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- To set-up and maintain Schools and other projects as this ministry may deem it necessary.
- To help and support Christian workers both at home and abroad.
- To assist in maintaining institutions like hospitals, prisons, orphanages and mentally retarded homes.
- To publish Christian literature for regions and for educational purposes.

These missional objectives as outlined by TOP, seem very holistic. They are analyzed in chapter five of the work to assess how far these objectives have been achieved.

3.7 Beliefs and Life of Temple of Praise Church

This sub topic focuses on the beliefs and practices of the Temple of Praise Church as an Indigenous Church. In the church's doctrinal statement, it is stated that 'We believe in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as verbally inspired by God and inerrant in the original writings and that they are supreme and final authority in life and faith.'¹²⁸

This is the preamble of the church's beliefs and practices. Aside the above doctrinal statement, the church also believes in the following;

- The Eternal Godhead: We believe in one God, eternally existing in Three Persons, The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit.
- Man's Depraved Nature: That man was created in the image of God, and that through sin; man incurred both spiritual and physical death. Consequently, man is

¹²⁸ *The Constitution of the Temple of Praise* (Sunyani: TOP Press, 2005), 2.

totally depraved, and subject to eternal punishment, and needs repentance and regeneration through the new birth.

- The Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ; That Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God and begotten of the Holy Spirit and born by the Virgin Mary and that He is true God and true Man and that He led a sinless life.

Not only that but also, that the Lord Jesus Christ, as a substitutionary sacrifice died for our sins on the cross to fulfill scriptures and that everyone who believes in Him is justified on the ground of his shed blood.

The church also believes in the resurrection of the crucified body of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He ascended into Heaven, and that He is exalted at the right hand of God, and that at present, He is our High Priest and Advocate in Heaven, and that He shall personally return to this earth in power and glory.

- Salvation for sinners: That by the grace of God, all who in repentance and faith receive the Lord Jesus Christ, are born again by the Holy Spirit and thereby become children of God.
- The Holy Spirit (Baptism and Gifts): The church believes in the personality of the Holy Spirit and the baptism of the Holy Spirit for believers subsequent to salvation, with the speaking in tongues as the initial evidence. To the researcher this position taken by the church presupposes that all those who cannot speak in tongues have not had the Holy Spirit baptism.
- They also believe in the gifts of the Holy Spirit and their manifestations.

- **Water Baptism:** The church believes in water baptism by immersion in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. All those who join the church from other churches but have not experienced baptism by immersion are entreated to be baptized. However, they do not believe in the baptism of infants, but rather dedicate them to God until they are of age.
- **Divine Healing:** They believe in divine healing which is the right of every born again believer, and that healing of sicknesses and diseases is provided for God's people in the atonement of Christ Jesus. Notwithstanding this affirmation, the church does not oppose to soliciting the help of qualified medical practitioners.
- **The Christian Church;** The Church believes in the universal church of Christ. They belong to Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Association.
- **Tithes and Offering:** They believe in tithing, giving of offerings and donations.
- **The Lord's Supper (Holy Communion);** The church believes in the Lord's supper as instituted by Jesus Christ.
- **The second coming of Christ;** They believe in the second coming of Jesus Christ, which includes the rapture of the saints, followed by the visible return of Christ with His saints to rule on earth for a thousand years.

They also believe in the bodily resurrection of the just to everlasting life and the unjust to everlasting damnation.

- **Marriage;** The church believes in the institution of marriage as ordained by God but not as a sacrament.

The church (TOP) as its theological position, places much emphasis on charismata. The word charismata in general denotes any good gift that flows from God's love to humans. The word can also mean any of the Spiritual graces and qualifications granted to every Christian to perform his or her task in the church. In TOP, members are encouraged to aspire for the spiritual gifts such as prophecy, healing, prayer and Bible studies as well as holiness. The theology of TOP can be best understood when consideration is given to her background. Her roots, coming from the 'Camp' of Idahosa and the subsequent break away from the Scripture Union on the issue of speaking in tongues, tells a lot why emphasis is placed on charismata.

Nothing has been stated in writing as the theology of TOP. However, hearing the founders and some of the pastors and lay leaders speak, one can easily know the theological position of the church.

3.8 Membership

Membership in Temple of Praise Church is open to all true believers in Christ and who hold the Christian Doctrine. As stated in the Church's constitution, membership in Temple of Praise Church shall consist of those persons who meet the following qualifications;

- Personal Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour and a desire to obey the requirements laid down in Acts 2:36-47.
- Agreement with the Doctrines of Faith as stated under Article vi of the Church's constitution.
- A lifestyle that is consistent with Christian conduct and doctrine.

- Regular attendance at the activities of the church.
- Financial support of the Church by tithes and freewill offerings.
- Voluntary submission to the spiritual oversight of the Church.
- All members are encouraged to complete the New Convert and Discipleship Classes.

Membership in the Temple of Praise shall be in three classes designated as;

- Active members.
- Associate members (those who are temporarily in other locations but desire to maintain membership.)
- Juniors who are under eighteen (18) years of age.

3.9 Discipline of Members

The Leadership of the church has put down some measures to ensure that members put up an acceptable behaviour. Any conduct contrary to the Scripture is deemed unacceptable. The leadership shall on sufficient grounds disqualify members from the church when such members go contrary to Scripture.

However, the purpose of discipline is restorative and remedial. Notwithstanding this assertion, if a person is separated from the church, such a person may not be re-instated until there has been genuine repentance of the offence which led to the sanction.

The Leadership will also periodically update the active membership roles in accordance with its requirements for membership. Absence from attendance of regular church meetings for three months without reasonable excuse will constitute being removed from

membership. This clause however excludes those Associate members who are temporarily in other locations.

More so, members found to indulge in any social vice to the detriment of the nation such as smuggling, bickering, engagement in fraudulent conduct, prostitution, fornication and the like, risk dismissal from the church.

3.10 Order of Service

The Temple of Praise Church has carefully structured a format through which their Church services are ordered on Sundays and other evening meetings. Without any hesitation, the researcher affirms that everything in this structure is in agreement with the word of God. The order of Service encourages orderliness when the church meets.

However, as a neo-Pentecostal Church, the Service is synonymous with the direction of the Holy Spirit. That is, the order is not a strict rule to follow but as directed by the Holy Spirit.

The Order of Service in the TOP is outlined below.

- Opening Prayers.
- Sunday School (Bible Studies)
- Praises and Worship
- Announcement
- Offering
- Choir Ministration
- The Word (Exposition)

- Closing Prayer
- Benediction

From the researcher's participation of TOP's church service on Sunday 9th March, 2014 at Sunyani as well as his interaction with the Associate Pastor, Alex Amankwaa, he noted that the church does not recite the Apostles' Creed or any other creed during their Service as some of the Protestants like the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and the Roman Catholics do in their worship.

From a broader perspective, the worship setting of Temple of Praise is characterized by a good emphasis on the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. Emphasis is put on charismata or spiritual gifts such as prophecy, healing, prayer, bible studies and holiness.

3.11 Ordinances of the Church

The TOP church believes in two ordinances only; baptism and the Holy Communion. Members of the church according to article (4) of the church's constitution must be baptized in water (by or through immersion) before they are classified as true members of the church. The church does not believe in infant baptism. Baptismal candidates must be able to go through the new convert class and confess and acknowledge their sins and understand the purpose of the act.

The other ordinance of the church is the 'Lord's Supper' or the 'Holy Communion.' In the church, the Holy Communion is celebrated once every month, usually on the first Sunday of the month. Every 'active' member who is in good standing is permitted to partake in the Lord's Supper. Members are however cautioned not to rush to partake in

the Lord's Supper without self-examination, and meditation. Members must reflect the work of Christ on the cross to save mankind from sin. It must be noted that there is no 'speaking' and Preparatory Service preceding the Sunday meant for the Lord's Supper as done in some protestant churches like the Presbyterian Church of Ghana.

However, it was discovered that any pastor who prepares the Lord's Supper in TOP should live a holy life. The pastor should pray during the period for strength and 'power' from the Holy Spirit.

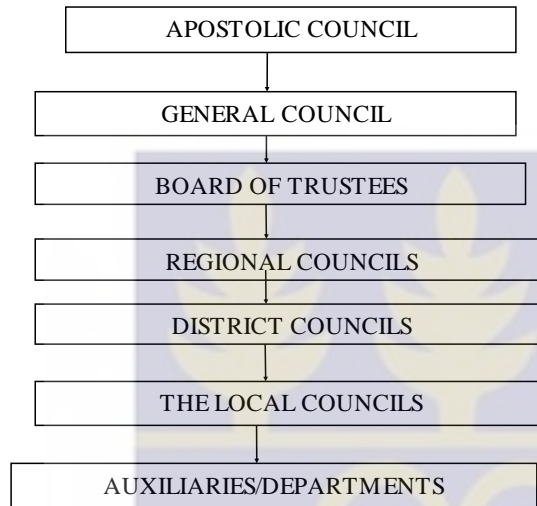
3.12 Organizational Structure of the Church

The organization and administration of TOP is centered on the Apostolic Council, her officers and the various councils. Officers of the church comprise the Apostolic Council. By the constitution of the church, the Apostolic Council is made up of the following: The General Overseer, General Secretary, Treasurer, and two other high ranking Ministers. At the time of this research, the founding members constitute the Apostolic Council. The council exercises spiritual oversight and control over the whole Church. Other top officers of the church include the Board of Trustees, the Administrator who is appointed by the Apostolic Council to a five year term. He is eligible for re-appointment.

a. Governing Bodies of the Church

The church as an organization is governed by the structure below. For easy study of the governing bodies, the researcher has structured the organogram below based on the church's constitution.

Figure 2.0 THE ORGANOGRAM OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF TOP



According to the church's constitution, the highest authority of the Temple of Praise ministries shall be the Apostolic Council. It shall be the determining and final authority of the church in all matters, spiritual, moral and governmental of all the local assemblies of the Temple of Praise church.

Composition: The General Council consists of the following; The General Overseer, General Secretary, Treasurer and two (2) other high ranking ministers.

The founders of the Temple of Praise ministries shall be on the board until their death, if they remain of good standing in the faith. It is worthy to note that as at the time of the research, the Apostolic council consisted of only the five founding members.

b. Functions

- The said Council shall have general supervision of the state money / funds received and disbursed by the church.
- It shall appoint standing Boards and committees.
- It shall discipline all Ministers who flout their regulations.
- It shall meet as often as the chairman deems necessary.
- It shall decide the bounds of each Region/ District in the church and shall appoint all officers on National, Regional and District levels.
- It shall appoint new members to the existing council when the need arises; and must be chosen on the basis of the scriptural qualifications laid down in Timothy and Titus and must be official members of the church.

c. General Council

The general council shall comprise the Apostolic Council; Regional Pastors, District Pastors, Trustees, all Local Pastors, Presiding Elders and one representative each from every local church. However, it is only the Apostolic Council members, Regional Pastors, District Pastors, Ordained Pastors, Trustees and Presiding elders that shall constitute the permanent membership of the council.

- It shall offer suggestions and proposals to the Apostolic Council to enhance the smooth administration of the ministries.
- It shall carry information from the local churches to the Apostolic council and vice versa.
- It shall advise the Apostolic Council in the performance of its functions.

- It shall meet annually at its regular meeting in January each year .When it is necessary to have an emergency meeting, all members should be notified if possible.

Five persons shall be appointed by the Apostolic Council to serve on the Board of Trustee. This board shall control and manage all properties in which the churches or membership of the church hold or the general right of interest.

There shall be a Regional council which shall consist of not less than five (5) members. The Regional Pastor, shall preside at all meetings and in his absence, the next in rank shall preside. Other people qualified to be members of this council

Subject to the provisions of the constitution the regional council shall be vested with power to determine all matters affecting the ministries in the region.

It shall submit an annual report to the Headquarters on matters affecting the ministry in the region.

There shall be a District Council which shall consist of not less than three(3)members. The District Pastor shall preside at all meetings. In his absence the next in rank shall preside.

- Subject to the provision on Regional Councils, the District council shall have power in the District.
- The District Council shall submit an annual report to the Regional Council on matters affecting the ministries in the District.
- At least one member of the District council shall represent that District at the Regional council meeting.

There shall be a Local Council which shall consist of not less than five (5) members. The Pastor in charge of that Assembly shall preside over all meetings.

- The council shall assist the Pastors in the care of the local church.
- They shall encourage evangelism, stewardship, and prayer, tithing and giving.
- They shall see to the provision and maintenance of worship places and mission houses. Subject to the provision of the constitution, the pastor in charge, in consultation with the council shall have power to determine all matters affecting the congregation.
- They shall have power to form sub-committees subject to the constitution to enhance smooth running of the local congregation.
- The council shall submit Annual reports to the District council on matters affecting the local congregation.

d. Auxiliaries / Department

There shall be other auxiliaries / departments established within the ministries to cater for the needs of the people spiritually, physically and socially.

