

# HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST

LESSONS FOR FUTURE REFLECTIONS



THE CHURCH  
OF PENTECOST

- ▶ In order to understand the present, it is important to know and understand history. Knowledge of the history of The Church of Pentecost will help us to understand how it has gotten to where it is today and where the church is going. We can then appreciate the people and events that have shaped the church and draw lessons from them for our forward march.

# THE ORIGINS AND EARLY BEGINNING



The Church of Pentecost had a very humble beginning dating back to the ministry of Pastor James Mckeown, which started in the Gold Coast in 1937.

Pastor James Mckeown, a missionary from the UK Apostolic Church, was born in Gleingboig, Scotland, on 12<sup>th</sup> September, 1900. At age 11, he left school to help his father on the farm in Ballymena and later became a tram driver. His parents were Presbyterians who later joined Elim Pentecostals Church and that is how James Mckeown came into Pentecostalism.

He got converted at 19 years and was baptized by Rev. George Jeffreys, who also baptized Sophia, James' wife.

He got married to Sophia Kennock, who had been educated to age 19, in 1927. Sophia was attracted to James because of his praying habit.

After getting married to Sophia, he settled in Glasgow and the couple joined the Apostolic Church because there was no branch of Elim Pentecostal Church around.

At a general convention of the Apostolic Church in 1935, a prophecy came forth that James and Sophia Mckeown should go to West Africa as missionaries. Both James and Sophia were not at the convention.

James initially refused the calling, **but after persistent cries from Sophia**, he accepted the calling 15 months later and arrived in the Gold Coast on 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1937 to nurture a group of believers of The Apostolic Faith at Asamankese who were led by Rev. Peter Newman Anim. They were yearning for, and had been praying for the power and fruit of the Holy Spirit.

# The first split

- ▶ In May 1937, James Mckeown had Malaria and was taken to European hospital, now Ridge hospital, in Accra, where he spent 10days.
- ▶ After he came back to Asamankese, the leadership of the church had a strong disagreement with him over the use of medication. At the Christmas convention held in 1937 at Asamankese, the issue was discussed at a special presbytery meeting and the meeting was divided into two, with one side insisting that medical treatment was sinful while the other group thought otherwise.
- ▶ The group against medical treatment, led by Peter Newman Anim, claimed that Mckeown was a man without faith and they could no longer work with him. They split from the church and currently, they are the Christ Apostolic Church.

McKeown moved on with the other group that saw no sinfulness in seeking medical treatment and so he moved with them to Akroso and in June 1938, finally settled at Winneba as the missionary base.

Between 1938 and 1953, the Apostolic Church, Gold Coast, led by James McKeown, had planted 512 churches, with 53 ordained African ministers and 2 other European missionaries and had a membership of about 10,000.



# QUESTION

***What lessons can we learn as a church from the first split?***

# The 1953 crisis

- ▶ In 1951, Pastor James Mckeown in a circular letter, wrote concerning the church:
  - ▶ *From the branches of the tree there hangs fruits. But there are still birds in the air, and they want a place to rest. There are still snakes in the grass and they want the little birds, so they have to climb the tree. There are many insects – they want the fruit. There are diseases carried by the insects that feed off the life on the fruit. Can GOD preserve and keep that which has been planted from all these evils?*
- ▶ The crisis to hit the church made this statement prophetic.

In 1953, the 'Later Rain Evangelistic Ministries, led by Dr. Thomas Wyatt, was invited from the USA by the Apostolic Church of Gold Coast. They brought a great revival into the church.

Dr. Wyatt was however, not in the good books of the Bradford Apostolic Church, the parent church of the Apostolic Church of Gold Coast.

At a General Council meeting in UK in May 1953, Pastor James Mckeown was dismissed for inviting the 'Latter Rain' team without prior approval and also for refusing to affirm the amendment in the church's constitution which sought to create separate Apostleship for blacks and whites, which he considered discriminatory.

When the news got to the Gold Coast, the acting Superintendent, Ps. J. A. C. Anaman, called a meeting of the Pastors and General Deacons to discuss the issue.

They gave their support and to Ps. McKeown and made the following resolutions:

- a) The Apostolic Church of Gold Coast recognized Ps. James McKeown as its leader.
- b) With immediate effect, any relationship between the Gold Coast Church and Bradford Church was severed. Thus, Bradford should stop sending missionaries to the Gold Coast Church.
- c) The Gold Coast Church would not entertain any delegation from Bradford.

They had thus declared their independence and adopted the name  
**“THE GOLD COAST APOSTOLIC CHURCH.”**

However, in September 1953, a Bradford delegation arrived in Gold Coast and managed to secure the support of some Pastors and elders, prominent among them were David Tenobi, S. R. Ocansey and A. Ofori. They maintained the name Apostolic Church, Gold Coast with Somanya as their support base.

They resorted to intimidations and forcibly took church rooms from the Gold Coast Apostolic Church. They initiated a court suit at the Accra Divisional Court against the Gold Coast Apostolic church and on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1956, was awarded £3518.10 by the court, which was paid by the Gold Coast Apostolic church and also obtained possession of many church buildings and lands in principal towns.

