

# THEY SAID YES!

## The Story of Pioneer Missionaries of FAME Ghana

Enoch Nyador

### Introduction

The seed of cross-cultural evangelism was planted in my heart during my days of ministerial training at the Ghana Christian College (1978-1982) and Emmanuel School of Religion (Johnson City, Tennessee, USA, 1983-1986). God used Dorothy Eunson, Dr. Carl Bridges, David Kalb and other former missionary teachers in Ghana to plant the initial seeds. Later in the U.S.A, my late teachers, Professors Charles Taber, Fred Norris, Delno Brown and others planted more seed in my life. The seed was watered by the late Dr. Robert Reeves, former Executive Director of Fellowship of Associates of Medical Evangelism (FAME), who met my wife, Dr. Lydia Glover-Nyador and I in Johnson City, Tennessee, U.S.A in 1985 and agreed to partner with us in cross-cultural medical missions upon our return to Ghana.

With a burning passion in my heart for cross-cultural evangelism, I started FAME Ghana in 1987, a year after, I started teaching at the Ghana Christian College. One of my first tasks was to recruit three Ghanaian Church Planters who would be willing to go to work among the Achode, Adele and Ntrubo People Groups. There was ongoing Bible Translation and Literacy work among them being led by missionaries of the Ghana Institute of Linguistics Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT). After much prayer and critical search, I contacted Pastor Hayford Ahiabu, one of my best students in the Cross-Cultural Evangelism Class who said YES to the Ntrubo People Group. Two of my former classmates at the Bible College also said Yes; Pastor Christopher Adjei to the Achode and the late Pastor Francis Budu Nyarko to the Adele. Later, I recruited more of my students to go the Nchumburung, Konkomba, Mamprusi and Chakali. Isaiah 6:8 says, “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’” (NIV). I am glad over 20 others have said Yes to serving as missionaries to Unreached People Groups in our own country, Ghana. Part of their story is told below.

### A Reason To Say Yes

An Ewe proverb translates to say, “One does not hurry to embark on a journey of no return.” Likewise, Jesus admonishes us to count the cost of following him (Luke 14:28-33). The journey of a cross-cultural missionary begins with sacrifice. The Ultimate Missionary, Jesus, said “...you cannot become my disciple without giving up everything” (Luke 14:33, ASB ). This was the dilemma one of our church planters, Pastor Dzobo faced when responding to the call for missions. As, John Jusu once wrote, “there is a ...fine line between faith and presumption.” He and his wife were professional Fashion Designers in Kwashieman-Accra with over 20 apprentices learning from them. They were successful in their trade: “The decision to say yes was never easy. How to forsake 17 years of experience in fashion designing business was a difficult task. I had no one sponsoring my education in the Bible school, it was only by Faith (SIC).” However, Pastor Dzobo responded to the call with only one expectation, “to see souls saved into the kingdom of Christ.” Dzobo has been a missionary to the Nchumurus for over 25 years now. Missionaries to the northern parts of Ghana can testify that it is not an easy feat. The people one would wish to lean on for encouragement, such as friends and family, would rather desert you in those moments of decision making.

Relatedly is another church planter, Francis Addae who chose missions over comfort. After his training at Ghana Christian College and Seminary, he had the option to go back to Abidjan where he was a pastor of a local church (he and his wife had lived in Abidjan for 16 years), with all the necessary benefits of a resident pastor, yet he chose to say “yes” to missions and has since planted 15 churches among Komkombas and Gonjas. His motivation is “to serve my mother Ghana by spreading the Good News of the Gospel of God in communities and isolated villages where churches are not being found.”

Another missionary worth noting is Hayford Ahiabu who worked among the Ntrubos in the then Volta

region (now Oti region). He had already planted five churches in the south but chose to respond to the call to reach out to other lost souls. His missionary work began in 1988 and he planted 10 churches until his call to help in the FAME office in Tema. Others such as Christopher and Haruna also had the expectation to win souls, by moving from their comfort zones into the mission field for the Lord.

Unlike Dzobo, Francis and the others, there arose a youthful generation who had sheer resilience, energy and spiritual life that were willing to go into the mission field to be part of the soul harvesters. With many opportunities available after their College studies, they chose to say “yes”, so they could be part of the Harvest Team. Didn’t Jesus say, “the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few”? According to Joshua, one of the youngest missionaries we have now, “I yielded to yes, because after couple of weeks’ prayers and fasting, I was fully convinced and convicted in my heart that this is the will of God for me now to go and reach the unreached with the Gospel of Christ.” Joshua after his first degree had a full scholarship to undertake Graduate studies in Political Science, but with faith and conviction, he serves as a missionary among the Chakali in the Upper West region of Ghana.

