



South West Ghana Conference.

Photo courtesy of Isaac Ofori Attah.

Southern Ghana Union Conference

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Southern Ghana Union Conference, formerly Ghana Union Conference, was organized in 2000, its territory was divided and renamed in 2013 and reorganized in 2017. Southern Ghana Conference belongs to the West-Central Africa Division and occupies the following territories: Central, Eastern, Greater Accra, Western, and Volta regions in southern Ghana. Presently, it has ten conferences: Accra City Conference (ACC), Diamond Field Ghana

Conference (DGC), East Ghana Conference (EGC), Eastern View Ghana Conference (EVGC), Meridian Ghana Conference (MGC), Mid-South Ghana Conference (MSGC), Pioneer Ghana Conference (PGC), South West Ghana Conference (SWGC), West-Central Ghana Conference (WCGC), and Western North Ghana Conference (WNGC); and two missions: Volta North Ghana Mission (VNGM) and Volta South Ghana Mission (VSGM)¹

Ghana is divided into ten political administrative units. The Southern Ghana Union Conference territory covers five regions (Greater Accra, Volta, Western, Eastern, Central). The Northern Ghana Union Mission also covers five regions (Ashanti, Brong-Ahafo, Northern, Upper West, and Upper East).

As of June 30, 2018, the Southern Ghana Union Conference had 920 churches, membership of 160,436, and total population of 14,390,218.² Southern Ghana Union Conference headquarters is located in Accra, Ghana.³

Brief Organizational History

Seventh-day Adventism in Ghana traces its origins back to 1888. In that year, Francis I. U. Dolphijn of Apam in the Central region of modern Ghana formally accepted the Seventh-day Adventist faith in Ghana. From Dolphijn's testimony, the Adventist message came to him in early 1888 after reading an SDA pamphlet he got from a ship captain who stopped over with his vessel at his coastal home of Apam. In other words, Seventh-day Adventism made its first convert in Ghana through the literature ministry and not through a preacher. Francis Dolphijn accepted his newfound faith warmly and wholeheartedly. He determined to help build up the church on a sound and lasting footing in his home country.⁴

Early 1894, upon the recommendation of Lawrence Chadwick, the official visitor sent by the Church to Ghana, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Battle Creek, Michigan, USA, dispatched the church's first foreign missionaries to Ghana. These pioneer American missionaries, Karl Rudolph and Leroy Sanford, first landed at Apam on February 22, 1894. That marked the opening of the first SDA mission station in Real Africa (otherwise known as "Black Africa"). Francis Dolphijn and his small band of Adventist believers warmly welcomed Rudolph and Sanford to Ghana when they came to establish the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

For two decades or so after his conversion to Adventism in 1888, Francis Dolphijn was one of the pillars upon which the Adventist church in Ghana was built. Seventh-day Adventism became a Dolphijn family ministry in which Francis, his wife, and their three children, Isaac, Fred, and Joyce, all were involved. In collaboration with foreign missionaries and some indigenous believers like J. D. Hayford and George Peter Grant, the Dolphijns worked wholeheartedly for Christ and Seventh-day Adventism in Ghana during the closing years of the 19th century and the opening years of the 20th century.

Francis Dolphijn was one of the first literature evangelists to work for the church in Ghana. He also served as an itinerant preacher as well as an interpreter for the foreign missionaries of the church in coastal Ghana. His hometown, Apam, became the first SDA base and headquarters in Ghana until it was moved to Cape Coast in

late 1894.

Pioneer Francis Dolphijn, his two sons Isaac and Fred, and George P. Grant were the first SDA converts to be baptized into the church's fellowship, a ceremony performed by Dudley Hale, an ordained missionary from America, in March 1897.

