

THE VOICE OF MISSIONS

Advancing Missions In Africa & Beyond Vol.25 - Special Edition

Sports

*A powerful
Great Commission
Tool*

**Into the
Sports
Stadiums**

**–Taking the
Gospel beyond
the Church Walls**

**The Voice
of Missions**

@ 25, Hurray!



CONTENTS

- 4.....From the Editor
- 6.....Into the Sports Stadiums – Taking the Gospel beyond the Church Walls.
- 10.....How football brought many people to Jesus in Angola
- 12.....I don't just coach sports, I coach life-Coach Joseph Mubangwe of Zambia
- 13.....Sports ministry impact stories from around the world
- 14.....Women on A Mission – My Beautiful Story

PROFILES

- 18.....Kwame- The Sports Missionary
- 20.....Brief Profiles of Some SPORTS MINISTRIES
- 22.....Unreached People focus: MAMPRUSI OF GHANA
- 23.....Unreached People focus: TAMAJAQ TUAREG IN NIGER

THE VOICE OF MISSIONS

Your Authoritative Missions Magazine

The Voice of Missions has been published since 1997 by the Ghana Evangelical Missions Association (GEMA), the National Umbrella Missions Body in Ghana.



The mission of GEMA is to provide a nationwide platform that enables the Ghanaian church to carry out her missionary work, accelerate her pioneering efforts and increase the fruitfulness of current missionary thrust in and out of Ghana.

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FROM THE EDITOR

THE VOICE OF MISSIONS IS 25 YEARS! HURRAY!

The first edition of the Voice of Missions (VOM) was published in December 1997. The years have passed by so quickly. There however have been gaps in our publishing history as there were certain years that we didn't publish any edition.

Nevertheless, since the publication was founded in 1997, we deem it fit to celebrate on a low key this silver jubilee and to give God all the Glory for the opportunity He gave us to use this medium to share the good news of Christ Jesus and to be avenue of news, thought-provoking articles, information and inspiration for the African missionary movement.

On this occasion, I want to celebrate Dr Seth Kofi Anyomi who was the President of the Ghana Evangelical Missions Association (GEMA) at the time. I was a young Christian journalist whom the Lord had called into missions. During my first meeting with Dr Anyomi at his office at Labone in Accra in 1997, I shared with him my passion to start a mission magazine since there was none in existence in Ghana. The goal of the magazine was to be a tool to activate the Church in Ghana for global missions and also equip the missionary fraternity. Dr Anyomi also shared with me that he had a similar vision, and we could do it together.

Since he was President of GEMA at the time, he suggested later that we published the VOM under the umbrella of the association. That is how the vision for the VOM was born and it became reality at the end of 1997 when the first edition was published by Sonlife Press. Special thanks to the Late Rev Divine Kumah and Mrs Paulina Kumah.

I therefore, on this occasion, would also want to once again thank Dr Seth Anyomi for being a co-visionary and the founding publisher. I would also like to thank all the gallant men and women who have served on the Editorial Team all these years as well as past and current Executives of GEMA.

THE POWER OF SPORTS MISSIONS

In this VOM edition, the focus is on Sports Missions, which is a powerful evangelistic and discipleship tool as well as a very cost-effective strategy for global missions. Solomon Gacece of Kenya usually said, "Give me a ball, and I will take a whole community for Christ". That statement had a great impact on me when I first heard him say it. Then I found out that I could use sports as a tool for evangelism, disciple-making and church planting. That was so awesome to discover about 23 years ago. Serving as a missionary in Botswana, I decided to test what Gecece had said, and lo and behold, it worked. All it took was one ball. JUST ONE BALL! Glory to God!

Whilst in Ethiopia recently, I heard from a mission leader how one of their missionaries serving in a difficult unreached area had begun to use sports as a tool. The results were that 64 boys joined the team he formed and out of that 49 made commitments to Christ. Praise the Lord. There are many of such encouraging stories and testimonies in this edition. Enjoy reading them and be inspired to take action using sports as a tool where needed.

RESTRUCTURING

Going forward, we seek to undergo some form of serious re-structuring in the first quarter of 2023 so that the VOM will be better placed and equipped to serve the Ghanaian and the African missionary movement as well as the global mission family at large.

Please pray with us. Please stand with us.

Congratulations and Happy 25th Anniversary to all of us.

Ray Mensah
EDITOR





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INTO THE SPORTS STADIUMS - TAKING THE GOSPEL BEYOND THE CHURCHWALLS.

By Kofi Kakraba Afful

The FIFA world Cup 2022 has just ended. What a spectacular football season it has been as the whole world followed the epic matches played in Qatar. I intentionally chose the heading of this article from the title of a book from my good friend Pastor Samuel Alabi, the current National Youth Director of the Nigerian Baptist Convention published in July 2014. How appropriate at this time when the global attention of the whole world was centered on the events and outcomes of games in Qatar.

Qatar 2022 (20th November to 18th December) was the first time the Global major sports event was hosted in the Middle East and the first time the global festival if you may call was held in November. Africa was represented by 5 countries out of the 32 countries that competed for

the Ultimate prize as World Champions that Argentina eventually won.

Sports is one of three foremost unifying languages presently in the world which the church needs to learn how to use to communicate the gospel effectively to this generation. The other two are Music and media, however, the focus here is on Football.

