

## A CHAT WITH REV. EDITH LARBI

### A Missionary to Klonu

***Voice of Missions (VOM):*** Can you tell us about yourself and your background?

**Edith Larbi (EL):** My name is Edith Enyonam Larbi, I am an ordained Reverend Minister with the Global Evangelical Church of Ghana. I was born on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 1943 at Peki Bambo, where I had my Nursery and Elementary education in the '50s. Though I had the desire to further my education to the tertiary level, lack of needed funds made this impossible.

I later come to Accra in search of a job. I got involved in lots of factory work. I also worked with AGIP, which later became the Ghana Petroleum Company.

***VOM:*** What in your childhood prepared you for your missionary service?

**EL:** One significant incident in my childhood that I believed laid the foundation for my ministry was a story recounted to me by my grandmother. According to her, something happened in our compound that made her believe I am a unique child. She narrated the story of how a goat was undergoing difficult labor and everyone just watched the goat in pain not knowing what to do, but I was the one who came to the rescue of the animal.

Another remarkable incident was when I was about 5 years of age. The family went to church and for reasons I could not explain; I chose not to attend the children's church that Sunday but rather went to the adult church. It was during the Easter season. The message of the pastor that day was on the Crucifixion of Christ. He elaborated on how Jesus was mercilessly beaten, this message got me curious, I could not understand the crime of the man for him to be so beaten up. As we walked back home, I asked grandma what the sin of that man was, I cannot remember the answer she gave me. However that message impacted me more than I can imagine, from that time on, the Holy Spirit began His works in me.

As a young lady, I was involved in virtually every

Christian activity around me. I joined the Volta Evangelical Association, travelling with them for open-air crusades. I did dawn broadcast preaching, all night programs, I mingled with every creature on the floor, scorpion, snakes, mosquitos, you name it but all these did not deter or discourage me in my quest to serve God. I served the Lord with excitement with no thought of comfort crossing my mind.

When I relocated to Accra, I joined the church choir. We were then staying in the Awodome area. I was in my early 20's and on my way back from the choir practice one of the days, I told the Lord that all my friends had boyfriends, as such He should also give me my boyfriend. As if in answer to my request, I heard an audible voice, it was as if someone spoke clearly into my ears. I heard the word "Repent" repeatedly in my local language. That very week a friend invited me to a yearly Intervarsity Christian Program. It was at this program I gave my life to Christ. That was in December 1966.

***VOM:*** How did you receive the Call into ministry/missions?

**EL:** I can say the call came suddenly. While attending Maranatha Bible College, one of our colleagues, aunty Grace, a midwife by profession lost her mother. Another friend suggested that it will be good for us to travel with her to the village to support her at the funeral. We bought into the suggestion and travelled with our bereaved colleague to Klonu village in the Volta Region of Ghana. In the night, about 20 of us slept in one room amidst mosquito bites. It was in this mosquito blood bite that I heard the audible voice again "I am going to bring you here to work for me" it was so clear, it entered my heart. When I returned to Accra, I told one of our lecturers, Rev. Beaden that I was going to return to Klonu to do evangelism. He asked me to wait till I had completed my program. Though I agreed with it, I still traveled to the village before I completed my course. I preached and one elderly woman gave her life to Christ; I was overjoyed. I must say that there was

nothing to write home about as far as this village is concerned. But this did not stop me from going back. After my program at Maranatha, I went back to Klonu where I spent 9 years of my life as a single missionary. It should be noted that I was neither sent by a Church or a mission agency. I however later became a Missionary of the Christian Outreach Fellowship (COF).

