

## GHANA PROVINCE

### Ghana and Liberia

Official Language: **English**

#### Vision Statement

*Called by the Triune God from diverse nations and cultures, we are a community of men committed by evangelical counsels to Christ and to the mission of incarnating his Gospel message in the multicultural situation of our nations.*

#### Mission Statement

*In cooperation with the local Church, we Divine Word Missionaries in Ghana and Liberia commit ourselves especially to the youth of our countries, by way of our diverse parish and school-based ministries.*

### 1. Societal Setting

The social life in Ghana and in Liberia is characterized by ethnicities with their various customs. However, the western lifestyle is greatly influencing the traditional lifestyle of Ghana, especially among the urban communities. Liberia on the other hand is characterized by a high percentage of interracial marriages between ethnic Liberians and the Lebanese, especially in and around Monrovia.

Ghana's population is now estimated at 28 million. It is an increase of 2.4% per annum



so that 51.4% of the population is under 20 years of age. Liberia's population is 4.5 million. As of 2006, Liberia had the highest population growth rate in the world (4.5% per annum) and in 2010 some 43.5% of Liberians were below the age of 15.

The literacy rate has increased dramatically in Ghana; it is currently about 76.1%. In 2010, the literacy rate of Liberia was estimated at 60.8%.

There are three major religious groupings in Ghana: 68.8% Christians, 15.9% Muslims and 8.5% followers of African Traditional Religions. 6.1% of Ghanaians have no affinity to any religion. The

2008 Liberia population census indicates that 85.5% practice Christianity (Protestants form the largest Christian grouping, followed by Catholics), 12.2% Muslims and 1.5% no religion.

The SVD attempt to start a mission in Liberia was hampered by one of Africa's bloodiest civil wars which broke out from 1989 to 1996 in that country, claiming more than 200,000 lives and displacing more than a million people. Then, in 2014 an outbreak of Ebola impeded our entry, claiming about 2,812 lives. The SVD was able to start its mission there only when the epidemic was over.

Poverty is causing many children to drop out of school, along with increasing numbers of unemployed youth in Ghana. Liberia is considered to be one of the world's poorest countries, having a formal employment rate of 15% coupled with the devastating effects of the war and Ebola. The SVD should explore what role to play in helping young people.

## 2. Ecclesial Setting

The Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference speaks out on problems concerning the welfare of not only Catholics but all and sundry in Ghana, as does the Conference in Liberia, which has been vocal in denouncing abuses and corruption. In Ghana there are 19 dioceses, 4 of which are archdioceses and a vicariate. Ghanaian Cardinal Peter Kwadwo Appiah Turkson is the first Prefect of the newly created *Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development* of the Vatican.

In the past 20 years there has been a constant increase in the number of local clergy and vocations to the religious life. Contrasted to this is the dwindling in numbers of expatriate missionaries. There is a high sense of solidarity among the various dioceses as regards personnel as some are ministering as *fidei donum* in other dioceses within the country and abroad. Some of the dioceses and religious congregations have stepped up their drive for local financial support and investment.

There are three dioceses in Liberia and vocations to the priesthood are quite low; thus, a number of religious congregations are in the country rendering religious and human development ministries in the Church.

In Ghana the majority of Catholics are found in the south. In the north Catholics constitute only 4% of the population. The Church strives to teach and worship in local languages; the bible, hymns and prayer books have been translated into many local languages. Some SVDs have been deeply involved in the translation work.

The dominance of Pentecostal/charismatic churches poses a lot of challenges to the local Church as they seem to attract our Catholics. This may be attributed to their way of worship, prosperity preaching, healing, and deliverance services. In the capital at least, it is common to see some of the parishes or deaneries organizing open air crusades and all-night events under different themes. These religious practices were largely seen before as Pentecostal. The participa-

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tion of the lay faithful is phenomenal. There is a cordial relationship and collaboration among the Churches and even with Islam.

In the bid to build the local Church, the SVD embarked on primary evangelization by opening many stations. Today the local Church is benefitting from the work of our confreres, as many have become big parishes.

