

SAMUEL APELIGEBBA

Lawrence Lerewanu

“Apeligebe was from the very beginning of his ministry a pioneering missionary who became an apostle to many nations and ethnicities. For the greater part of his ministry he worked amongst a dozen or more tribes/ethnicities and languages very different to his native Frafra. In my time in Ghana, I cannot identify another Ghanaian who has worked amongst and planted churches in so many different languages. He was the type of missionary that Northern Ghana had lacked for years. Apeligebe spent more than 30 of his 42 years of ministry in cross cultural missions before returning to his traditional homeland to plant 31 Frafra churches before retirement in 2017”. These are the words of Ross Campbell of New Zealand who served as the founding Director of the Ghana Evangelism Committee (GEC).



Rev. Samuel Apeligebe was born on the 6th of February 1950 in Zuarungu -Daboore near Bolgatanga in the Upper East Region. As first born of his father, he was earmarked to take over the family idols and therefore denied the chance of formal education. At the age of 14, he ‘stole a ride’ to Kumasi on a cargo truck, where he lived on the streets, doing whatever menial job that came his way for a living. He eventually ended up as a houseboy to a Missionary, Greg Francis, WEC Field Leader at the time.

Here, Samuel heard the gospel of salvation from an adopted orphan in the missionary’s house and became convinced and persuaded to switch allegiance from traditional worship to place his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Samuel met other WEC Missionaries, Ross Campbell and Derek Cartwright who turned out to be God’s instruments to shape his destiny. While diligently serving as houseboy, Samuel had a dream, which upon reflection and consultation with mature Christians, pointed to him being a shepherd – a shepherd to God’s sheep. Through the instrumentality of Ross Campbell and Derek Cartwright who became spiritual fathers and mentors to

him, Samuel learned the rudiments of reading and writing, acquiring enough proficiency to enroll in the WEC Bible School in Kpandai in the Northern Region. Upon completion of his course of study, Samuel’s first assignment was to the community of Zongo-Macheri, near Kete Krachi in the Volta Region. Thus began the cross-cultural missionary journey of Samuel Apeligebe.

At this point in his journey through life, Samuel Apeligebe, was led to meet and marry Miriam, a faithful partner, without whose all-round support in prayer, physical and psychological realm Samuel’s life might have been a different story. Ministering in the virtually ‘cashless’ society of the period, with no assurance of monthly income from the churches planted in the communities, Samuel and Miriam depended on barter trade for the essentials of life. While Samuel would ride a bicycle during the day along the arduous bush paths to far off communities overseeing the churches planted, Miriam would carry loads of yams, cassava and other staple foodstuff to far-off Bator communities along the Volta Lake to engage in barter trade for fish to feed the family.

Samuel's passion was always on getting the Good news of salvation to communities everywhere and was always ready for the next assignment to unreached people. Wherever he went, the first assignment he set for himself was to learn the language, the culture, the traditions and way of life of the people group.

Thus, during the 42 years of his service in the Lord's vineyard, Rev Samuel Apeligeba was able to engage in cross-cultural missions, planting churches and ministering to 9 people groups, having acquired the ability to communicate the gospel very fluently in the Konkomba and Basaare languages; partially fluently in Chumburu and Nawuri languages; partially fluently in Loso and Kabre languages in communities across the Ghana-Togo border; very fluently in Dabgani and Nanung and excellent in his mother tongue, Gurune. He was also very fluent in Twi. In his final station before his retirement, Rev Apeligeba had managed to oversee the growth of the Evangelical Church of Ghana (ECG) from 5 to 29 churches – a testimony to his passion of seeing people come to Christ.

Samuel believed in the power of partnership in the work of missions. This is evident in the Christ honoring fellowships he joined hands with in fulfilling his mandate. The endearing influence of his spiritual fathers and mentors, Ross & Avrille Campbell and Derek Cartwright have always been at the frontlets of his eyes; WEC/ECG's willingness to release him to areas he felt the Lord calling him as his next assignment was very dear to his heart; the right hand of fellowship of International Needs through the instrumentality of Rt. Rev. Walter Pimpong enabled Samuel to have critical needs met in his ministry was endearing to his heart. Rev Samuel Apeligeba's ministry could not have been what it ended up being, but for the irreplaceable presence of his dearest Miriam, made evident in the children God blessed them.

Samuel's biography, "The Making of a Disciple" was launched at the ECG Church at Maamobi, Accra in May 2019. His book was written out of a concern for today's emerging leaders. He identifies many issues that deserve our attention. But there is one thing he doesn't make explicit in his own words which was



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a key to his effectiveness in ministry. He writes as pastor to those who would be pastors; a disciple to those who would be disciples but he was more than a disciple or a pastor or church leader.

Ross Campbell makes this final observation: "I am sad to see Apeligeba leave us when he had so much we could have learnt from him. Remember, he was a non-literate from a traditional back ground. We tend to see illiteracy and lack of a formal education

as a disqualification from ministry. But from Apeligeba's case I see it can be a blessing in so far as it opens up and sharpens one's powers of observation and ability to quickly learn and effectively communicate in different languages. Even when exposed to formal education later in life these unique abilities remained and reflect in much practical wisdom etc. This was certainly true of Apeligeba.

Samuel Apeligeba went home to be with the Lord on 8th October 2020 at the age of 70. Just like the Apostle Paul, Rev Apeligeba can also truly say, "*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing*". (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

Editors note: After 42 years of fruitful missions work, the Leadership of GEMA has decided to honour the legacy and memory of this true gallant soldier of the Cross with a posthumous "Lifetime of Service Award".