

Grace Communion International (GCI) Ghana celebrated its 50th anniversary from Sunday August 18, 2024, to Sunday August 25, 2024. During the period Ghana hosted the West Africa Leadership Conference meant to bring together leaders from Liberia, Togo, Benin, and Nigeria. Presenters included the four GCI Africa Regional Directors. Other participants came from Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Atlanta, Georgia in the U.S. Our special guest of honour was GCI President, Pastor Dr. Greg Williams who came with Pastor Gabriel Ojih, pastor of Grace Communion Richardson in Texas, U.S. Gabriel is originally from Ghana, a foundation member of the denomination in Ghana and one of its former lead pastors. Starting in 1974 as the Worldwide Church of God, the church was later incorporated as Grace Communion International Ghana in 2014. Together, we joined to celebrate fifty years of God's grace, with the theme, "Thus far by grace" taken from 1 Samuel 7:12.

On Sunday August 18, 2024, all Accra area congregations gathered at the GCI Ghana Retreat Site at Kutunse to begin the celebration with a church service inspired by praise and thankful music led by the National Pastor, Pastor Ing. Theo Nii Okai. With support from all pastors present, Ms. Karen Asabea Gyebi and Mr. Kelvin Kofi Kafui Ablordeppey, of the Ablekuma congregation located in the western part of Accra, were ordained as deaconess and deacon, respectively,

With the arrival of Dr. Greg Williams and Pastor Gabriel Ojih as well as most regional directors and sub-regional leaders on Tuesday August 20, 2024, a one-day Leadership Conference for Board Members, Regional Directors, and National Ministry Leaders was held the following day at the newly refurbished National Office Conference Room at New Ashongman, Accra. The two new conference rooms which were dedicated by Dr. Greg Williams were named after two of GCI Ghana pioneer leaders, namely, the late Pastor Charles and Comfort Akowuah of the Kumasi congregation and Pastor Emeritus Solomon and Charlotte Ayitey who worship at the New Ashongman congregation in Accra.

This first meeting, as with all subsequent meetings, started with a brief “Praise & Worship” session. This day’s session was led by Deaconess Mrs. Sarah Abban who is the Ghana’s Board Secretary. After initial welcome remarks by the Superintendent of Africa, Pastor Kalengule Kaoma, Dr. Williams provided a brief report on his travels to the various congregations around the world and followed with a devotion on “Why Are We Here?” He said that we are here (1) to worship and praise our great God, (2) because we are a family coming into a family reunion, though we come from various places and backgrounds, (3) and to fellowship with one another. He encouraged us to be centered on our triune God, so that we can go back rejuvenated, rededicated, and committed to the work of God, he concluded. Greg Williams led all participants to share the elements of the Lord’s Supper.

Various presentations and discussions followed. Pastor Kalengule Kaoma, Superintendent of Africa led a discussion on the “Role of Church Boards and Ministry Teams.” Pastor Emmanuel Okai, West Africa Regional Director discussed “Positioning GCI in West Africa.” And Dr. Greg Williams discussed opportunities for Christian studies through ACCM as lifelong learners. Five ACCM students who are being groomed into a cohort for Ministry Training Program (MTP), namely, Pastor Elvison Parwar, Pastor Peter Davor, Pastor Dr. Samuel Ofori, Pastor Isaac Buckman and Nathaniel Dawson, were invited to join the meeting addressed by Dr. Williams. Pastor Gabriel Ojih, Board Member of Grace Communion Seminary (GCS) discussed GCS training programs and its contribution to equipping our pastoral and other teams within the church. Dr. Greg Williams concluded with a discussion on MTCs and expressed the hope that Ghana has the potential to begin a Ministry Training Center (MTC), like Manila, Philippines, Bogota, Colombia, Hawthorn, California, etc., to mentor/coach others into ministry, referring to the Coaching Triangle. All the discussions included a healthy dose of questions, contributions and interactions.

The following day on Thursday August 22, 2024, we began the West Africa Leadership Conference that saw participants from Ghana, the host country and

many other countries such as the U.S., Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Kenya, South Africa, Zambia, and Liberia at the church's retreat site at Kutunse, near Ghana's capital city, Accra.

