

The Ghana Evangelism Committee, 1974–1985: Rapid mission expansion and early continental recognition

Prince Adu-Gyamfi Kyeremeh ¹, Jonathan Edward Tetteh Kuwornu-
Adjaottor ², Paul Kwabena Boafo ² & Kwabena Opuni-Frimpong ²

¹ St. Monica's College of Education, Mampong-Ashanti, Ghana.

² Department of Religion and Human Development, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana.

ABSTRACT

This study explored the early years of the Ghana Evangelism Committee (GEC) from 1974 to 1985, tracing how an interdenominational mission organisation grew rapidly to a national scale and enjoyed prominence not only in Ghana but also across the African continent. It established that the purpose of GEC was, and remains, not to compete with the church but to address a practical issue in Ghanaian Christianity: how to mobilise a diverse ecclesial landscape for coordinated evangelisation while preserving denominational identities. The study was based on a qualitative institutional case study approach that incorporated archival stories, commemorative histories, constitutions, training manuals, survey reports, annual reports, and interviews, and interpreted the data using thematic analysis and data triangulation. The analysis revealed how GEC maintained a fast pace of growth through a church-based, reproducible evangelistic architecture centred on New Life for All (NLFA), district retreat systems, prayer-cell mobilisation, literature production, radio communication, and pastoral training. It also demonstrated that the early era, which bred a general evangelistic thrust and continent-wide familiarity, bequeathed the principles of subsequent church-growth approaches, saturation church planting, and mission intelligence. The study adds to the body of research on African Christian agency, parachurch mission, pragmatic ecumenism, and the history of mission mobilisation in postcolonial Ghana.

Keywords: Ghana Evangelism Committee, Mission Mobilisation, New Life for All, Para-Church Mission, Interdenominational Collaboration, Ghana, Evangelisation.

INTRODUCTION

Christian mission history is often told through foreign missionary societies, denominations, revival movements, and, more recently, the dynamism of Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity.¹ These stories

¹ Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (New York: Orbis Books Maryknoll, 2002); 3–15; Lamin O Sanneh, *Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 22–30; Joel Cabrita, “Christian History and Historiography,” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), sec 3..

are invaluable, but they may obscure a second significant aspect of the history of African Christianity, namely, the rise of interdenominational institutions, which are not aimed at supplanting the churches but at mobilising them. The Ghana Evangelism Committee (GEC) is a part of this understudied past. GEC was formally established in 1974, but was neither a denomination nor a traditional mission agency. Instead, it was organised as an indigenous, interdenominational service body, whose main work was to stir the churches of Ghana to evangelisation, discipleship, and national missionary consciousness.²

The acceleration and magnitude of the initial influence are key features of GEC's early history. In just a few years of its official constitution, the Committee had shifted its institutional conception toward the national rollout of the New Life for All (NLFA) programme. It had established district-wide systems of retreat, hired regional and district staff, printed and distributed hundreds of tons of evangelistic and discipleship literature, organised thousands of prayer cells, infiltrated denominational synods and conferences, and gained continental recognition of the success of evangelistic work.³ This was not a coincidental occurrence. It was the result of a certain institutional logic. Thus, GEC did not promote the mission by directly owning evangelism, but by providing churches with the tools to do the work.

This article posits that the years 1974-1985 were the formative decade in which GEC was able to establish itself as a catalytic interdenominational mission body of unusual national scale and premature continental notoriety. The main argument is that the initial contribution of GEC was not to be a competitor ecclesial formation, but to address a practical issue in Ghanaian Christianity of organising a plural Christian space into coordinated evangelisation without destroying denominational identity. GEC produced a sort of interdenominational missionary work through NLFA, pastoral retreats, district organisation, literature production, mobilisation of public prayer, radio communication, and, subsequently, strategies of church-growth and church-planting, which contemporaries considered important enough for Africans as a whole to remember.⁴

The article presents five interrelated points. It begins by re-creating how GEC came into being, from the preparatory Evangelism Committee of the early 1970s to its constitution and initial consolidation. Second, it contextualises GEC in wider missiological and World Christianity studies on African Christian agency, para-church organisation, and evangelical collaboration. Third, it demonstrates that GEC's initial growth relied on multiplication through churches rather than on event-based ownership. Fourth, it shows that the era leading to the emergence of the visible evangelistic movement laid the roots of the subsequent shift in GEC toward the church-growth strategy, research, and mission intelligence. Fifth, it claims that the early GEC framework provides a significant African illustration of *pragmatic ecumenism* in mission: denominational collaboration rather than institutional union.

The article uses a qualitative institutional case study methodologically and relies on thematic analysis and data triangulation, drawing from archival narratives, commemorative histories, constitutions, training manuals, survey documents, annual reports, and interviews with long-serving participants and leaders. All interviews have been referenced under pseudonyms rather than participants' real names, in accordance with research ethics. It is this ambivalent primary base that enables not only the narration of events but also the interpretation of institutional intention, method of operation, and perceived significance.

The article is composed of six sections. The literature review involves mission theology, African Christian agency, para-church theory, social capital, and revival-based evangelism. The use of primary data and the research design are described in the methodology section. The evidence is presented in the findings section in chronologically ordered subsections, tracing GEC since pre-history, through continental

² Ghana Evangelism Committee, *GEC Reviewed Constitution after Extraordinary General Meeting* (Accra: Ghana Evangelism Committee, 2024), preamble and arts. 2-5, unpublished institutional document, Ghana Evangelism Committee Archive, Accra.

³ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Milestones in the Development of the Ghana Evangelism Committee, 1970–2010* (Accra: Ghana Evangelism Committee, n.d.), sections “1974-76,” “1977-82,” and “1983-84,” unpaginated Ghana Evangelism Committee Archive, Accra; Ghana Evangelism Committee, *50th Anniversary Brochure* (Accra: GEC Archive, 2024), 7-11.