Interestingly, God did create sports as He gave the idea to people who invented it. The fact that many people are abusing sports and some other secular activities in the world do not deny the truth that God through Christ created all things for His purpose and Glory.

“For by (Christ) all things were created: things in heav-

en and earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him” Colossians 1:16

One doctrine that seems to have done more harm than good to the church in church history, is the doctrine of dualism. This doctrine teaches separation between the spiritual/sacred and secular things. It has also affected Christians’ participation in politics and other activities because they are termed secular in the world at large.

However, it is time the church balanced between what is spiritual/sacred and secular things rather than separate them. How could Christians be the salt and light of the world if we are not going to be involved in the things of the world? How can the church positively impact the sports minded people in her community for Christ if we separate ourselves? It is time we arose as a church to neutralize the bad effect of this theology /doctrine which is not balanced.

Sports is big! Yes, because 80% of the world either watch or participate in it; and it is increasingly a place to create community. Sports provide believers with fantastic opportunities to share the good news of Jesus Christ with others. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commands: “Go and make disciples of all the nations.” All ‘nations’ here includes the nation of sport lovers and enthusiasts.

Here is a Mission-field that is ripe and ready for harvest. Indeed, people who participate in sports arguably make up the biggest people-group or ‘nation’ in the world today. The 80% of the people in the stadiums may be unbelievers, whilst 80% of people in any average church will be believers.

It therefore makes sense that we GO! To where the people who need Christ are – the Stadiums of the world. From Rev 5:9,10 “...You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God, persons from every tribe, and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a Kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth”

Sports Ministry is a ministry of reconciliation (1 Corinthians 5:18). It is supposed to bridge the gulf between the world of sports and the church of God. Sports Ministry is to intentionally use one’s gift to glorify God and to extend His Kingdom on earth in such a way that non-Christians would come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

For many years, believers have been glorifying God through sport, competing as ambassadors for Christ. They play in a way that honours God; they proclaim aloud the Good news of Jesus Christ; they pray for their sports friends. As believers, we are to worship God and bring glory to Him in all we do or say. The Bible teaches that worship is a matter of our whole lives (Romans 12:1), so that the way in which we participate in sports becomes our act of worship. God can be glorified in every aspect of our sporting experiences.

So, what are we asking For?

That Christian Mission agencies, churches and Christian individuals will partner and rally under a common banner to utilize the opportunities of the Major Sporting Events for a massive outreach. This



Figure 4: Following the success of Brazil at the 2002 world cup, members of the national team outwardly proclaimed their faith in Jesus Christ to millions of viewers around the world. They went on to visit hundreds of schools across nations telling their unique stories of how their faith in Jesus makes them better sports persons.

we believe will expose millions to the Gospel, win some thousands to God and build the faith of thousands.

We have done it before in 2008 when Ghana hosted the African Cup of Nations. Championed by the Bible Society of Ghana, over 550 volunteers were put together with 15 Christian agencies and Organizations and several churches under the headline banner “The Ultimate Goal(TUG)” based on Philippians 3:14 “I press on toward the GOAL for the prize of the Upward call of God in Christ Jesus”.

The mission of TUG-Ghana 2008 was then to capitalize on the opportunities provided by Cup of African Nations (CAN 2008) to reach and teach people about Jesus Christ.

Several strategic Initiatives were undertaken:

Some of the activities undertaken were Kids’ Games Program, Medical Outreaches, Large Screen show-

ings of the matches in some communities and churches, Music and Creative Arts festival at the National Theater, Fans Zone and Water Distribution. A sports Ministry conference was also held that had participants from all over the world attending.

What can your Church or Christian Mission Agency Do?

1. Church Sports Services

Sport is a universal language. Churches must take this opportunity to show, through sport, the relevance of Christ to as many people as possible. We must be sensitive to others’ values and beliefs and promote common values, rather than differences.

The Church must use mediums of communication that transcend religious, cultural, and geographical barriers to reach these groups with the message of love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ.

2. Hospitality

Hospitality is a relationship-based program whereby host volunteers provide services and programs for free, to connect with the community as well as visitors.

Hospitality should be the hallmark of every church community and its members. We should be the very best at giving a great welcome – loving our neighbors and serving them.

In different sporting events around the world, teams of volunteers have served on Official organizing committees and offered services such as visitor guides, sports chaplains, water distribution, medical checkups, hospitality centers and homestay programs to name a few.

3. Fan Zones

What is a Fan Zone?

Fan Zones are gathering centers set up near a sports venue and offer opportunities for fans to gather together and have fun and enjoy creative programs while allowing the interaction between believers and fans.

Some ideas used have included: pin exchanges, Souvenir exchanges, sports quizzes, sports screenings, mini sports games, free WIFI, face painting and poster signing to name a few.

Why Implement Fan Zones?

During sporting events, fans and visitors love to interact





and learn interesting facts about the host city or their sport. Most of the time, fans would have spare time to hang around and check out interesting locations or things to do. Setting up a Fan Zone is a great way to bring people together and at the same time allow believers to connect with fans and visitors to share Jesus.