For the fulfillment of the above purposes, the following Departments shall be established in the ministries;

- The Women's Ministry - TOP ladies
- The Youth Ministry
- The Music (Choir) Ministry
- The Children's Ministry
- The Prayer Ministry

- The Counselling Ministry
- The Ushering Ministry

And such other departments as the Apostolic Council may from time to time establish.

- These groups shall promote lay evangelism, Christian stewardship and shall render other services to their communities within their regions and districts.
- These departments shall also foster fellowship and provide inspiration and guidance within their regions and districts.

e. Finance

The effective running of any organization, be it secular or religious depends largely on money. Without money, running the organization becomes extremely difficult. To this effect, churches have to put down pragmatic steps and programmes intended for developing both the spiritual and physical well-being of their members in order that members can contribute meaningfully to the cause of the church.

The Temple of Praise Church does not have any income generating venture; it solely relies on giving by members in the form of tithes, offering, voluntary thanks offering and remittances from their Assemblies in the diaspora as the church's only sources of income.

When the researcher interviewed the General Overseer of the church, (Rev. Osei-Wusu Cobbina), he stressed on measures which the church has instituted to help build the financial base of the church to help curtail the frequent slogan of 'no money syndrome'. Members are motivated to donate generously towards the cause of the church. He stressed that the church will never experience any form of 'donor fatigue' by the members irrespective of their frequent donations.

Aside the normal offerings and tithe payments, members are entreated to sow a seed every week in the form of money. This principle of ‘seed faith’, the General Overseer stressed, was learned from Oral Roberts. Oral Roberts was an American Methodist-Pentecostal televangelist and a Christian Charismatic. He founded the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association and Oral Roberts University. As one of the most well-known American religious leaders in the 20th Century. Roberts preached a form of Christianity he called seed-faith. His ministries reached millions of followers worldwide spanning a period of over six decades. He was born on 24th January, 1918 and died on 15th December, 2009.

According to Emmanuel Larbi, ‘the influence of Oral Roberts cuts across the various church traditions in the country.’¹²⁹ Larbi went on that ‘until recently, Oral Roberts was in communication with several people in Ghana, through his regular letters to his partners. His visit to Ghana in July 1988 attracted a huge and euphoric crowd at the Accra Sports Stadium. It is believed that about 70,000 people mostly youth turned up for the meeting.

3.13 Sources of Income

a. Seed-Faith

Rev. Cobbinah explained the concept of the Seed-Faith as taught in TOP as follows; everything in life starts with a seed-including things we receive by Faith. Expounding on Genesis 8:22, he went on to stress that God says, while the earth remains, seedtime and harvest... shall not cease. The eternal law of seedtime and harvest, planting and reaping,

¹²⁹ Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, 289

giving and receiving will not change as long as the earth remains. Again, Jesus compared faith to a seed being planted to get a result. (Matthew 17:20). When we put our faith in God's hands like a seed we plant, we are giving God something to work with, and He will send the miracle we need. No matter how small our faith seems to be, it will meet needs and solve problems that appear as impossible as moving mountains. This is because each act of faith is a seed planted and will be multiplied many times.

The General Overseer went on to say that the Seed-Faith principle that we find in the Bible contains three keys;

- Recognize that God is our Source; (Philippians 4:19) that God will supply all our needs according to His riches, His Love for us, His power to help us, and His wisdom to guide us. He may use many different instruments; a job, gifts, doctor, friends, family to meet our needs. But He alone is the Source and He alone cannot fail.
- Give first so that it may be given unto us. (Luke 6:38). We must first plant a seed of faith so that God can multiply it back to meet our needs. Jesus is talking about giving in the deepest sense of the word-the giving of ourselves to God. This includes anything we can give;- Love, time, patience, forgiveness, finance, prayer, whatever we have. Our giving reflects our trust in God and our thankfulness. It links us to God's inexhaustible resources for our every need. There is no way we can give to God without receiving something back from Him, multiplied.
- Expect a Miracle; (Mark 11:24) the moment we ask God for something, the moment we do our part and sow our seed of faith, we should believe God that the answer is on its way. It is important to expect our miracle so we can recognize it

and reach forth to take it when it comes. And it is also important to remember that God controls the time and method He will use to give back to us. We must keep trusting God and expecting our miracle, no matter how long it takes to reach us.

So, the principle of seed-faith is giving God something to work with. No matter how little you think you have, sow it in joy and faith, knowing in your heart that you are sowing a seed in order to experience miracles. The sower should start expecting all kinds of miracles, bearing in mind that God always sends the right answer at the right time, in the right way. His timing and methods are always exactly right for our lives.

Rev. Cobbina stated that this seed-faith teaching is so imbibed by the members that the church generates a lot of money from it. He reiterated that in some of the congregations, the church generates more money from the seed-faith than the normal offerings and tithes.

b. Senders' Box

Another method used to generate income for the church aside what has been discussed is the Senders' Box. Using Romans Chapter 10:15 as the Biblical base, the General Overseer said that there are members in the church who are available for all evangelistic activities but are not resourceful.

On the other hand, there are others who are resourceful but not available. The latter can give freely, sacrificially, generously, regularly, and joyfully with the motivation of love for God and His work. There is a Giver and Sender. However, it is not spelt specifically that the Giver can never be involved in any evangelistic activities except by giving and

the Sender cannot also give except involving himself or herself in evangelism. Each of them is entreated to involve in both sides except you work in an area where one is strong.

The researcher was told that monies raised through the Sender's Box are solely marked for evangelism and its related issues. As basic a thing as money often is, it can be transmuted into everlasting treasure. It can be converted into food for the hungry and clothing for the poor. It can keep a missionary actively winning lost men to the light of the gospel and thus transmute itself into heavenly values. Any temporal possession can be turned into everlasting wealth. Whatever is given to Christ is immediately infused with immortality.

The Sender's box approach, according to Rev. Cobbinah can best be described in the above words. It has helped alleviate a lot of pressure on the church's finances. Not only that but it has also contributed immensely to the church's evangelistic activities.

The researcher was told that recently part of the proceeds was used to roof a church building in Yeji and also rented a mission house for a resident pastor of the church at Atebubu.

The researcher did not have access to the church's financial statement. However, it is estimated that the church's income as at 31st December, 2013 stood at Seven Hundred and Thirty-Five Thousand, Four Hundred and Forty-Eight Ghana Cedis (GH ¢735,448).

c. The Investment Fund

The church instituted an investment fund in the year 2008. All Assemblies of the church are therefore entreated to contribute to the fund. To that effect, the Assemblies are to pay

fifteen percent (15%) of all annual harvest proceeds into it. Since its inception, the fund has raised about fifty eight thousand, two hundred and twenty eight Ghana Cedis (GH ₵58,228). Rev. Cobbinah stressed that they have invested the amount, but the researcher was not informed about the kind of investment. He however reiterated that it was good investment that will go a long way to help the church. The 2013 report by the church's administrator on the Investment Fund however is not encouraging. Part of the reports reads "It is sad to put on record that the enthusiasm and vigour with which we embraced the idea of the Investment fund seems to be dying out". He therefore entreated members to rekindle the spirit which they started with. Members of the Church are humbly admonished to commit themselves to contribute generously to the investment. It is a laudable idea which should be embraced and sustained as the Church stands to benefit.

d. Income from Foreign Branches

The church's Assemblies outside the borders of Ghana, notably in Europe, also pay something to the church as a form of their tithes. Even though they are not levied directly by the church, their commitment to the church is not in doubt. As at the close of 2013, their total contributions made to the Head Office stood at thirteen Thousand, Four Hundred and Seventy Seven Ghana Cedis (GH ₵13,477) and Two Thousand Eight Hundred Euros (€ 2,800).

e. Managing the Church's Funds

When the researcher probed further about what was the mainstay of the church's finances, the General Overseer of the church, Rev. Cobbinah responded that to

accomplish one's mission and vision for ministry, one needed to effectively manage the church's finances. It is a fact that the management of church money is a complex task for any church finance manager, treasurer, business administrator, bookkeeper or pastor. He went on that in view of this, the church has instituted five key controls to help strategize, organize, measure, protect and audit the finances to champion a strong financial base. An effective stewardship mechanism has been put in place. The five key controls are:

- Planning and budgeting; how to use strategic planning and an operating budget to reach ministry goals. In view of this all locals and districts are entreated to present their annual budgets to the Headquarters of the church for proper and critical analysis.
- Minimizing the risk of embezzlement; sadly, embezzlement of funds is rife within the church. The church has instituted internal control measures for all the locals as well as the Headquarters to protect valuable ministry resources.
- Church Financial reports: An up to date financial assessment of the church's operations are effectively communicated to the members on regular basis. The church's income and expenditure is given to the leaders as well as the members to enable them know the financial position of the church. This helps cast out doubts and suspicion of members, because they are well informed on the financial information of the church.
- Another issue is the performance measurement. This Rev. Cobbinah evaluated how good you are at what you do. As leaders, they needed to explore various measurements and ratios to help them to assess the health of church and identify the areas that needed strengthening.

- Church Audits: To avoid the danger of embezzlement, the church has resorted to frequent auditing by professional bodies such as the Audit Service, the Ghana Revenue Authority to audit their books. Aside this, the church has her internal auditor who audits their books periodically.

3.14 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the history and development of TOP. It is evident from the research that the church is one of the earliest neo-Pentecostal Indigenous churches in the region. Its genesis was characterized by a series of challenges. However, it can also be concluded that the founders have been able to embrace the challenges, surmounted them and built on from their humble beginnings to their present state. As an Indigenous church, TOP depends solely on internally generated income. Notwithstanding this assertion, the church has managed to hold itself together since its establishment about twenty-three (23) years ago in terms of their finances. It is not ready to go into any income generating venture at present. Currently, everything relating to their finances seems to be working to perfection. How sustainable this approach (of relying solely on internal income generated) should inform TOP to establish some income generating projects. In the next chapter, missionary methods and growth patterns of TOP are discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE GROWTH PATTERNS OF TEMPLE OF PRAISE CHURCH

4.1 Introduction

This chapter of the thesis assesses the growth patterns of Temple of Praise Church. In evaluating the patterns, the following sub-themes are discussed; what church growth is, types of church growth, factors that enhance church growth, hindrances to church growth and the methods and factors that have contributed to the growth of TOP.

4.2 Church Growth

Growth is very essential to any establishment, be it secular or religious, if any organization fails to grow or meet its target, the general assumption is that, that organization has failed. Growth is often equated to progress and success. *The Webster Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary* defines growth as ‘the act or process or a manner of growing; development, gradual increase. Size or stage of development, development from a simpler to a more complex stage.’ Growth therefore refers to a positive change in size, often over a period of time. Growth can also denote a stage of maturation or a process toward fullness or fulfillment.

When we speak of church growth, the focus is not only on numerical increase of church membership, neither is it a mere sociological process. However, because the phrase church growth is so common, confusion abounds in its precise meaning. A secular humanist would see church growth as merely the outcome of the interplay of anthropological, historical, economical, and political forces.

The North American Society for Church Growth (now the American Society for Church Growth) defines church growth as ‘that discipline which investigates the nature, expansion, planting, multiplication, function and health of Christian churches as they relate to the effective implementation of God’s commission to make disciples of all people.’¹³⁰ The researcher adopts this definition for the work because of some components in the definition. These components of the definition describe the church under research. The work seeks to investigate the nature, expansion, planting and multiplication of Temple of Praise Church.

Donald A. McGravan has this to say about church growth ‘it means all that is involved in bringing men and women who do not have a personal relationship to Jesus Christ into fellowship with Him and into responsible church membership.’¹³¹ In other words, church growth is evangelism which one can be measured by the number of fruit-bearing disciples in local churches. It is evangelism that engenders accountability to the mandate of the Great Commission.

The researcher agrees with the assertion made by C. Peter Wagner (founding president of the American Society for Church Growth). Wagner captures five components worthy of recognition from the definition of Donald, when we talk about church growth.¹³²

Firstly, church growth is a discipline. A discipline is a field of study or a system with distinct characteristics. Church growth is accepted around the world as a discipline worthy of recognition.

¹³⁰ John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith Justice Anderson (ed.), *Missiology, An Introduction to the Foundation, History and Strategies of World Missions* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1998), 484.

¹³¹ Ibid, 485.

¹³² Peter C. Wagner, *Church Growth Principles and Procedures* (Pasadena, California: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1980), 489.