Another servant leader who said YES is Tevi Lawson who forsook Political Journalism for missions in the northern region of Ghana. After his Pastoral training, he also decided to join the missionary team, despite the available option to continue his political journalism either in Ghana or Togo. His youthfulness and experience would be more needed for God’s work of plundering hell than engaging in partisan politics. He is currently serving at Yezesi, among the Mamprusi with his wife. They are not only winning souls, they also are training young girls in vocational skills to curb the unemployment and teenage pregnancy rates in the community.

It appears from the above that all the missionaries said yes despite the easy options they had available. One underlining factor that is traced through their commitment is the desire to serve the Lord and win Souls. There were no second reasons for saying yes. In fact, many of them had never lived in the North prior to saying yes and therefore, had no idea what was really awaiting them. It was a risk-taking decision for many of them.

This does not also mean they were the only ones who were contacted to go. Some others also had the

opportunity to serve but chose to decline for various reasons just as Jesus mentioned in Luke 9:59-62. Affirmative response to the call for missions, however, comes with its own challenges, even on the mission field.

### Overcoming cross-cultural challenges

Our early church planters were faced with language barrier. Language carries lots of values and the worldview of people. It is one of the important tools in effective communication. We use language in almost every sphere of our human lives: social, religious, political, educational, arts, music and dance. According to Kwame Bediako, ‘In matters of religion, there is no language that speaks to the heart and mind and to our innermost feelings as does our mother tongue.’ Therefore, there was the need for our church planters to learn the local language of the people. Though they resorted to the use of the lingua-franca (of the community) at the time (mostly Twi), with local translators, they had to learn the mother tongue of the people for effective missionary work. Subsequent church planters are first sent into the community to learn the language of the people before any church planting took place. We could also note that to learn the language, the time frame varied from person to person, but it was generally within the first two years.

Another the cross-cultural hurdle, they had to deal with isolation from the extended family. As Jusu rightly wrote, “...Missionaries no longer have the church and extended family around them that they enjoyed...The support of others help us cope with difficult situations...But missionaries frequently have no one to help them deal with difficulty.” This was the exact situation Pastor Sam Dzobo found himself in; “My friends, family and siblings disregarded the idea of cross-cultural evangelism in the northern part of Ghana”. Thus, even in financial difficulties and emotional distress, he got limited support from family and friends.

Pastor Francis Addae resorted to quickly adapting to the culture of the people and integrating himself as family. Joshua uniquely buried all cultural differences and was ready for the new experience: “My submersion into the culture, for me, was nothing more than being a native. I was more like one of them and was highly cherished and admired by all. This, most times comes with the spirit of humility, patience and self-control. But one thing that is key is me knowing my identity, who I am and

why I am in their midst.”

Most of our church planters relied heavily on nearby sister churches and pastors for directional and emotional support. In recent times however, we have provided pastoral care and counseling for all our church planters through the Member Care Coordinators. There are other challenges that I would have loved to enumerate, however, an Ewe proverb translates to say “The young crocodile does not grieve on its way into water (because water is its element).” Meaning, “One does not worry about the consequences of an action if one is already aware of them.”

That notwithstanding, it is important for modern missionaries, especially Africans, to prepare adequately in their planning, prayer and stay on the mission field. With availability of internet and other information technology, cultural studies about the target groups and their language should be easier. We must also make use of other available information about the people groups we wish to reach out to.

### A Worthwhile Labor

Jesus said “...I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit...” (John 15:16), and indeed, these gallant missionaries, despite all the challenges, have glorious fruits to show for the sacrifice on the mission field. Not only have they won and discipled many souls into the Kingdom of God, they have also extended their missionary works to other neighboring communities, established churches and have been able to raise leaders for these congregations. As mentioned earlier, some run vocational training centers, clinics and large farms to reduce the unemployment and vices in the communities. These missionaries are community developers and visionaries at what they do. Their

presence led to provision of boreholes and other social amenities in deprived communities. They are agents of transformation. The journey has not been easy and smooth, but all that matters is responding to the call of Jesus, “follow me” and “Go into all the nations”.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, I wish to thank God and all his people in Ghana, the U.S.A, Europe and other places who have helped our missionaries to say Yes. My plea is for more disciples of Christ to say Yes because there are more people groups in Ghana and the rest of Africa and the world waiting for cross-cultural evangelists to bring them the Gospel in their own heart language and culture. We also need a second group of committed disciples who would be ready to say Yes to support those who go in finances and other needed resources and above all in prayer. May we, the followers of Christ unite, irrespective of our denominations and other affiliations to focus on the task our Lord has given us and to collaborate to fulfill it.

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