***VOM: Were family/friends supportive?***

**EL:** I can say that my family was supportive because they did not discourage me. They knew that getting involved in Christian activities was my lifestyle. My uncle once told my mother that when anyone is looking for me and they find a nearby Chapel, they should enter, I will surely be there. My fellow workers often remarked that the only thing that they know will move me is anything that has to do with Christianity. When I decided to resign from my job and relocate to Klonu, my employer immediately increased my salary but this did not dissuade me. I was determined to leave. Mr. Lamptey, my boss told me that anytime I have a change of mind, and came back, my job will be given back to me, though this was not the company practice. Immediately I left my workplace that day, I gave out some of my office wear and turned the rest into rags, I did all these because I did not want anything to encourage me to go back to the secular job.

***VOM: What are some of the challenges you faced on the field?***

**EL:** I had lots of challenges. I remember on my way to Klonu, I met a pastor who when he learned of my decision, exclaimed that there is nothing there, not even water to drink or wash. Indeed it was difficult terrain, after boiling the rainwater for drinking, the water will still be foaming, but this was my drinking water. Indeed the Lord's presence was mighty with me, I cannot explain the supernatural force that kept me through those times.

***VOM: Were you not scared by the reality on the ground?***

**EL:** I do not think so. I walked through the dark al-



*Missionary Edith Larbi (middle) with Rhoda Appiah and Colleague*

leys by night without fear, at times as late as 11 pm. I remember walking through the Klo River around midnight and I saw a water snake. I told the snake that I am on my way home, so the snake too should go its way, and that was how we both parted ways without harming each other. One day a lady called Maggie spotted me on my way to the river to fetch water. She quickly came out to help. Afterward, she inquired to know why I was not married. I was dumbfounded, for I did not know what to tell her. Right there and then, the Lord told me to tell her that it was because of her that I was not married. The woman later gave her life to Christ but unfortunately, her husband abandoned her with five children because of her faith in Christ Jesus.

***VOM: As a single lady did you ever suffer loneliness?***

**EL:** No the Lord did not allow me to suffer from loneliness, He completely took such feelings away. My lonely moments were when I didn't see people around, then I would begin to ask if the rapture has taken place. Then I will start going to people's houses to check on them. Though I went alone to Klonu, later on, I got a younger brother and one or two people who came along to support me in the work.

***VOM: Who or what was most helpful in preparation times (Books or People)***

**EL:** As at the time I went to Klonu, I knew very little about missions. But I had read lots of books while in Bible School. Each student needed to read 40 books per semester. I read all these books which included books by Kathryn Kuhlman. I drew a lot of inspi-

ration from these books and it was through these books I got my firsthand information about missions.

**VOM: What do you perceive are your strengths in ministry/missions?**

**EL:** The word of God, the Holy Spirit and my passion for the lost.

**VOM: What do you see as your weak points in ministry/missions?**

**EL:** I can't think of any. At times I look back and I think I should have done more or better than I did. Many people did not understand me, especially the people in the village, they asked me "have you come to marry or you are a Miss (A 'Miss' at that time was a teacher). I often told them that I have come to tell them about God. According to the chiefs in the village, they have seen people doing God's work but they are yet to see one with my level of attachment to serving God.

**VOM: What parts of missionary work did you enjoy the most?**

**EL:** I enjoyed every aspect of Christian service. I am an all-rounder. I served as a pastor in the village, a teacher, doctor, evangelist, I mean everything.

**VOM: What aspects of missions would you like a change or do differently?**

**EL:** I will want to look at the issue of financial support. For instance, when I was working with COF, it was expected of every missionary to raise their support out of which they will get their monthly stipend. It was not difficult for me to raise the support, however for many others, this was a very difficult task hence the need to do a secular job to raise money, the effect was that they ended up losing focus.

**VOM: How were you sustained before you join COF as a missionary?**

**EL:** Sincerely I cannot remember exactly how, but I remember that I led a very simple life, I come from the part of Volta Region where we like soup, as such I relied on that with crabs I harvested from the river. I managed with my few clothes and small money. At

a point in time, the children of some of the brethren shopped for me when coming from Accra, and when I started getting support from COF, I shared the support with others. I even raised support for Maggie's family. The woman whose husband abandoned because of her faith. Though she was without her husband, her family was living well due to the support. But all I can say is that what to eat or drink was the least of my worries then because the Lord was faithfully providing even without me asking.