The Dolphijn boys later left home. Fred Dolphijn left for Britain for more studies, with the support of people like J. D. Hayford. It was hoped they would return home and continue in the SDA work and cause. They did return, but did not continue for long in either the work or the faith. After Mrs. Dolphijn died, her husband became both father and mother to their three children for about two decades. He apparently never remarried following the early death of his wife. Francis Dolphijn himself died in the mid or late 1910s. Francis Dolphijn made his indelible mark as a pioneer founding father of Seventh-day Adventism in Ghana.⁵

The following are the highlights of main dates and events in the history of the Adventist work in Ghana.

April 1915: It marked the beginning of official pioneering work at Agona in Asante led by William Lewis.

October 12, 1921: J. K. Garbrah assisted by Jesse Clifford and Thomas Baker began the work of Seventh-day Adventism in Kumasi.

1924: The joint headquarters of the West African Field and the Ghana Mission under the leadership of L. F. Langford moved from Agona to Kumasi and the joint office became known as West Africa Union Mission (Ibid., 187).

1932: The mission office was moved to Bekwai by Jesse Clifford.

1933: The mission, then based in Bekwai, was reorganized under the new name, Gold Coast Union Mission, covering five territories in West Africa. These were Gold Coast (now Ghana), Ivory Coast, Dahomey (now Benin), Togoland (now Togo), and Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), with Jesse Clifford as the director. He was also the director of the Ghana Mission.⁶

January 1947: The West Africa Mission headquarters moved from Ibadan, Nigeria, to Accra, Ghana. The name was changed to West Africa Union Mission. This was the period of Jesse Clifford, D. J. Clarke, J. C. Viewer, and N. C. Brown.⁷

1970: Ghana Mission was reorganized into the Ghana Conference; Kumasi remained the headquarters of the first local conference in the whole of black Africa.

January 2000: The West Africa Union Mission was reorganized into Ghana Union Conference; Accra was retained as the headquarters.⁸

December 2013: Ghana Union Conference was reorganized into two unions: Southern Ghana Union Conference with headquarters in Accra covering five regions in the south; and Northern Ghana Union Mission with

headquarters in Kumasi covering five regions in the north.

Major Reasons for the Formation of the Second Union in Ghana

Early 2005 the leaders of the church in Ghana felt the urgent need to reorganize the Ghana Union Conference (GUC) into two unions. The reasons for reorganizing the union were:

1. Increase in membership and the largeness of the territory. Creating two unions out of the existing one would greatly enhance administration and ministry, thereby bringing leadership closer to the people.
2. It would also ensure a greater utilization of talents for effective evangelization and expansion of the gospel work, and it would reveal administrative qualities of church workers.
3. The second union would offer a more cost-effective disbursement of funds and would make it easier for the union personnel to travel across each territory.⁹

At the 2005 yearend meeting of the executive committee of the Ghana Union Conference, action was taken to officially begin the process of reorganizing the territory into two unions. The GUC executive committee also voted to establish a fund to help the new union accomplish the process. Into this fund all the fields in Ghana contributed monthly and proportionately according to the strength of each field. Subsequently, a committee (Two Unions Committee) was formed in 2007 to write a proposal to be presented to the executive committee of the West-Central Africa Division (WAD) to enable the union to be reorganized by the end of the quinquennium (2010). The committee members included Pastor E. O. Abbey (chair), Pastor J. K. Badu (secretary), Dr Seth A. Laryea, Pastor Emmanuel Denteh, and Elder Francis Danford, the Strategic Planning Director of the WAD!¹⁰ Church members across the territory were sensitized to appreciate the importance of the reorganization of GUC. Finally, the committee prepared a proposal that recommended two union conferences to the GUC executive committee. Subsequently, the proposal was sent to the WAD executive committee.