⁴ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Milestones in the Development of the Ghana Evangelism Committee*, entry “September 1977 - Africa Award for Outstanding Nationwide Evangelism”; unpublished institutional document.

recognition and initial strategic deepening. The discussion explains the results in terms of catalytic mission, pragmatic ecumenism, and postcolonial institution-building. The conclusion addresses the implications of GEC's early history for mission studies, African Christianity, and studies of national evangelisation structures.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mission, Disciple-Making, and the Organisational Challenge of the Great Commission

The theological question of mission itself must serve as a starting point for any serious historical study of an evangelistic institution. Contemporary mission research has repeatedly shown that the Great Commission cannot be reduced to a command to preach. The interpretation of Matthew 28:18-20 by R. T. France is noteworthy in that he maintains that the controlling imperative in the text is to make disciples, and going, baptising, and teaching only characterise how discipleship is practised.⁵ Mission is not, therefore, only proclamation but formation. It comprises witness, incorporation, teaching, and continued obedience. This is a guiding principle of this article, as it is why an organisation like GEC would consider training, following up, planting a church, and developing leaders to be as important as proclamation itself.

David Bosch takes the discussion a step further by situating the Great Commission within the broader context of Jesus' ministry, death, resurrection, and the sending of the church. According to Bosch, mission is not a solitary motto but an aspect of the church's involvement in God's redemptive work in history.⁶ Bosch's work is particularly useful in that he insists that mission continuously creates new institutional forms. Mission history is thus not merely the reiteration of a single model. It is a history of adaptation, mediation, and structural innovation in answer to shifting contexts. The insight creates an analytic space for thinking about national evangelisation committees not as administrative conveniences. They can be historically contingent and yet theologically significant forms.

The same can be said of John Stott, who wrote in the context of evangelical mission that the Great Commission demands practical, corporate, and sustained obedience.⁷ He was opposed to reductionist, narrow notions of evangelism, yet still devoted to making it central. Christopher J. H. Wright takes the frame one step further by grounding mission in the entire trajectory of Scripture and making it clear that the church is part of a larger purpose in God that is bigger than itself.⁸ This literature is directly relevant to GEC. When making disciples and mobilising the church are part of the mission, the structures to help churches witness together are not peripheral to mission studies. They are part of the mission's history.

Missio Dei, Ecclesial Participation, and the Space for Mediating Institutions

This interpretive horizon is further enhanced by the fact that modern mission theology has changed its *missio ecclesiae* to *missio Dei*. The powerful definition of mission as the movement of God to the world, put forth by Bosch, and the church's equipment to carry out that mission, decisively undermine any sense that mission is proprietary to churches.⁹ Lesslie Newbigin also conceived the church as a sign, instrument, and foretaste of the kingdom, a part of a greater work than itself: a divine work.¹⁰ This was later sharpened by Christopher Wright, who insisted that mission is not something that God happens to give to the church; rather, "God's mission has a church."¹¹

This literature is important in that it creates conceptual space for mediating institutions to operate. When mission is a primary focus of God and the church is not the owner of mission, entities that assist churches in being better engaged in God's mission may have theological legitimacy, even though they are

⁵ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 1114-1120.

⁶ David S. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 56-83, 389-393.

⁷ John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1975), 21-36.

⁸ Christopher J H Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (InterVarsity Press, 2025), 62-67.

⁹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390-393.

¹⁰ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God* (London: SCM Press, 1953), 147-162.

¹¹ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 22-24, 62-67.

not, in a narrow sense, churches. The question then becomes not: "Is such a body a church?" But how does such a body make ecclesial participation in the mission of God possible? This is exactly what this article posits about the early history of GEC.

The literature does not go far enough in discussing the coordination of participation nationally within a plural ecclesial setting. *Missio Dei* describes the origin of mission, but not necessarily the organisational patterns through which various churches engage in action. The latter becomes especially large in postcolonial African contexts, where coordination is a formidable challenge due to denominational proliferation, ecumenical complexity, and regional disparities. The prior history of GEC is thus worthy, as it makes institutional mediation the focus of missionary analysis.

African Christian Agency and the Recentering of Mission

The World Christianity literature has changed the face of the study of Christian mission by showing that the demographic and institutional centre of gravity of global Christianity has changed decisively towards the Global South, particularly Africa. Andrew Walls, Lamin Sanneh, Dana Robert, Kwame Bediako, Ogbu Kalu, and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, in their various ways, discredit the view of mission as mainly a movement of the West to the rest.¹² The African Christians are not merely receivers of mission but interpreters, organisers, and agents of mission.

The two concepts of the indigenizing principle and the pilgrim principle proposed by Walls can be particularly significant in considering institutions such as GEC.¹³ Christianity makes itself at home in local cultures and calls them out of themselves. Sanneh's translation work reveals that local appropriation and indigenous agency are empowered by the vernacularization of the gospel.¹⁴ Bediako brings this directly into the context of African theology, adamant that African Christianity should be perceived as a truly African religious experience rather than an alien extension.¹⁵ Recent discussions of World Christianity emphasise that the field is not just about global Christian demographics. Instead, it focuses on the interpretive agency, institutional innovation, and local histories of Christian communities beyond the traditional Western mission centres.¹⁶

This source is essential to the current research project, as it prevents GEC from being perceived as an organisational remnant of missionary business. GEC was created at a time when even Ghanaian churches were grappling with the realities of evangelisation in a postcolonial nation-state. The question changed from whether Christianity had arrived to whether churches were in a position to mobilise for evangelism, discipleship, and the planting of new churches across the country. GEC is part of this African Christian project. It is important not just for what it did, but also for what its appearance indicates about ecclesial agency in Ghana in the 1970s and 1980s.

Para-Church Theory, Modality, and Sodality, and the Ghanaian Complication.

One of the most helpful places to begin with a mission structure that coexists with the local church is Ralph Winter's well-known distinction between modality and sodality. Winter claimed that Christian history had undergone a cycle of giving birth to two parallel forms: the broad, inclusive church form, referred to as the *modality*, and the more focused, missionary form, called the *sodality*.¹⁷ This differentiation is useful, as it

¹² Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*; Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 1-29; Dana L Robert, *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion* (John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 73-108; Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1995), 252-267; Ogbu U. Kalu, *African Pentecostalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). 1-28; Johnson Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2013), 1-24.