4. Public TV and Video Screening

Watching sport on TV is great fun but there is nothing quite like getting together to watch a sporting event in a community setting. Public sports screens may incorporate a festival atmosphere and help the church to move to the center of the community and provide an opportunity for Christians to live and share their faith. These events can be done on either small scale (in your home, your local church or community center) or a large scale (in an outdoor community venue). If you are incorporating a community-type festival with the public sports screens, try to offer everything for free and make everything fun!

During a break in the broadcast, consider playing a global athlete's testimony or having a local athlete also share his or her testimony. You can also feature a ball

juggler or run a live panel discussion, a simple conversation or have fun games activities. Have resources to give away after the event is complete and plan for ways to gather information from those in attendance so that follow-up can take place.

You may use any of the strategies outlined above for your outreach or mount a large screen like we do for a Jesus Film to show the event during the entire duration of the tournament or at critical times when the Black Stars play. However, you could also do Tract ("The Ultimate Goal" / "The Supreme Goal") evangelism as you open your church for people in your immediate Community to come to your church grounds to watch a match.

Come, let's seize these wonderful opportunities and lift up Jesus on the sports fields.

Ghana has the privilege to host the All-African Games from the 4th to the 19th August 2023 whilst Ivory Coast also has the privilege to host the 2023 African Cup of Nations. These are great opportunities not just for Ghana and Ivory Coast but the whole of Africa.

Let's go into the stadium.

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Enoch Apo Lartey 0277761957 – Greater Accra Region.

The Sports Movement has presence in several African countries such as Zambia, Uganda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Cameroun, Madagascar, Namibia, Botswana, Gabon, Guinea, Lesotho, Malawi, Ivory Coast, Central African Republic, and Senegal to name a few. Our focus is Every Country, Every City as we Go to All People and Places in the world of Play and Sports, Fitness and Health. So, whether it is geographically in a nation, city, a community, an island, a jungle, a prison, or a street, sports gives tremendous opportunities to obey Jesus Command to GO. Whether it is a sporting code, a sports club, a federation, a gym or a field, sports people are a people group about whom we care greatly. To them all we must GO!

THE ULTIMATE GOAL | GHANA 2008 |

I press on toward the **GOAL** for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. *Phil 3:14*



BIBLE SOCIETY OF GHANA
Making God's Word available & affordable



How football brought many people to Jesus in Angola.

By Denilson Agostinho

In 2006, my friends and I played football every Sunday afternoon. We just loved football. We were all from traditional churches but were not saved. Not that we knew what salvation was all about, but football brought us together. One of our friends encountered Christ Jesus through a youth leader in our community. He wanted to share the good news with us but he didn't know how to share it.

On one of the Sunday special football matches, he invited us to join him for prayer. He simply invited the team to pray with him. The team thought it strange, because we just played football, but on second thought we agreed. We were about twelve teenagers. I invited the team home to use my room which I shared with my grandfather and so we then had a prayer place.

I prayed the way I knew, and the others prayed based on their traditional church background. We all enjoyed the experience of coming together to pray and so we made it our tradition. After our Sunday special football, we would all gather in my room to pray, and this continued for two to three months. No one opened the Bible to preach a message or even read a passage of scripture. We just prayed. We played football, gathered the team and prayed.

Suddenly, we realized that our lady friends were joining us for the time of prayer. This continued for another two to three months. As we continued in prayer, we realized the Lord was doing a great work in our hearts. This is how we got born again; we all surrendered to Christ without anyone telling us to repent, we knew what we had to in our hearts.

After this encounter, the Bible now seemed like a different book, and Jesus looked all so lovely in our eyes. We started reading our bibles, but we needed a leader to teach us the Bible, so we decided to ask the community youth leader who evangelized our brother to lead us and the rest they say is history. Since that time, we all have been stuck on the Lord and haven't turned back to the world by God's Grace. It's been about sixteen years since we encountered the Lord through football and our group has only seen tremendous growth.

We kept playing football every Sunday, followed by a prayer meeting. Then we started meeting other teams in our district for football matches and after each match, we invited them to pray with us. This led to tremendous growth. Many more believed in Christ Jesus. In eight months, we were over sixty young people. In a year, we were over a hundred boys and girls. It was now a movement.

Now we wanted to know God more, read the Bible more, evangelize more etc. Sadly, we stopped playing football and got actively involved in other ministry activities. After a number of years, we thought about how we got saved, and realized that it was through sports (football), so we decided to start using sports as an evangelistic tool to reach out to many more people in Angola.

We started traveling the nation to reach others with the gospel using sports as well. In Luanda, we continued using football to win many souls, till five years ago we decided to become a local church. We are a youthful church currently in four provinces of Angola. To God be the glory!

One youth leader. One young football lover. One team. One prayer meeting after a football match and today, thousands are saved and transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit.



Is Sports still a useful tool?

We used to meet as a movement on Saturdays to pray so that we can play football on Sundays. This led many people to Christ. But when we became a church, because some adults joined us, we changed our meeting day to Sunday. It's been good. However, the challenge is, in Luanda, many still play football on Sunday mornings. So, if I am asked, if it's an effective tool, I would say, a thousand times yes. Perhaps we have to create an alternative opening to reach out to many more through football on Sunday mornings.

The church in Angola was not very open to sports as a tool for evangelism and mission. It was regarded as un-spiritual, but things are changing.