The proposal was turned down at the 2009 yearend meeting, largely due to pending financial obligations and technicalities. WAD suggested that the second union be made a mission instead of a conference as originally proposed.¹¹

It was a blow to the entire membership of GUC. However, the GUC leadership never relinquished the idea of reorganizing the union. So, intensive stewardship promotion was carried out in all the union fields to improve the financial situation. In GUC's 2010 yearend meeting, which coincided with the GC session, the reorganization issue was seriously promoted again. In 2012 a committee was reconstituted to work on the reorganization. A six-person committee, namely: E. O. Abbey (chair), F. Y. Adu Gyamfi (secretary), Adu Sampah, E. A. Odonkor, Solace Ahlorzi, and S. A. Laryea were tasked to resend the proposal, with slight adjustments—especially on finances—to the WAD.¹² Consequently, the proposal was prepared recommending a union conference and a union mission, namely, Southern Ghana Union Conference (comprising Volta, Greater Accra, Eastern, Central,

and Western regions of Ghana), and Northern Ghana Union Mission (which included Ashanti, Brong-Ahafo, Northern, Upper East, and Upper West regions of Ghana).¹³ This time WAD accepted the proposal and recommended the same to the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Great excitement came to the entire membership in GUC when the news came in November 2012 that the inspection team from the GC was coming in 2013 to inspect GUC territory and acquaint themselves with facts on the ground about the union's preparedness for reorganization. A team of six, namely: G. T. Ng (GC secretary and chair), Rosa Banks (secretary), Ray Wahlen (GC undertreasurer), Israel Leito (Inter America Division president), Benjamin Schoun (GC vice president), and Daniel Jackson (North America Division president) from GC, together with the three officers from WAD: Gilbert Wari (president), Onaolapo Ajibade (secretary), and Emmanuel Manu (treasurer) undertook the inspection in Ghana from February 13 to 17, 2013.¹⁴ The group worked closely with the leadership of GUC: S. A. Larmie, president; Kwame Kwanin Boakye, secretary; I. O. Amonsem, treasurer; and the chairman of the Two Unions Committee, E. O. Abbey.

From the proposal presented, membership of GUC as of the third quarter of 2012 stood at 493,016, with 1,229 churches and 1,784 companies.¹⁵ Also it had six conferences and one mission, namely: East Ghana Conference (EGC), South Ghana Conference (SGC), South West Ghana Conference (SWGC), Central Ghana Conference (CGC), Mid-West Ghana Conference (MWGC), South Central Ghana Conference (SCGC), and North Ghana Mission (NGM). The proposal was unsuccessful, largely due to pending financial obligations. WAD suggested that the second union be made a mission instead of a conference as originally proposed. Southern Ghana Union Conference will have three fields (South Ghana Conference, South West Ghana Conference, and East Ghana Conference); and Northern Ghana Union Conference will have four (Central Ghana Conference, South Central Ghana Conference, Mid-West Ghana Conference, and North Ghana Mission).

On April 14, 2013 the GUC's proposal for two unions was voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (GC), at the Spring Meetings held at Battle Creek, Michigan, USA. By this vote come January 1, 2014, Ghana will operate two unions—Southern Ghana Union Conference and Northern Ghana Union Mission Conference.¹⁶

The rest of 2013 was spent in preparation for the inauguration of the two unions. At the last yearend meeting of the GUC held on December 11, 2013, the Ghana Union Conference officially dissolved, and officers were voted for the Southern Ghana Union Conference. They were: Samuel Adama Larmie, president; Thomas Takyi Ocran, secretary; and Ebenezer Amase Odonkor, treasurer.

These, together with departmental directors, held office till the end of the quinquennium, December 2015. Southern Ghana Union Conference started operation on January 1, 2014.