**The Gold Coast Apostolic Church was not discouraged, but continued with the evangelism and the April 1954 Easter Convention in Kumasi had 11,000 members attending, restoring confidence in the church.**

# The Crisis of 1960 to 1962

- ▶ After independence, The Gold Coast Apostolic Church changed its name to Ghana Apostolic Church to reflect the country's change in status. In 1960, another conflict arose within Ps. Mckeown's church concerning African chairmanship. There was an issue about uniting the two Apostolic churches.
- ▶ The issue was resolved on 21<sup>st</sup> July, 1962, by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president. He ruled that the two churches should remain as distinct entities and all properties acquired before 21<sup>st</sup> May, 1953, the date of Mckeown's cessation, should go to the Apostolic Church of Ghana, the associates of Bradford Apostolic Church, whiles any properties acquired after the said date should remain with the respective churches. He also ruled that Mckeown should adopt a new name for his church. An extraordinary Church Council meeting was held at Kaneshie, Accra on 28<sup>th</sup> July, 1962 and a decision was made on the name. Thus, from 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1962, the church adopted the new name **"THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST."**

## GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT AFTER 1962 (1988-2015)

- ▶ After all the crisis had been resolved, the CoP began to experience remarkable growth in all regions in Ghana. Sophia Mckeown also played significant role in the development and growth of the church, organizing the women, teaching them and praying with them. Ps Mckeown handed over the leadership of the church to the first African chairman, Apostle F. S. Safo in 1982. Apostle Safo died in 1987, while in office but his term of office saw church membership increase from 135,690 in 1983 to 186,526 in 1988. He was succeeded by Prophet M. K. Yeboah who led the church from 1988 to 1998, retiring at 72 years. His tenure saw a 166% increase in church membership, from 186,526 in 1988 to 495,956 in 1998. He handed over the Church to a 40-year-old Apostle Michael Kwabena Ntummy, the youngest chairman ever, whose tenure of office, 1998-2008, saw the church grow from a membership of 495,956 in 1998 to 1,290,712 in 2008, a 160% increment. He also handed over to the current chairman, Apostle Dr. Opoku Onyinah in 2008 and his tenure will end in 2018.





**PASTOR JAMES McKEOWN**  
VICE PRESIDENT & CHAIRMAN, The Church of Pentecost



**APOSTLE FRED STEPHEN SAFO**  
CHAIRMAN, The church of Pentecost, 1982- 1987



**PROPHET M. K. YEBOAH**  
CHAIRMAN, The Church of Pentecost





The church is still experiencing remarkable growth. In the 2014 State of the church address, the chairman reported that the church had a total membership of 2,626,902 worldwide and operates in 91 countries.

**HALLELUJAH!!!...THE CHURCH IS INDEED MARCHING ON AND THE GATES OF HELL WILL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT!!!**

*From the branches of the tree there hangs fruits. But there are still birds in the air, and they want a place to rest. There are still snakes in the grass and they want the little birds, so they have to climb the tree. There are many insects – they want the fruit. There are diseases carried by the insects that feed off the life on the fruit. Can GOD preserve and keep that which has been planted from all these evils?*

**Is this statement by Pastor James Mckeown still relevant in the context of the Church of Pentecost and PENSA today?**

- **What lessons can we draw as a church from the 1953 crisis?**

# LESSONS FOR THE CURRENT GENERATION

- ▶ Our fathers had tenacity - eager not to give up on their assignment irrespective of the challenges they faced.
- ▶ They dedicated their lives in sacrifice to see to the expansion of GOD's kingdom.
- ▶ Their over-reliance on GOD as the one to fight for them and provide for them is what has sustained the church. (Their concern was GOD, not on worldly possessions).
- ▶ Their desire was to see the church grow and mature spiritually and this affected every aspect of church growth - numerically and financially.
- ▶ Their determination to abide by the Church's covenant with GOD is what has kept the hand of GOD in the church.
- ▶ The Holy Ghost factor - They saw the work of the Holy Ghost as the pivot around which the church would grow and thus gave more time to seek and encounter the Holy Spirit and we are all witnesses to the fact that the Holy Spirit's ministry has transformed many lives and the church as a whole.
- ▶ With Holiness as their watchword and discipline a core value, the church has gone very far.
- ▶ The love for evangelism and missions is what has seen the church spread to 91 countries and seen the membership grow from 135,690 in 1983 to 2,626, 902 in 2014.

# Lessons from Mrs. Sophia Mckeown



- ▶ She was not obsessed with position, but she worked very hard to support her husband's ministry.
- ▶ She is the one who pressured Pastor James to accept the calling of coming to West Africa and she made sure she came with him.
- ▶ She did not allow her higher education level or age put pride in her.
- ▶ She was prepared to endure all sufferings of the ministry, for GOD, and with her husband - **For better, for worse.**
- ▶ She is a living proof of what the Bible says in Proverbs 12:4 - *A wife of noble character is her husband's crown.*”(NIV)
- ▶ Indeed, ‘many women do noble things, but she surpasses them all.’

**AMEN**