Testimony-

Once in Cuanza-Norte (a province in Angola), we decided to play football on a Sunday morning instead of the regular church service. It felt weird for the people but they obliged. We invited many unbelievers and we played and had fun till we were all tired. After, we invited them for a time of prayer. We sang and prayed. We sat on the floor and I preached for about twenty minutes. I led them to Christ. Hallelujah! Eight months later, a brother called me, and asked me for the location of our church because he was in Luanda and wanted to fellowship as a believer.

How can we use Sports?

We must always understand that Jesus is God in the flesh. In other words, God took on human form so that we can relate with Him. It is difficult for some people to understand God, especially when they can't relate because everything is spiritual, but Jesus revealed God in a body. He showed us God, that He is love and can relate to humanity. That is how I see sports. It's a tool that helps people understand God.

Through sports, we help people know that God is not too spiritual that He cannot relate with us. It doesn't matter which kind of sports. Any kind of sport can be used to bridge the gap and make God relatable.

Many people are abandoned. Many people don't have true friends, many don't have people to trust, but when through sports, we as believers connect with people and share with them our experiences, they know we are human like them, with feelings and challenges just like they do. They understand that regardless of challenges, you have decided to trust Christ Jesus as your Master, as such you are not alone in life; and they also can do the same, because He brings us into God's family.

Therefore, sport is a tool to relate with people as they are so that we can relay to them God and who Jesus is in real terms. We cannot over spiritualize everything. We are spiritual people, but we must manifest the spiritual in the flesh to bring the flesh to the Spirit of the living God.

Denilson Filipe Agostinho is the founder and director of Missionary Association Voice for the Nations, Angola, established in 2013. He has been dedicated to training, sending and supporting missionaries throughout Angola. He holds a degree in business management, and he is the Vice-Leader at Born Again Church based in Cassequel do Buraco where he serves as a pastor. At a professional level, he has been an English Language Teacher at the Public school Juventude em Luta since 2017, and has also mentored several missionary projects. He is married to Teresa Agostinho and together they have two children.

I DON'T JUST COACH SPORTS, I COACH

-By Joseph Mubangwe of Zambia

Life



I am a football coach at Amazing Grace Football Academy, I started my coaching career in 2016 when I was 18 years old. I had a number of children I coached regularly. My interest was only in coaching the boys on how to play football, and that is how we continued month after month.

However, in 2019 I met coach Simon Mwanamoya who is very passionate about sports. He started coaching and mentoring me on how to live and lead a transformed life and how to win souls for Jesus Christ using the ball. Through him I took some coaching courses as well as attended some sports ministry training programs.

That is when I came to realize that it is not about coaching people on how to play football but rather coaching in a way that focuses on the spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical lives of the kids, and above all, coaching young people to follow Jesus Christ and accept Him as their personal Saviour. It started with me. I received my Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour, and I committed myself to becoming a member of the Grace Church. Now I don't just coach football, I coach life.

Our team is Amazing Grace Football Academy and it has been blessed with dynamic young people - under 10, 12, 14, 16, 17 and 20, both boys and girls and our team is anchored on TITUS 2:11. Through discovery Bible studies, we are growing in numbers from 22 to more than 120 athletes and even though we call it an Academy, for us it is a church.

My deep thanks to Coach Simon for what he has done in my life and coaching career. I am now a coach not only in the field of play but also in the lives of the many young people we are coaching - I am going to live my life in a way that glorifies our Lord Jesus Christ always.

SPORTS MINISTRY IMPACT STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

YOUR FUTURE PARTNERS MAY BE FOUND IN THE FIELD



PP is from the capital city in this restricted South Asian location. He is a business man. He was also a raging **alcoholic**.

The life of PP transformed upon his engagement with a sports ministry team in his city. He now plays football and basketball actively. His **family life** has been restored and his work life has improved drastically.

Recently, PP sponsored a full set of football jerseys to the team. A transformed life typically leads to **extravagant generosity** - this is a natural fruit of the best news on earth!

A PATHWAY TO LIFE CHANGE

3 months ago, Tony was playing basketball in a public playground. David is a sports leader. What caught David's eye was Tony's openness and simplicity as opposed to his teenage peers who were stand-offish.

David spent a lot of time talking and walking with Tony. Tony started attending Floorball coaching and youth events.

2 months ago, David began reading the Bible with Tony. Tony went to camp, where he heard about Christ.

Today, Tony is preparing for repentance. He is attending a local church with David. Tony is serving as a Floorball coach.

p.s. Names changed.



A TIGER CAN CHANGE ITS STRIPS ALL THAT IS NEEDED IS A BALL AND A BIBLE TO START GROUPS.

A volleyball net was set up on the church grounds.

10 South Sudanese youth discovered God through Scripture study during the volleyball practices. They now train daily for two hours. Due to the consistent volleyball coaching sessions, unemployed and non-believing youth from gang background have become their audience.

The church youth have used the opportunity to invite the spectators to play and to share the best news on earth with them. 23 at-risk-youth have made life-changing decisions. They are now part of two groups that meet 3 times a week to practice volleyball and to discover and live out God's truth together.

IMPACT IN BANGLADESH

MM is 22 years old. He loves football (soccer) and is a good player. He is from the Thakurgaon district of Bangladesh. He is from a tribal and indigenous family. His parents are daily laborers living from hand-to-mouth. They dwell in a tiny house with six family members.