### 3. Intercultural Mission – *Ad Extra*

#### Those in Final Vows

IN ACTIVE MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
<b>Parish</b>	54	41.2	46.1	36.5
<b>Education</b>	13	9.9	11.3	9.9
Schools	12	-		
Universities	1	-		
<b>Formation/ SVD Vocation</b>	12	9.1	8.7	6.8
<b>Administration/ Support</b>	8	6.1	7.8	9.0
<b>Other Apostolates</b>	20	15.2	12.2	20.3
JPIC	1	-		
Bible	2	-		
Communication	2	-		
Mission Animation	1	-		
Others	14	-		

#### Those in Final Vows

NOT IN MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
Studies/ Orientation	11	8.3	3.5	10.8
Retired/Sick	9	6.8	6.1	4.0
Others	4	3.1	4.3	2.7

#### Characteristic Dimensions

The Characteristic Dimensions feature in our various ministries although some may be more prominent than others. In almost all the SVD-managed parishes and schools for example, there are Bible sharing groups; justice and peace and integrity of creation issues are part and parcel of our various ministries.

**Biblical Apostolate:** The Bible pastoral ministry of the province organizes the *Dei Verbum* program to train priests, religious and lay people to love the Word and to champion its dissemination in their various places of ministry. In addition, many confreres are involved in various forms of Bible sharing and study in their places of work.

**Mission Animation:** Our mission animation ministry creates awareness among the people of the need to share in the missionary mandate of the Church by supporting the SVD in both cash and kind.

**JPIC:** JPIC is championing the cause of the voiceless and the under-privileged especially by organizing seminars and workshops. Many

confreres are involved in various JPIC ministries, like the 'lepers aid' and witch camp ministry among others.

**Communication:** Communication ministry is involved in the production of video materials and workshops to empower priests, religious and lay people to employ modern media tools to propagate the Word. Other confreres are involved in other forms like TV and radio programs to spread the Word.

### Priorities among Congregational Directions

**Education:** The action plan for five years beginning 2014 consists of the training of (at least) two people a year to be qualified to teach, to be head or to serve in other ways in our schools and the schools of the parishes we staff. So far this has been achieved by having those in temporary vows earmarked for education to do their Pastoral Year in our schools. We will inform the generalate of candidates for perpetual vows whom we have prepared for our schools and request they be appointed to Ghana because of our priority. We will consider starting a private SVD school as an income generating project. The initiative has started – a team is in place, land acquired, drawings are in process.

**Primary and New Evangelization:** We will use the Arnold Janssen Spirituality Centre in Tuba, Accra, the parish in Kumbungu, Tamale and the Divine Word Catholic Conference Centre (DWCCC) at Nsawam as places to develop pro-

grams in primary and new evangelization. A few programs have been held at Tuba in Accra during the construction of the facility. More programs are scheduled since the facility is almost complete. Kumbungu, about twenty minutes drive from the seminary in Tamale in the north, offers opportunities to seminarians to experience primary evangelization in the villages within the catchment area of this Muslim dominated parish. The DWCCC in Nsawam is being used to run the Dei Verbum program. Formation programs for the laity on the new evangelization are also lined up for this center by our New Evangelization Team (NET).

**Youth and Family:** We will emphasize pre-marital preparation and post-marital programs. We will develop ways of continuing post-baptismal and post-confirmation education in the faith using social communication media. Our parishes will team up with neighboring parishes for various youth activities and programs. We will develop marriage support programs such as Marriage Encounter and the training of people as marriage and family counselors. We will develop programs for families in distress. On the level of the province, there has not been a general program for family and youth; however on the various parish levels some confreres and pastors are seeing to it that couples are prepared well in pre-marital and post-marital programs, mostly in conjunction with the diocesan programs. We acknowledge however that this is the area of our chosen CD that we need to focus on to make it a reality to help many families, especially those in

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distress. We intend that in the future the Arnold Janssen Spirituality Centre will provide facilities for such counseling for families and individuals, as well as developing programs and running family and marriage encounters.

### Collaboration with SSpS and Others

Our collaboration with the SSpS has improved. The SVD provincial council meets with the provincial leadership team of the SSpS twice a year to discuss matters of mutual concern. In the area of spirituality, we have annual retreat together. They join in directing the 30-day retreat journey of our novices. We have one on-going formation program together which is called *Cross Cultural Reflection on Ministry* (CCROM). Finally, we celebrate the feast of the founder together.

There is a good collaboration between the SVD and other religious congregations. We form part of the Conference of Major Superiors of Ghana. We have joint programs like vocation promotion. Collaboration with the local Church is also good. Some confreres serve as consultants to the Bishops in some dioceses. Our confreres work together with the local clergy.

### SVD Lay Partners

We promote our SVD lay partners by advertising our charism, our prayer life, our community living and our commitment to work as a team. In addition, they are invited to join our activities like Family Feasts, ordination, profession of vows, etc. We have Friends of the

SVD in Accra Archdiocese, Koforidua Diocese, Techiman Diocese and Donkorkrom Vicariate. Their activities consist of prayer meetings for the growth of the missionary work of the SVD; Bible sharing at least every fortnight; visits to the sick and the aged; support to our needy communities both in kind and in cash. They are present in some of our spiritual and social gatherings. Their number is around 150 members.