¹³ Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 7-9.

¹⁴ Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 1-29.

¹⁵ Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 252-267.

¹⁶ Emma Wild-Wood, "Studying World Christianity," *Religious Studies Review* 50, no. 2 (2024): 273-78.

¹⁷ Ralph D Winter, "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, vol. 2 (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1974), 244-53.

clarifies why the church's missionary calling sometimes leads to specialised modes that cannot be easily sustained in ordinary congregational life.

However, the Ghanaian case does not make easy use of Winter. GEC was undoubtedly missionary-focused, yet more ecumenical and more nationally based than most traditional mission agencies. There was no such thing as a foreign mission field operating independently of the churches. It was there to organise, network, and educate churches that were already in the country. In that respect, it was not only parallel to the churches but was organised between them and on their behalf.

This is later reflected in the language of the GEC constitutions. In its new form, GEC is described as an interdenominational, indigenous service agency formed to accomplish the Great Commission through the mobilisation of the Body of Christ. It also establishes its mission as a catalyst for the Body of Christ in Ghana.¹⁸ Although this is a later language, it reflects something which is already evident in the early period. GEC never asserted ownership of the ecclesium. It operated through churches, and that interdenominational embedding is one reason it spread so quickly.

Evangelical Cooperation, Ecumenism, and Mission Unity without Merger

The other significant body of literature deals with ecumenical cooperation. Newbigin also made a strong case that the gospel is undermined by Christian division and that mission itself places pressure on the church toward unity.¹⁹ Bosch also held on to the argument that a true mission possesses an ecumenical logic since it embodies the unified redemptive mission of God. However, the Ghanaian and African contexts, as a whole, would suggest that unity is usually pragmatic rather than structural.²⁰ Without seeking an organic merger or theological homogenisation, churches can collaborate in areas such as evangelism, prayer, research, or social action. Recent African Pentecostal scholarship has also called for more careful attention to ecclesiastical and ecumenical engagements, rather than treating Pentecostal expansion only as a story of independent growth or competition.²¹

This was and remains exactly the trend in GEC. Denominations were and remain denominational but shared common training, district retreats, literature, and evangelistic patterns. This kind of cooperation is not given the emphasis it merits in mission studies, as it has been in African contexts, whereby in many instances, practical mission unity comes before the formal ecumenical consolidation.

Social capital literature also comes in handy in this regard. Robert Putnam's distinction between bonding and bridging social capital is useful for explaining how institutions create cooperative capacity between groups.²² Bonding capital is usually created within denominations. Capital can be bridged between them through ecumenical or parachurch structures. In the case of GEC, such bridging activity can actually be seen in the early years: leaders of various traditions worked within the same evangelistic frame. It was not only a cordial fellowship but also an organised missionary activity.

Revival Spirituality, Church-Based Evangelism, and the NLFA Impulse

The last piece of scholarship concerns revival, lay mobilisation, and church-based evangelism. Habits of testimony, repentance, discipleship, and lay participation fostered by the East African Revival and other African evangelical revolutions had a deep influence on postwar evangelical mission thinking.²³ Such currents are why programmes such as NLFA might have such an effect. They tapped into a spirituality that was already open to individual testimony, Bible study, and participation.

¹⁸ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *GEC Reviewed Constitution after EGM*, Preamble and art. 5.

¹⁹ Newbigin, *The Household of God*, 147-162.

²⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 463-474.

²¹ Mookgo Solomon Kgatle, "Developing the Scholarship of Ecclesiastical and Ecumenical Engagements in African Pentecostal Studies," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 6, no. 15 (2025): 4398-4408..

²² Robert D Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York Simon and Schuster, 2000). 22-24.

²³ Kevin Ward and Emma Wild-Wood, *The East African Revival: History and Legacies* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2013), 1-18.

The significance of NLFA in the GEC case lies in its ability to translate these impulses into a systemic programme. The GEC training manuals reveal that NLFA was intended to mobilise each Christian in prayer and witness within a local church with local leadership.²⁴ It was pastor-led, but was not pastor-limited. It was activating the lay, but not anti-institutional. It was reproducible, translatable, and training-intensive. This is one reason interviewees from various backgrounds recall the NLFA phase so vividly. It reduced evangelism from a general wish to a congregational process.

Therefore, the readings considered in this paper indicate a need to treat the early years of GEC as a single entity. Mission theology explains the validity of churchwide mobilisation. Indigenous agency is emphasised in World Christianity and African theology. The theory of para-church describes the development of task-based forms, but it requires further development in African ecumenical contexts. Interdenominational cooperation can be explained using the literature on ecumenism and social capital. The church-based evangelism literature on revival sheds light on NLFA's practical spirituality. The early history of GEC is at the point of convergence of these issues.

METHODOLOGY

The current study used a qualitative institutional case study design to examine the Ghana Evangelism Committee during the period 1974 to 1985. The selection of the case study was suitable, as the study aimed to provide interpretive and explanatory data on how an interdenominational mission body came into being, operated, and gained early impact, rather than statistical generalisation.²⁵ The methodology lay within an interpretivist paradigm, acknowledging institutions as bearers of meaning, memory, and symbolic legitimacy, and entailed intimate engagement with stories and lived experience.²⁶

Three primary sources were used to draw data. First, the chronological and organisational basis for reconstructing GEC's development was supported by archival and institutional documents, including constitutions, annual reports, financial records, milestone records and anniversary publications. These documents allowed the tracking of key processes, such as national mobilisation, the structuring of districts, and the distribution of literature. Second, programmatic and training resources, especially the New Life for All (NLFA) manuals and evangelistic booklets, were examined to reveal the internal logic of GEC's mission strategy. These writings showed that the success of GEC was based not only on revivalist zeal but also on organised training, follow-up, and multiplication pedagogy led by local church leaders. Third, semi-structured interviews with twelve purposively selected participants who knew GEC's history, leadership, programmes, institutional development, ecumenical relationships or partner networks were undertaken.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling because the study required information-rich respondents rather than a statistically representative sample. The selection criteria included one or more of the following: direct involvement in GEC's leadership or administration; long-term association with GEC's programmes; participation in denominational, ecumenical, or para-church structures connected to GEC; knowledge of New Life for All, early training systems, survey work, or mission mobilisation; and ability to provide historical or institutional memory relevant to the period under study. Therefore, the participants included current and former GEC leaders, staff, steering committee members, church leaders, and representatives of partner organisations. The integration of diverse voices, including steering committee members and church leaders, enabled the identification of convergences and divergences in historical interpretation, making the analysis more profound.