MM attended a ReadySetGO envisioning where he learnt about sports ministry for the very first time. He was impacted by the testimonies from sports persons. He now attends a local church regularly to learn more about God's love.

He participated in an Ubabalo Whole Life Coaching training, which led to the formation of six Football and Cricket Teams in different communities. He is working to develop elite players and coaches who will influence the next generation of young people. Ubabalo Whole Life Coaching is a programme that equips 'coaches to be father figures and disciple-makers on the sports field through obedience-based Scripture engagement'.

His prayer is that God will equip him and his family members to use sports for the glory of God.

Women *on a* Mission

With Rhoda Oluwakemi Appiah



A Chat with Abigail Mensah, founder and visionary of Beautiful Feet, a sports ministry dedicated to evangelizing and discipling young boys.

Voice of Missions (VOM): Tell us your name, your education, and your family background.

Abi Mensah (AM): My name is Abigail Mensah, I am 49 years old, I have been married for 24 years to Michael Mensah and we are blessed with four wonderful boys. I hold a degree in BSc Physics and Computer Science.

VOM: What was it like growing up as a Christian, what helped/contributed to your spiritual growth?

AM: I gave my life to Christ at the age of 11. I am the last of six siblings, who had a great influence on me. Our firstborn, a sister, I will say “brought Christ home.” She joined a group called Calvary Road Inc. which I belie-

ved introduced her to the ways of God and one after the other my other siblings came to know the Lord. Though my parents were normal Christians, the Lord used the Christ-like environment created by my siblings to draw me to Christ and establish me in Him

VOM: How did you begin the ministry or what inspired you to start “Beautiful Feet”

AM: It is almost eleven years since I dared to trust God with the little first steps toward his beckoning. Unbelievable! Would I do it all over again if time was rewound? Definitely! Every obedience, every wait, every frustration, every pain, every high and every low has been all worth it.



It all began when I was seeking God fervently concerning His plan for me. “Father, bless this new business I am about to venture in. You know my heart is for you and your kingdom. I would give to promote your work from the profits I made”, I prayed continuously. But God had another plan.

His gentle voice came to me one day as I continued in prayer, “What if I give through you and not necessarily to you? Would that be fine with you? “, He asked. I understood immediately what that meant. I was going to be a channel through whom His word, His grace, His blessing and His life would reach others. It didn’t matter who I was.

To my flesh, it didn’t sound pretty, but I knew that the best place to be was where God was... and so I said a big “YES! “ God also gave me the name of the Work; BEAUTIFUL FEET. This was six years before I even knew what it will entail. Little by little He revealed His plan to me; I was going to work with young boys (mainly) in the world of sports.

On December 3, 2011, BEAUTIFUL FEET was born with 28 boys on a football field at Tesano in Accra, Ghana. It has been a long and winding road but today the work has multiplied to other cities in other regions; the mission work being undertaken by the very boys we are discipling.

Each of the 5 BEAUTIFUL FEET stations and its 4 affiliates are being disciplined through regular football coaching and weekly off-the-pitch Bible studies. It is a joy to see the emerging leaders share the gospel with their teammates and younger brothers at training every week and even more so when they undertake mission trips to either plant more teams or strengthen old ones. It is working!!!

VOM: Funding has always been an issue with mission

work, how has “Beautiful Feet” survived the thorny issue of funding?

AM: God has FULLY provided for His work till now. Let me quote Hudson Taylor here, “Depend on it. God’s work done in God’s way will never lack God’s supply” . We have seen God move in strange and miraculous ways for His work. Though we operate mostly at zero budget, all the work (camps, mission trips, tournaments, welfare etc.) has been provided for by God through the people He chose. One thing is for sure, HE IS FAITHFUL! We will continue to trust him.

VOM: Was there anything in your growing up that prepared you for ministry?

AM: Growing up as a little girl, I had a deep love for football. Whether God knew He would be needing me in this area of His work so He put the love of football in me as a little girl (staying up late at night to watch BIG LEAGUE SOCCER in those days) or that He linked my passion with people He loved and desired to bless, is a question I would ask Him when I meet him face to face.

VOM: How did your family and friends react to this decision, were they supportive of you being in ministry?

AM: Though my family and friends have my interest at heart coupled with good intentions for me; they struggled to understand the nature of my calling for many years. However, a few of them are pillars of support for me without whom I wouldn’t have gotten this far

VOM: How do you combine parenting with the ministry demands?

AM: I have had a supportive husband in this regard. The ministry started when my children were still young. When I am away, he assumes the role of mother and father. My children are older now and sometimes travel



with me on missions. However, time and responsibility are always a delicate balance. I always ask for wisdom and direction from the Holy Spirit to achieve this balance. I also have counsellors who help me keep this balance well.

VOM: Who or what was most helpful in the preparation time (book or person)?

AM: In my search for purpose, I read books. The one that stood out was “God’s Generals,” I learnt a great deal from those wonderful and dedicated men and women in the book. The Lord also used the late Rev. Joseph Lancelot Nii Boi Armah-Tagoe (he loved to mention all his name) to prepare me. Later on my journey, Rev Kwesi Dickson took on this father role.

VOM: If the clock could be turned back, what changes (if any) would you want to make in your own personal preparation for ministry/missions?

