, Asikuma/Odoben/Brakwa, Awuru Senya, Awutu Senya East, Gomoa East, and Gomoa West; with Diamond Field Conference to the north, Accra City Conference to the east, Mid-South Ghana Conference to the west, and the Gulf of Guinea to the south. The conference headquarters is in Agona Swedru, Ghana.<sup>1</sup>

As of June 30, 2018, Pioneer Ghana Conference had 74 churches, membership of 14,802, and general population of 1,073,510.<sup>2</sup>

## Background

In 1888 the Three Angels' Messages were introduced to Ghana through a pamphlet which, Francis I. U. Dolphijn got from a ship captain who stopped over with his vessel at his coastal home of Apam, Ghana.<sup>3</sup> He accepted the newfound faith warmly and wholeheartedly after reading the pamphlet.<sup>4</sup> Reading this literature led him to begin observing the seventh-day Sabbath. He started to preach to others and finally established the Apam SDA church in 1888. He contacted Church headquarters in Battle Creek and on February 22, 1894, the first official Seventh-day Adventist workers to West Africa arrived on the coast of the Central region of Ghana and began work at Cape Coast and Apam. They were Edward Leroy Sanford and Karl G. Rudolph. Through their work and the efforts of others, Adventism came to stay at Cape Coast as well.<sup>5</sup> Dolphijn, partnering with western missionaries, soon became part of the first Adventist pioneering team in West Africa.<sup>6</sup> Dolphijn's effort led to the spread of the message to the western part of the Central region, the Western region, the Ashanti region, and other parts of Ghana.

In the eastern part of the Central region, oral history has it that William Kwesi Atta Dawson of Fetteh introduced Adventism at Fetteh and Mayenda, even before 1888, but this was not as well-known as the case of Dolphijn in Apam. William Kwesi Atta Dawson was purchased as a slave, but he was favored by the American slave masters because of his fair complexion and as a result was trained as a merchant. He had the opportunity to travel to America on several occasions. He returned from one of his trips to America as an Adventist. He started the SDA church at Gomoa Fetteh with his extended family members, and he observed the seventh-day Sabbath with them every time he returned to Gomoa Fetteh from America. On one of his returns to Gomoa Fetteh, he found out that some of his nephews had moved to a village called Bra-ma-yenda<sup>7</sup> to work at farming. He moved to join these nephews and preached the Adventist message to people in the area. His message was received and he established the SDA church at Bra-ma-yenda, now Mayenda.<sup>8</sup>

William Kwesi Atta Dawson constructed a church building and a mission house in 1894 for the church at Mayenda from the proceeds from his farms. The church at Mayenda became well known and the missionary stationed at Cape Coast occasionally visited them.<sup>9</sup> The Mayenda church members extended the Adventist message to many places in Pioneer Ghana Conference territory. Sometimes William Kwesi Atta Dawson, along with the church members from Mayenda, visited Francis I. U. Dolphijn at Apam. They made the journey on foot while preaching

at towns and villages along the way, and their message was *Yesu Reba oo*, meaning, "Jesus is coming." They did this with one person ringing a bell to catch the attention of the people.

The message caught the attention of people in Gomoa Lome and Wawase. At Gomoa Lome, Moses Yorke, Daniel Siripi, Emmanuel Eduoku, Peter Otoo, Robert Ansah, John Ansah, and James Essuman, who were strong members of either the Methodist church or the Islamic faith, came together to establish the SDA church at Gomoa Lome on March 29, 1933. Also, in the 1930s, D. G. Arthur, Solomon Arthur, and Joseph Eyiah came together to establish the Wawase SDA Church. On May 3, 1947, Emmanuel Eduoku, Daniel Siripi, and Joseph Eyiah, started an SDA church in Agona Swedru.<sup>10</sup>

## Events Leading to the Establishment of the Conference

In the early 1950s, Adventism in the Central region was reorganized with two major districts, namely Cape Coast and Agona Swedru. The Adventist message spread rapidly around the Agona Swedru area and many churches were established. This background facilitated the growth of the church within Agona Swedru, Mayenda, Apam, Kwanyako, Bobikuma, Bawjiase, Dawurapong, Nyakrom, and Nsaba. Pastor J. M. Arloo (1954-1959), Pastor S. K. Essel (1959-1966), Pastor C. B. Brew (1966-1978), Pastor Twamasi Ankrah (1978-1981), Pastor J. K. Arthur (1981-1986), Pastor J. K. Adu-Mintah (1986-1992), Pastor L. E. Debrah (1992-2001), Pastor R. A. Ntriakwah (2001- 2009), and many other pastors served within the Swedru district and new districts which were created.<sup>11</sup>

Mid-South Ghana Conference was born on November 3, 2014, with Cape Coast as the headquarters. On December 23, 2015, the Mid-South Ghana Conference executive committee voted to create a new field: Pioneer Ghana Administrative Unit, with the headquarters at Agona Swedru.<sup>12</sup> Pioneer Ghana Administrative Unit increased in church membership and developed facilities until it was organized as a conference in 2017.<sup>13</sup>

## Administration (2017-present)

President, Richard Asiedu Ntriakwah

Secretary, George Emmanuel Acquaah

Treasurer, Freeman Aboagye

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### SOURCES

Land, Gary. *The A to Z of the Seventh-day Adventists*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009.

Minutes of the Executive Committee of Mid-South Ghana Conference held on December 23, 2015, Pioneer Ghana Conference archives, Agona Swedru, Ghana.

Owusu-Mensa, Kofi. *Saturday, God and Adventism in Ghana*. Frankfurt: Lang, 1993.

*Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook Online*, 2018. Accessed October 13, 2019, <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/2018pdf>.

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"The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ghana 1888-1988." *A National Centenary Commemoration Bulletin*. Accra, Ghana, April 30, 1988.

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## NOTES

1. "Pioneer Ghana Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2019), 405.
2. Ibid.
3. Kofi Owusu-Mensa, *Saturday, God and Adventism in Ghana* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1993).
4. Ibid.
5. Gary Land, *The A to Z of the Seventh-day Adventists* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 115.
6. "The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ghana 1888-1988," *A National Centenary Commemoration Bulletin*, Accra, Ghana, April 30, 1988.
7. Meaning "come and let's pass the night together."
8. This information has come down to as oral tradition. Personal knowledge of the author as a member of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Ghana and the secretary of Pioneer Ghana Conference (2017-present).
9. Gottfried Oosterwal, "The Mission of the Church," *Ministry*, July 1972, 8.
10. This information has come down to as oral tradition, personal knowledge of the author as a member of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Ghana and as the secretary of Pioneer Ghana Conference (2017-present).
11. Mid-South Ghana Conference records, Pioneer Ghana Conference archives, Agona Swedru, Ghana.
12. Minutes of the Executive Committee of Mid-South Ghana Conference held on December 23, 2015, Pioneer Ghana Conference archives, Agona Swedru, Ghana.
13. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook Online*, "Pioneer Ghana Conference," accessed October 13, 2019, <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/2018pdf>

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