### 4. Intercultural Life – *Ad Intra*

MEMBERSHIP	2018	2012	2005
Bishops	3	2	1
Clerics	98	90	84
Brothers (final vows)	21	24	26
Brothers (temporal vows)	3	3	0
Scholastics	33	33	30
Novices	18	13	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>163</b>

AGE AND COUNTRY	2018	2012	2005
Average age	48.8	50.9	42.7
Nationalities	28	23	21

**Spirituality:** The SSpS is more involved in the affairs of spiritual animation of our province and together with the SVD directing the affairs of the annual province retreat. The mission secretary animates the *Friends of the SVD* and re-

gularly conducts retreats and recollections for its members. Some of the prayers of our spirituality in the *Vademecum* are being taught and prayed with our parishioners; in a few places some of these prayers have been translated into the vernacular. Many of the local people have shown interest in these prayers. Some are asking for copies of the *Vademecum*. We are working to ensure that each confrere in the province owns his personal copy of the *Vademecum*. Generally, it appears confreres are becoming better committed to spiritual activities.

**Community Life:** The provincial council sees to it that the confreres attend province programs. The implementation of this has somehow raised the consciousness of the obligation to participate in province activities by the confreres. During the last province visitation, issues of community life such as attendance at community meetings, use of the *Vademecum*, financial reporting and the like were discussed with the members and communities. Other issues on the implementation of the CDs, especially financial self-reliance, were followed up. This has helped to gear up the commitment of the confreres to be serious about the implementation of the CDs.

**Leadership:** At the beginning of this triennium we had a leadership workshop for the provincial council members and another one for the provincial council and local council members and house superiors. The annual Cross-Cultural Reflection on Mission (CCROM) also seeks to highlight issues of leadership as well as of cross-cultural skills. In order to assist the confreres in choosing the best people for leadership po-

sitions regardless of national and ethnic origin, at one of our provincial assemblies, the SSpS Leadership Team here in Ghana was invited to share with us their process. Our leadership workshops clearly revealed that there is a need to talk before voting gets started about the importance of choosing really good leaders, devoid of ethnic, national or personal interests, to serve the province.

**Finance:** We have had an international auditing company to audit our accounts in line with international standards. We have also had our auditors give us a presentation on better record-keeping. Refresher courses are organized for individual, house, and community treasurers. There is a general increased effort from the confreres in the districts in developing projects for financial self-reliance. The better use of structures and resources has been seriously considered in the past year. As a result, some properties have been restructured to make better use of them and gain rental income.

More and more confreres are becoming aware of the need to keep good records and also to submit their various earnings as required by the constitutions. Recently our two provincial treasurers took part in the AFRAM treasurers workshop in Kenya.

Communities are encouraged to regularly have a report from their community treasurers and also plan together their community budgets. They are also working with lay people to find ways of raising more local contributions.

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The new Finance and Development Committee has been formed and has been more active in trying to push the province towards financial self-reliance through seeking out and studying

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changes in our long term investments to get a better return using the advice of professional lay people to help decide how to do this.

**Formation:** We have been committed to improving the number of formation personnel over the past two years as well as upgrading their degrees. A number of confreres are going for higher studies both locally and abroad for the formation houses and other ministries.

The *Cross Cultural Reflection on Ministry* is an avenue for the on-going-formation of confreres in the province related to pastoral ministry and

possible projects we can undertake. The expertise of lay people has been more engaged to help us make decisions relating to financial self-reliance and investment. We have made some

intercultural competence. Especially in our formation communities “culture days” are now celebrated to recognize each one’s culture and enhance our cross-cultural competence. TICCS has been helpful in providing formation for new missionaries and also our seminarians. A re-entry program for all confreres returning from mission has been established, as well as a program for confreres going on mission outside the country.

Since last year we have two vocation directors, one for the north and another for the southern sector of the country. They are working with the local district vocation promoters and together with all other confreres have been highly charged to raise the awareness of the brother vocation. We regularly get about 13 new candidates joining our formation programs each year, frequently including one or two brother candidates. Recently we have an application from one of our missions in Zwedru-Liberia. Each week we also get many applications from Nigeria though we are not yet in that country. The efforts being made for initial formation and on-going formation for spiritual renewal are regular recollections, bible sharing, spiritual direction, retreats and visits to Marian shrines.