AM: I think I would spend more time learning from those who have been in ministry ahead of me

VOM: Are there misconceptions about life and ministry which you have overcome?

AM: I had the misconception that women with children could not be involved in ministry, and also that people in ministry were miserable because of lack of provision, both are completely wrong.

VOM: What do you perceive are your strengths and/ or weaknesses in ministry?

AM: Once I feel a lead from the Lord to take a particular



step or walk in a particular direction, I have the grace to persevere in it, I consider this a strength, while I see impatience with my disciples as my weakness.

VOM: What part of ministry do you enjoy most?

AM: When I see transformation gradually unfold in my disciples/mentees and also when I see other coaches actively discipling their teams

VOM: What has been your greatest disappointment?

AM: My lack of follow-up of my initial converts at the beginning of the ministry, I took things for granted. I thought that hearing the word of God was sufficient for them. I was wrong, I ended up losing some of them to the world due to their background.

VOM: Most treasured memory?

AM: When God showed himself faithful to make a completely impossible mission of sending a team to participate in the first-ever, Christian Football World Cup in India. He said “go ahead” and He made it happen. He did it! Just to show me that He can do whatever He says He will do.

VOM: Specific ways life has been richer because of your commitment to missions?

AM: Missions has really shaped me. I have learnt to work with people from different backgrounds better. I am more patient than before.

VOM: Your favourite scripture passage/verses that stands out for you.

AM: “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.” Isaiah 52:7 ESV

VOM: Any missionary hero or model.

AM: George Muller and Rev Dr Ray Mensah.

VOM: What is the future like for “Beautiful Feet”

AM: We desire to see football stations of young people established all over Ghana, in the sub-region and in Africa as a whole. We desire to develop skills and careers, as well as develop character and faith in all these stations and even more critically develop emerging leaders who will be Torchbearers and Torchlighters in this dark and perverse world.

VOM: Advice you would give to women especially young ones who are into missions/ministry or about to go into missions/ministry.

AM: They should tarry in prayer and wait for the leading of the Holy Spirit. Keep an eye on their families and learn from others.

Rhoda Oluwakemi Appiah is the regular writer of the “Women on A Mission” column. She is married with three children. Rhoda is a pioneering missionary of Fullstature Missions International together with her husband, Rev. Daniel Hyde Appiah. She is a lover of God and His word, with an overwhelming desire to see God’s kingdom advance in every sphere of society. Rhoda can be reached at “kemiappiah@gmail.com”

WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE TRAINING IN SPORTS MINISTRY?

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KWAME, THE SPORTS MISSIONARY

The Sports ministry, although with its challenges, has been so amazing. By the Grace of God, it has been used as a tool to bring so many boys to the saving knowledge of Jesus. It is very effective even among unreached people groups where the hearts are “hard soil.”

I started the ministry by God’s grace around 2019. In the community we started in, the boys used to run away from us. But the story changed when I walked by a park one day and the Lord drew my attention to it. After that, I went to the market and bought a ball and alas, the sports ministry began.

It’s been such an amazing tool of transformation that brings so many people around because everybody loves to play and have fun. I believe that in reaching unreached people groups, sports can be “the” tool. Pastor Ray Mensah often quotes a certain leader who once said, “Give me a ball and I will take a whole community for Christ”, and I have really seen this come to pass in any community I find myself. Just putting a ball down on the field can gather so many people to come and play. I believe that it is as effective for the strong Islamic fields just as it is for the children who are growing in the Lord.

By God’s grace, we’ve established 5 teams all on the mission-field among an unreached people group. All the towns are strong Islamic communities but by God’s grace, with a ball, these children are being transformed as they play.

Before every soccer session, there is scripture

engagement. The relationship that I have established with the children, as a father figure and a coach, motivates the children to keep coming around. They keep on coming because of the ball, and we keep going into their lives because of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe the power of sports missions as a tool for saving souls is underrated by many; but from the little experience I have accumulated over the years, I believe that, it is a powerful tool to reach the unreached!

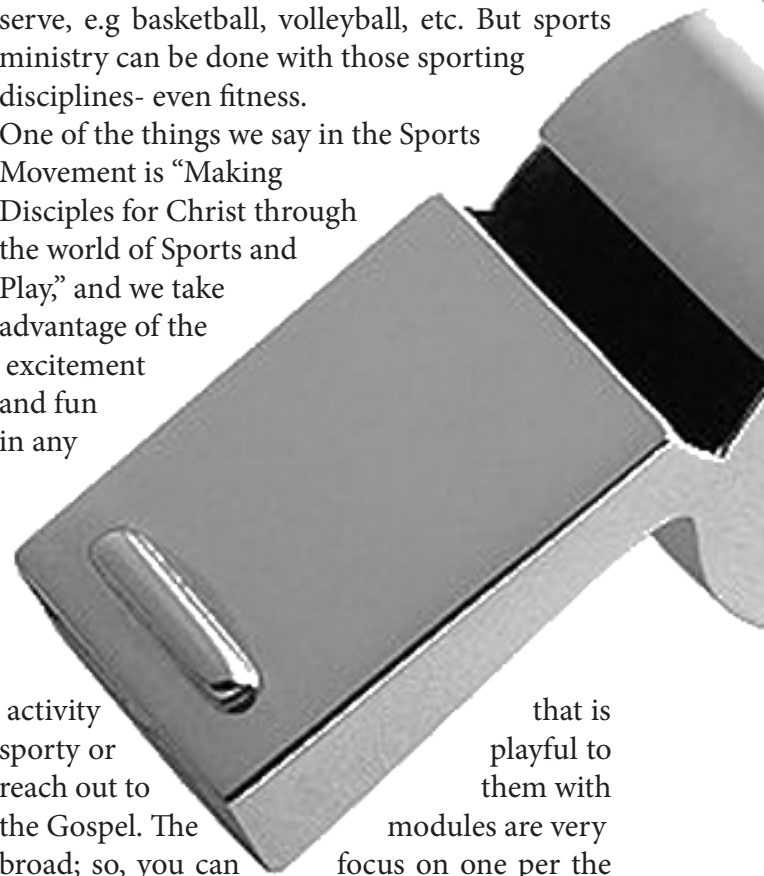
The Sports Ministry is very, very, broad but I have narrowed my focus to soccer. This is because most of the other sports are not popular or even known at all at the mission-field that I serve, e.g basketball, volleyball, etc. But sports ministry can be done with those sporting disciplines- even fitness.