Secondly, church growth focuses on disciple making. Evangelism cannot end with simply a decision. True evangelism, church growth evangelism, means that new Christians develop into fruit-bearing disciples of Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, church growth centers on God's word. That is, no church-growth precepts, said the early leaders, can contradict the truths of God's word.

Fourthly, church growth integrates social and behavioural sciences to help determine growth.

Lastly, Wagner affirms that church growth as a modern day movement began with the missiological work of Donald McGrahan in India.

Rick Warren posits that 'church growth is the natural result of church health.'¹³³ He also argues that for effective and efficient approach to church growth, these five dimensions cannot be underestimated.

- Churches grow warmer through fellowship.
- Churches grow deeper through discipleship.
- Churches grow stronger through worship.
- Churches grow broader through ministry.
- Churches grow larger through evangelism.

The researcher is of the view that when we put church growth into perspective, the focus is not only on numerical increase. Church growth is no mere sociological process. The growth should be qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative in the sense that the people

¹³³ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Michigan, Grand Rapids: 1995), 49.

who are added to the existing number have been genuinely transformed into the likeness of Christ, they are grounded in the word of God, they are growing into maturity, and they share their faith regularly among others. Quantitative refers to the number of disciples a church is producing, people who are brought to Christ, developed to maturity and mobilized for ministry and missions. Growth is what every church needs. Most church leaders plan, aim toward, and set goals for the right kind of growth. Growth however comes in different forms. Missiologists have identified types of church growth. Four of such types are exemplified in the next section.

4.3 Types of Growth

Under this sub-theme, four types of church growth are highlighted. Donald McGravan in his work *'Understanding church growth'* distinguishes three kinds of church growth.¹³⁴ These types are expounded below; first is the biological growth. Biological growth derives from those born into Christian families. As families give birth to children, it suggests that such children will follow their parents to their place of worship as they grow. Thus following the birth of a child, another body is present and taking up space. Richard Foli contends that, biological growth is good, looking at it from the biblical point of view.¹³⁵ God's commandments say be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth (Genesis 35:11). However, Foli argues that biological growth is exceedingly slow.¹³⁶ Apart from the slow nature of this type of growth, the researcher is of the view that, this source of growth seems to lose its potency. Reasons assigned to this position stems from

¹³⁴ Donald McGravan, *Understanding Church Growth* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1970), 98.

¹³⁵ Foli, *Towards Church Growth*, 52.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

the fact that dynamics and modernity of our current society makes it difficult for parents to exert pressure on their children to follow them to church.

Currently, much emphasis is being placed on human rights (freedom of worship and association among others). The researcher wants to reiterate that parents do not have much influence on their children when it comes to where to worship. It is also a fact that the current generation does not entertain the attitude of giving birth to too many children, unlike the recent past, where couples could give birth to as many as ten children. Within parts of the Akan socio-cultural setting, there is what we call 'badudwan' which is literally translated as giving of a sheep by the husband to the wife on the delivery of the tenth child. One hardly hears of this in our contemporary times. Owing to economic hardship, among other things, families are now in smaller units. Thus even in situations where children will follow their parents to their churches, the number is small, making growth quite insignificant.

Another type of growth is the transfer growth. Transfer growth occurs when believers from one congregation move and transfer their membership to another congregation due mainly to geographical relocation. Foli again is of the view that 'transfer growth is important.'¹³⁷ To him, every church should follow up its members and conserve as many of them as possible.¹³⁸ But it is obvious that the transfer growth will never extend the church, for unavoidably, many are lost along the way. Moreover, transfer growth means the increase in certain congregations at the expense of others (one man's gain is another man's loss). For instance in Ghana, the rural-urban migration is very high; churches in

¹³⁷Foli, *Towards Church Growth*, 53.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*

urban areas grow at the expense of the rural congregations, because of the rural-urban drift. Congregations in the rural areas sometimes lack the services of the youth, most of who migrate to urban areas in search of jobs.

The researcher contends that there are some deficiencies in this type, because, in places where a particular church has no branch, its assembly members are forced to join other churches. For instance, until recently when the Presbyterian Church of Ghana began to establish congregations outside the boundaries of Ghana, precisely in the United States of America and parts of Europe, most of her members who travelled to these places joined other Ghanaian churches which were already established over there.

When the researcher interacted with Cobbinah, the General Overseer of TOP, he reiterated that his church has embarked on planting churches in Accra, Kumasi and Takoradi. He added that, apart from obeying the Great Commission, the other factor that has propelled them into it is that most of their members who are transferred to these places join other churches under the pretext that TOP has no assemblies there. This situation, he said was not good. He declared that TOP cannot 'work' and 'feed' others.

The third kind of growth is Conversion Growth. It occurs when someone moves from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. It occurs when those outside the church come to reset their faith intelligently on Jesus Christ are baptized, and are added to the Lord in His church. Foli stresses that, this is the only kind of growth by which the 'Good News' of salvation can spread to all segments of our society and to the earth's remotest

bounds.¹³⁹ This form of growth comes from sharing the gospel with the unsaved. Evangelism is primarily related to conversion growth.

Robin Gamble in his book, *The Irrelevant Church* adds a fourth dimension to the three sources outlined by McGravan which he terms as 'Restoration Growth.'¹⁴⁰ Gamble goes ahead to define Restoration Growth as 'a holistic approach laid down by the church to win back to the Christian fold those who had backslided.' It is the conscious effort to reclaim members who had fallen off the faith back into the kingdom. In the Reform tradition, a special service is usually conducted for those who are to be restored. In the Presbyterian church of Ghana for instance, a service is conducted for people who are restored or readmitted into the congregation. In the liturgy, it is stated that 'if someone has lapsed from church membership for a number of years, without having been disciplined, and now desires to return, this form may be used with suitable adaptation of the wording.'¹⁴¹

The process of restoration is complete when the minister addresses those who seek restoration with a series of questions to which those seeking it will respond. After that the officiating minister will say 'Go in peace, seek the grace of Christ that you do not sin again, that no evil may befall you. The very God of peace sanctify you wholly and may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen'¹⁴²

¹³⁹Foli, *Towards Church Growth*, 54.

¹⁴⁰Robin Gamble, *The Irrelevant Church* (Kent, Great Britain: Monarch Publications Ltd., 1991), 150.

¹⁴¹Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *Liturgy and Service Book Part One*, (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1987), 176.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*

Finally, members of the session of that particular congregation shall also shake hands with the restored members as a sign that they have received them again into fellowship. The situation is quite different in TOP. In TOP, when a member is suspended, an elder is assigned to visit and encourage such a person to turn away from his/her sinful ways. When the elder is convinced that the person has shown remorse and has really turned away from what led to the suspension, he reports to the Council of Elders. When the Council is also satisfied, they would invite the person and admonish him/her to stand firm in the faith. The Council will then inform the Senior Pastor about developments. The Senior Pastor will then announce to the Assembly in which the person was suspended that the person has been restored to his/her former status.

Aside these four kinds of church growth, it is empirical to state that church growth has three facets. These are, spiritual, numerical, and activity. The Spiritual dimension is when there is growth in grace in the lives of the members. Spiritual growth is a life-long process that depends on the study and application of God's word and constant walking in the Spirit.

Numerical growth is when there is an increase in membership. Christ commanded his followers to 'make disciples.' This cannot be accomplished without adding people to the church. Obedience to the Great Commission is paramount to finding winning and folding lost people into the churches. Church attendance will continue to decline if we do not focus on numerical growth. The third (Activity) is that, living churches do not expand. They develop distinctive organs with special functions. Church growth inevitably results in gifted people who exercise their gifts to benefit members, society and the church universal.

Growth, being quantitative or qualitative, is very crucial in every organization. It is therefore very important for churches to adopt good and effective strategies to experience real growth. This leads to the next sub-theme; factors that enhance church growth.

4.4 Factors for Church Growth

Growth is very important in every organization. The achievement of every institution is normally measured by the growth of that institution. As discussed earlier, growth can be quantitative or qualitative. However, the bottom line is to achieve real growth. It is therefore imperative for churches to adopt good, effective and efficient strategies to experience real growth. Many theologians have underscored some of the factors as recipes for growth. Notwithstanding this assertion, the researcher builds on nine principles outlined by Gary L. McIntosh. These factors facilitate proper church growth. They include the following:

The first one is the Holy Spirit. According to McIntosh, 'Holy Spirit is the only one who can add new converts to the church and lead the church to grow healthily.'¹⁴³ Jesus Christ said that the Holy Spirit would come and fuel God's strategic plan, first in Jerusalem, then Judea and Samaria and the whole world (Acts 1:8). It was also the Holy Spirit who caused the church to explode in one day from an upper room prayer meeting of one hundred and twenty (Acts 1:5) to a throng of three thousand (Acts 2:41). Unless the Spirit of God moves, healthy church growth is impossible.

The second factor which McIntosh emphasizes is prayer. Prayer makes churches healthy. Related to the earlier assertion, the Holy Spirit empowers biblical church growth through

¹⁴³Gary McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 2003), 44.

effective prayer. The importance of prayer is emphasized strongly in the book of Acts of the Apostles, as it is mentioned thirty two times, a statistic which backs its significance. Jerry Fawel contends that nothing of eternal consequence happens apart from prayer.¹⁴⁴ Churches grow healthy when they pray effectively to get people saved, receive resources and remove barriers. This position is echoed by the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. In the Twi Hymn No. 3. The third stanza reads '*wokura anyamesem, wo bo mpae dennen, nso saa nkrante ne akode yi a wode yi dom,*'¹⁴⁵ which is literally translated as, 'they hold on to the word of God and pray earnestly. It is these weapons that they use to deliver the captives from the evil one.'

Another factor is the Word of God. McIntosh argues that, biblical church growth begins with the 'Word of God'.¹⁴⁶ It is a fact that life-giving churches have a strong commitment to the authority of God's word. Therefore, churches that do not accept the Bible as authoritative, cannot experience growth. The Churches that grow are the ones which are committed to the authority of God's word. Martyn Lloyd Jones contends that 'his church's rapidly growing influence was not that of a church growth expert. It was the influence of a Scripture-driven man pastoring a Scripture-driven church.'¹⁴⁷

The next factor is worship. The worship trend of churches makes them healthy or unhealthy. Authentic worship takes place when churches maintain proper attitudes and a conducive atmosphere throughout the worship experience. The second component is the expectation people bring to worship. In grounded congregations, the worshippers

¹⁴⁴Billy Graham, *Life and Quotes and World Christian News* (California: Feed Bumer, 2014), 11.

¹⁴⁵Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *Twi Hymn*, 3.

¹⁴⁶McIntosh, *Church Growth*, 45.

¹⁴⁷Ian H. Murray D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The First Forty Years* (Ventura, CA: Banner of Truth, 1982), 166.

including visitors, believe something important will happen to them personally at the service. People come to worship seeking assistance in their lives. They do not come to be observers, nor do they merely expect a performance by the choir or by the worship leader.

It is worth noting that the critical factors in worship are the feelings of expectancy created by the atmosphere of the service, the mood of warmth, and friendliness carried into the church by the members. The members continue through the service by the worship leaders' efforts to convey to all attendees that when the diverse segments of the congregation has a corporate experience. Peter Wagner writing about Pentecostal denominations especially in Latin America, (which he claims are probably the fastest growing sections of the world church today), identifies their worship as a key factor for their rapid growth.¹⁴⁸

Aside the factors mentioned, another one is discipleship. There is a call on the church to make disciples through a process of going, baptizing and teaching. While bringing glory to God is the ultimate goal of a local church, the immediate goal is to win people to faith in Christ. After winning them, it is essential to assimilate the new converts into the life of the local church and building them up in the faith by teaching them everything Christ commanded. Churches desiring growth should adopt effective methods of discipleship.

Related to the above is evangelism. Churches which intend to grow, should strategize for results oriented evangelism. The church is the gathering of believers who have been called by God and sent out into the world as witnesses of Christ. Spreading the gospel to

¹⁴⁸ Peter C. Wagner, *Look out the Pentecostals are Coming* (Illinois: Creation House, 1973), 106.

the ends of the earth is the most important responsibility of the church. It is only through the proclamation of the Good News to the unsaved people that will bring the latter to the throne of Christ. John Wesley is quoted as saying:

you have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go not only to those that need you, but to those that need you most. It is not your business to preach so many times, and to take care of this or that society, but to save many souls as you can to bring as many sinners as you possibly, can to repentance.¹⁴⁹

According to Rick Warren, 'evangelism is more than our responsibility; it is our great privilege. We are invited to be part of bringing people into God's eternal family.'¹⁵⁰ Evangelism is not a task entrusted to a few in the church, but rather given to all the believers who are called a royal priesthood.