Ethical procedures were followed throughout²⁷ out the study as clearance was secured from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HuSSREC) of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) – Kumasi, Ghana. Again, informed consent was obtained from all

²⁴ Ghana Evangelism Committee, "New Life for All Leaders' Training Notes." (Accra, 1994). unpublished institutional document, Ghana Evangelism Committee Archive, Accra.

²⁵ Robert K Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, vol. 5 (Sage, 2009), 15–18.

²⁶ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 5–10.

²⁷ Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford university press, 2016), 470–475.

participants before interviews. The participants were briefed about the research purpose, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any time. To safeguard confidentiality, pseudonyms replaced real names, particularly since some participants held recognisable leadership or institutional positions. Using pseudonyms helped preserve participant anonymity while still capturing their perspectives.

The interviews were thematically analysed, and only evidence directly relevant to the study's focus was selected for discussion. The thematic analyses involved constant reading and coding to identify recurrent patterns such as national mobilisation, interdenominational cooperation, lay activation, and mission intelligence.²⁸ These themes were then triangulated with data; that is, claims were corroborated by documents, training materials, and interviews to ascertain their validity and reliability.²⁹ In cases of discrepancy, the interpretations were informed by the most consistently corroborated evidence, allowing the construction of a balanced history of the institutions.

This methodological approach allowed the research to transcend descriptive or commemorative narratives and advance to a critical institutional account of GEC's early growth and significance. The qualitative institutional case study thereby served not only as a mode of data collection but also as an interpretive framework, connecting historical processes to broader deliberations within mission theory and African Christian development.³⁰

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

From Evangelical Concern to Institutional Conception: The Pre-History of GEC, 1970-1973

GEC was formally established in 1974 after a critical gestation period from 1970 to 1973. This pre-history is important in that it shows that GEC was not formed as a sudden experiment by bureaucrats. It was born from an increasing belief among Ghanaian church leadership that evangelisation needed an interdenominational organisation.

A milestone document of the GEC states that the first important moment was when Willys Braun of the Evangelism-in-Depth office in Kinshasa met with senior leaders of the Christian Council of Ghana and urged the formation of a national evangelism committee. This was followed by the formation of an evangelism committee that included the Christian Council and the Ghana Evangelical Fellowship (now the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council).³¹ Additional meetings are documented in May and December 1970, and again in February 1971, at which point the need for a full-time program director was already evident.³²

The 50th anniversary brochure of the GEC confirms this general time frame and provides valuable interpretative information. It points out that the move was initiated by the churches in the Christian Council and the Ghana Evangelical Fellowship, and that joint church-evangelism annual pastors' retreats began to emerge during this time. It also retains the impressive remark by Willys Braun on returning to Ghana in 1971 that he had not encountered, in his journeys across thirty African countries, "a country so alive to God".³³ The quote can be read as missiological enthusiasm or strategic evaluation, indicating that Ghanaian church leaders were being addressed as a national Christian constituency capable of extraordinary mobilisation.

The importance of this stage lies in its role in outlining the problem. Whether Ghana had churches was not a problem; they did, and it was not simply a question of doctrinal unity. Instead, it was the question of how to give impetus to concerted evangelistic action in an already pluralistic denominational environment. GEC is thus conceptually a predecessor to the Evangelism Committee of the early 1970s and thereby occupies a space where national mission coordination was initially conceived.

²⁸ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101.

²⁹ Norman K. Denzin, *The Research Act*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978). 291–307.

³⁰ J. W. Creswell and C. N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (4th Ed.) (Sage, 2018). 96–100.

³¹ Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council, "'About Us.'" 2025. Accessed April 2025. <https://gpccghana.org/about-us>

³² Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Milestones in the Development of the Ghana Evangelism Committee*, entries for March 1970, May 1970, December 1970, and February 1971.

³³ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *50th Anniversary Brochure*, 7-8.

This reading is supported by interview evidence. Ps. Jones clearly linked the origin of GEC to the thoughts of the ecumenical bodies in Ghana, notably the Christian Council of Ghana and the Ghana Evangelical Fellowship. He noted that the vision was the mobilisation of the entire church in the total evangelisation of Ghana and beyond.³⁴ Ps. Luke also pointed out that the early beginnings of what would later become GEC were based on a partnership between the Christian Council Churches and the Ghana Evangelical Fellowship, even before the formal formation of GEC in 1974.³⁵ The significance of these testimonies is that they do not substitute for the documents, but assure us that the original inspiration was generally remembered as both ecumenical and missionary.