One of the things we say in the Sports Movement is “Making Disciples for Christ through the world of Sports and Play,” and we take advantage of the excitement and fun in any

activity sporty or reach out to the Gospel. The broad; so, you can Spirit’s leading.

One thing that we took note of as we started this

that is playful to them with modules are very focus on one per the



ministry was to build very good relationships with the people- especially because they are an unreached people group. In view of that, it's even advisable not to mention Jesus to them in the beginning otherwise we would scare them off.

A good example is when I had freshly arrived at my mission base and began the ministry. I wanted to teach the boys a Christian prayer, and they started running away. It was my first experience being a coach then, but over time I have realized that my relationship with the boys is very important to be able to win them for the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to converse with and engage them. I remember discussing the social vices in the community with the boys- betting, fighting, etc and that was very helpful and transformational for them.

I remember seeing two brothers when I first arrived last year - probably around the ages of 14 and 15. They had closed from school and had come to the house of their teacher- which happened to be the same compound house I was lodging in. I informed the boys that I was a coach that had just arrived and was looking for players to train with. I enquired if they were interested and asked them to inform their friends in school too.

The following day, the

boys came to the house to register

for the

team and

they came

with friends- lots of them!

This really shows how powerful sports ministry is. Over

time, Rising Stars FC (the name

of our team) has grown so much

that it is one of the teams that doesn't

run out of players to the glory of God! The players are so many that there are three sets of players, but we do our best to make sure that all the players have good training and playing time. We don't look so much at the skill of the people, but we accept everybody like Jesus did.

As we train, we share the Gospel, pray for them, encourage and disciple them!

This is what we've been doing so far and by God's grace it's working; many people have come to the saving knowledge of Jesus.

To the glory of God too, we've been win-

ning some of our matches. Recently we beat a team 6-0 and it was a beautiful experience as a coach. We have also won a gala tournament I will greatly encourage the church to utilize sports ministry because it is a strategic tool! It is cost effective too; all you might need is a ball. I encourage the church to take advantage of it, and I believe that the Lord, through this ministry, will bring so many boys and girls to the saving knowledge of Jesus.

It can be used to reach out to the young people in the communities to teach them about Christ and let them know that He loves them so that they will live pure lives. May the Lord help the church!

The testimonies are numerous- God be praised! One of the biggest testimonies is that when we started, I used to settle a lot of fights. But now, there is no day that we will go to the park that no boy will mention the name of Jesus.

There was a lot of disobedience, but by God's grace the story has changed after they received the Lord Jesus. Their speech is more graceful too by God's grace; the insults and violence have ceased as well. We keep praying that this transformation will be sustained. The Lord be Praised! One of the boys, used to have a ring and wristband on his hand that he claimed was given to him by his grandfather that is able to alert him when he is given food that is poisonous, including many other weird things. But I shared the Gospel with him and right before my eyes he took off the ring, tore the wristband and threw them away! After that, though, he became ill, but we kept on praying for him and by God's grace he was delivered and is sound and healthy now. He even joined us for the "Stretch Camp" organized by Beautiful Feet in Accra and he was baptized to the glory of God!

Sports ministry is a real tool that the church can seize to win souls for Christ- even in the unreached places!

I used to settle a lot of fights. But now, there is no day that we will go to the park that no boy will mention the name of Jesus.

BRIEF PROFILES OF SOME SPORTS MINISTRIES

OM SportsLink.

SportsLink is one of the catalytic ministries in Operation Mobilisation (OM), where we believe every sports field can become a harvest field for discipleship and generate hope for families and communities through the transforming love of Jesus Christ. We want to see athletes and coaches, local churches and communities make the most of sports through sharing Christ in relational and relevant ways, such as hosting community sports activities, engaging in sports leagues, training coaches and athletes in applying biblical principles to sports, and much more.

OM Sport teams not only enable local sports initiatives, but also host outreaches at international sporting events, such as the FIFA World Cup, and hold events that span the globe. In addition to mainline sports, several OM teams are starting new work to focus on various extreme and adventure sports. Regardless of the sports field is in the air, on an ocean wave, on a rock face or on flat land, every sports field can become a harvest field!

