

# Dolphijn, Francis I. U. (died c. 1914)

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## NII LANTE THOMPSON

Nii Lante Thompson is an ordained minister of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with over three decades of ministerial experience. He is currently serving as the Ministerial secretary and Family Ministries director of the Southern Ghana Union Conference in West Africa. He holds a D.Min. from Andrews University.

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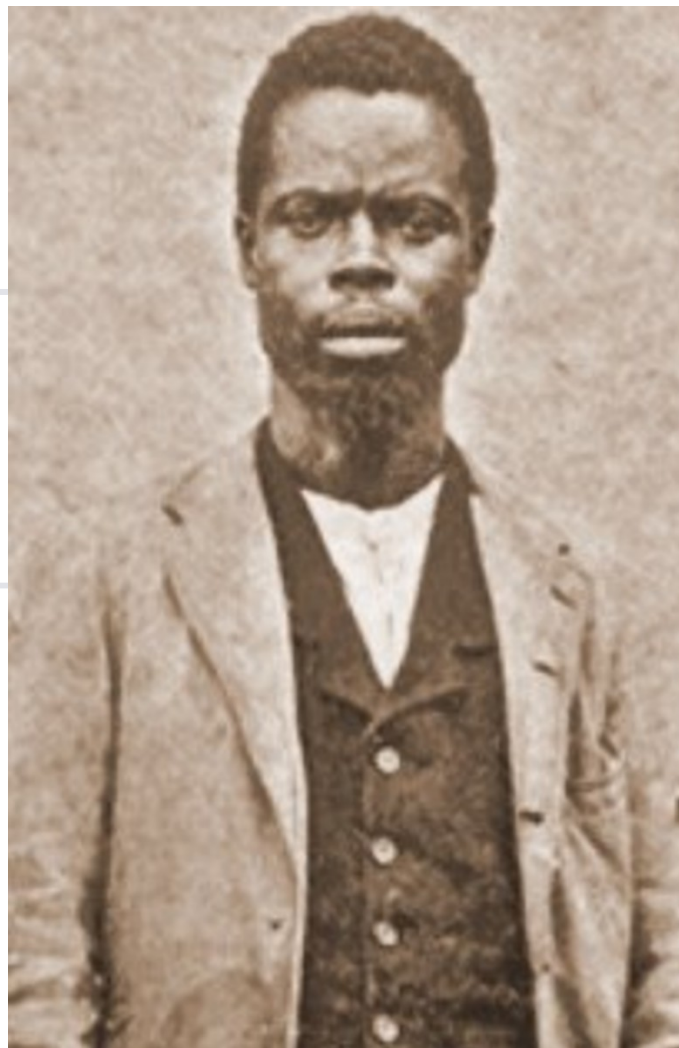
Francis Dolphijn was the first indigenous missionary of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ghana.

Francis I. U. Dolphijn was from Apam, a coastal town in the Central Region of Ghana. It is believed that his grandfather was a Dutch soldier who worked in what was then the Gold Coast colony. Very little is known of Francis before his conversion into the Adventist faith in 1888. Francis was a trader dealing in rubber, palm products, gold, cotton goods, and hardware.

Francis Dolphijn was the husband of Ekuia Guraba of Mankoadze, also in the Central Region of Ghana.

They had three children: Fred, Isaac, and Joyce. Not long after the birth of Joyce, Mrs. Dolphijn passed away, leaving Francis to raise the children.

Dolphijn's first contact with Adventism was through his friendship with William Dawson. Both were descendants of Europeans who worked in Ghana, former Methodist Christians and traders.<sup>1</sup> Dawson had earlier traveled to America, where he found this new faith, which he shared with his friends, including Francis. Initially, Francis was not convinced. He did not see why he should leave the well-established Methodist church to embrace a one-man church until he received a tract on the Sabbath from a sea captain in 1888<sup>2</sup> along the shores of Apam. Dolphijn corresponded with the source of the tract through the address printed at the end of the tract. He decided to share his newfound faith throughout the Gold Coast.<sup>3</sup>



Francis Dolphijn

Photo courtesy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives.

Zealous and committed to his newfound faith, Francis Dolphijn displayed a special interest in literature evangelism. From 1890, Dolphijn corresponded with the International Tract Society of the Seventh-day Adventists through Mrs. S. L. Strong, Mrs. Jessie Waggoner, and Pastor Lawrence C. Chadwick, who sent him tracts, magazines, and booklets as he shared his evangelistic zeal with them. Their support helped him teach the truth to his family and neighbors who gathered to study on Sabbaths.<sup>4</sup> His request for someone to be sent to teach them led to the first missionary visit by Pastor Chadwick to the West Indies, South America, and the West African Coast from Dakar to Accra in 1892.<sup>5</sup>

In November 1896, Pastor Dudley C. Hale visited Dolphijn in Apam and spoke to him about joining the Adventist workforce. Dolphijn accepted the invitation and officially became a full-time worker for the Church on January 1, 1897, together with George Peter Grant. Francis and his two sons, together with Grant, were baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church by Pastor Hale on March 27, 1897, during Dudley's ten months in Ghana—the first Adventist baptisms in West Africa.<sup>6</sup>

Pastor Hale's health forced him to leave the Gold Coast for a time, and Dolphijn was sent to Sekondi, where he worked tirelessly, proclaiming his faith with almost no assistance<sup>7</sup> until Pastor Hale was able to return in March 1903.<sup>8</sup> He also managed the mission farm that Hale had secured before he left, located northeast of the Cape Coast Castle.<sup>9</sup> The farm produced corn, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, other vegetables, plantains, bananas, palm nut, pineapple, pawpaw, yams, and other native fruits.<sup>10</sup> When missionaries came to Ghana, he served as a translator for them as they spread the gospel message.<sup>11</sup>

In January 1906, Dolphijn went to Sierra Leone, West Africa, to assist D. C. Babcock in the canvassing work there. Dolphijn had success there but left at the beginning of May.<sup>12</sup>

After his retirement, Dolphijn moved back to Apam, where he lived under the care of his daughter since he did not remarry after the death of his wife.<sup>13</sup> Dolphijn died in Apam sometime between 1910 and 1914. Though Dolphijn had helped build churches in various parts of the country, he never built one in his hometown; hence, his funeral service was held in a Methodist Church in Apam.<sup>14</sup> Although all three children of Francis Dolphijn worked with their father, they left the Adventist Church.

Modern recounting of the work in Ghana acknowledges Brother Dolphijn's Sabbath-keeping group stemming from reading Adventist tracts as the beginning of the work in Ghana.<sup>15</sup>

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11. L. C. Chadwick, "The West African Mission Field," *Daily Bulletin of the General Conference*, January 29, 30, 1893, 27; D. U. Hale, "A Personal Experience," *Lake Union Herald*, March 22, 1911, 1; D. U. Hale, "The Waiting Gold Coast, West Africa," *ARH*, July 14, 1902, 14; Hale, "Our Mission."
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