1974 Institutional Turning Point: Constitution, Ross Campbell, and the Launch of NLFA

It was in the year 1974 that missionary concern was finally transformed into institutional action. The milestones document records 27 February 1974 as the date on which the Ghana Evangelism Committee was established. Denominational nominees for representatives and leadership positions were instituted, and Ross Campbell, seconded by WEC Mission, was appointed the first National Director.³⁶

The Anniversary Brochure agrees with this story. It mentions that in 1971, Rev. Gerald Swank arrived from Nigeria to introduce the New Life for All programme in Ghana, but the programme's nature required a full-time coordinator for proper implementation. Mr Ross Campbell, a missionary with Worldwide Evangelisation for Christ (WEC), was therefore seconded to write and implement the programme in Ghana. In 1974, GEC was officially constituted, and the NLFA was launched as a programme of the GEC with Ross Campbell as the first National Director.³⁷ This formulation is significant since it explains two misconceptions. First, Ross Campbell's role was foundational to GEC, but he was not the founder in the individualistic sense of the term. Second, GEC was not invented in isolation from NLFA, nor was it reducible to it. Instead, NLFA emerged as the primary practical mechanism through which the newly formed GEC gained institutional traction.³⁸

This combination of institutional structure and programme logic is a powerful indication that the early success of GEC was based on it. The organisation did not start this by seeking to regulate all the evangelistic activity itself. Rather, it innovated a nationally scaled way of mobilising local churches. The same early sources indicate that the NLFA aimed to assist ministers, pastors, and church leaders in mobilising their congregations for evangelism, discipleship, and church planting, particularly because denominational leaders felt that church growth and church planting did not occur at the desired rate.

The interview evidence is particularly eye-opening here. Miss Gifty remembered that the original concept of early GEC was NLFA, and that at the time, the GEC national office was called the New Life for All Office before the Ghana Evangelism Committee's identity became fixed. She stressed that NLFA was not simply a booklet but a process and method of witnessing and winning souls.³⁹ Miss Hannah, who had joined in 1982 but had the same experience of the NLFA office culture, also recalled that GEC initiated evangelism in churches by offering materials, training, and support, after which teams were established and trained with the consent of church leadership.⁴⁰

Taken together, the evidence suggests that 1974 was not only significant in that a constitution was created, but also that a viable system of evangelism had been coupled with an interdenominational institution. This is what enabled quick growth.

³⁴ Interview with Ps. Jones (pseudonym; former steering committee member), 2026.

³⁵ Interview with Ps. Luke (pseudonym; steering committee member), 2026.

³⁶ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Milestones in the Development of the Ghana Evangelism Committee*, entry "27 February 1974."

³⁷ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *50th Anniversary Brochure*, 8-9.

³⁸ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *50th Anniversary Brochure*, 8-9.

³⁹ Interview with Miss Gifty (pseudonym; GEC official), 2026.

⁴⁰ Interview with Miss Hannah (pseudonym; former GEC official), 2026.

The Architecture of Rapid Expansion: District Retreat, Literature, and Leadership Training

Among the most obvious results from the archival record is that GEC's early expansion was infrastructural. It was not founded on charismatic spontaneity or rallies. It was based on the building of a nationwide evangelistic architecture.

The Milestones document explains that, following the formal constitution, the Committee hastened to produce NLFA manuscripts, published the Get Ready to Witness manual, won denominational approval, and set an annual programme and a budget to launch NLFA in member denominations. By the end of 1974 and early 1975, the country was divided into 96 implementation districts, district committees were organised, and three-day district retreats were organised to train pastoral leaders on the annual NLFA cycle. In the following 2 years, about 120 of these retreats were conducted throughout the nation.⁴¹

The above is very important. It demonstrates that GEC not only provides inspiration but also constructs implementation structures. The annual district retreats provided a means of bringing pastors and local leaders into the same evangelistic beat. The programme was established locally by the district committees. The annual cycle implied that evangelism was not episodic. It was routinised.

This is supported by the magnitude of the production of literature. According to the Milestones document, between 1974 and 1975, GEC launched an enormous publishing programme in which more than 1.7 million literary works were published, some in up to nine Ghanaian languages, across more than 70 publications.⁴² It is historically significant because it demonstrates that GEC's strategy did not rely exclusively on the face-to-face retreat culture. It was also based on communicative infrastructure. The organisation standardised the message, increased training, and increased accessibility using printed materials.

The tracts and manuals that accompanied it render comprehensible the extent of integration of this literature system. For instance, *There's a New Life for You!* did not stand alone; it provided readers with links to follow-up help, discipleship resources, and other books available from the Ghana Evangelism Committee.⁴³ Literature was not, therefore, just for initial contact. It was a component of the pedagogical continuum between gospel presentation and follow-up and between follow-up and Christian development.

The identical urge to communicate spilt over to the radio. The Milestones state that in July 1975, GEC established a radio team and, in November, commenced weekly broadcasts on GBC2 radio in Ghana.⁴⁴ This fact can be overlooked, yet it is historically relevant. It shows that GEC initiated church-based mobilisation and broader public communication very early on in its existence.

The logic behind this infrastructure is confirmed in the training manuals within the archives. *New Life for All Leaders' Training Notes* states that the programme's "ultimate objective" is "the fulfilment of the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ." It then outlines two fundamental objectives: the first is to go everywhere with the gospel and establish a church in every unevangelised community, and the second is to mobilise every Christian in prayer and witness within the context of a local church with local leadership.⁴⁵ The same trend is evident in *You Are My Witnesses*, which establishes a model of staged leadership and congregational training. Leadership groups would be formed by pastors and trained leaders, whose responsibility is to lead members through lessons and provide practical training to help them develop habits of evangelism and discipleship.⁴⁶

What emerges from these manuals is a programme of unprecedented strategic consistency. The church is not passed over; it is triggered. The leaders are not removed; they are trained. Evangelism is not stand-alone from discipleship; it is part of a larger process.

⁴¹ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Milestones in the Development of the Ghana Evangelism Committee*, sections "1974-76".

⁴² Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Milestones in the Development of the Ghana Evangelism Committee*, section "1974-76".

⁴³ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *There's a New Life for You!*, back matter, unpublished institutional document, Ghana Evangelism Committee Archive, Accra.

⁴⁴ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Milestones in the Development of the Ghana Evangelism Committee*, entry "July 1975 - Radio team formed" and "November 1975 - weekly GBC2 broadcasts."

⁴⁵ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *New Life for All Leaders' Training Notes*, unpublished institutional document, Ghana Evangelism Committee Archive, Accra.

⁴⁶ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *You Are My Witnesses*, 1-4, 40-46.