In Ghana, we are engaged in sports ministries among 3 of the 20 unreached people groups in Ghana with 17 sports fields and also expanding territory into the Sahel region of Africa. We are also focused on training and mobilizing churches and individuals in sports ministry to reach out to people everywhere.

At the moment, we are mobilizing and training chaplains and Churches for the 13th All African Games to be held in Ghana in August 2023.

For more information, visit www.om.org/en/ministry-profile/om-sports

Sports Friends SIM

Sportsfriends is a sports ministry group which is focused on the 6 to 14 year age group and discipling them through Life coaching. At Sports Friends, we are convinced that no one should live and die without hearing God's good news. That's why we're using sports as a platform to share this message of hope with young people, their families, and their communities! We currently work in 18 countries in 5 continents. In Africa, we are in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and the horn of Africa. In Ghana, we are currently present in the Upper East, Northern, Savannah and greater Accra Region.

For more information, visit www.sports-friends.org

Fellowship of Christian Athletes

We are a community working to see the world transformed by Jesus Christ through the influence of coaches and athletes. We desire to see every coach and athlete enter into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ and His church. We seek to make disciples through our strategy of engaging, equipping and empowering coaches and athletes to know and grow in Christ and lead others to do the same. Visit us at fca.org

Athletes in Action

At Athletes in Action, we dream of a day when there are Christ-followers on every team, in every sport, in every nation. Since 1966, we have been helping athletes experience the hope and purpose that comes from following Jesus, and equipping them to use their platform to be part of God's mission in the world to make disciples of all nations.

By serving, training, and sending athletes as influencers into the world, we are building spiritual movements everywhere through the platform of sport so that everyone knows someone who truly follows Jesus. Visit us at athletesinaction.org

Christ Care Sports Ministry

This ministry was started in 2006 by Pastor Wicklife Jeremiah Omendah as a youth evangelism program. Today the sports ministry has expanded into a full ministry mission which sends tens of male and female youth on short-term mission trips all over the Southern Nyanza Region of Kenya. Our goal is to extend the love God to all sports-loving people.

Taking the Gospel to the young and lost has never been the same since we started the Sports Evangelism. Sport is hugely popular among young people in our community and in Kenya in general. Sport is therefore a credible and attractive way of engaging the attention of young people and providing a platform to both share the Gospel with them and also through which to promote prevention of HIV, de-stigmatization and to encourage the development of important life skills. Visit us at christcarekenya.org.

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TAMAJAQ TUAREG

NIGER



Photo Credit: Joshua Project

The Tamajaq Tuareg are a frontier people group and tribal nomads located in the western part of Niger. They are also found in other countries within the Sahara such as Mauritania and Mali. Some of them are settled farmers and some migrate seasonally to Ghana, La Cote D'Ivoire and Nigeria when farming season is over.

Population: 1,164,000

Main Religion: Islam (Sunni Muslims)

% Christianity: 0.09%

% Evangelical: 0.09%

Main Language: Tamajag, Tawallamat

Bible: Yes (NT)

Audio Bible: Yes

Jesus Film: Yes

Pray for the Tamajaq Tuaregs People:

1. Pray that the Lord will break the stronghold of Islam over the Tamajaq Tuareg people.
2. Pray that the Spirit of God will prepare their hearts to receive the gospel.
3. Pray that missions agencies and churches will accept the challenge of adopting and reaching the Tamajaq Tuaregs.
4. Pray that the small number of Tamajaq Tuareg believers will rise to the challenge of taking the Gospel to their people.
5. Ask the Lord to save key leaders among the Tuareg who will boldly declare the Gospel as some endure persecution
6. Ask the Lord to raise up strong local churches among the Tamajaq Tuaregs.

MAMPRUSI OF GHANA

The Mamprusi people are predominantly located in Mamprusi East, Mamprusi West and Mamprugu-Moaduri Districts in the North-East region of Ghana where they are the land owners. Some of their chief towns are Nalerigu, Walewale, Gambaga and Yagaba. They are having a significant number of their people in Bawku Municipal and other cities as labourers and head potters. A good number are also farmers in the rural parts of southern Ghana. Most Mamprusi people can also understand the Kusaal and Dagbani languages because of their close affiliation.

Population: 414, 000

Main Religion: Ethnic Religion

% Christianity: 0.84%

% Evangelical: 0.20%

Main Language: Mampruli

Bible: Yes (NT)

Audio Bible: Yes

Jesus Film: Yes

Pray for the Mamprusi People:

1. Pray for the Spirit to prepare the hearts of the Mamprusi people and liberate them from any spiritual bondage.
2. Pray for the salvation of the Mamprusi people and that God may send several Christian workers among them and meet their spiritual and physical needs.
3. Pray that these Mamprusi believers will be salt and light to Mamprusi communities.
4. Pray that church planting will grow across all Mamprusi communities.
5. Pray for all Mamprusi towns and villages that do not have churches to respond to the gospel.
6. Pray for all churches, mission agencies, National Service Personnel and student groups to effectively engage this people with the gospel.



Photo Credit: Joshua Project



GEMA

GHANA EVANGELICAL MISSIONS ASSOCIATION

GEMA is the National Christian Missions Umbrella Body in Ghana.

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