Day one of the West Africa Leadership Conference at Kutunse saw an overall attendance of 159 adults and 37 children. The day started with praise singing and prayers after which Pastor Kaoma, discussed our theme, "Thus Far by Grace," taken from 1 Samuel 7:12. He indicated that God's grace has been with us right from the beginning till now, and it is the same grace of God that will carry us forward. The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Greg Williams titled, "Joining the Harmonious Flow of the Triune God." He explained that the flow from Jesus to and through us elicits a response — a response filled and compelled by God's love to witness. Christ's faith imparted to us elicits our response to Great Commandment living and Great Commission sharing. Christ being our source of hope elicits our response to be the church, which is the hope of the world.

For the workshops on the Faith, Love, and Hope Avenues, the participants were divided into groups facilitated by the following leaders: Gardner Kunje (Faith), Anthony Gachanja (Hope), and Kalengule Kaoma (Love) to facilitate local implementation. Other workshops on Education Ministries (Gabriel Ojih), GCI Generation Ministries (Kalengule Kaoma), and Praise and Worship (Emmanuel Okai) were held with revised groups.

On Friday August 23, 2024, which was the second day of the Leadership Conference, attendance was 156 adults, 34 youth, and 45 children, making a total of 212. The day started with praise and worship and prayers. It was followed by a discussion, led by the president of the 5-D's (Disruption, Discovery, Death, Design, & Deploy) using US-GCI as a model following changes being undertaken. Superintendent Kaoma followed with a discussion of leadership development and Pastor Emmanuel Okai discussed the future of GCI West Africa.

After lunch, the ladies took over to organize the West Africa GCI Women Ministry Conference. A food fair followed that showcased various sumptuous, mouth-watering, indigenous Ghanaian cuisine which were patronized by all present, especially our foreign guests, who came to sample these dishes and local beverages.

Friday was concluded with an Opening Night Worship service for the 2024 Jubilee Convention. The message was delivered by Pastor Gabriel Ojih who encouraged all to go "Forward in His Grace and Truth."

Saturday August 24, 2024, was another full day of activities. Attendance was 236 adults, 38 youth, 69 children, making a total of 343. The day started with a church service which had a lot of music to express appreciation to God for his grace. The Regional Director of Southern Africa, Pastor Takalani Musekwa, delivered the sermon with a message titled, "Abraham's Journey of Faith to the Promised Land," through which he drew our attention to lessons GCI Africa can learn as they journey beyond 50 years. The day was dedicated to "Children, Youth and Family" fun and fellowship. The youth embarked on "Street evangelism" within the Kutunse community, sharing gospel tracts accompanied by live brass-band music. Throughout the day, most people wore GCI 50th anniversary-branded shirts.

Sunday August 25, 2024, was the concluding day of the celebration. Attendance was 452 adults, 48 youth, 72 children, making a total of 572. Members resplendently dressed in the special 50th Anniversary designed wax-print shirts, "Kaba and Slit," boubous, and other designs. Greg Williams in his concluding message, discussed leadership transitions, citing the examples of Moses to Joshua, Elijah to Elisha, John the Baptist to Jesus. He then pointed out and discussed five lessons, namely: leadership is team-based; leaders are responsible for future leadership; leadership is personal and familial; church leadership is part of a great chain; and leadership is Christ-centered always.

Various Awards were given by the 50th Anniversary National Committee to five pioneer church members, including 92-year-old Emeritus Deaconess Letitia Ojih (mother of Gabriel Ojih), some visiting participants, including Greg Williams, Gabriel Ojih, Mr. and Mrs. Kaoma. Pastor Emmanuel and Margaret Okai received a citation for their many decades of exemplary service to the church in Ghana as well as the West Africa sub-region.

A beautiful 50th anniversary cake, designed and produced by Lawyer Mrs. Dora Odai and gifted to the church, was cut by President Dr. Greg Williams with support from Mrs. Becky Okai, Mrs. Margaret Okai, and Mrs. Musaba Kaoma.

On Monday August 26, 2024, some of our Africa Regional Directors and their spouses, the Africa Superintendent and his spouse were joined by our five guests from Atlanta, Georgia and others to tour the infamous Elmina Slave Castle near Cape Coast, in the Central Region of Ghana. Before that visit, the group of nearly 20 visited the Kakum National Park to experience the canopy walkway where they viewed a typical rainforest environment from treetops. Indeed, the visit to the Elmina Slave Castle was very emotional for all, especially our African American friends from Atlanta who were visiting the Motherland for the first time.

All the visitors and guests have returned safely to their respective countries. Indeed, God's bountiful Grace has brought us all this far.

May his name be praised,

Ing. Theo Nii Okai, Ghana National Pastor