The relevance of this training model is strongly supported by interview testimony. Ps. Main remembered the sharpness with which its materials and conferences made leaders focus on missions and evangelism across denominational boundaries as one of the most vivid initial characteristics of GEC.⁴⁷ Ps. Dan also recalled the New Life for You evangelism strategy, taken to the grassroots with well-planned materials, training, and visual aids, which taught that it was not the role of the pastor to evangelise, but of the entire congregation.⁴⁸ Miss Hannah also remembered that a good number of churches were not then actively involved in evangelism and that GEC opened evangelism to them by supplying materials, training, and encouragement.⁴⁹ One of the most effective displays of triangulation in the early GEC material is the convergence of manuals, the organisation of chronology in archives, and retrospective testimony.

Staffing, Field Workers, and the Human Infrastructure of Expansion

People were also needed to achieve the rapid expansion. As historical records show, the rise of GEC was not the result of Ross Campbell's efforts alone. It involved a network of field workers, office workers, and district/regional workers, many of whom had an educational or church background and were temporary. The larger historical picture shows that, by March 1975, GEC started hiring regional and district directors, usually invited and selected, and, in most instances, they took a two-year leave from the Ghana Teaching Service to join GEC.⁵⁰

This fact is very telling. It reveals that early GEC relied on many educated Christian lay professionals, particularly teachers, who could be recruited into evangelistic service. This was both resourceful and frail. The organisation was able to draw in competence, but in most cases, only in the short run. However, this mass of early workers and employees proved to be key to GEC's survey work and other aspects of institutional life.⁵¹ This is important historiographically, as it reminds one that GEC's initial success was collective. Thus, the initial logic of development at GEC depended on a cadre of dedicated workers.

National Breadth and Ecumenical Penetration: Beyond One Denomination

A fourth key conclusion is that GEC's initial growth was truly interdenominational. To profess national evangelistic ambition is one thing, and to be practically introduced into denominational systems is another. According to the milestones document, during the mid-1970s, GEC was reporting at Methodist synods, Presbyterian presbyteries, and other denominational meetings, and annual retreats and committees were constructed in a broad-church field.⁵² These broader identities are reflected in the later constitutional language of GEC as an interdenominational service agency, although the actual wording would come later.⁵³

The importance of this ecumenical penetration lies in the type of legitimacy it requires. GEC could not have operated on the national level had it been seen as a tool of a single church block. Its practical acceptance in traditions indicates that it was successful early in its efforts to represent what might be termed mission unity without merger. In this way, the denominations were separate but accommodated a common evangelistic platform.

This is reaffirmed in the interviews. Ps. Jones emphasised that mobilising the whole church was GEC's focus.⁵⁴ Reflecting later with a great historical memory, Ps. Ken said GEC was a body with which Methodists, Presbyterians, Pentecostals, Anglicans, para-church agencies, and others joined together around the Great Commission. He also remembered the early New Life for All movement as truly interdenominational, with vans, crusades, announcements to the masses, and discipleship that was not that

⁴⁷ Interview with Ps. Main (pseudonym; former Steering Committee Member), 2025.

⁴⁸ Interview with Ps. Dan (pseudonym; church leader), 2026.

⁴⁹ Interview with Miss Hannah (pseudonym; former GEC official), 2026.

⁵⁰ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Milestones in the Development of the Ghana Evangelism Committee*

⁵¹ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Milestones in the Development of the Ghana Evangelism Committee*

⁵² Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Milestones in the Development of the Ghana Evangelism Committee*, section "1974-76."

⁵³ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *GEC Reviewed Constitution after EGM*, preamble and arts. 2-5.

⁵⁴ Interview with Ps. Jones.

of a single church.⁵⁵ The analysis of this finding is significant because it reveals that the initial influence of GEC cannot be reduced to missionary efficiency. It was an ecumenical trust accomplishment as well. GEC grew rapidly because it was embraced as a common evangelistic platform.

1977-1980: Continental Recognition and the Visibility of Catalytic Mission

One of the most notable aspects of the early history of GEC is that it gained Africa-wide evangelistic prominence in just a couple of years of its official existence. The milestones document and the archival records show that in September 1977, GEC was awarded the Africa Award of Outstanding Nationwide Evangelism by Evangelism Resources, an international ministry headquartered in Kinshasa, and records that GEC also received the award in 1978 and 1980.⁵⁶ The plaques in the archive bear material evidence of this memory, with GEC receiving awards for outstanding achievement in evangelisation.

These awards matter because they act as external validation of visibility and perceived effectiveness. They do not measure spiritual depth or long-term transformation by themselves. However, they demonstrate that GEC's work has become legible and noteworthy beyond Ghana. This is especially significant given the organisation's relative newness at the time. A body constituted in 1974 was being recognised continentally within three years.

The most likely reason for this is the nature of GEC's early model. It was not a one-denomination revival. It was a national system for mobilising the church. The creation of district directorates, the massive production of literature, the increase in prayer cells, the interdenominational activity, and the stress on multiplication all combined to create a pattern that other evangelical observers clearly considered impressive. The archival record supports this interpretation. A special meeting of denominational leaders on whether the Great Commission was doable in Ghana was held in October 1978. This meeting was held in the context of NLFA's success in reviving and mobilising churches for evangelism. According to the milestone document, the church leaders agreed that the Great Commission could be accomplished within our generation. It was a hope greater than hope. It was a sign that initial triumph had shifted the horizon of what church leaders thought was possible.

This is further enhanced by interview testimony. Dr Agyei, who joined in the early 1980s, explained how NLFA and similar programmes equipped churches without displacing them, and that the ministry was based on a church strategy.⁵⁷ The memory of GEC in the 1976 Ghana Congress on Evangelisation, as recalled by Ps Jones, further clarifies how early GEC was linked to a larger evangelical impetus without necessarily being reduced to Lausanne per se.⁵⁸ The organisation existed in an emerging national and continental missionary awareness, but articulated that awareness in interdenominational mobilisation.

⁵⁵ Interview with Ps. Ken.