Another factor bothers on Leadership. Under this, the leadership of the Ordained and the Lay are put into perspective. Leadership makes churches healthy and strong paving way for proper growth. John C. Maxwell argues that 'everything rises or falls on leadership.'¹⁵¹ George Barna, who spent about fifteen years to research all phases of American Christian churches states that, 'American churches are dying due to lack of strong leadership'.¹⁵² He went on to say that 'In this strong time of unprecedented opportunities and plentiful resources, the church is actually losing its influence on society. The primary source is the lack of leadership. It is said that nothing is more important than leadership.'¹⁵³ Maxwell in his assertion affirms that 'Great Pastors build

¹⁴⁹Graham, *Life and Quotes*, 11.

¹⁵⁰Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Michigan: Grand Rapids, 1995), 104.

¹⁵¹John C. Maxwell, *Developing the Leader Within You*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 2.

¹⁵²George Barna (ed.), *Leaders on Leadership* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1997), 18.

¹⁵³*Ibid.* 19.

great churches, average pastors build average churches and weak pastors build weak churches.¹⁵⁴ This position should inform pastors to build themselves and become faithful and effective spiritual leaders to serve Jesus as the head of the church and all church members as the body of Christ. Pastors must become a model of biblical leadership to believers. Pastors must also consciously adopt pragmatic steps to develop faithful and effective spiritual leaders like themselves to ensure continuity and for a lasting and healthy church growth.

Aside the role the Clergy play in ensuring growth, growth also comes when the lay are highly motivated, well trained and strategically incorporated into the day to day administration of the church. It is an acknowledged fact that church growth depends largely on the laity and not just the clergy. All successful churches have dynamic leadership but more especially, they have involved the laity. It is therefore imperative for the clergy to consciously train the lay, so that they are equipped for the task. The clergy must help church members to discover their gifts and use them. Opportunities must also be given to the lay to exercise leadership.

Lastly, the church should consciously provide fellowship and create an affectionate atmosphere, so that members will feel a sense of belongingness. Any form of segregation among members must be discouraged. Special attention must be given to every member of the church, rather than just a perceived few. Foli contends that Christianity is meant to be lived in the context of loving and caring relationships, which was seen at the birth of the church at Pentecost.¹⁵⁵ Christianity had a religious communism of 'love' and shared

¹⁵⁴ Maxwell, *Developing the Leader*, 3.

¹⁵⁵ Foli, *Towards Church Growth*, 70.

whatever they possessed with each other, so that no one lacked or had need. From these nine factors outlined by Gary, churches desiring biblical church growth should;

- Encourage corporate and individual prayer life in the congregation.
- Rely fully on the Holy Spirit, as biblical growth does not come through human effort but via the empowering ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- Study the word of God and appropriate the Gospel message.
- Make worship attractive to suit all categories of members.
- Design a process for welcoming, following up and connecting newcomers to the life of the church.
- Acknowledge that being a growing church involves effectiveness in all three areas; going, baptizing and teaching.
- Develop leadership.
- Create a friendly atmosphere for members to fellowship.

Among other things, churches desiring biblical church growth should work towards the factors enumerated in this segment of the thesis. In the next sub-theme, hindrances to growth are discussed.

4.5 Hindrances to Church Growth

Notwithstanding the maxim that some factors serve as recipe for church growth, some others restrict growth. There are many of such factors, only five are considered under this section due to time and space constraints.

The first on the list is when churches set out methods, programmes and procedures which are ineffective for the present time and situation. Churches must consciously move with time and also address the growing needs of its members. However, some churches oppose change because they value tradition. Churches which wish to grow rapidly must vary their methods and programmes in order to move with contemporary times, otherwise they can never experience any meaningful growth.

Inadequate leadership retards growth. This occurs when leaders are not good role models to inspire others, when they are autocratic, have poor communication skills, do not delegate responsibilities, are preoccupied with matters that should be delegated to others, have poor vision and lack planning.

When the church is dull, worship is very boring and does not attract new members. When uninteresting sermons (which lack substance) are preached, such sermons do not challenge and motivate the church members, let alone draw outsiders to the church. In most cases, when such situations happen, it draws away the members especially the youth.

Related to the above is when the atmosphere is not captivating. This automatically discourages members and repels outsiders. When a church's atmosphere is cold unfriendly, indifferent and lacks joy and enthusiasm, it becomes herculean for new members to join.

Lastly, when the attitudes and lifestyles of the members, especially the leaders do not glorify God, they cause people to view the church negatively. As a church of God, much is expected from its members. Thus when members indulge in all forms of social vices, it

becomes very difficult for the church to attract new members. For churches to witness significant growth they must have a positive impact on the society in which they are located, else their growth will be stagnated.

Even though TOP, as a human institution, cannot be comprehensively be exempted from hindrances that may retard church growth, the researcher is of the view that none of the above mentioned hindrances can be associated with TOP. This position has been taken due to the fact that as a neo-Pentecostal Indigenous Church, their methods, programmes, and procedures seem to be devoid of bureaucracy. Their leadership seems to be very effective. Their effectiveness and efficiency have contributed to the significant growth of TOP. The researcher is convinced that if the opposite had happened, the church would not have experienced the significant growth they have had. Furthermore, as a neo-Pentecostal Church (with much emphasis on the Holy Spirit and its related charismata), the worship style seems to be very attractive, as it is not the classical type. In addition, the leadership, seem to comport themselves and live a life worthy of their calling. They have been able to eschew any human frailties that would bring disgrace to the entire church.

The next section of this chapter of the work focuses on the methodology used by TOP and some factors that have contributed to the significant growth of TOP.

4.6 Missionary Methods of Temple of Praise

Throughout mission history, Christians have used many different methodologies to spread their faith through the practice of evangelism. The *Business dictionary* defines methodology as 'a system of broad principles or rules from which specific methods or procedures may be derived to interpret or solve different problems within the scope of a

particular discipline. Unlike an algorithm, a methodology is not a formula but a set of practices.

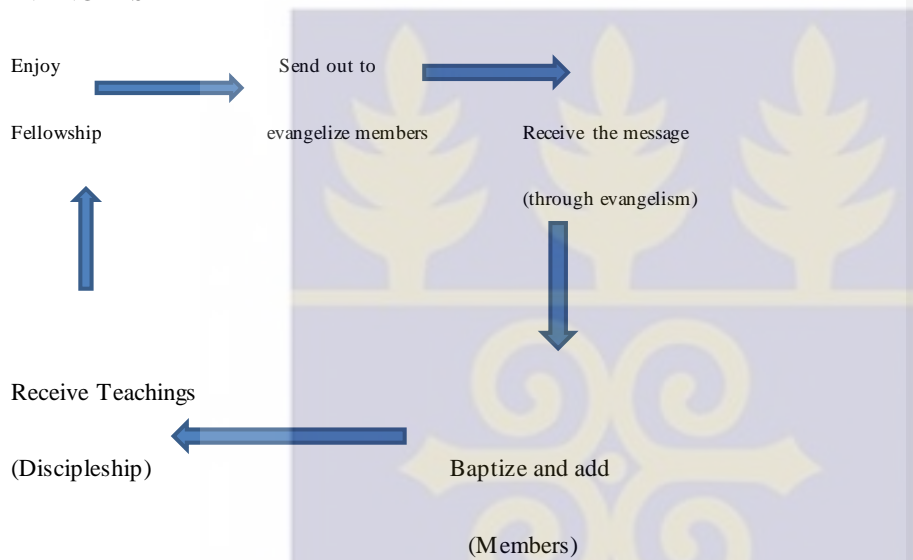
It is the type of methodology which a church adopts that ensures growth or otherwise. TOP, as a Christian church has adopted some methods to ensure that they will continue to win 'souls' to the kingdom of Christ and for the church. These methods are not catalogued in the church's constitution, neither are they in the church's liturgy. However, when the researcher interviewed the General Overseer and the General Secretary¹⁵⁶ of the church on different occasions, the following methods were highlighted;

The first method discussed was the "Bring a Guest" to church approach. Members of the church are encouraged to bring a guest to church. Rev. Cobbinah reiterated that the emphasis on this approach is on those who do not go to church or do not belong to any denomination. This is to avoid what he termed as 'sheep stealing.' Emphasis is on those who do not belong to any church. The leadership of the church has made members aware that it takes the combination of the leadership of Jesus Christ and the responsibility of man to bring growth to the church. In view of this antecedent, all church members are expected to bring others especially the 'lost' ones into the kingdom. The task lies on the whole church, not just a few dedicated members. All are baptized to witness. The challenge to reach the unreached millions demands that all members should execute the task. Pastor Cobbina however, contended that this approach is only achievable when there is consistent and conscious discipleship of members. In view of this, the General

¹⁵⁶ "The interview with the General Overseer and General Secretary were conducted on 20th and 21 March, 2014 respectively at Sunyani.

Overseer, enumerated steps taken to prepare and equip members for this task. The models are illustrated below in Figure 3.0;

Figure 3.0 STEPS USED BY TOP TO PREPARE MEMBERS FOR THE TASK OF EVANGELISM



From the above the researcher is of the view that there is a conscious effort to equip the members for the task ahead. New members are absorbed into the fraternity through evangelism, after which they pass through the new converts class. They are then baptized and made members of the church. After all these, they are disciplined through the normal Sunday School of the church. This activity ensures growth of members. They enjoy fellowship and are later sent out to bring others into the church. So the cycle continues.

They cited Acts 2:40-43:

“Those who gladly received his word were baptized and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continue steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and

fellowship in the breaking of bread and in prayer as the biblical basis for this approach.”
(NKJV)

The researcher is of the view that members are prepared internally before they embark on this approach. Therefore, this approach is not a mere slogan ‘of bring a guest’ but the leadership of the church consciously equips the members in order to achieve results.

Another method which the church uses is the home cells approach. Home cells are small groups of people of the same faith, who consciously meet in homes of members on a regular basis to share the word of God, pray and deliberate on issues which relate to the corporate organization and individuals of the group. Joel Comiskey defines home cells as ‘open, evangelism-focused small groups that entwined into the life of the church. They meet weekly to build up each other as members of the body of Christ, and to spread the gospel to those who do not know Jesus. The ultimate goal of each cell is to multiply itself as the group grows through Evangelism and Conversion.’¹⁵⁷ The researcher was informed that as soon as the church (TOP) establishes another branch, the next thing to do is to organize the members into home cells. It is alleged that, the leadership demarcated the areas into zones to commence the home cells. Apart from the fact that some of these cells had metamorphosed into assemblies, the General Overseer enumerated about ten benefits of the Home Cell ministries. He supported his argument with some biblical quotations. These benefits are as follows;

- That home cells promote the most effective method of evangelism-relationship evangelism.

¹⁵⁷ Joel Comiskey, *Home Cell Group Explosion* (Houston: Touch Publication, 1998), 17.

- That people are empowered in small groups to do more than they ever thought they could.
- That a vast number of people in the congregation are developed into leaders through the cell group ministry.
- That Individuals in the cells are identified and acknowledged (who they are, what they need, what they possess, what they can accomplish for Christ and among others).
- That people are affirmed and encouraged. They receive that little extra loving nudge that says 'you can make it.'
- That the group is identified through the word, fellowship and relationship. Each member is given an opportunity for leadership development.
- That mentoring occurs with a heart to heart transmission of information and values.
- That serving and ministry gifts are exercised.
- That cell groups provide a place for new believers to grow in Christ's likeness, learning to possess character and qualities such as humility, service and forgiveness.
- That cell groups provide accountability in the church.

Aside these benefits, the researcher was reliably informed that the Home Cells approach, had contributed immensely to the growth of the church, because, through it, some leaders (Lay and Ordained) had emerged, provided fellowship and helped solve physical and spiritual needs of some of the members.

Another method used by the church is personal witnessing. When the researcher interacted with the General Secretary of the church, the latter asserted that one of the most powerful tools the Christian possesses when it comes to evangelism and soul

winning is personal testimony that is, how God revealed Himself, and saved an individual. He argued that the Apostle Paul proved this by giving his personal testimony throughout Asia Minor. Holmes Rolston Jr. echoes this position by stating that ‘we have seen that twice in his writings, Paul makes the definite claim to have seen the risen Lord. The story of his conversion is told in Acts 9:1-9; 22:6-11. In listing the appearances of the risen Lord, in Corinthians he says: ‘and last of all, as to the child untimely born, He appeared to me also.’¹⁵⁸

The General Secretary argued that people can challenge one’s exegesis or application of scripture, but people cannot argue with what the Lord has done in one’s life. The testimony can be that healing of a disease (physical or spiritual), a conversion experience, deliverance or simply the joy of living for God. J.B. Phillips adds to this stand by quoting Paul that:

For you have heard of my past career in the Jewish religion, how I persecuted the church of God with fanatical zeal and in fact I did my best to destroy it. I was ahead of most of my contemporaries in the Jewish religion and had a greater enthusiasm for the old traditions. But when the time came for God (who was responsible both for my physical birth and for my being called by His grace) to reveal His Son within me so that I might proclaim Him to the non-Jewish world.¹⁵⁹

Members of the church have been encouraged to witness or share their faith to their neighbours as well as others they meet in their workplace in order to win them for Christ. The transforming nature of the gospel message will undoubtedly affect the lives of the people they engage.

¹⁵⁸ Holmes Rolston Jr. *The Apostle Paul Speaks to Us Today* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1951), 87

¹⁵⁹ J.B. Phillips, *Letters to Young Churches* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1947), 90.

Related to the above is the lifestyle evangelism model. This type is a method of evangelism that focuses on living a godly life. It is suggested that God is made known through the beauty of holiness. The example of a life lived in communion with God then draws people to the beauty of holiness and allows for conversion. An example of good integrity and character is often more powerful than a thousand words. J.M. Stifler posits that 'it is wide of the mark to suppose that this worthy name, by which these believers were called, was given in derision by their heathen opponents. Its use shows who had preceded them.'¹⁶⁰ It is said that nothing preaches harder than self. Members of the church are therefore admonished to frequently live a life worthy of emulation; they are to shun all social vices and practice Christian virtues. No wonder members who flout the instructions of the church are suspended. The name TOP should constantly remind the members that their bodies are a temple of Christ, so they should glorify God with their bodies in whatever they do.

Apart from the methods mentioned earlier, the other one being used by the church is the Sunday school. During Sunday forenoon services, members break into groups and interact with each other. The Sunday school approach seeks to bring out a homogenous unity where people are bound together by some common bond and endeavour to understand their unique characteristics. Apart from interacting with one another, it also serves as a platform for effective and efficient nurturing of old and new members. During this period, doctrinal issues as well as the traditions and beliefs of the church are discussed and taught. The leadership of the church argued that, the Sunday school is one of the most effective methods of turning strangers (new members) into friends. It

¹⁶⁰ J.M. Stifler, *An Introduction to the Study of the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1892), 102.

establishes long term contract with the individuals. The researcher was privileged to witness the Sunday school when he visited the Sunyani Assembly on 9th March, 2014.

On the said day, the topic discussed was baptism. The time allotted for the Sunday school is forty five minutes. Another five minutes is allowed for members to interact with each other. The researcher is of the view that this method effectively plants the seed in the heart of members and also produces a common bond of friendship among members and with the church in general.

Another method used by the church is the institution of ‘analysis’ meetings in all the assemblies. This meeting is attended by Pastors, Elders, and Leaders of the various groups of the assemblies. It is organized every Sunday in all the assemblies. The time allotted for the meeting is one hour. The cardinal aim of the analysis meeting is to assess and evaluate the day’s (Sunday) forenoon service with respect to attendance. To that effect, the key agenda of such meetings is to find out why attendance to the day’s service increased, or decreased. In situations where attendance was on the ascendency, members were encouraged to continue their good ‘deeds’ to bring more people into the kingdom. On the contrary, members were entreated to wake up from their ‘slumber’ and win souls for Christ.

In relation to this approach, the church has instituted awards to individuals and assemblies who excel by winning more souls. Such awards come in the form of plaques and citations. Prospective winners are acknowledged and appreciated during the church’s annual conventions. The institution of the awards has motivated a lot of the people to do something ‘small’ for the Lord, Rev. Cobbinah added.

Even though there are other programmes, such as revivals, crusades and conventions which all aim to build and increase membership of the church, the last method being discussed under this section is constant visitation of members of the church by the leadership. The leadership of all the assemblies (pastors and elders) has made it their principal duty to visit all members on regular basis, especially those who do not attend services in any given period. They also visit most of their members in their workplaces, to share with them daily challenges confronting them, exhort and pray with them. This method, the General Secretary reiterated, has helped build and sustain most of their members. It has also established a cordial relationship between the leadership and the members as the constant visitations have helped bridge the gap. It has also served as an avenue of winning others into the kingdom of God as well as the church, as some people are attracted by the constant visitations.

To the researcher, the leadership of the church has developed effective strategies which have helped them to win more souls and more importantly, to sustain them in the. As at the time of the research, the Temple of Praise Church had Sixty-four (64) Assemblies, made up of a total membership of Seven thousand, eight hundred and fifty members (7,850). To the researcher, the growth is very significant because since its establishment to date, there is an average addition of three hundred and forty two (342) members per year. The growth rate is highly commendable. Among other things, it seems that these evangelistic methods adopted by TOP had led to the growth. However, these evangelistic methods are assessed in chapter five of the work.

4.7 Factors that have Contributed to the Growth of TOP

Having established some of the methods adopted by TOP to promote growth in the church, the last aspect of this chapter analyses some other factors that have also contributed to their growth. In attempt to digest these factors, the researcher uses David Garrison's elements of church planting movements to assess the factors responsible for the growth. Garrison defines church planting movement (CPM) as a rapid and exponential increase of indigenous churches planting churches within a given people, group or population segment.¹⁶¹ Garrison identifies these ten elements that are found in every CPM. To the researcher, TOP falls within this category. Again a comparison of the Garrison's elements and strategies of TOP reveals remarkable similarities hence the use. Garrison's common elements¹⁶² are; extraordinary prayer, abundant evangelism, intentional planting of reproducing churches, the authority of God's word, leadership, lay leadership, houses churches, churches planting churches, rapid reproduction, and healthy churches.

To Garrison, the suggestion of these ten elements are indicators of the vitality of the movement which will enable the church to transcend the lifespan of the founders, hurdle generational and cultural barriers and have a broad and lasting impact. These ten elements as used by church planters, can also be used as leading indicators or benchmarks to assess their strength, movement, synergy, minimize movement deterrents and move toward healthy practices for their context. Within the context of this work,

¹⁶¹ Stifler, *An Introduction*, 102.

¹⁶² David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements; How God is Redeeming a Lost World* (Midlothian, VA: Wiatake Resource, 2004), 21.

these ten elements are not used as a criteria for assessing the growth of TOP but they are considered to have contributed significantly towards TOP's growth.

Commented [P1]: CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING GROWTH?

Garrison's first element is prayer, and the researcher agrees that prayer is very essential to any evangelistic activity. All evangelicals' pursuits must be bathed with intense prayer. It is suggested that the soul winner who takes the power of prayer seriously will accomplish greater things to the glory of God. The gospels are replete with examples that substantiate the fact that Jesus prayed prior to performing miracles or before major events occurred. The researcher is of the view that after critically interacting with the leadership of the church and members and also worshipping with them on a few occasions, the ministry of TOP is solidly built on prayer with much emphasis on the Holy Spirit who empowers them to pray. Constant prayer meetings, (both corporate and personal) have been inculcated in the members to the extent that members make it their divine duty to pray always. The General Overseer remarked that 'a church that does not give prayer its proper place does not grow.' Prayer is essential to the life and growth of the church because it affects every dimension of its growth. To that effect, the church (TOP) has instituted prayer teams (Towers) in almost all the assemblies. The core duty of the teams is to pray for others and the church. The church also organizes a lot of prayer meetings and in some instances; they conduct prayer services to help build the prayer life of the members. The General Overseer reiterated that in the initial stages of their ministry, they collaborated with some of their colleagues in the neo-Pentecostal fraternity who they considered as pace setters in the ministry and organized prayer sessions with them. Garrison's second element is evangelism. *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* defines evangelism as 'The proclamation of the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ with a view

to bring about the reconciliation of the sinner to God the father through the regeneration power of the Holy Spirit.’ The word evangelism emanates from the Greek noun *‘Euangelion’* meaning good news. The evangelical dictionary goes even further and gives a more extensive and comprehensive definition of evangelism as, “to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures and that of the reigning Lord, He now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the Spirit to all who repent and believe.”

The researcher is of the view that when one critically assesses the methods used by the church since its inception, there is no doubt that there is a systematic and a pragmatic approach by members to make new contacts and break new grounds in order to reach the unreached with the Good News. The church also has a well-trained evangelism team comprising almost all the members of the church. This team is taught about the basics of repentance and baptism, how to approach people with the gospel message and how to follow-up and build up new converts. There are also frequent seminars to equip members with modern trends of evangelism.

The third element is Intentional church planting. This element deals with the fact that Christian leaders realizing that church planting is the most effective means of discipleship. They devise a strategy from the outset where starting new churches is the single minded focus. Everything not contributing to this focus is discarded. The researcher wants to reiterate that this was one of the reasons which prompted the founders of TOP to start their ministry. When they left the Scripture Union and established their own fellowship as stated earlier, one of the reasons that ‘forced’ them to go into church planting was the nurturing of the converts (because they blamed their ‘mother’ churches

for failing to nurture them to grow in the Lord). From the onset, one could see that church planting was the sole motive of the founders. No wonder in just two months, they were able to establish four assemblies (Sunyani, Dormaa Ahenkro, Berekum and Wamfie). However, the pace at which the assemblies were being established has slowed down, since the focus of the founders has now shifted to the urban areas. Notwithstanding the change of focus, this element has helped contribute to the significant growth of TOP.

The next element is the authority of the Bible. Garrison contends that when the Bible is translated in the heart language of the people and believers, they unhesitatingly see it as the Bible, and not as any other book, aids, or teachers of authority in their daily lives. It promotes effective growth. Emil Bruner opines that 'the Bible is the soil from which all Christians' faith grows; it is the source of Christian doctrine and the manual of church practice. As stated earlier in chapter three of the work, 'TOP believes in the scripture of the Old and the New Testaments as verbally inspired by God and inerrant in the original writing, and that they are the supreme and final authority in life and faith'. Aside this belief, members of TOP have been built up to the gospel message in their daily lives to the extent that the Bible is their standard by which everything is measured.

There is also the element of local leadership. Garrison contends that local leaders and (not outside ministers or missionaries), give direction to the movement and take responsibility for it. This position is remarkably similar to the story of TOP, (as leadership of the church since its inception has emerged, grown and deployed indigenously). It can be said emphatically that the church has not been dependent on influence from outside. The leaders have been built from within and more importantly, from the Brong Ahafo Region.

Garrison's next element is the principle of Lay leadership. He opines that when a movement is spreading, there is neither time nor resources to educate, train and ordain professional leaders. The truth is wherever a movement starts to require educated leadership, it comes to a grinding halt. This assertion by Garrison is highly debatable but the researcher wishes to reserve any comment as this is not the focus of the work. When the researcher interacted with the General Overseer, he reiterated the affirmation of Lay leadership when he said 'whenever believers realize that if they are to reach their own culture for Christ then they personally need to take initiative and not wait for professional clergy to do it.' The leadership of TOP picked on the 'raw material' available and has been able to transform them into finished goods which they have used to achieve success.

Another element on the list is Cell or house churches. According to Garrison, it is universally true that whenever church planting movements occur, the church was found in homes rather than in expensive buildings. The church is found where people live. The genesis of TOP fits perfectly in this assertion as they formed cell groups which were very reproducible, meeting in homes of members or store fronts and other makeshift places of worship. These locations dominated the early stages of the church. However, this philosophy has changed as most of the assemblies have now moved on to a property owning mentality of using huge chapels as their meeting places.

Yet another element discussed by Garrison is churches planting churches. Garrison is of the view that the natural manner of reproducing is after one's own kind. Churches are meant to plant churches that plant churches. Garrison reminds us of God's command; be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Not only that but he also affirmed that a mission agency or a denominational board is not the means to start churches and was never meant

to be. The position of the leadership of TOP holds the view that reproduction is natural so they do not need outside resources to obey Christ's command to make disciples. In view of this assumption, ordinary church members, not only professional clergy, accept the responsibility for starting churches. This challenge has contributed to the rapid growth of the church, as ordinary members have embraced the challenge and also realized that they are worthy to be counted as partakers of the 'kingdom business.'

The ninth element is rapid reproduction. Garrison affirms that whenever there is a church planting movement, the reproduction rate is shortened so that the multiplication rate accelerates. The researcher holds the view that the founders of TOP have a sense of urgency to reach their 'lost' neighbours hence the brisk establishment of assemblies. To them, they avoided everything non-essential to planting of churches in the initial stages. No wonder they never attempted to provide social services in the communities they operated in, at the initial stages as church planting was their only focus.

Finally, Garrison compares churches to living things, when he states that healthy ones reproduce naturally, and sick ones on the other hand can cause infertility. Healthy churches are said to portray the following characteristics; worship, evangelism, discipleship, ministry to others and fellowship. The researcher is of the opinion that all these five characteristics feature prominently in the activities of TOP.