**VOM: What is your greatest disappointment or disillusionment?**

**EL:** None. I did have issues with people I worked with because they do not seem to understand me, but I did not hold anything against them nor hated anyone.

**VOM: What are your most treasured memories?**

**EL:** When people turned away from idols to Christ. One particular incident stood out though. There was this veteran idol worshipper and his wife in a nearby village. I often went there to witness to him and his wife, but the wife was just not willing to give in, this was because she was afraid that if the husband should give his life to Christ, the gods will kill him.

One day while this man was coming from another village where he had gone for another idol, he heard us singing a song in our local language during our night vigil. The lyrics of the song revolves around our satisfaction in Christ, he was puzzled. The Lord used this song to minister to him and he got saved. Afterward, he brought out 12 baskets full of idols to be burnt, there was this particular smock-like garment that will just not catch fire for nothing less than 15 minutes. I had to call another pastor to join me in prayer until it eventually burnt. When the woman saw that the husband did not die, she readily surrendered to the Lord. Both of them were baptized in water as Abraham and Sarah.

Another memorable time was when I went to another village to preach. Due to my phobia of bicycle riding, I chose to walk home, when the evangelistic program ended. While the others rode on bicycles, I as walked alone, I followed the cow footsteps, which ended me in thick mud, as I walked, I kept hoping that the next step will land me on dry ground but the reverse was the case. I sank in mud neck deep. All

of a sudden someone came around, pulled me up, and carried me to the dry ground. I never saw the person again. From there I saw a coconut tree which suggested that there was a village nearby. As I walked through, I got to the hut of an old woman who was a bit apprehensive as to who I was, but thanks to God, her young daughter recognized me as Sister, (that was how the village people called me) the lady that has been coming to preach to them. That was how I was led to the nearest bus station that took me back to Klonu. By the time I got back, it was late, the gong beater was about to beat the gong in search of me. I believe I experienced an angelic intervention that day.

**VOM: What is/are your favorite scripture(s) that relate to your experience?**

**EL:** Jude 23. I always visualize the Lord holding me and keeping me from falling. Temptations came from left and right. The so-called evangelists will travel from Accra to visit me, but when they talked, I could see through their ulterior motives, but the Lord always kept me from the evil ones.

**VOM: What advice will you give to women or people who are in missions or about to go into missions?**

**EL:** My advice is that they should not be greedy. Their mind should not be on what they can get. The words of a song encourage me a lot, it says “Make the Lord your delight and your want will be his care.”

**VOM: Your commitment and love for God is unparalleled. What went wrong with the Christian faith in today’s generation as far as commitment and love for God is concerned? Where did we miss it?**

**EL:** When the tree is crooked and you put fire on it, the ashes will also be crooked, but when the tree is straight and one puts fire on it, the ashes too will be straight. What happened with the church is “small Christianity, small worldliness.” Some of our leaders have become crooked, and it has spread like ashes to the body.

**VOM: So what is the way forward?**

**EL:** We should allow the Bible, the word of God to guide us. We must watch and pray. We must be alert with the knowledge of God’s word. What went wrong is that we have walked away from the Holy Spirit, we have closed our ears to Him, and we are no longer depending on the Holy Spirit. The way the disciples were with Jesus is how we should be with the Holy Spirit. Today the church is not different from the market, no difference between us and the worldly people.

**Interview by Rhoda Oluwakemi Appiah.** Rhoda is married with three children. She is a pioneering missionary of Fullstature Missions International together with her husband, Rev. Daniel Hyde Appiah. She is a lover of God and His word, with an overwhelming desire to see God’s kingdom advance in every sphere of society. [kemiappiah@gmail.com](mailto:kemiappiah@gmail.com)