⁵⁶ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Milestones in the Development of the Ghana Evangelism Committee*, entry "September 1977 - Africa Award for Outstanding Nationwide Evangelism." See Figures 1, 2 and 3 (pages 13)

⁵⁷ Interview with Dr. Agyei (pseudonym; missionary), 2025.

⁵⁸ Interview with Ps. Jones.



Figure 1: GEC 1977 Award



Figure 2: GEC 1978 Award

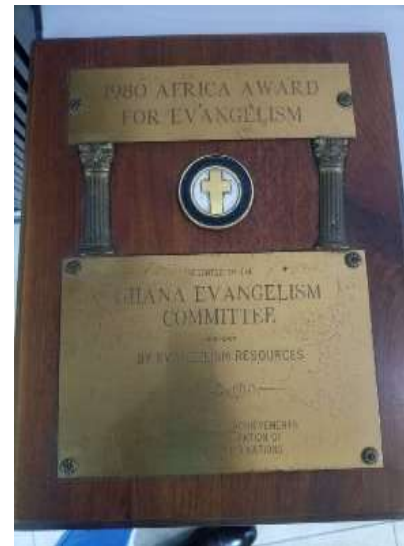


Figure 3: GEC 1980 Award

Credit: Photos taken by the researcher at the GEC Headquarters, Accra

Prayer, National Crisis, and the Widening of Public Relevance

A further finding is that GEC's early reach extended beyond narrow evangelistic programming into coordinated national prayer mobilisation. According to the *Milestones* document, GEC distributed national praise and prayer notes through more than 10,000 NLFA prayer cells and organised a Week of Repentance and Prayer for the Nation in June 1978, followed by a National Day of Prayer in December 1978 and a Week of Prayer for Peaceful Elections in June 1979. These initiatives were supported by the Christian Council and the Catholic Bishops' Conference.⁵⁹

This is revealing in at least two ways. First, it demonstrates the depth of the network. An organisation could not coordinate prayer at this scale without already having extensive ecclesial channels. Second, it shows that GEC's legitimacy was not restricted to the internal world of evangelism training. It was becoming a public spiritual convener during a national crisis.

This should not be interpreted as a departure from mission. In the context of late-1970s Ghana, prayer for the nation and the churches formed part of a wider understanding of evangelistic and spiritual responsibility. GEC's capacity to move from witness training to national prayer coordination shows that its mobilisation infrastructure was already broader than a single programme. The prayer-cell system was not peripheral. It was part of the organisational matrix that made GEC visible and useful.

1981-1985: From Evangelistic Programme to Church Growth, Church Planting, and Mission Intelligence

The final significant conclusion concerns how GEC's early success led to strategic deepening rather than institutional stagnation. Throughout the early 1980s, the organisation was moving beyond first-generation NLFA mobilisation to a broader need for church development and church planting, and *the Unfinished Task*.

According to the *Milestones* document, GEC sponsored its first Pastors' Conference in July 1981 with a group called Christian Dynamics, whose theme was on spiritual input and practical teaching on the purpose of the church, the role of the pastor, and spiritual warfare. Such conferences subsequently became annual

⁵⁹ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Milestones in the Development of the Ghana Evangelism Committee*, entries for June 1978, December 1978, and June 1979.

events in most regions in the 1980s.⁶⁰ It means that GEC was consolidating its influence through pastoral formation, not just through printed aids.

According to the same source, 1983-1984 was a crucial strategic change. It was during this time that the vision of an evangelised Ghana was realised in the light of saturation church planting. This required having healthy witnessing churches in all the villages and neighbourhoods of the cities; a church within walking distance of all; and a church in a language that could be understood by all.⁶¹ The program, *Three in 83*, challenged Christians to witness, win, and disciple three friends, and churches were to plant three daughter churches and pursue three unreached people groups.⁶²

This is a very decisive development. It evidences that the initial influence of GEC had shifted from its mobilisation to strategic intelligence. The organisation had ceased to simply enquire whether churches were evangelising. The questions were about where the churches were, where they were not, and how church planting could be more systematised.

The shift towards research comes out naturally here. The Anniversary Brochure reports that the National Church Survey was launched by GEC in 1984 and that in 1985, a pilot survey was launched in the town of Sunyani with Rev. Sam Oppong as the pilot.⁶³ The text of the survey itself attests that the Brong Ahafo pilot was completed in 1985 and was intended to determine where churches were located, the rate of expansion, the areas that were still unchurched, and how denominations could launch more aggressive outreach and church-planting efforts.⁶⁴

This transition is greatly supported by interview testimony. Miss Hannah remembered that the conception of research was born out of the belief that the churches still required the NLFA impulse, but also knowledge, particularly regarding the people and regions in the north that were not adequately covered by the churches.⁶⁵ Miss Gifty also directly associated the survey with the necessity to find out the location of the churches where they were and where they were not.⁶⁶ Thus, the survey was not a break from the initial vision of evangelism. It was its strategic maturation.

By 1985, therefore, GEC had already achieved a wonderful first decade. It had changed the missionary care into interdenominational form; the interdenominational form into national mobilisation; the national mobilisation into continental recognition; the continental recognition into strategic deepening through church-growth vision, church planting, and mission intelligence.

DISCUSSION

Explaining Rapid Mission Expansion

The evidence provides a fairly precise explanation of why GEC grew so fast during its first 10 years. The reason was that the organisation addressed a practical ecclesial issue that was already present in the minds of various churches but could not be dealt with easily on its own. Ghanaian church leaders realised that not all congregations were mobilised for evangelism as much as they should be, that church planting was not balanced, and that current denominational practices were inadequate to generate the missionary breadth they yearned for. Instead of asking churches to give up their identities, GEC offered them an interdenominational system of training, literature, retreat structure, and strategic rhythm that would help them become more effective together.

⁶⁰ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Milestones in the Development of the Ghana Evangelism Committee*, entry “July 1981 - GEC sponsors its first Pastors Conferences.”

⁶¹ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Milestones in the Development of the Ghana Evangelism Committee*, section “1983-84 - A Focus on Church Growth & Church Planting.”