Officers of the fields under Southern Ghana Union Conference were as follows:

Officers of East Ghana Conference (EGC), with headquarters in Koforidua:

President: S. B. Arloo

Secretary: Kwaku Okyere Barffour

Treasurer: Seth Ofori Boakye

Officers of Accra City Conference (ACC), with headquarters in Accra:

President: Solomon O. T. Hammond

Secretary: Nathan Teye Odonkor

Treasurer: Charles K. A. Quaye

Officers of South-West Ghana Conference (SWGC), with headquarters in Sekondi:

President: Yaw Kwakye Adeefe

Secretary: Kofi Nana Nimako

Treasurer: Jonah K. Antwi

Officers of Mid-South Ghana Conference (MSGC), with headquarters in Cape Coast:

President: Solomon Kofi Asante

Secretary: Isaac Oteng Asare

Treasurer: Isaac Anowuo

Reorganization of the Southern Ghana Union Conference

In pursuance of the idea of bringing the church administration close to the members, the Southern Ghana Union Conference embarked on major reorganization of the fields to create eight more fields from the original four, namely: EGC, ACC, SWGC, and MSGC.¹⁷

The following are the new fields that were created from the existing four and their offices:¹⁸

Pioneer Ghana Conference with, headquarters in Agona Swedru:

President: Richard Asiedu- Ntriakwah

Secretary: George E. Acquaaah

Treasurer: Freeman Aboagye

Meridian Ghana Conference, with headquarters in Tema:

President: Oheneba O. Agyei

Secretary: Emmanuel Dickson Poakwa

Treasurer: Daniel. A. K. Ameyaw

Volta South Ghana Mission, with headquarters in Ho:

President: Chris Kwesi Lambert

Secretary: Stephen Yaw Agboado

Treasurer: Stephen Ahindeke

Volta North Ghana Mission, with headquarters in Jasikan:

President: Richard Daves

Secretary: George Kuzube

Treasurer: Daniel Faakye

Western-North Ghana Conference, with headquarters in Sefwi Wiawso:

President: Francis T. Baidoo

Secretary: Frank Osei-Tutu

Treasurer: Charles Amoah

Eastern View Ghana Conference, with headquarters in Nkawkaw:

President: P. M. K. Arthur

Secretary: Collins Kyei Konadu

Treasurer: E. P. K. Quainoo

West-Central Ghana Conference, with headquarters in Tarkwa:

President: Abraham Binzuah-Siah

Secretary: James P. Ayeah

Treasurer: Emmanuel Cobbina

Diamond Field Ghana Conference, with headquarters in Asamankese:

President: Seth Asare Nyarko

Secretary: Alexander Abu Gyimah Wiredu

Treasurer: Victoria Annor

Leaders of the Southern Ghana Union Conference since 2013

Presidents: Samuel Adama Lamie (2013-2015); Thomas T. Ocran. (2015-present).

Secretaries: Thomas T. Ocran (2013-2014); Christ Annan-Nunoo (2015-present).

Treasurers: Isaac Owusu Amponsen (2013-2014); Ebenezer A. Odonkor (2015-2017); Bright Osei Yeboah (2018-present).

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. "Southern Ghana Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2019), 403.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Kofi Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana Seventh-day Adventism: A History* (Accra: The Advent Press, 2017), 207.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., 226.

8. "Ghana Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, accessed September 23, 2019, <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/2001.pdf>.

9. Personal knowledge of the author as a conference administrator then.

10. J. K. Badu, strategic planning director of the West-Central Africa Division, interview by Kwame Boakye Kwanin, May 3, 2018, Monrovia, quoted in "Reorganization of GUC into two Unions," a brochure (author's private collection).
11. Ibid.
12. F. Y. Adu Gyamfi, interview by Kwame Boakye Kwanin, May 15, 2018, Kumasi, quoted in "Reorganization of GUC into two Unions," a brochure (author's private collection).
13. E. O. Abbey and S. A. Larmie, *Proposal* (unpublished manuscript, Southern Ghana Union Conference records, Accra, Ghana), 12.
14. Ibid.,
15. Ibid., 15-17.
16. S. A. Larmie, "Ghana Union Conference Report for 2013," (WAD Yearend Meeting, unpublished, kept in West-Central Africa Division records, Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire).
17. Personal knowledge of the author as the executive secretary, Southern Ghana Union Conference, 2013-2014.
18. Personal knowledge of the author as the current president of Southern Ghana Union Conference.

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