The researcher wishes to agree with Garrison's assertion 'that these ten elements are indicators of the validity of the movement which enables the church to transcend the life span of the founders, hurdle generational and cultural barriers and have a broad and

lasting impact.¹⁶³ It is also agreed that growth patterns usually reflect the methods used and factors which contributed to the growth or otherwise.

Even though these ten elements are not codified in the constitution of TOP, neither did the leadership categorically make mention of them during the researcher's interaction with them as strategies that they have consciously adopted to achieve growth. However, critical analyses of the factors that have engineered their growth will definitely point to these ten elements. To that effect, there is now clear understanding that the significant growth of TOP did not just emerge but the leadership and members worked towards it.

4.8 Conclusion

From the earthly ministry of Christ and the day of Pentecost, to this present time, it has been God's divine plan that the church should grow. Every church, whatever its size, must regard numerical and spiritual growth as being of supreme importance. Church growth, however, does not just happen. It must be prayed for, planned for and worked for; and the example of TOP, attests to the fact that with conscious effort, proper planning and pragmatic steps, the church is capable of experiencing significant growth. The growth of TOP is a clear example that church growth is achievable in our contemporary times when churches desire to grow. Growth is also possible when given the needed attention and preparation. The next chapter of the thesis is the concluding part and it highlights some of the findings. It also assesses the growth of TOP in the context of the three-test theory.

¹⁶³ Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*, 21.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The preceding chapters have examined Indigenous Missions in the Brong Ahafo Region with TOP as the main focus. The chapters also touched briefly on Christian Missions, the Brong Ahafo Region, the history of Christianity in Ghana and for that matter Brong Ahafo Region which is traced to the pioneering work of the early missionaries carrying the Gospel of Jesus Christ from Europe.

Attention has also been given to indigenous missions, factors that gave rise to Indigenous missions, Indigenous missions in the Brong Ahafo Region where the focus was on Sampon Oppong and five indigenous churches. The history and development of TOP, early challenges, financing and factors that have contributed to the phenomenal growth of TOP had also been highlighted. From the research, the following have contributed to the significant growth of the Church:

Firstly, it is an undisputable fact that Outreach has been the priority of TOP since its establishment. They have demonstrated a special zeal and enthusiasm for evangelistic ministry and outreach programs. Outreach is the work of groups and or individuals within the church which is directed towards people, groups and communities which are not currently associated with the Church, when such initiatives are taken, the sole aim is to win people, groups and communities to the church. In effect, when a church engages in outreach, it is reaching out to the community in order to meet needs or to let people know of its existence and possibly 'bring them on board.' A church that engages in outreach programmes, is interested in growth and sharing its faith, witness and

purpose with others. As a new Neo-Pentecostal Indigenous Church, the leadership realized that if they failed to reach out to others, they will lack membership and subsequently growth will be impossible. The leadership also turned the focus of their congregation away from themselves and to their original mission and Christ's mission (of reaching out to the unreached). This principle of Outreach programmes have contributed immensely to the growth of TOP. The leadership needs to be commended for the effective and efficient orientations to her members which have occurred through programmes, prayers, budgeting and honestly evaluating the Church's success at birthing new Christian disciples.

It is alleged that the longer a church exists, the more concerned members become with self-preservation and less concerned with the church's original reason for being established. After almost twenty-three years of existence, this mentality is likely to catch up with members. Gary L. McIntosh and Charles Arn affirm this position by stating that 'over time, churches become increasingly self-centered and self-serving. The result, not surprisingly is that such churches stop growing.'¹⁶⁴ While there are many good things a church can do and there are many good things a church should do, there is an essential thing a church must do, 'go out and share the good news' with everyone you meet, far and near in the way of life (Matt. 28:19). One is curious to follow the growth of TOP in the area of outreach with the passage of time.

Furthermore, it was also discovered that both the leadership, the ordained as well as the lay of TOP, have all committed themselves to reaching out to the 'unreached'. The researcher is of the view that the entire membership of TOP does not think that its

¹⁶⁴ Gary L. McIntosh & Charles Arn, *What Every Pastor Should Know – 101 Rules for Effective Leadership and Ministry in Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 14.

evangelistic outreach, is the exclusive responsibility of its pastors, or of some other paid workers. All hands are on deck to spread the good news. William Richey Hogg contends that 'wherever the notion is perceived that evangelistic outreach of the church is an exclusive responsibility of minority few, a disastrous attitude often results. The congregation becomes a body to be served.¹⁶⁵ It no longer lives through corporate and personal evangelism as a body that serves.

Hogg terms this attitude as 'the virus of professional evangelism.'¹⁶⁶ That is when the charge to share the gospel message, is left to those who are perceived to have been trained for that. However, the opposite is true in the ministry of TOP. TOP's significant growth in Brong Ahafo has been possible because every member of the church has been nurtured to the extent that reaching out to others springs from propulsion and not attraction.

The members of TOP seem to have come together to champion the cause of Christ. Even the 'weakest' among them seems to have a gift, no matter how seemingly trivial which is peculiar to this genuine cause of spreading the gospel. For the past twenty three years, TOP seems to have been more concerned and committed to its mission of reaching out to the unreached.

The study has also brought out that both the leadership and the entire membership have not directed attention inward unto themselves, but are highly committed to the sharing of the gospel. The Church (TOP) seems to understand itself and have carefully analyzed the situation into which God has placed it. That is to share the Gospel. It is said that a growing church has a deliberate commitment to people beyond itself. Hogg argues that

¹⁶⁵ William Richey Hogg, *One World One Mission*, (New York: Friendship Press, 1960), 149.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 148.

‘anytime a church does not live and act as though a great good news had been committed to it to be shared with all the world, it fails to grow’¹⁶⁷. Hogg again opines that ‘when a church acts rather as if the gospel had been given to it for its own well-being and for the benefit of any nearby who may choose to join its ranks’,¹⁶⁸ it is very difficult for such a church to experience growth. However, the opposite is true when one compares with the ministry of TOP. The church has not kept the gospel message to itself but continues to share it with others.

The study also revealed that the lay have played a very vital role. The involvement of the laity, both as leaders and as participants in the evangelistic activities, should never be underestimated. The manner in which they have met the challenges to be in ministry; their submissiveness to the clarion call of the great commission, and their active participation holds lessons for posterity. Hogg posits that for the great majority of church members, the Christian world mission and anything associated with it, seems remote and of no direct personal importance. The concerns of daily living, hobbies and perhaps local church activities fill their thoughts. A few are hostile to the Christian mission. Many are indifferent to it. The same cannot be said of the lay membership of TOP. They have been active team players. The members are challenged in their judgment, that mission is not the responsibility solely of those who are interested and it does not also belong only to enthusiasts but to all who belong to the church. The members seem to understand that church membership, by definition, commits one to world-wide mission, to taking the whole gospel to the whole world.

¹⁶⁷Hogg, *One World*, 148.

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*

Lastly, one notes that the leadership, especially the ordained, are wholly prepared to help their members discover its vision and mission. Most of the church's programmes, training sessions; traditions and orientation are geared towards an evangelizing church that carries the gospel to those outside the church. Moreover, these activities enable the members to gain deeper understanding of the life of the whole church. Hogg affirms that 'many pastors, by their very preparation, are hindered in giving a church, the vision it needs to see its own mission.'¹⁶⁹

The researcher observed that in some of the churches, the mission and missions have been the concern of a minority; and that among church members generally there exists an inadequate understanding of what the church itself is in its mission and missions which have been the concern of a minority. Among church members generally, there exists an inadequate understanding of what the church itself is, in its mission and unity. When such situations occur, church growth becomes a mirage. TOP's significant growth has been possible and successful because almost all the stakeholders see themselves as partakers of the task. An all-inclusive evangelistic strategy to win unreached souls for Christ has been adopted.

5.1 An Assessment of The Missionary Activities of TOP

In assessing the missionary activities of TOP in the region, the researcher uses the three tests theory developed by Walls as discussed in chapter one namely, the church test, the kingdom test and the gospel test. As a missionary church, TOP is engaged in the spreading and expansion of Christianity. The tests when applied to TOP, will reveal the quality of Christianity being spread by her.

¹⁶⁹ Hogg, *One World*, 148

5.2|The Church Test

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The church test is the spread of the Christian profession in a particular area. The church test implies the fruit of Christian mission, which is, the bringing into being of the people of God or the community of worshipping Christians.

In relating the church test to TOP, the researcher wishes to submit that TOP has passed the church test, with particular reference to their effective and efficient ways of evangelism and purposeful drive to establish more congregations in the Brong Ahafo Region. They have experienced advancement especially in the region. From very humble beginnings, they have now almost covered every part of the region. Even though they are not the first to attempt to share the Good news in the region, they now have congregations in all the Districts and Municipal capitals in the region, (refer to the map of Brong Ahafo in the appendix V). Their remarkable growth cannot be underestimated. The study revealed that, the Church has sixty-four (64) assemblies made up of a total membership of seven thousand, eight hundred and fifty (7,850) in the Brong Ahafo Region. This presupposes that, an average of three hundred and fourteen members is added to their membership annually. To add and maintain such number in church management is highly commendable.

When it comes to the cultural translation of the Gospel, the church has performed creditably well. Since its inception in the region, Twi has predominantly been used as the means of communicating the gospel message. The leaders of TOP who insisted on the Twi language thought it wise to go that way, because the church operates in areas where majority of the people are semi-literates and peasant farmers. Any attempt to have used

the English language as the mode of communication like most of their colleagues in the cities would have driven people away from the gospel message.

The use of vernacular in TOP's missionary activities have confirmed the fact that indigenous churches take root and grow best when the scriptures are translated into the language of the people and lay men can witness using vernacular scriptures. Furthermore, the use of the mother tongue by TOP, has laid emphasis on the fact that the mother tongue is a powerful medium to spread the gospel message. It is said that whenever the gospel is translated in to vernacular, the people of that language take ownership. Many others also bear testimony to the greater effectiveness of church planting efforts made through the preferred language of the local population. Even among non-literate groups, the bible has been well positioned when translated and this has stimulated growth. Walls affirmation in this church test theory is echoed by the Apostle Paul. The Apostle explained to the Corinthians that in church meetings, he would rather speak five words in a plain language than a thousand in an unknown tongue so that the other world will be edified. (Acts 14:10-13). This assertion by Paul can be compared to the Akan proverb which says "*asem aa ehia no, ye ka no yen kurom kasa mu*" which can literally be translated as, 'important messages are communicated in the local dialect'. The leadership of TOP from the beginning realized the importance of the gospel message and decided to communicate in the heart language of the people. It is true that when the heart language of the people emerges in their prayers, songs, sermons, illustrations and applications, worship becomes more accessible and within reach of all members of the community and allowing everyone to participate. Missionaries who identify and embrace the heart

language of the people they are trying to reach are well positioned to stimulate growth.

The researcher has no doubt that TOP has passed the church test.

The church test alone, according to Walls, is not a satisfactory measure of Christ's presence in a community. It is to be seen in relation to the other tests. This leads us to the Kingdom Test.

5.3 Kingdom Test

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The kingdom test has to do with movements or institutions generated within or outside the church but under Christ which brings vitality to the church as an institution.

In the ministry of TOP, it is hard to point to one of such movements in the Church's operational structures. However, it may not also be wrong to mirror the whole church as a kingdom test movement. The researcher has taken this position judging from the genesis of the church (TOP). It was a movement whose intention was to exert Christ's influence in the community in which it operated before the leaders turned into church planting and subsequently established TOP. It is alleged that some of these movements which emerged on the Ghanaian Christian scene, were later turned into churches. Omenyo argues that ' a major consequence of the evangelical/ charismatic renewal in the 1960s and 1970s was the institutionalization of some of the fellowships into churches, or the development of completely new and independent neo-Pentecostal churches known in Ghanaian parlance as charismatic churches or ministries.'¹⁷⁰ This dimension cannot be disputed as most of these movements which emerged turned out to be churches. TOP is not exclusive to this allegation.

¹⁷⁰Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 96.

TOP, as a missionary church, has done a lot within the Brong Ahafo Region, since its formative years to the present time. Everywhere it has operated in the region, its sole aim has been the radiant call of people into repentance and exerting the influence of Christ in the communities it has operated. The radical approach shows the sense of urgency to remind people of the love of Christ which calls people to repentance. Notwithstanding this assertion, the researcher wishes to reiterate that the leadership of the church must continue to remain focused in order not to sway off and become counter signs.

Walls has rightly observed that the spiritual churches, otherwise known as African Instituted churches, which served as kingdom signs, are now perceived by the charismatic churches as counter signs of the kingdom.¹⁷¹ With the re-emergence of Healing and Deliverance now being showcased in the electronic media, with both local and foreign influence (as most of these movements/churches have their own television stations), the leadership ought to remain resolute and champion the cause of Christ and continue to rely solely on the Holy Spirit for divine direction. The leadership, especially the founders, should continue to seek the face of the Lord so that they lead the church in the 21st century without becoming counter-signs. In Walls' "assertion one of the Kingdom signs is the provision of social services such as hospitals and schools, among others. From the research, it is clear that TOP has paid little attention to the provision of social services in the areas of operation". History recounts that the church in Brong Ahafo came into being as a result of the work of the Western Missionaries. They did not only preach but were also involved in providing social services such as healthcare, education, technical training and scientific farming. It is also said that no serious history of pre and post independent Africa can be written without reference to the church's contribution towards the shaping

¹⁷¹ Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process*, 16.

and transforming of the life and the people of Africa. The social, economic, political and religious impacts due to the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the past and present history of Africa have been enormous. What is remarkable about the mission of the church in Africa is that the gospel was initially proclaimed as a message that concerned the whole person, body and soul. As said earlier, TOP has not paid much attention to this social transformation. The leadership is being reminded that missions are broad and as deep as the needs and exigencies of human life.

5.4 Gospel Test

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The gospel text is the effect of Christ on people and culture. The gospel or the good news is about Christ's ultimate victory over the evil forces that opposed God and destroy the world.

In assessing TOP's impact through the Gospel Test, the researcher wishes to state that it is difficult to measure the level of influence the Gospel has had on the members or again to quantify the impact, the church has brought on its members. Walls affirms this position when he reiterates that 'and the capital difficulty of making this into any sort of principle of judgment is that the influence may be direct and acknowledged, or direct and unacknowledged or indirect and even unconscious.'¹⁷²

Notwithstanding this assumption, the fact remains that the effects of Christ on people's lives is that members have been transformed. The current leadership of the church bears testimony to this transformation. It is a fact that TOP did not emerge in a vacuum. Planting of the church was through the work of local leaders who had faithfully reproduced themselves. The leadership of the church since its inception had emerged,

¹⁷² Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process*, 18-19

grown and deployed indigenously. It was the custom of the early church to develop strong local leadership wherever the gospel was preached. The success of the church in that era depended on the development of local leadership. It is evident that the local leadership of the church in apostolic times was placed on the shoulders of new converts as quickly as possible. Aside the leadership, some of the members seems to have also benefited from the gospel as their lives have been transformed. The General Overseer, Rev. Cobbina, reiterated that most of the youth who joined the church in its early stages have grown up to become responsible adults with some holding key managerial positions in both public and private institutions. He went on to say that, in this era of perceived corruption in almost every fabric of our society, we need men and women of highest repute, honesty and integrity to occupy responsible positions. This can be achieved when our lives have been transformed by the gospel message.

The effect of Christ on people and culture has been tremendously great especially where TOP operates, as it continues to advocate the liberation which the gospel brings to humanity.

When the three tests theory is synopsized to the missionary activities of TOP in the Brong Ahafo Region, it can be concluded that, the Church's impact has been impressive due to the fact that, since its establishment, it has witnessed a rapid and phenomenal growth. It has also brought about revival and dynamism in their activities.

Thirdly, the gospel which they present has been clothed and presented within the sociocultural setting of the people. The lives of the people, especially her members have been transformed. What is left to be done is to make a conscious effort to provide some social services.

There is no doubt that in the last twenty three years since the establishment of TOP, the Brong Ahafo region has witnessed aggressive evangelistic activities, innovation, mission initiatives and rapid growth. Though the gospel has not reached every part of the region, there has been a phenomenal growth in church planting. The door of the gospel has been opened to hitherto muslims dominated areas in the region like Atebubu and Techiman. Even though TOP is not the first church to share the good news in the area, their efforts must be commended.

TOP, among other denominations, are springing up on weekly basis especially in every part of the region. TOP, among others, are of various shapes and forms operating from one room apartment or shed. However, the Lord is equipping and anointing the church for a 'final' aggressive warfare and evangelism.

From the research, the following can be said of TOP:

- Christ is the center of their missionary work. They proclaim Christ and not self or church.
- Mission has been a responsibility of the Lay and the Ordained. Missions have not been exclusively left to the minority.
- The church centers its congregational life around a passionate worship of the Triune God, celebrating salvation by grace through faith in Christ and relying on the power of God's Spirit for fruitful ministry.
- The church is more prayerful. The church has remained under the authority of Christ.
- The church is led by the inspired and authoritative word of God and grounded in the teachings of historic Christian doctrines.

- The church nurtures individual members in a deepening spiritual life of worship, prayer, study and mutual discipleship.
- The church shares God's self-sacrificial love for the lost, lonely and broken people and cultivates a commitment toward outreach as well as expression of worship.
- The leadership, especially the founders have been able to discard any human factor including pride, internal struggling, infighting, and misunderstanding. On the other hand, they have remained resolute and committed to their vision and mission which brought TOP into existence.
- The church cultivates the habit of loving, accountable, reconciling relationships within its ranks.
- The church balances outreach with internal nurture, discipling and uniting members through participation in the church's mission
- The leadership has been held with faith, vision, courage, integrity and a passion for holistic mission.
- The church has placed every area of individuals and congregational life under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, without much distinction between 'sacred' and secular.
- The women and the youth are all involved in the mission work at all levels.

Overall, it can be said that TOP has made great strides in spreading the gospel through planting of churches, evangelizing through literature and sending out missionaries to many parts of the region.

Aside the factors mentioned above, some causative factors that have precipitated this phenomenal growth is what Barker terms as freedom.¹⁷³ To Barker, to start a new church is a kind of liberation from the limitations and frustrations imposed by the church one was in before.¹⁷⁴ The 'Freedom' includes;

- Freedom to exercise spiritual gifts.
- Freedom to worship with more movement and excitement.
- Freedom to exercise gifts of leadership.
- Freedom to create new forms and institutions.
- Freedom to relax or reinforce moral requirements.

Critically, all these freedoms have contributed in a way to help TOP grow rapidly. The ethos of the church paves way for emphasis on the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and its accompanied gifts. There is no rigidity in the worship style, (which is more flexible with members supposedly feeling the presence of the Spirit). Leadership positions have not been limited to the educated elites but also the less educated, even illiterates who possess real gifts of leadership have been given the opportunity to lead. New forms and institutions have been created with less difficulty to facilitate the church's activities.

Lastly, freedom to relax or reinforce moral requirements. On this the researcher maintains that, moral requirements have been enforced rather than relaxed. These freedoms even though not automatic to growth, have in a way, contributed to the rapid growth of TOP.

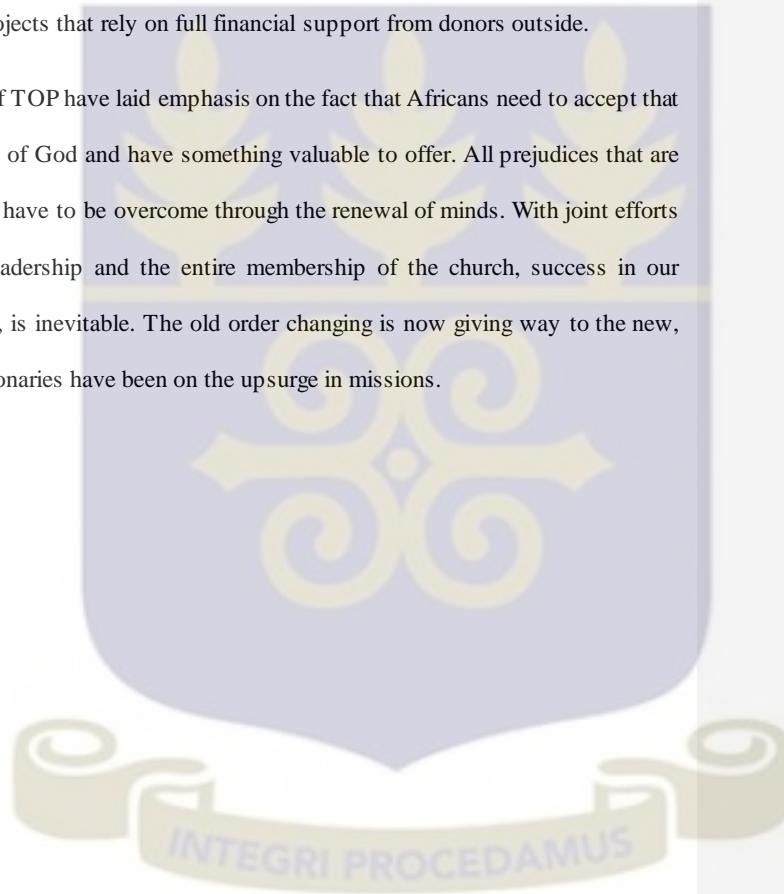
It is evident that TOP's significant growth has reinforced the notion that the African is capable of managing his own affairs. The researcher believes that TOP, as an indigenous

¹⁷³ Barker, *The Rise of Independent Churches*, 70.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

church, has ensured a measure of sustainability and reduced dependency. They have done away with the dependency syndrome. They have carried out effective teachings that have informed their members about what to do to move missions forward. Much effort has been put in to explore local possibilities, which has helped TOP to avoid planning programmes and projects that rely on full financial support from donors outside.

The achievements of TOP have laid emphasis on the fact that Africans need to accept that we are also children of God and have something valuable to offer. All prejudices that are harmful to progress have to be overcome through the renewal of minds. With joint efforts coming from the leadership and the entire membership of the church, success in our mission endeavours, is inevitable. The old order changing is now giving way to the new, as indigenous missionaries have been on the upsurge in missions.



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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE FOUNDERS OF TOP

Personal Information

1. Name of parents.....
2. Date of birth..... Place of birth.....

Spiritual Encounter

3. When and where did you become a Christian?
.....
4. Into which church or denomination were you worshipping?
.....
5. Did you belong to any para-church group?
.....
6. Why did you leave your church?
.....
7. When and how did you start your church or ministry?
.....
8. What motivated the founding members to start the ministry?
.....

9. What are your church's tenets of faith, if any?

.....

10. In your opinion or view, what are the following: Holy Spirit, Speaking in Tongues, Healing and Deliverance?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

ORGANIZATION

11. How is your church organized?

.....

.....

12. In which tradition do you place TOP?

Pentecostal []

Neo-Pentecostal/Charismatic []

Mainline []

13. What system of church administration do you practice?

.....

14. Who are involved in leadership positions?

.....

15. What is the administrative structure of the church?

.....

FUNDING

16. Apart from offering and tithing, are there any other sources of funding of your church?

Yes []

No []

17. If yes, which areas do you receive support?

.....

18. Do you have any income generating venture which support you financially, or you rely only on normal tithes, offerings, harvests, and voluntary thanks offering?

.....

19. What is the average income per month?

.....

GROWTH

20. How many members did you start with?

.....

21. What is the yearly growth rate of membership?

.....

22. How many branches do you now have in Brong Ahafo?

.....

23. What is the numerical strength (total membership) in Brong Ahafo?

.....

24. Do you have branches outside Brong Ahafo? If yes, how many?

.....

25. Do you think your church has achieved a lot in terms of growth? If yes, what account for that?

.....

26. What are some of your strategies for evangelism?

.....

27. How do you nurture and motivate your members to remain in your church?

.....

28. In your opinion, is TOP doing anything that other churches are not doing?

.....

29. Have you experienced recession/decline in growth? If yes, what accounted for that?

.....

.....

.....

TRAINING

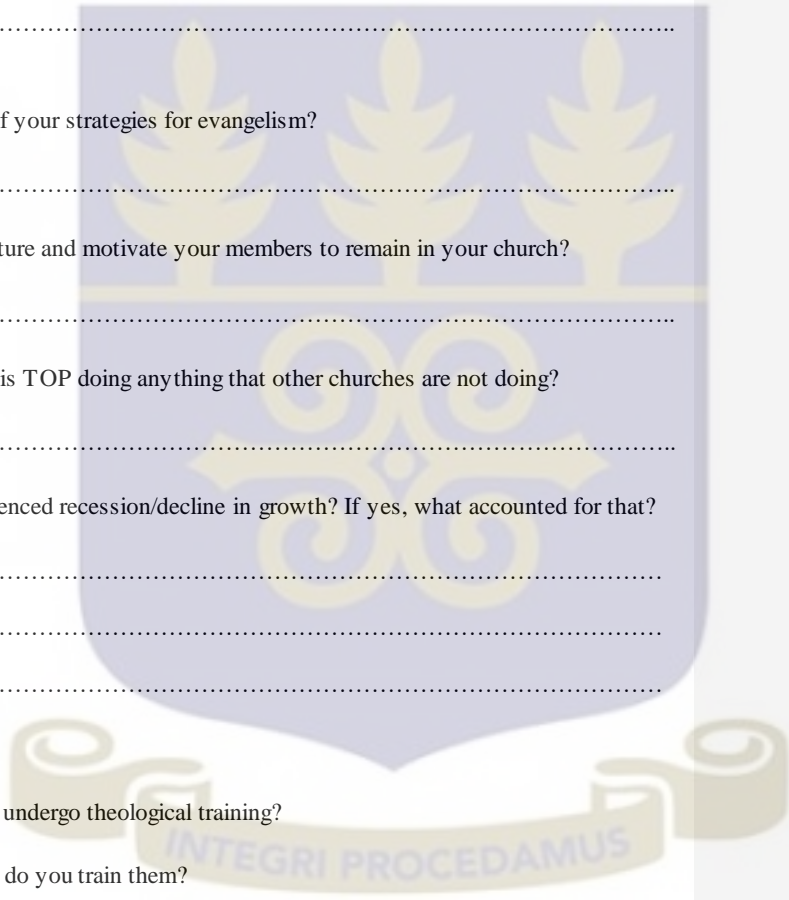
30. Do your pastors undergo theological training?

a. If yes, where do you train them?

.....

b. If no, why?

.....



31. What is the highest qualification among the pastors/lay leaders?

.....

32. Approximately, what is the salary structure level of your pastors and others on your pay roll?

.....

33. Do you have other incentives for the pastors apart from their normal monthly salary?

.....

SOCIAL SERVICES

34. Have you provided social services to the communities/areas you have branches?

a. If yes, what are they?

.....

b. If no, why?

.....

35. What does the future hold for TOP?

.....

.....

OTHER

36. In your opinion, are there any challenges confronting indigenous missions in Ghana?

.....

.....

.....

.....

37. How does TOP, a Neo-Pentecostal church relates or coordinates with other churches and ministries in the Brong Ahafo region?

.....

38. What were some of the initial challenges that confronted TOP?

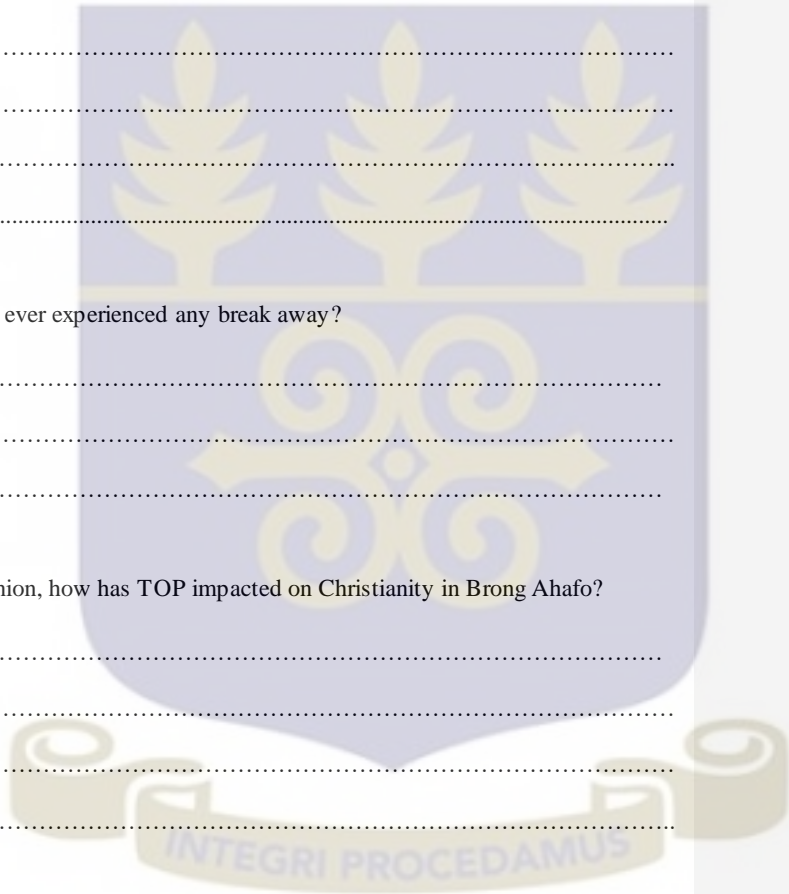
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

39. Has your church ever experienced any break away?

.....
.....
.....

40. In your own opinion, how has TOP impacted on Christianity in Brong Ahafo?

.....
.....
.....
.....



APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PASTORS OF TOP

Personal Information

Name.....Educational Background.....

Date of birth..... Place of birth.....

1. How long have you been a pastor in this church?

.....

2. Are you in Full time of Tent ministry?

.....

3. What is your motivation to work with TOP?

.....

4. Is there anything unique about the Founders of TOP which has influenced your thinking as a pastor of an Indigenous Church?

.....

5. How do you increase your church membership?

.....

6. What has accounted for the exponential growth of TOP in the Brong Ahafo Region?

.....

7. What are some of the evangelistic strategies adopted by your church?

.....

8. Is there anything about your church you wish to change or improve upon?

.....

9. What is view on the church's administrative structure?

.....

10. Appropriately, how much do you receive monthly in form of stipend?

.....



APPENDIX III

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR LAY LEADERS

Personal Information

Name.....Educational Background.....

Date of birth..... Place of birth.....

1. When did you become TOP member?

.....

2. How did you become a member?

Through Crusade []

Personal invitation []

Radio []

3. Do you hold any leadership position?

.....

4. What is your role to the day-to-day administration of your church?

.....

5. Do you take part in the church's evangelistic activities? If yes, what?

.....

6. Have you received any capacity building training?

.....

7. Is your church experiencing growth? If yes, what are some of the factors contributing to it?

.....

8. What makes TOP, an indigenous church, so unique and different from other churches?

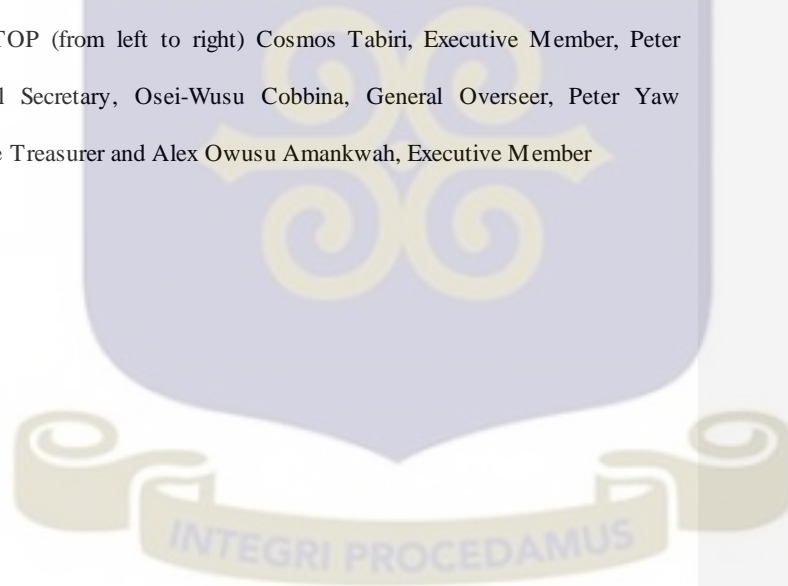
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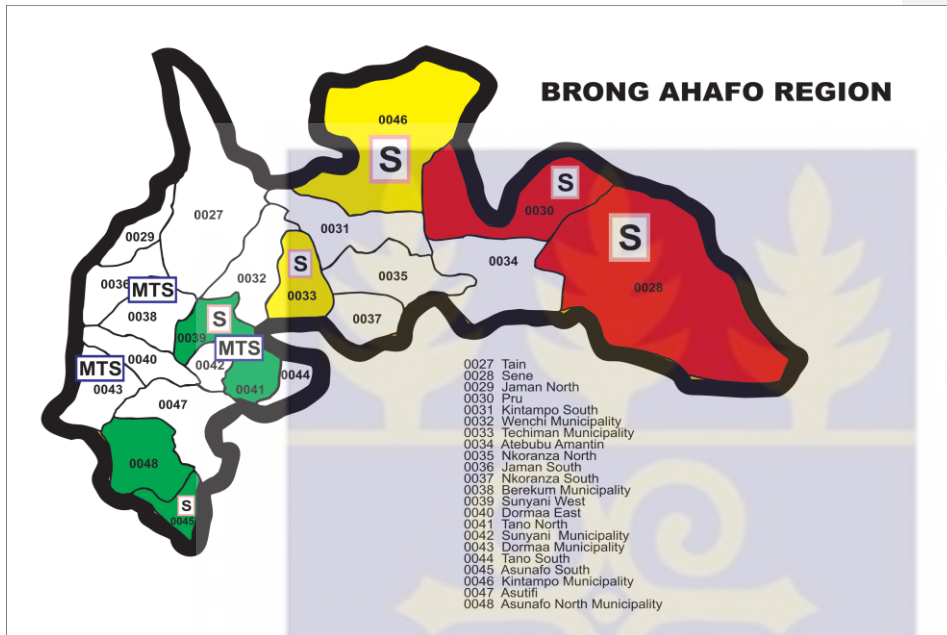
APENDIX IV



The Founders of TOP (from left to right) Cosmos Tabiri, Executive Member, Peter Kyeremeh, General Secretary, Osei-Wusu Cobbina, General Overseer, Peter Yaw Asamoah, Executive Treasurer and Alex Owusu Amankwah, Executive Member

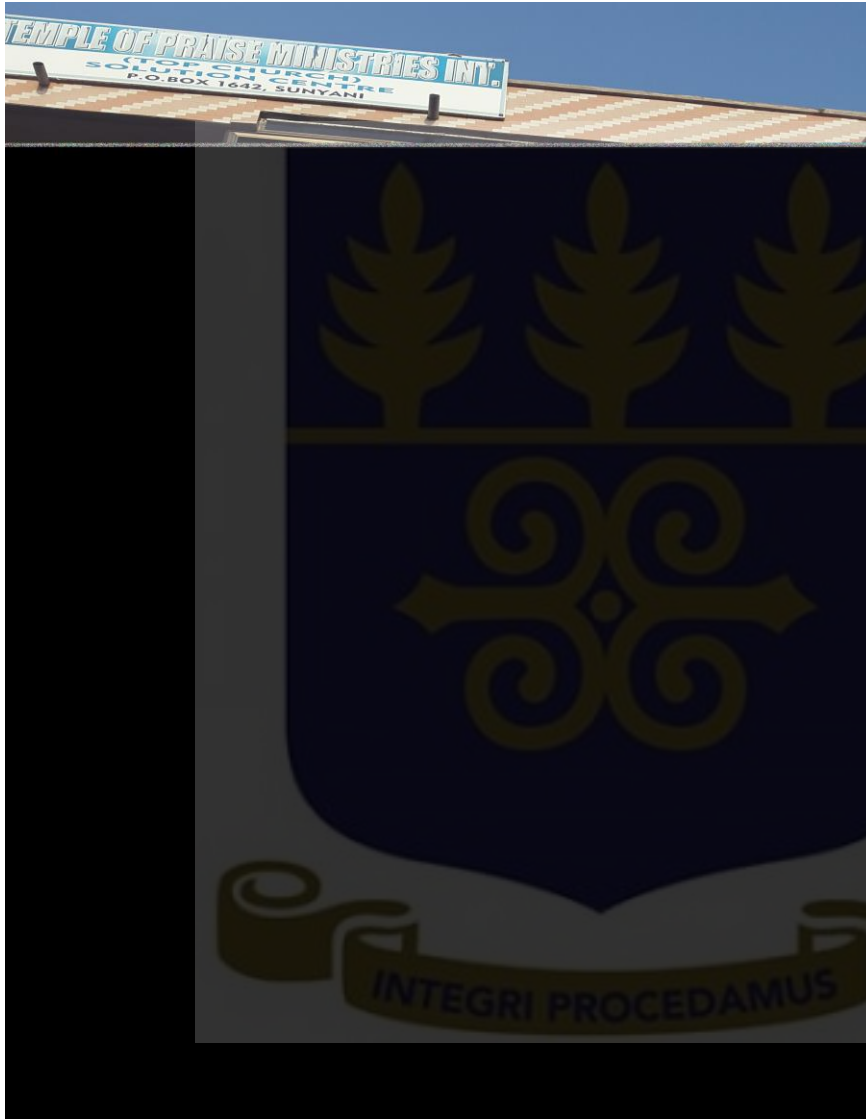


APPENDIX V



The Map of Brong Ahafo indicating all the Districts and Municipal capitals. TOP has congregations in all the capitals.

APENDIX VI



Front view of the Sunyani Central Church.