⁶² Ghana Evangelism Committee, *Milestones in the Development of the Ghana Evangelism Committee*, entry “1983 - ‘Three in ’83’ launched.”

⁶³ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *50th Anniversary Brochure*, unpublished institutional document, Ghana Evangelism Committee Archive, Accra.9-10.

⁶⁴ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *GEC Church Survey*, 10-11.

⁶⁵ Interview with Miss Hannah.

⁶⁶ Interview with Miss Gifty.

This is the reason why the expansion was not only quick but also extensive. The Committee did not have to build churches per se to disseminate its power. It became ingrained in the churches of the present. Thus, the model was not that of ecclesial replacement but of ecclesial activation. The Great Commission was not merely a doctrine to be ratified, but an activity that was organisable.

Early GEC as a Catalytic Institution before the Term became Explicit.

Among the implications of the findings, one of the most significant is that GEC operated catalytically before the formalisation of identity in the explicit language of the subsequent documents. The description of GEC in the latter constitution as a catalyst for the Body of Christ in Ghana is not a recent creation but has historical roots.⁶⁷ It puts into clearer words what had already been practised in the early decades.

This is illustrated in the early years. GEC was not a primary ecclesial agent engaged in evangelism. It organised churches through NLFA, district retreats, manuals, prayer notes, pastoral conferences, and public communication. It had an indirect influence. It did not replace but hastened others' missionary involvement. This is exactly what the catalytic institution does.

This interpretation is supported by the early award history. Continental recognition in 1977, 1978, and 1980 can best be understood (not as a reward for denominational expansion) but as an acknowledgement of an example of nationwide church mobilisation. The organisation was eminent because it had mobilised other organisations.

Pragmatic Ecumenism and Mission Unity without Merger

Another significant trend in African ecumenism is evident in the findings. GEC demonstrates that effective Christian unity in mission does not necessarily entail homogenisation of doctrine or an organic institutional merger. The situation in Ghana was that the churches were still denominationally separate, yet collaborated on evangelisation, discipleship, prayer, research, and thinking. This utilitarian ecumenism was not just skin deep. It demanded credibility, joint leadership models, interdenominational involvement, and the churches' readiness to embrace a platform that was not their own. It thus constituted actual ecclesial cooperation, although not of the classical ecumenical kind stressed in certain Western theology. This is a valuable insight for mission studies. Plural Christian settings of national evangelisation might be less reliant on merger than on the formation of effective mediating structures. One such structure was GEC.

From Revival Impulse to Strategic Intelligence

The other important implication is that the first decade of GEC's history has shown it is moving toward a revival of strategic intelligence. Evangelical urgency, personal witness, and renewal in churches were certainly influential in the early years. But the organisation did not remain at the level of generalised revivalism. By the early 80s, it was already thinking in terms of church growth, saturation church planting, unreached peoples, and data-driven survey work.

This is significant because it challenges simplistic dichotomies between revival and strategy, or between spirituality and research. In the case of GEC, the two were inseparable. The need to learn more was highlighted by evangelistic urgency. It was the impulse of missionary concern, rather than of missionary aversion, that gave rise to the survey.

Early Strength and the Seeds of Later Fragility

The findings also help shed light on a paradox that becomes more evident later in the decades. These aspects of GEC that contributed to its effectiveness in the early years- its reliance on volunteerism, cooperation with churches, indirect influence, and interdenominational trust- also led to its weakness in the future. Since GEC was not the owner of churches, its strength relied on the continued ownership of churches. Since it failed to centralise mission authority, its impact was prone to change with shifts in leadership zeal, finances, and

⁶⁷ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *GEC Reviewed Constitution after EGM*, preamble and art. 5.

denominational interests. Therefore, childhood years are not to be idealised as a mere victory. They are to be interpreted as an instance of relational institutional power. That was a real strength, albeit with inherent weaknesses.

CONCLUSION

This article contends that 1974-1985 marked the pivotal decade of rapid mission growth and initial continental acknowledgement in the Ghana Evangelism Committee's history. Taking advantage of the vision in the early 1970s, GEC was officially established in 1974 and swiftly created a nationwide, church-based evangelism system through the New Life for All programme. It established district committees, organised pastoral retreats, mobilised prayer groups, translated and distributed literature on a large scale, recruited regional and district staff, integrated into denominational structures as a common evangelistic platform and began using media to expand its influence.

These developments achieved more than just internal success. They created a level of national missionary visibility that was acknowledged by contemporaries outside of Ghana. The African Awards in Evangelism in the 1970s and 1980s are significant historically because they exemplify this visibility. They demonstrate that GEC's efforts were regarded as an important example of nationwide evangelistic mobilisation.

The study has also shown that by the early 1980s, GEC was already deepening its strategy. The Committee moved from broad evangelistic activation toward church-growth thinking, church planting, and mission intelligence, culminating in the 1985 Brong Ahafo pilot survey. In that sense, the early period was not only effective; it was formative. It established the institutional DNA that later made possible GEC's catalytic self-understanding as an interdenominational mission body serving the churches of Ghana.

For mission studies, the early GEC case demonstrates that the history of mission in Africa must include not only churches and foreign agencies, but also national mediating bodies that mobilise churches across denominational lines. African Christian history offers a compelling example of postcolonial ecclesial agency. For parachurch theory, it suggests that some of the most effective mission institutions are those whose influence is exercised not through ownership but through activation, coordination, and trust.

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ABOUT AUTHORS

Prince Adu-Gyamfi Kyeremeh (M.Phil) is an Assistant Lecturer at the St. Monica’s College of Education, Mampong-Ashanti, Ghana.

Jonathan Edward Tetteh Kuwornu-Adjaottor, PhD, is an Associate Professor of New Testament and Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics, Department of Religion and Human Development, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana.

Paul Kwabena Boafo, PhD, Senior Lecturer, Department of Religion and Human Development, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana.

Kwabena Opuni-Frimpong, PhD, is a Senior Lecturer, Department of Religion and Human Development, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana.