

A BRIEF HISTORICAL SKETCH OF YOUTH MINISTRY IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GHANA

In 1937, a young accountant, Andrew Mcutheon Atkinson was appointed by the Church of Scotland to work as a missionary accountant in the then Gold Coast. It was through his inspiring work that the first Young People's Guild branches were organized in 1938. The idea of the guild sprang from the Scottish milieu. As a member of the Young People's Guild in the Church of Scotland, Atkinson sought to set up a Christian youth movement in the then Presbyterian Church of Gold Coast. This idea was meant to provide a forum through which the unorganized youth of the Church could find expression in serving the Lord.

It must however be pointed out that, in many communities, there existed some independent youth organizations. One of such youth club existed at Odumase-Krobo and served as the nucleus of the first youth group. It had fifteen members and regularly met on Fridays for bible Studies, Prayer and Games. From this humble beginnings the idea of the youth Ministry spread through the Country and by the end of the year 1938, there were eight branches; Odumase, Adabraka, Accra, Nsawam, Suhum, Koforidua, Osu and Kukurantumi. The total membership of organized youth as at December 1938 stood ninety (90).

Atkinson had set up a monthly newsletter 'The Christian Way' for the movement. From 6th to 9th January 1938, the first National delegates' conference was held at the Osu Junior Boys School. This conference drew up the first constitution of the Guild and the motto, 'To Know His Will And To Do It' was adopted. The first national executive was elected with A.E Bannerman (late Rev.) as President and D. A Puplampu as Secretary Treasurer. A.M Atkinson was appointed as Organising Secretary.

With the rapid development of the guild, it became necessary for the movement to have a National office. Through negotiations with the Basel Mission, a mission bungalow at Osu was leased to the guild. It had an office, dormitories for outstation members, and a library. Guild conferences were held there until 1950 when it became the official residence of the Moderator of the Church.

The National appeal of the group saw it emerging in all parts of the country. In 1983, a significant breakthrough was made by the Presbyterian Church of Ghana when the Youth Policy was promulgated at Bawku. The Youth Policy of 1983 sought to forge effective mobilization of all youth Council and Young People's Guild which were separate organizations were merged. It also ensured that ministry in the schools and Universities championed by the National Union of Presbyterian Students of Ghana was effectively organized under youth ministry. The policy also identified youth in the Church and people between the ages of 12 and 35 years. Youth were placed in two separate categories. Those between the ages of twelve (12) and eighteen (18) and years were identified as Junior Youth. Those between eighteen (18) and thirty-five (35) were

placed in the Young People's Guild. At this stage many hardworking 'Youths' who were above thirty-five (35) years ceased to be members of the Guild.

Youth ministry in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana in the post Youth policy era has seen many developments. The National Office was manned by the General Youth Secretaries. A youth resource centre aimed at documenting and storing information on the activities of the youth in the Church and Community at Large. It comprised a small film studio, a printing machine, and a computer. With the Commitment of the Youth, the resource centre still stands to the glory of God.

The Presbyterian youth Self-Help Project, another project of the Youth movement, was inaugurated in 1997 in three Presbyteries; Dangme- Tongu, Volta and West Akyem, it offers employable skills in the areas of bee-keeping, snail rearing, batik printing, tailoring, carpentry and masonry. Within its first four years, it produced about 300 graduates.

With the decision of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana held at Kumasi in 2005, the Upper age limit for the Youth of the Church has been reduced to thirty (30) years. This decision is a landmark one since it establishes a Young Adult Fellowship as a new group in the Church. It is important to point out that, matters affecting youth have always defined the direction of Christian education in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana.

LIST OF NATIONAL PRESIDENTS

1. Mr. A.E Bannerman (later Rev.)	1939-1940
2. Mr. C. O. Botchway	1940-1944
3. Mr. G. N. Offei	1944-1945
4. Mr. F. A. Amoakwa Adu	1945-1946
5. Mr. J. E Granham (later Rev.)	1946-1948
6. Mr. W. E. Alfonso-Brown	1948-1949
7. Mr. L. A. Bannerman	1949-1951
8. Mr. J. C. K. Ocloo	1951-1958
9. Mr. A. Akuetteh	1958-1961
10. Mr. G. M. Akita	1961-1964
11. Mr. O. K. Darko (later Rev.)	1964-1970
12. Mr. S.Offei Addo (later rev.)	1970-1976
13. Mr. E. Kissiedu Ayi (later Rev.)	1976-1982
14. Mrs. G. Ohene-Ampofo	1982-1988
15. Rev. Dr. B. Y. Quarhie	1988-1990
16. Mr. Erasmus Odonkor (later Rev.)	1990-1992
17. Mr. Michael Ofosu-Yebaoh	1992-1996
18. Mr. Enoch Larbi Aboagye	1996-2000

19. Mr. Samuel Ansah Anobaah	2000-2004
20. Mr. Edward Nana Adansi Ofori	2004-2007
21. Mr. Samuel Amoah Opare	2007-2010
22. Mr. Christian Okomfo Addo	Aug. 2010 – Nov. 2010
23. Rev. Kofi Amfo –Akonnor	Nov. 2010 – Aug. 2011
24. Mr. Richard Kwasi Offei	Aug. 2011 – Sept. 2013
25. Mr. Isaac Kortey Martey	Sept. 2013 - Sept. 2016
26. Mr Alfred Appiah.	Sept 2016- Date